Exploring the Legitimacy of the Car in Aarhus in Light of Congestion and Climate Change - How Agonism Can Bring Us Closer to a Sustainable Future
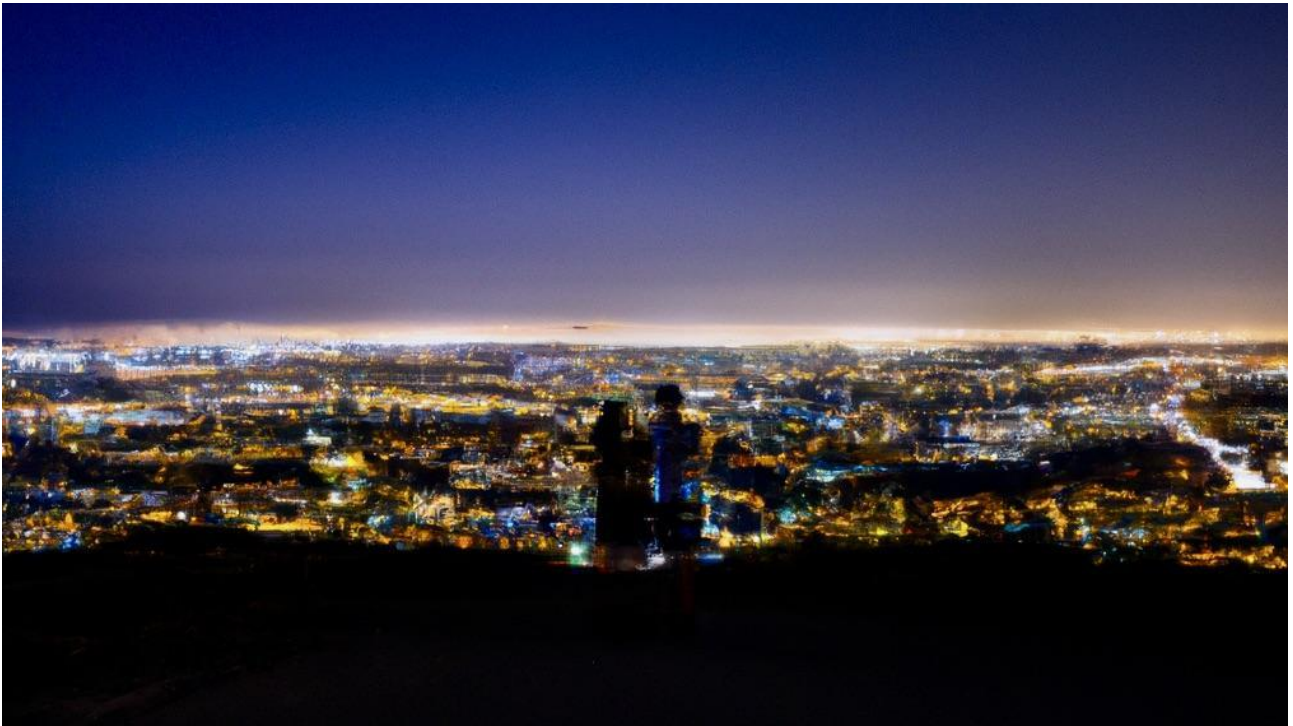

Figure 1 Picture by DALL·E

Urban Planning & Management   **Kres Jespersen**

Master's thesis

28th of February 2023

Title

 Exploring the Legitimacy of the Car in Aarhus in Light of Congestion and Climate Change - How agonism Can Bring Us Closer to a Sustainable Future

Project

 Master's Thesis

Author

 Kres Daa Jespersen

Supervisor

 Kristian Olesen

Keywords

 Climate change, Social constructivism, Discourse analysis, agonistic planning

Number of pages

78

Appendices

5

Submission

28th of February 2023

Preface

Kres Daa Jespersen conducted the following master's thesis in Urban Planning & Management. I thank my supervisor Kristian Olesen for the time committed to meetings, great talks, constructive feedback and essential perspectives. I would also like to thank the mobility department in Aarhus Municipality for its support in so many ways. Without my great colleagues, the thesis would not have been half of what it is. A special thanks to Morten Skou Nicolaisen, Jesper Frandsen, and Tyge Wamstrup, who dedicated their time to an interview. Last, I would like to thank my friends, family and the volunteer group "Sager Der Samler" for always sharing their perspectives with me.

Kres Daa Jespersen

Kres Daa Jespersen

Reading instructions

The references in the thesis are formatted in the APA style and begin with (Surname/institution, year). However, particular articles have several quoted politicians, which means they are referred to as (Surname in "referred to text", year). Secondly, some of the quotes are from Danish sources, which is why the author has translated them into English. The reference list at the end of the thesis is listed alphabetically after the authors' surname or institution, followed by the year the text was published.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Congestion and climate change are directly related to how we have structured our car system, which is why it is necessary to look at how we can restructure it into a sustainable one (Urry & Kingsley, 2009). Urry & Kingsley (2009) argues that this process has already started, and "powerful forces" will have re-engineered our car system by the end of the century. As our political processes are known for solving climate change with a democratic consensus, they solve the apparent conflict among the involved actors and let us move on as a society. However, the report *"The Closing Window"* from UNEP (2022) argues that the radical changes necessary to remain within the Paris agreement have so far not been part of the solutions. This paper hypothesises that the current democratic consensus-driven processes do not allow questioning the underlying power relations that contribute to sustaining our current fossil-fuelled mobility system. Instead, an alternative planning process is needed to create new political dynamics that allow us to question our car system and introduce new ideas.

These thoughts are brought down to a regional level by looking at the mobility system in Aarhus and the political and planning processes. So far, the municipality has answered to climate change by finding consensual solutions that everyone can agree upon. Although these solutions seem to respond to climate change, the CO_2 levels in the transport sector tell a different story. Since 2008 the municipality has not experienced a drop in CO_2 emissions (Climate Action Plan, 2020). Moreover, as the mobility plan (2018) describes a population growth of 50.000 towards 2030, bringing 20.000 new cars to the municipality, the level is not likely to drop. There seems to be a gap between the solutions agreed upon and the solutions needed to bring down CO_2 emissions. To understand this gap, this paper first examines how the historical conditions have shaped a car-oriented mobility system and, similarly, a dominating car discourse. Secondly, the paper analyses how the dominating car discourse has successfully framed itself to deliver an answer to climate change and exclude alternative solutions. As the area investigated enters the political arena, the paper unfolds how the consensus-driven approach in Aarhus benefits the car. Based on the analytical findings, the paper discusses how an agonistic planning approach can bring about new political horizons and dynamics, allowing sustainable solutions to be more easily included.

Problem / Justification

The issues that Aarhus municipality are experiencing are not isolated but can be seen as global tendencies. Issues such as congestion, pollution, and the need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from traffic require radical changes to our systems (UNEP, 2022). As Urry & Kingsley (2009)

describe, we are standing at the very beginning of transforming our mobility systems into more sustainable ones. This paper agrees with Urry & Kingsley (2009) and asks how to strengthen this transformation. Questioning the underlying power structures of the mobility system is necessary to achieve a sustainable mobility system. Therefore, I intend to apply agonism as a possible solution to the planning and political process that have not provided compelling solutions so far. However, agonism is still struggling with practical solutions to urban planning. The paper, therefore, justifies itself by discussing how agonism can be part of a sustainable future. However, the area where it is applicable first has to be analysed before exploring practical solutions to agonism. The following research question and sub-questions have therefore been formulated.

Research question

In light of emerging conflicts such as congestion and climate change, what discursive changes were made to the dominating Aarhusian car discourse to remain legitimate, and is it possible to introduce a planning process that encourages exploring solutions outside the dominating discourse?

To answer the research question, the following sub-questions have been created:

- *How can the European car discourse and the conflicts it is facing be understood?*
- *How are conflicts interpreted into the Aarhusian car discourse for it to remain legitimate, and what type of issues arise in the political/planning process because of the interpretation?*
- *By applying agonism to the discussion - is it possible to present a political/planning process that encourages exploring solutions outside the dominating discourse?*

The first sub-question establishes a literature review that explains the car in Europe. The review describes the evolution of the car discourse through the mid-20th and 21st centuries, the issues it has faced and how it argumentatively has answered them. This background knowledge will be essential for the reader as I bring the most significant arguments from Europe into the Aarhusian context. Bringing the arguments into the Aarhusian context will be visible in the *Introduction to the case - the history of the car discourse in Aarhus* and the analysis.

The literature review continues with John Urry and Dennis Kingsley's work *"After the car"*. Urry & Kingsley (2009) are used to introduce the issues with a fossil-fuelled car system and the necessity of

changing it to achieve a sustainable future. The paper uses their work to argue for narrowing the scope of the study to the traffic policies in Aarhus and formulating the basis for a discourse analysis.

The first part of the literature review establishes the most important arguments and viewpoints on the European car since the 1950s. The basis of the literature review is to understand the values given to the car on a European level and how the car related to the issues it created. Moreover, the literature review places the analysis in a broader perspective.

The analysis, therefore, begins by understanding the nodal points of the Aarhusian car discourse in light of the tendencies across Europe. Values such as wealth, freedom, consumerism, speed, and safety are brought together, forming the nodal points "growth" and "personal freedom". Then, having the historical perspective of the Aarhusian car, the paper builds its understanding of the car until today. Finally, liveability is added as a nodal point in recent times, implicitly legitimising the car's presence today. Together the nodal points form a coherent line of argumentation that provide "win-win" climate change solutions to the politicians.

As these solutions have not been able to bring down CO_2 emissions, the paper discusses if a new ecological discourse is needed. Part of the paper's findings from the analysis has been the procedural issues that continue to halt a sustainable mobility system. With the theoretical foundation for the discussion described in the section *"Conflicts as part of a sustainable future,"* the paper explores how agonistic planning can be actively used to expand what is seen as legitimate solutions in the decision process. The discussion focuses on proactively using the conflict to benefit a sustainable mobility system. The discussion, therefore, begins where the analytical conclusion ends. It asks whether it is possible to apply agonism to the planning and political process to look for solutions that do not prioritise the car. Secondly, it is discussed how agonistic planning and democracy can open the planning and political processes up to otherwise illegitimate discourse.

Literature review

The following literature review presents how politicians and planners have seen the car as a game changer for more efficient ways of moving people and goods and achieving greater personal freedom. The literature review shows how the car has indeed changed all aspects of society while at the same time further cementing habits and norms. The literature review will focus on the arguments that supported the car in its advent and the conflicts it had to address. The review starts in the second half of the 20th century - the post-war years - as this is when the car quickly moves from leisure driving to everyday use. This review will place the car in a historical setting to understand why the car was

viewed as a symbol of freedom in the post-war years. Secondly, by bringing the historical context into the paper, contemporary experiences can be understood through a broader historical perspective. The literature review continues into the present time, where the car has increasingly been problematised. Because of climate change and congestion, the car has had to adapt its arguments to legitimise its existence. Following the historical walkthrough of the car is a description of the negative influence the fossil-fuelled transport systems have had on our climate. Urry's work on transport systems describes how a transport system can be understood and why it is changing into a sustainable system. Urry & Kingsley (2009) show that the car system has several aspects; however, the paper narrows its scope to "traffic policies". Understanding the car system as part of the political process allows the paper to investigate how political dynamics stand in the way of a sustainable future. The section *"Conflicts as part of a sustainable future"* describes how planners and politicians have typically moved the process forward through consensus and compromise. Mouffe (2013) has been critical of the willingness of the political system to seek compromises. She believes we need to adopt agonism to the process to solve the core of the issues. The section *"Conflicts as part of a sustainable future"* describes agonism and how it can be applied to the planning process to bring about new political dynamics.

The European car - how the car did indeed not change our lives

To understand the car discourse during the mid-20th century, we have to see the car as more than a means of transport. The most significant advantage of the car was how well it fitted into the consumer mindset. The car became an extension of the consumer's identity, symbolising wealth, freedom, speed and safety. Unlike public transport, the car spoke to the individual's need to express itself (Sheller, 2004). Part of the good life was lived outside the city in suburban areas with a car. The car was carried forward by the individual's need to express oneself and the culture of the 20th century (Sheller, 2004). People no longer had to squeeze their lives into the timetable of a train because of its flexibility. Instead, the driver could simply enter their car and surround themselves with cutting-edge technology at their disposal and ready to take them anywhere. In a life where work filled up much of the day, the car offered time reductions when travelling to and from work. Social life was suddenly a greater part of people's lives as one could drive to leisure places or friends. People's movement grew, and with that, their dependence on cars (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002).

Architects and planners would approach cities with the idea of the car as a way of life instead of a means of transport. They would make extensive changes to the urban environment to support the new way of living. Backed by governmental investments in road infrastructure, the car could spread far and wide into the landscape. The highway concept (the Autobahn), invented by the National Socialist German party, would allow the car to spread even further without interference from other road users (Urry & Kingsley, 2009). Furthermore, while infrastructural investments supported the car, trams were being rolled back across Europe because they were seen as slow, inflexible and caused congestion. Ironically, some trams would be put back into the cities because of congestion (Urry & Kingsley, 2009). However, the distances between work, home and our social life grew and undermined cities' social fabric, according to architect Richard Rogers (Urry & Kingsley, 2009). One of the significant factors for citizens to switch to private transport was, according to Pooley et al. (2006), suburbanisation. Public transport could no longer cover the complex cross-city journeys that suburbanisation produced. The physical changes seemed to further support our social habits with the car instead of transforming social patterns. For example, men would drive home from work to eat the lunch their wives had made. Women, however, were generally reluctant to obtain a driver's licence (Pooley et al., 2006). Despite these after-rationalisations, the time was seen as a "motor revolution". As Le Corbusier stated, seeing the "city as a machine" became the essence of modernity (Urry & Kingsley, 2009). His ideas of a modern city with linear streets cutting through the city would radically change cities across Europe. Architect Moshe Safdie observed how cities would adapt to unimagined traffic volumes by cutting down old districts (Urry & Kingsley, 2009). Urban planners would look at the city through the car's needs and make changes that benefit it. However, the new system and the suburban planning would split homes from businesses, retail shops and work and limit people's movement to the car. The changes would negatively influence the city's social capital (Feriel, 2020). According to Feriel (2020), earlier planners had criticised the modernist thoughts of the CIAM group because they could not reproduce the raison d'être for the city centre. Planners believed the four core ideas (dwelling, transportation, work and recreation) needed a fifth: the "heart of the city". The criticism was not an anti-auto mobilisation but rather an extension and further interpretation of the motor age. The city's core would be designed for pedestrians with trees, water sculptures and plants, and easily reached by car. Planners would plead for ring roads with parking spots nearby for the consumer to easily reach pedestrian malls. Pedestrianisation would gain traction as businesspeople could see the benefits of removing the car in favour of increased revenue (Feriel, 2020).

Planners from Copenhagen were influenced by other European cities and closed Strøget (a retail street) for cars. Several other European cities followed. Alfred A. Wood, a planner who would greatly influence pedestrianisation, became familiar with the concept from trips to Northern Europe. In his work, he would argue that the city centre of Norwich is carefully designed to support pedestrians and its historical importance (Feriel, 2020). Wood was careful in his argumentation not to promote an anti-auto mobilisation discourse. Instead, he would use arguments from the past to gain support. The arguments would support the city's heritage to please the Norwich Society and increase turnover to please the businesses. The plan would pedestrianise the city centre and be served by a ring road system allowing quick and easy access by car (Feriel, 2020). The plans gained much international attention but were never fully implemented. Instead, when Alfred Wood left his position, only 150 metres were turned into a pedestrian street. Despite the relatively modest changes, Norwich and other prominent "pedestrian cities" such as Essen and Copenhagen received attention from small groups of planners (Feriel, 2020). International attention could later be observed when the OECD, whose purpose is to support economic development, adopted pedestrianisation in its area of research; however, with ambivalent support. The attention from OECD came because of the oil crisis at the beginning of the 70s. Based on reports and public discussions, the OECD held a conference in which many urban planners and other officials participated (Better Towns with Less Traffic, 1975).

The intention of pedestrianisation had been watered down due to multiple considerations, and city centres were to be changed to support commercial interests instead of solving congestion. The object was to revitalise city centres rather than object to auto-mobilisation. The international attention turned pedestrianisation into a more neutral and consensual movement (Feriel, 2020). Pedestrianisation should no longer only apply to central urban spaces but broadened to mobilities - a way of moving through the city. However, the discussions were coloured by a counter-movement that had not taken shape or a decisive direction. The movement became a catch-all to all other possible mobilities than the car, which is why the conclusions to the conference were rather vague. Furthermore, the scepticism of the car was downplayed to a better balance between the car and other mobilities rather than actual alternatives (Feriel, 2020).

Feriel (2020) concludes that attempts to challenge the car and initiate a pedestrian revolution have been modest so far. Urban planners like Alfred Wood had grandiose plans for a car-free city (Wood, 1966); however, there has been a significant difference between the plans and the completed installations (Feriel, 2020). The modest installations have shown how the historical weight of the auto-mobilisation has excluded alternatives to the car. As Feriel (2020) states *"In Europe,*

pedestrianization has proved to be the best possible compromise to accommodate old urban fabrics to motorized consumerist leisure oriented post-war societies" (Feriel, 2020, p.783)

Despite noble attempts to move our cities away from car dependency, the revolution of the car is absent. The section has described how the car, through the 20th century, integrated physically and mentally into large parts of our culture, creating a lock-in where revolutions were nearly impossible. In the following section, we will describe the system theory that will help explain why a path-dependent system makes it difficult to achieve a sustainable future.

After the car - The future mobility system

The section first explains the theoretical shift where researchers moved their focus from the structures facilitating mobility to "movement" itself. Based on the shift Urry & Kingsley (2009) developed a new theoretical approach to the car system that must be understood as complex, historically grounded and continually under pressure from external forces trying to change the system. Despite constant pressure from green mobility solutions, the fossil fuel system continues to stand. The section therefore continues with an elaboration on the mechanisms that place the current mobility system in disorderly order and how it excludes external forces trying to contest it.

Around the turn of the millennium, several humanistic research areas were beginning to reinterpret their understanding of mobility because the theory supporting mobility left the researchers unable to explain the new phenomena (Urry & Sheller, 2006). John Urry & Mimi Sheller (2006) developed a radically new approach to mobility. Mobility should no longer be understood through stasis, sedentarism, structure and social order but through the movement of information, ideas, and people moving willingly or not and in contingent order. National borders became less important as "disorderly" groups of people and ideas moved across borders and rapidly shared information. Urry & Sheller (2006) would therefore focus on the connection between places and what shapes places. To do so, they appeal to the infrastructural systems that carry information, people, and goods. These systems have been overlooked and should instead be understood as manifesting the movement of people's lives and thoughts. Systems that are risk-free, reliable, conform and enable repetition. These systems are integrated with gender, class, and ethnicity, which enforces specific movements or fixity. They further argue that social sciences have inadequately researched mobility and communication and how they are economically, politically, and socially organised.

Based on the new approach, Urry & Kingsley (2009) developed a sociotechnical system that can explain the movement of the car and its place in society. Furthermore, a better understanding of the sociotechnical car system would help understand how the fossil car system can develop into a sustainable car system. The current sociotechnical system consists of physical factors such as fossil fuel systems and infrastructure and gradually more abstract factors such as policies, technology, and norms. The paper narrows the analytical focus by focusing on transport policies as a basis for understanding the political and planning processes.

If we as planners or society agree to move away from a system that continues to emit an unsustainable amount of carbon dioxide, we first need to understand the system and, secondly, how we move towards a more sustainable low-carbon system. The paper argues that the step towards change is not banning cars but investigating how society can create the best opportunities for change.

Sociotechnical-system thinking is based on complexity sciences. A starting notion for complexity sciences is that the physical and social world is full of contradictions, unpredictable and rule-bound (Ball, 2004). The complexity sciences thus investigate how systems change, adapt, and co-evolve in ways that influence later decisions. Systems are not seen as being in equilibrium but evolving on the basis of path dependency and external conditions. Path dependency is when the system has developed into a rigid state where certain other possible solutions are excluded from happening (Urry & Kingsley, 2009). Such path dependency gradually enters the system by positively contributing to the entire system and further stabilising it. As described by North (1990), *"Once a development path is set on a particular course, the network externalities, the learning process of organizations, and <u>the historically derived subjective modelling of the issues reinforce the course</u>"* (North, 1990, p. 99). The last part of the sentence is interesting as it describes how the system, because of its history, shapes its approach to issues. The system creates a locked-in state where other possibilities are excluded. The beginning of the development path does not always seem to have significant value but can have an enormous effect on the system as a whole. This process can change the circumstances of the entire system and lead to further growth or its demise (Capra, 1985). However, according to Prigogine (1997), the system may instead adapt to a higher level of complexity in response to external conditions. Pre-second world war system analysis mainly focused on how the system, through negative feedback loops, regained its equilibrium. An example of a negative feedback loop could be central heating in a house. The heating system sends hot water into the room, which warms up the room. The water then returns colder, which again has to be warmed up to return to equilibrium. Positive feedback loops, however, describe a system increasingly reinforcing certain tendencies,

leading to a tipping point where the system undergoes paradigmatic changes. (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). An example could be abnormal amounts of CO_2 emissions increasing the planet's average temperatures, which releases methane gases from the Siberian arctic, further increasing the planet's temperature.

The paradigm change can then be described by the term black swans. Black swans are described as highly improbable events that can change the path of the system, bringing the system over its tipping point and starting a cascade of positive feedback that leads to a new paradigm (Urry & Kingsley, 2009). Relating the black swan theory to Aarhus, the term represents the ideas that are part of excluded discourses because they do not fit the path taken or the discursive structures. The discourses are unwelcome because they open the door to black swans, potentially radically changing a system that businesses, institutions and social norms rely on.

However, system theorist Ervin Laszlo (2006) explains that there are moments in time when the system is at a 'chaos point' and open to a path change - a more radical change. Chaos points are points in time where the system stands at a crossroads because of issues such as congestion and climate

Figure 2 - New post-car system (Urry & Kingsley, 2009)

change. Climate change and congestion have received increasingly more focus in Europe (City of London, 2020; City of Paris, 2018; City of Barcelona, 2018) and opened the system up to black swans, giving them a higher probability of breaking through and gaining momentum (Urry & Kingsley, 2009).

Figure 2 shows how a new post-car system consists of several aspects wherein the black swan can be found. A black swan could be a new transport policy that includes new ways of approaching congestion and climate change, affecting the current car system's disorderly order. The black swan would lead to a situation where the *"die is less cast and various futures are structurally possible"* (Urry & Kingsley, 2009, chapter 3).

The system sciences and Urry & Kingsley's (2009) sociotechnical system has now been described to understand why climate change has ripened the car system for change. The paper argues that black swans or highly improbable events are necessary to change the current system towards a sustainable one. Despite the well-known conflicts, the CO_2 emissions from the current car system still have not been reduced. In other words, black swans have not occurred. The analysis will show that the current planning and political process are guided by the values we ascribe to the car. Therefore, new approaches that contest the values of the current system are excluded and never discussed.

Looking at the political and planning process is necessary to understand how new approaches can be introduced. The literature review, therefore, continues with a section that can help understand the current political system in Aarhus, how it excludes black swans and why agonism is relevant to open the political processes to black swans.

Conflicts as part of a sustainable future

The following section describes the political process in a Danish context. The section begins by describing the typical ideologies in Danish politics, followed by the institutional, ideological framework from which solutions are found. The section describes the Habermasian ideals of a just discussion which the current democratic ideals rest on. Following the descriptions, the section introduces agonism, which is critical of the Habermasian ideals.

Even small changes to the current car system have started heated discussions from both sides of the political spectrum (Henderson, 2013). The perception of the car is reflected in the discussions of the allocation of physical space to cars, bicycles, and public transport. Moreover, the costs of owning and

driving a car in the city can also spark heated discussions (Henderson, 2013). Henderson et al. (2019) have identified three general ideologies in a Danish context: the left/progressives, neoliberals, and right/conservatives. Each ideology applies its ideas to the future transport policies in their respective city. The left/progressives have bicycles and public transport at the centre of their mobility policy. The left believes the government should interfere and regulate the market in areas where the free market has failed.

A consequence of exponential growth is climate change, which is why the left is challenging the capitalistic structures that have carried the car forward. Concretely, the left (SF, Enhedslisten) will restrict private ownership of the car or limit its movement, discouraging citizens from buying one. The social democrats (Socialdemokratiet) are identified by Henderson et al. (2019) as neoliberals. They believe that the market structures will, through simple supply/demand on innovative green solutions, solve the issues themselves. The right (Venstre, Konservative) believes in unrestricted personal freedom, so the car's movement should not be prioritised less than other mobilities. The right believes that the car is an inevitable technological progression and includes notions such as "individual responsibility" and "necessary for families with children" (Henderson et al. 2019). So how are solutions found when the political spectrum cannot agree on the role of the car?

Part of the Danish political process is typically to look at planning policy documents presented by the civil service. Next, politicians discuss changes to the document until a compromise is found among the majority (Henderson et al., 2019). However, to understand compromise and how it is theoretically justified, the paper dives further into the theory of compromise and the communicative approach.

Compromises contain ambiguity as they, on the one hand, are seen as a surrender of principles and a sign of weakness. On the other hand, they are viewed as the art of politics and cooperation. Compromise is a paradox and a conundrum for politicians that every day have to decide whether they stand fast on their principles or find agreement for the sake of political progress and peace. In other words, they navigate between political idealism and political realism (Rostbøll & Scavenius, 2018). To justify the compromise, Rostbøll & Scavenius (2018) argue that it has to be tolerable for all parties to put the lid on their political standpoint.

There are similarities when the communicative approach is brought into the thoughts on compromise. The communicative approach sees conflict among actors as an occasion to find a consensual solution that most actors support. The communicative approach, therefore, finds its theoretical standpoint in Habermas' ideas of domination-free discourses and instead reaches agreement through the rational argument. The process intends to remove the political standpoint and, through discussion, come closer

to the rational arguments. In doing so, the politically incompatible actors are guided towards the compromise. (Pløger, 2004).

However, the theory of agonism has been critical of compromises and, therefore, the communicative approach as well, which is why it is declared the next paradigm within planning theory (Pløger, 2004). In the following section, the text will elaborate on the ideas behind agonism and its relation to conflict. Subsequently, the section describes the discrepancy between theory and practical use in planning, which is primarily linked to its proactive approach to conflict. The section will therefore continue with a review of papers that tries to close the gap with suggestions for practical use. The presented suggestions will afterwards be used in the discussion, together with the findings from the analysis.

Agonism

Before the paper unfolds how agonism is applicable to urban planning, the section starts with the principles of agonism. Mouffe (2013) describes liberal democracies as becoming increasingly pluralistic and diverse. Pluralistic democracies can be described as lobbies, groups, or actors that, to a higher degree, represent a particular interest (Paxton, 2020) when policies are being discussed. The groups are meant to see each other as adversaries, meaning they respect and legitimise each other's opinions when discussing. Pløger's (2004) term "strife" describes disagreements between discourses and the different orchestration or meaning of sentences between the discourses when conflicts are discussed. The orchestration of meaning comes from the adversaries' worldview, and any attempt to reach consensus would, therefore, always be an attempt at temporary hegemony of one discourse over another. A hegemonic discourse is a discourse that dominates the orchestration of meaning related to the discussed subject (Pløger, 2004). This paper uses the term *dominating car discourse* to refer the hegemonic orchestration of meaning related to the car-oriented mobility system.

The communicative approach has, according to agonism, not been successful in solving conflict because it sees conflict as distrust between parties which can only be solved through compromise. A compromise suppresses values that are part of the strife due to its use of Habermas' ideal speech situation. According to agonism, this suppression of values has led to increased societal conflict (Mouffe, 2013) because strife is inherent to an increasingly pluralistic society as it constitutes our differences in identity and ways of thinking. The communicative approach sees the strife as unsolvable due to political differences, in other words, antagonistic. The communicative approach ignores the core of the strife as it tries to solve the strife through consensus or legal means.

Antagonism is the "struggle between enemies" (Mouffe, 2013) where agreements cannot be reached. It is when oppositions cannot agree on the issue, leading to an unsolvable position. According to the communicative approach, the strife can only be solved through consensus such as voting, bargaining or *"a morally justified consensus"* (Pløger, 2004). According to Purcell (2009), such enforcement can be highly beneficial to the power of the hegemonic discourse as it avoids contestation of the underlying power relations. This paper takes the social constructivist point of view, as I believe even our society's underlying power relations should be contested. Doing so would mean questioning the dominating car discourse's underlying power relations. Agonism, however, focuses on strife as the productive force to contestation of the underlying power relations. Essential to achieve agonism is agreeing to a common basic understanding of the opposing party's discourse which gives legitimacy to the opponent. An agonistic view on strife makes strife more troublesome to solve as it legitimises the opposition and undermines the *"government ethos defined by the 'right manner of disposing things'"* (Foucault, 1991, p. 95). In other words, the strife cannot be managed rationally and legally within the governmental structures if the strife is understood as agonistic.

The presupposition is that if compromises are found, each conflicting side has to move away from their personal belief and enter a common ground in the middle (Paxton, 2020). The ideal search for consensus would then be based on rational and neutral arguments. However, understanding the middle ground as the most common worldview, in other words, objective, is according to social constructivism based on the historical values of the dominating discourse. In other words, compromises stabilise the dominating discourse further while leaving out true alternatives to the status quo (McClymont, 2011). For example, when mobility policies are compiled and presented to the city council in Aarhus, the planners know that the solutions must gain broad political support (Frandsen, 2022), leaving out true alternative solutions to the conflict.

Agonistic principles suggest we are critical of relying on objective, neutral and consensual agreements and instead cultivate a planning and political system that continually scrutinises "objective" worldviews (McClymont, 2011).

According to agonism, opinions are political and based on the group's ontological viewpoint. If political processes strive for compromises, then several points of critique can be directed at the communicative approach (Purcell, 2004). First, when striving for a compromise, the actors involved will direct the discussion towards the most common orchestration of meaning. According to Habermas' ideal speech situation, the discussion moves away from discourses and personal views

and attains objectivity (Pløger, 2004). However, this premise is disputable. Looking at the discussion through social constructivism (and therefore agonism), Pløger (2004) argues that the discussion is neither objective nor rational. A discussion is inherently political and permeated by power (Purcell, 2009). As Purcell (2009) argues, the hegemonic discourse *"necessarily distorts the symbolic field by arbitrarily elevating one particular representation over others"* (Purcell, 2009, p. 150). The basis for the discussion is thus begun on the premises of the hegemonic discourse, which inherently has an imbalance of power. Habermas' ideal speech situation strives towards an *"'undistorted communication', which allows participants to forge decisions fairly and honestly without domination or coercion"* (Purcell, 2009, p. 150). As the communicative approach tries to remove power from the discussion, communication would cease as the hegemony is the basis for communication (Purcell, 2009). In other words, the hegemonic discourse distorts the symbolic meaning of the discussed subject, meaning that what is a common belief of something is still a distorted version as the world 'out there' is the representation of it. By not acknowledging the distortion that the hegemonic discourse places on the discussion, it masks the embedded power relations as a possible compromise is found on behalf of the hegemonic discourse (Purcell, 2009). The process should acknowledge the embedded power and instead attempt to create decisional processes that mobilise power in counter-hegemony (Mouffe, 2000).

Agonism, argues that it is possible to change the antagonistic view on strife by institutionalising agonism (Kühn, 2021). By establishing a process based on agonistic values, we allow opposing parties to present their viewpoints and see the case from the other's perspective (Kühn, 2021). Within the communicative approach, this would still be possible; however, the solutions to the issues would be limited to win-win situations where every actor could agree to the premises. Instead, agonistic planning argues that the intention of discussing strife should be much more open and focused on seeking out alternatives. *"The system must make strife a productive force"* (Pløger, 2004, p. 87). The system is understood here as the process behind solutions, which means that the planning process must invite opposition into the discussions to create situations where strife is the driving force behind innovative solutions (Pløger, 2004). Where compromises intend to find solutions to the strife, agonism instead asks officials to explore the area of disagreement to search for new ways of structuring discourses and the world.

However, Mouffe's theory on agonism is criticised for not having found its practical use in urban planning, which according to Kühn (2021), is only widening the gap between theory and practice. The following section, therefore, includes articles that intend to close the gap. The articles will be

used as literary background to discuss the possibilities of the practical application of agonism in Aarhus municipality's planning process and bring perspective to a broader use of agonism.

McClymont (2011) explains how confrontational arenas can be established within the existing planning procedures in her paper. The article has a local analytical scope and is site-specific in the sense that the arguments the discourses use to gain their meaning from the specific place. McClymont (2011) describes two opposing discourses that are incompatible. One side argues that the discussed area is a green belt, while the opposition argues that it is a brownfield. The discussions are given a forum in the city council, and both sides legitimise the opposing view. Despite the government declining the proposal to build houses on what the entrepreneur interpreted as a brownfield, the process legitimised both viewpoints. McClymont (2011), therefore, argues that parts of agonism can be integrated into the planning process. However, giving the government the final say in the decision-making supports the hegemony of the discourse. Giving the government the final say can hide powerful interests in what appears to be an open and equal forum (Purcell, 2009). Suppose we are to transform the inherent power of the hegemonic discourse. In that case, Purcell (2009) argues that groups of people need to organise and see themselves as equally disadvantaged against the existing hegemonic discourse. Laclau & Mouffe (1985) use the term chains of equivalence to define larger political communities coming together under a broad political movement to contest the hegemonic discourse. Purcell (2009) brings an example of groups that, despite their individual interests and focus areas, come together in a coalition to act as an agonistic adversary to the opponent that holds the hegemonic viewpoint on the area of conflict.

However, I argue that agonistic democracies cannot only rely on the marginalised groups standing outside the democratic processes with the intention of contestation. To further expand on the possibilities of applying agonism to the planning process, the paper includes Pløger (2022) in the literature review as it explains possible agonistic institutions.

Pløger (2022) explains how our current planning and political structures are a *"closed ladder system of decision making"* (Pløger, 2022, p. 8), where governing structures do not return to earlier finished decisions even if new knowledge or values are presented. The decision process rests on aggregated knowledge that makes the outcome of the decision process certain and predictable. New climate knowledge does not have the expected impact on the decisional process, as governing structures ignore results that contravene earlier decisions:

"The aggregated knowledge produced by the United Nations climate panel is not recognized in local decisions on climate planning, and governments do not interfere with past knowledge and the reasons behind decisions. Rather, they add knowledge that fits the game of legitimacy in the present." (Pløger, 2022, p. 8)

The quote above describes a planning and political process that continues adding knowledge that fits the governing structures' values instead of accepting the knowledge that describes the conflicts. The added knowledge helps formulate a defence compatible with the hegemonic discursive structures' values and the conflicts it faces. Therefore, the decisional process does not seriously consider future climatic issues as: *"The current climate ostrich policy and its political incrementalism involves a never-ending political wait for a technological fix for market reasons"* (Pløger, 2022, p. 8). Suppose we are to move past a decision process that has not been able to include the current knowledge on the climate crisis. In that case, we have to shape the planning process differently to bring about new political horizons.

Pløger (2022) argues for a planning practice that builds on temporary solutions that look beyond contemporary issues and remain alert to a contingent future where values we orient ourselves after are included. Instead of imposing certainty using the accumulated knowledge, the process should, to a larger degree, embrace uncertainty and progress.

Pløger (2022) finds inspiration from Hillier (2011) and includes strategic navigation to implement agonistic planning.

Strategic navigation asks the planners to look across the landscape of different opinions and trace the connections between forces (discourses, structures, actors, knowledge etc.), allowing a wider group of actors to be involved and have a legitimate voice. This type of grid shows potential overlaps in interests among the actors. From there, the planners notice where the opposition can be found and how they potentially affect policy decisions. Tracing the
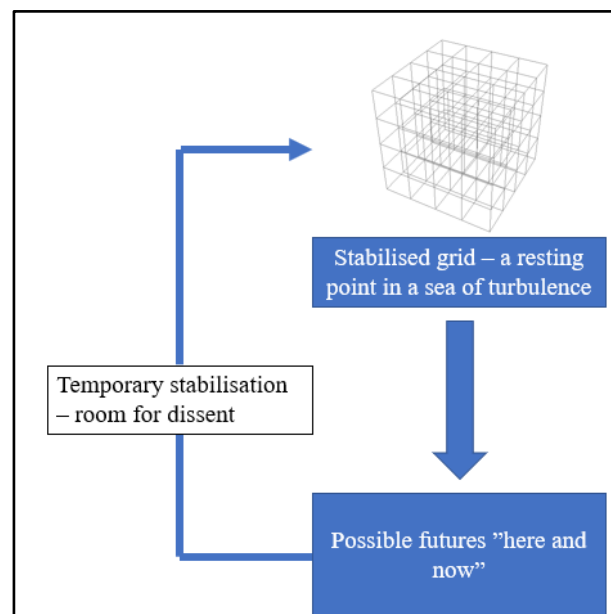

Figure 3 Model of strategic navigation and temporary resting places

forces creates a grid that presents how the forces can be connected to possible futures. To address the potential overlaps in interests, Pløger (2022) includes a second method, temporary resting. The method involves continuous meetings where actors unfold a pragmatic view of local challenges and issues. The process holds a pluralistic view of reality and intends to find common ground - a shared reality based on pragmatic wants and needs (Pløger, 2022).

Suppose new knowledge is to be added to the planning process. What is considered a meaningful decision is contextual and can change along with new knowledge, issues and opinions. The temporariness of the planning process becomes vital as Pløger (2022) argues to look beyond the contingencies of the past and present and remain alert to future decisions.

Theoretical framework

The following section will present the chosen theories and their assumptions to create a framework to analyse the material. First, the paper will introduce the reader to the assumptions of social constructivism as a point of departure to introduce discourse theory. Social constructivism will be presented in the research design and part of the theory of science. The section will then further elaborate on the discourse theory and social constructivism of Laclau & Mouffe. Lastly, the section provides a critical view of the possibilities and limitations of the chosen theories regarding the analysis.

Social constructivism and discourse theory

Social constructivism assumes that the opinions we orient ourselves after do not stem from a deeper rational or essential world structure (Stage, 2015). Social constructivism argues that when we think, act or relate to ourselves or others, it is on behalf of a network of historically manifested meanings. In the same way, Laclau & Mouffe (1985) argue that we understand the "real world" through the discourse we apply. For example, a rock can be a rare geological find or a football in a match among kids (Stage, 2015). These meanings are constantly renegotiated or problematised among people, changing our perception of ourselves, our actions and the world. Changing understandings of the world lead to the first ontological observation. The world is chaotic in that it has an unstable objectivity since our understanding of what is true is our own constructed meaning (Torfing et al., 2000).

The conflict-filled social practice, however, still has unambiguity and sturdiness. Objectivities are not interchangeable since the objectivity we subscribe to is fastened to our historical substance. The

historical substance means that the objectivity we subscribe to is not "objective" in the sense of the word's original meaning. Instead, the construction of meaning settles and takes an "objective" character (Torfing et al., 2000). In this case, the car has become deeply culturally integrated and has a discursively founded legitimacy in society. The paper's premise is that if we are to provide truly sustainable solutions to conflicts such as climate change, we have to look for solutions outside the dominating discourse. The social constructivist approach makes it possible to question and change the objective reality. The paper argues that this can be done by fostering a political or planning process where such questions find room to be unfolded. This understanding of objectivity allows us to ask, *"Is it possible to introduce a planning process that encourages exploring solutions outside the dominating discourse?"* To answer that question, discourse theory allows us to take a step back and look at the historical conditions that produce objectivity and meaning. It looks at the greater network of relational meaning; the objectivity people orient themselves towards in search of "correct" and meaningful actions (Stage, 2015). However, what is a discourse? A discourse is a relational structure of meaning. A relational structure means that the discourse does not orient itself towards a deterministic centre from which it gains its basis of existence. Instead, the discourse is in constant negotiation with its environment; in other words, it is subject to intervention. Interventions either collect or fragmentise meaning, also called "hegemony" or "politics" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The discourse can either limit itself to some aspects of meaning or include them. However, there are limits to what the discourse can include or exclude. Discourses consist of structures of meaning that must be consistent. If discourses cannot explain new events because they would otherwise become inconsistent, then there is a chance they break down, allowing new structures of meaning to appear (Jørgensen & Philips, 2002). The events rarely have a radical effect on the discourse. Instead, events lead to different networks of meaning, shiftings or differentiations that can explain the event. Important is how the evolution of the discourse is not driven by an underlying rationality of becoming "better" or more "truthful". The discourse can "move" in any direction (Jørgensen & Philips, 2002). Discourse theory is about understanding language as a system that gives meaning to our world and actions. The paper starts its understanding of discourses from Saussure's linguistic net, where he describes the meaning of words as gaining their meaning through social agreements (Jørgensen & Philips, 2002). Words do not have an inherent objective meaning, but the meaning is constructed in the social sphere. Words that are given meaning in the discourse are referred to by Laclau & Mouffe (1985) as moments. Saussure sees the linguistic net as a fishing net where every word is a knot in the

net. The word gains its meaning from other words in the net as it represents exactly what they do not. This creates a perfect net where every word has its meaning (Jørgensen & Philips, 2002).

However, post-structuralists have criticised this rigidness to the words' meaning. They believe the word's meaning can change due to time and context. Words can, therefore, not be defined with a definitive meaning. Instead, Laclau & Mouffe (1985) have further developed their poststructural discourse theory from Saussure's to understand the change in words' meaning. The paper will, therefore, further explain the analytical tool developed by Laclau & Mouffe to understand how meaning is challenged and fixed through negotiations and conflict words.

The discourse is a type of structure in a Saussarian sense that gives meaning to the observed world. Imagine a loosely constructed fishing net where the knots consist of significant words that ties the net together. The significant words are called nodal points, which are central points to the discursive net that gives the other words their meaning. The nodal point does not in itself hold any meaning (Torfing et al., 2000). The knots (or words) are relational in that words gain meaning from their relationship to other words. The discourse actively attempts to reduce ambiguity to the reality it tries to describe, thereby excluding any other potential meaning. The process is called closure and is never successful. The field of discursivity is the field where all excluded meanings from the discourse are. Words that have not been articulated in the discourse can be found here. These are called elements. However, since discourses are always understood in relation to each other, they are also in danger of being undermined. Discourses can avoid this by adopting elements to their discursive net in a way that does not undermine the meaning of the rest of the net. Therefore, the net is never fully completed and is constantly contested by elements or other discourses attempting to explain the observable world better (Torfing et al., 2000). A discourse can always be undermined by other discourses that place the words in different constellations giving them different meanings. However, when one discourse dominates a particular area alone, it has achieved hegemony. The hegemonic intervention has succeeded if one discourse can fixate its moments on an area where there had been discursive battles (Torfing et al., 2000).

For example, the car in the 1950s quickly overtook the area of mobility, and the presence of the car was not questioned, and very few other means of transportation were seriously implemented in the city. Today, however, we see several other means of transportation being discussed and implemented due to the conflictual topics: congestion and climate change. The paper, therefore, identifies these topics as central to the analysis as they have been the centre of discussions. Using the discourse theory, the topics are identified as floating signifiers, as they are "moments" where the dominating

discourse has not been able to exclude other meaning potentials (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Instead, the car discourse has had to adopt new elements from the field of discursivity to remain relevant.

Research design

The question that started the research was pondering, "Everybody seems to know what it takes to reduce our CO_2 emissions and avoid further climate change; however, nothing is happening, so what exactly *is* happening?"
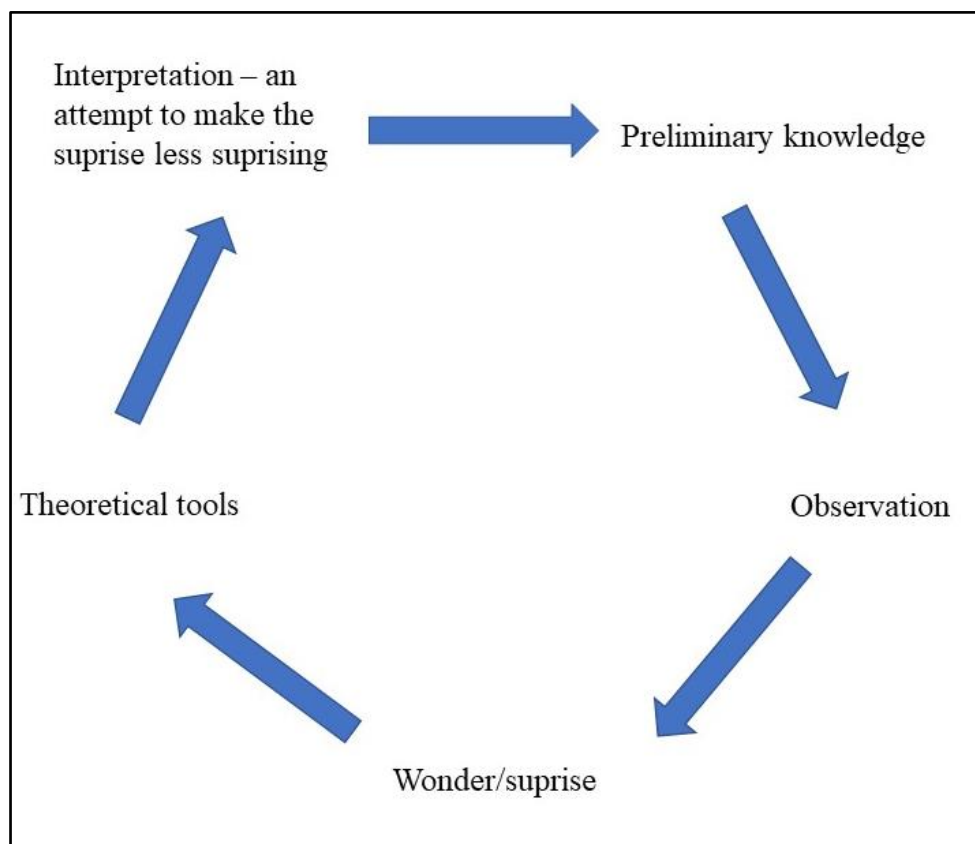
Figure 4 The abductive research approach

Using the figure above to describe the abductive research approach (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004), the walkthrough begins in the top right "corner". The initial knowledge is the knowledge the paper has from the UN. The report by UNEP (2022) describes how we need to act now more radically than ever before to close the emissions gap. However, the relatively modest changes in Aarhus municipality and the stagnant CO_2 emissions from the transport sector are observed and show that radical actions are not taken. One can, therefore, only wonder why the solutions are only modest.

To understand why only modest changes have been the answer, I argue for a need to delve further into social constructionism and discourse theory. The argument here is that data and knowledge on climate change have not so far led to the changes needed - the answer had to be found elsewhere.

A literature review was therefore conducted to understand Aarhus through social constructionism further. Understanding that the actors in Aarhus act on behalf of their worldview is central to the paper's description of why people prioritise their daily life above climate change. Social constructionism provides a theoretical basis to understand why any serious attempt to reduce CO_2 emissions has been rejected as it goes against people's personal freedom or less growth. Instead, the approach politicians can agree on is to try to envelop climate change in our existing mobility system and develop solutions that do not ruffle anyone's feathers. So far, this approach has not been successful.

The paper, therefore, sets out to provide greater insight into the dynamics between the actors to understand why our current political and planning approaches only provide modest results. Secondly, how a deeper understanding of the dynamics can help us overcome the struggles and lead to a sustainable future.

Theory of science - Social constructionism

Since large parts of social constructionism as a theory of science has already been described in the theoretical framework, the paper will limit itself in the research design. The following section will therefore elaborate on parts of social constructionism that have not been described but are essential to the scope of the analysis. The elaboration includes the relationship between the individual, the dominating discourse and the epistemological and ontological considerations.

Epistemology is the study of how we come to know the world "out there" and the method we use to understand it (Stage, 2015). Social constructionism does not relate to the question of whether the discourse is objectively true or false, as it is simply impossible to evaluate within the theory. Furthermore, social constructionism does not find it relevant as it looks at the discourse's implications on the world (Jørgensen & Philips, 2002). In this case, the paper examines the car discourse's implications on our society. In that sense, it is not relevant to understand the car as ultimately good or bad, as it is part of society and has had implications for it (Stage, 2015). The question of the car has to be understood as a political question. Instead, the paper understands the car discourse as a net

of arguments legitimising the car's existence. The paper is not interested in evaluating the truthfulness of the arguments but in understanding the net of arguments. If the arguments are understood, it is possible to step back and critically relate to them.

Social constructionism has encountered criticism for not relating to the true/false question and is called relativistic. Critics have argued that if social constructivists are not looking for objective truth, then every discourse, thought and action is equally true. However, social constructionists argue that they are not succumbing to relativism as they must understand the truthfulness of the discourse within a time and spatial context. Furthermore, social constructionists do not reject the "world out there". However, as soon as they start to understand it and classify it, they bring it into the ontological realm by defining it through the existing social constructions (Stage, 2015).

Methods

The following chapter describes the methodological approach. The section first describes which documents were analysed and how they were analysed. Next, the section describes how the documents were used to formulate interviews with interviewees with central knowledge of the planning and political process. The chapter continues with an elaboration on the theory behind the interviews and how they were conducted. Finally, the chapter describes how the document review and interviews were used in the discourse analysis.

Document analysis - How the documents were approached

Analysing central documents relevant to the car discourse is important to the discourse analysis. However, Laclau & Mouffe (1985) do not come closer to how central documents are identified. The paper has identified the central documents from preliminary work, such as conversations with central actors that have guided the author towards traffic plans, scientific articles, summaries of city council meetings and newspapers that could give insight into the car discourse in Aarhus. Secondly, it has been central to the analysis to identify the topics of conflict that have challenged and changed the discursive net of the car discourse. The following documents were analysed:

Central documents to the analysis
- The traffic plan from 1994: Traffic at the centre (1994) - Aarhus Municipality
- The traffic plan from 2005: Roads to the Future (2005) - Aarhus Municipality
- The traffic plan from 2018: Mobility plan (2018) - Aarhus Municipality
- Aarhus Municipality plan (2017)

- Summaries of city council meetings
- Newspaper articles

How the documents were analysed

First, the author reviewed the traffic plans to gain an overview of the discursive changes. By reviewing the traffic plans, it was possible to gain insight into the areas where the planning approach to mobility had changed and the issues that the municipality emphasised. Especially congestion was given attention as it had been an issue since Traffic at the centre (1994). Climate change was mentioned as an issue in Roads to the Future (2005) and emphasised in the Mobility plan (2018). Once the conflicts were known, it was possible to move on to the arguments used in the conflict that legitimised the car discourse. Based on their implicit meaning, the identified arguments were grouped and placed under a nodal point.

Interviews

The book Doing interviews by Brinkmann & Kvale (2018) inspired the choice of method for interviewing central actors. The book describes the semi-structured interview method that allows the interviewer to follow a list of questions; however, deviate from the script to come closer to themes and subjects that could be relevant. Seen in the light of discourse theory, the semi-structured interviews allowed me to uncover the car discourse and its structure. Secondly, the semi-structured interview was highly relevant when exploring the intricacies of the political processes. The interview with Tyge Wamstrup gave insight into how the car discourse limits the political process in searching out alternative solutions.

Discourse analysis

The following section will explain how discourse analysis has been structured to understand the car discourse in Aarhus. First, the paper conducted a document analysis of the municipal traffic plans since 1994 to identify the most central moments of the car discourse - the nodal points. Secondly, interviews were conducted to unravel further the nodal points and the meaning potentials they exclude. The textbook by Jørgensen & Philips (2002) was used to formulate the questions below. The questions ensured that the interview guides explored the underlying meaning of the interviewee's statements.

- What meanings do planners and politicians (and other actors) establish by positioning signs in a particular relationship with one another, and what meaning potentials do they exclude?

- What moments have a privileged status, and how are they defined in relation to the other moments in the discourse?
- Which type of ideology is the discourse based on?
- What kind of understanding does the articulation reproduce?
- How do the moments with a privileged status define their relation to the discursive struggles?

Once the nodal points were identified, the paper continued to investigate how the nodal points and moments were organised in relation to each other. The nodal points "growth", "liveability", and "personal freedom" were used in the discourse analysis to group the moments and show how they stabilised the car discourse and gave it legitimacy. The conflicts "congestion" and "climate change" (determined as floating signifiers) were then identified to come closer to how the moments were structured around the discursive fights. Seeing how the nodal points had been adapted to congestion and climate change since the 50s gave insight into how the car discourse had been continuously legitimised.

Introduction to Aarhus municipality - the history of the car in Aarhus

The following chapter describes the urban planning in Aarhus from the 1950s until the most recent mobility plan. The chapter begins by describing the modernist thoughts that began to prioritise the car as it was viewed as the modern mode of transportation. The chapter describes how planners and politicians initially prioritised the car and planned the infrastructure after its needs. Subsequently, the Mobility plan (2018) is introduced. The paper concludes that despite the Mobility Plan (2018) addressing climate issues, our past choices are muddying our priorities and how we approach solutions to climate change.

The history of the car from the 1950s until the mobility plan of 2018

In Aarhus, the number of cars tripled during the 50s, while bicycles seemed to disappear (Gejl, 1995). Cars were becoming the norm and no longer a symbol of wealth. Modernist ideas and grand-scale projects were coupled with the older liberal thoughts that would support the businesses. Planners embraced modernist thoughts such as rationalism, science, and the art of engineering (Buhl Thomsen, 2015). Together they dominated the mindset of the Aarhusian planners that would build modern grand-scale projects serving the businesses (Buhl Thomsen, 2015). One of the paradigmatic projects of grand-scale planning is the Ny Hovedgade project which illustrates how mobility was linked to

liberal market-driven ideas. The project would tear down central parts of the historical city centre to make room for four lanes with a width of 45 metres. Along the street, six-story buildings would be built in a strict architectural style reminiscent of the art of engineering (Buhl Thomsen, 2015). Other similar projects would be built in Aalborg, Odense and internationally, such as in Germany, Italy and the US. However, the Ny Hovedgade project never became of anything because of the continuous underestimations of cars that questioned whether the infrastructure would be outdated before being built (Gejl, 1995).

Furthermore, a conservation movement led by the social democratic mayor Bernhardt Jensen was in the way. The movement argued for the lack of housing and the conservation of cultural heritage. The mayor was, therefore, not criticising the car per se but had other priorities before the car (Buhl Thomsen, 2015).

Despite the rejection of building the Ny Hovedgade project, planners and businesses embraced the new rational ideas of mobility since the municipality had reached its city borders. Growth was happening outside the municipality because of the conservation movement standing in the way. New apartment buildings, family houses and shopping centres were being built at an unforeseen speed in the suburban areas outside Aarhus' borders. In 1970 the municipal border was expanded because of the municipal reform. It absorbed some of the neighbouring municipalities, and suburban planning was started to relieve the car pressure from the city centre (Buhl Thomsen, 2015). However, the car-centred planning did not shorten the drive to work. After each traffic count, the planners were shocked by how even their wildest predictions were put to shame by the number of cars. This, of course, meant that congestion became an unforeseen issue (Buhl Thomsen, 2015).

The expansion of the municipal borders, however, helped with the housing shortage and with the new borders, the planners could plan more efficiently for a larger area (Buhl Thomsen, 2015).

The city council would, in 1973, vote yes to changing Frederiksgade to prioritise pedestrians. However, the changes were small and as mayor Jensen expressed *"Hvem tør stække den motoriserede samfærdsel" "Who dares to constrain the motorised traffic?"* (Gejl, 1995, p. 53). This was evident in the under-prioritisation of public transport and the lack of pressure on citizens to use it. Tramlines were de-prioritised during the 50s and 60s, and one was even decommissioned (Gejl, 1995). Local train stations were slowly disappearing from Brabrand and Hasselager, two cities in Aarhus Municipality. However, the under-prioritisation of the tramlines meant more space for pedestrians, and in 1971 the city got its first pedestrian street, and more followed. Some of the pedestrian streets

would later be part of Skt. Clemens Torv - a central pedestrian street. The businesses were suspicious of limiting the car's movement even though experiences from other cities showed no decline in income (Gejl, 1995). However, Aarhus municipality saw how the pedestrian streets were doing well, which meant an increased interest in removing the cars and preserving the historical centre at the stake of commercial interests that drew in citizens from the suburbs and tourists (Gejl, 1995).

The 70s also saw its first regulation of traffic to make car traffic more efficient and safer (Traffic at the centre, 1994). In the 80s, an idea of a green wave was introduced to guide the northern/southern traffic around the city. If the motorist drove at an appropriate speed, he or she could match their arrival at the next junction with a green light, hence the name "green wave". These were some of the first suggestions to ease the car movement around the city centre due to the negative consequences of pollution, noise and traffic fatalities (Traffic at the centre, 1994).

The traffic plan by Aarhus municipality (Traffic at the centre, 1994) describes the city as standing at a crossroads. The city was still experiencing pollution, problems with parking and movement limitations of the bicycles and buses. The plan describes that 150.000 citizens every day cross the ring road, and a large part does it as a motorist to visit businesses. The plan describes that the high number of cars was due to the unlimited movement of the car. The city lacked a road hierarchy. Every street was equally available for cars, bicycles and buses, which meant neither had great conditions for movement. To counter this development, the plan suggested specialising the streets to accommodate more individual mobility needs (Traffic at the centre, 1994).

In the municipal traffic plan of 2005 (Roads to the Future, 2005), the hierarchy of the roads has been visualised more clearly. The ring road system is prioritised to lead the traffic around the city instead of through the city. Because of the ring road's central position in the traffic hierarchy and the expectation of an increase in traffic, the municipality is considering expanding it from four to six lanes. Furthermore, the municipality has prioritised public transport and bicycles more significantly within the ring road system. The traffic hierarchy leads cars towards larger streets around the city centre while smaller streets within the city centre are increasingly prioritised towards bikes. Bus corridors and bike infrastructure within the city centre are some of the actions the municipality takes, and will sometimes be at the expense of the car (Roads to the Future, 2005).

The mobility plan of 2018

Figure 5 Main structure map (Mobility Plan, 2018)

In Aarhus municipality, the technical department changed the name of the traffic plan to "the mobility plan" when it was published in 2018 to show the adoption of a broader perspective in mobility planning. The plan uses the ongoing congestion and climate issues as its main argument to prioritise more efficient transport of people and goods. The mobility plan presents an expected increase of up to 50.000 new citizens in 2030 and 20.000 additional cars in a city if they do not change how the citizens are transporting themselves. To avoid further congestion, the Mobility plan (2018) aims to increase mobility without increasing car traffic. The plan prioritises a greater public transport network by establishing a light rail system and a better network of public buses that support it. Bicycles are prioritised by increasing the width and comfort of bicycle lanes. However, despite the greater focus on alternative mobilities, arguments like *"It has to be easy to drive to and from the city centre by car if Aarhus is to be a functional city"* (Mobilitetsplanen, 2018) are part of the document and supporting the car. The overall intention of the mobility plan (2018) is to use the full potential of the space available – smart utilisation. This formulation means prioritising solutions that fit the local circumstances, especially within the ring road (Municipality plan, 2017). Within the ring road, where space is limited, the plan prioritises the bike, bus and train and argues for capacity optimisation and sustainable mobility. The mobility plan (2018) argues that bikes and buses can service more people and allow them to reach most destinations within 10 minutes on a bike. However, the plan argues that Aarhus *shall continue* to be an attractive city to place one's business and therefore *continue* to have a high degree of mobility. The mobility plan (2018), therefore, does not only improve the conditions for bikes and public transport. To accommodate the need for cars, the plan describes how the municipality intends to build underground parking, wherefrom the centre of the city can be accessed. The intention is to move street-level parking into the underground parking facilities (Mobilitetsplanen, 2018).

The general picture of the solutions to the issues raised points in several directions. The plan prioritises bikes and public transport within the ring road, typically driving shorter distances while still making room for the car. The plan intends to strengthen the road hierarchy further, leading the cars towards the larger streets and limiting the cars' movement through neighbourhoods (Mobilitetsplanen, 2018).

Analysis - How our history shapes our values of today and the decisions of tomorrow

The following chapter is structured as follows. The first part of the analysis explores how congestion and climate change have historically contested the car discourse. Counter-discourses have repeatedly questioned the car's value in light of congestion and climate change. The car discourse has therefore had to relate to the contestation and adapt to remain legitimate. At first, the car discourse blamed the physical structures for creating the congestion, not the car. However, as peace restoration and aesthetic conditions gained a footing, alternative forms of mobility became relevant to discuss - on the car's premises, nonetheless. Secondly, climate change quickly became a serious issue and the municipality responded in the same way as with congestion. By modelling solutions according to the existing structures, climate change could be handled without diverging from the course.

Therefore, the first part of the analysis focuses on how the conflicts "congestion" and "climate change" have been adapted to the car discourse to present a legitimate answer. The second half of the analysis dives further into the nodal points of the discourse - the most central moments that give meaning to the rest of the moments. Based on the literature review and preliminary readings, growth, personal freedom, and liveability are deemed nodal points. The analysis continues with an elaboration of how the nodal points are understood and used to legitimise the car. This discovery leads us to the last part of the analysis, where the paper, through interviews and articles, gains insight into how the discursive net frames sustainable solutions to also include the car. The solutions are called win-win solutions because the politicians can agree on the sustainable solutions without compromising their values much. Except the actual impact the solutions have on CO_2 emissions is questionable. In other words, the paper wants to highlight the issues with understanding climate change as part of the car discourse.

The complete analysis answers the second sub-question:

How are conflicts interpreted into the Aarhusian car discourse for it to remain legitimate, and what type of issues arise in the political/planning process because of the interpretation?

How the car discourse in Aarhus has been contested and answered to the conflicts

The following section intends to unpack how the car discourse has historically related and adapted its argumentation to the conflicts "congestion" and "climate change". Congestion and climate change

are therefore labelled as floating signifiers as the car discourse has not been able to exclude other meaning potentials.

How congestion has contested the car discourse

The chapter *introduction to Aarhus municipality* has shown how congestion has been an ongoing issue for Aarhus municipality. The following section will present how the car discourse has reinterpreted its arguments in regard to congestion for it to remain dominant against counter-discourses. The section begins by analysing the traffic plans from 1994 and 2005 to show how the car discourse has renegotiated its nodal points to remain legitimate in light of congestion. Next, the mobility plan from 2018 is analysed to show how "liveability" has been included in the car discourse as a nodal point to preserve the legitimacy of the car discourse.

As Jesper Frandsen (2022) mentioned in the interview, congestion is not a new issue. In a document produced by Frandsen, he summarises the traffic plans and their focus. The document concludes that congestion has been pointed out since the traffic plan of 1994 (Mobility planning in Aarhus, n.d.). Despite the lack of novelty to the issue, how the car discourse has related to congestion has gradually changed. The gradual change in the argumentation is due to counter-discourses, which led the analysis to deem "congestion" a floating signifier. Using Mouffe's (2014) description, discourses can either adapt their argumentation or lose legitimacy. The analysis argues that the car discourse has gradually changed its argumentation to stay relevant. "To stay relevant" is interpreted as the car discourse experiencing difficulties explaining "congestion" exclusively with its existing discursive net. The dominating car discourse, therefore, introduces new elements to the discursive net to regain its right to define congestion. To support this claim, the following section will introduce how counter-discourses have contested congestion, deeming it a floating signifier. Secondly, present how the car discourse has rearticulated itself to remain dominant.

Frandsen's (2022) statement that the municipality has gradually tightened the car movement to reduce congestion is observable in the three traffic plans since '94. In the following section, the gradual tightening will be understood as a rearticulation of the car discourse to remain legitimate.

In Traffic at the centre (1994) congestion is not connected to the increased number of cars. In the introduction, the plan argues that:

"it is not easy to move forward when the streets are narrow, and there is a short distance between intersections" (Traffic at the centre, 1994, p. 6).

Instead of blaming the increasing number of cars for the congestion, the plan argues that suboptimal infrastructure is the main reason for congestion. The statement holds values reminiscent of modernistic ideas (Urry & Kingsley, 2009), where planners would adapt the environment to the car. The statement is an argument that criticises the Aarhusian infrastructure for being not geared to the number of cars and should be expanded. The implicit meaning lies close to the "predict and provide"- argument mentioned in the literature review, where planners would predict the future number of cars and then provide the necessary infrastructure.

Despite the focus on improving the infrastructure in Traffic at the centre (1994), the car's movement is questioned by planners in the central parts of the city because of the congestion it creates. In the centre of the city, the plan describes that:

"Here cars can drive everywhere, slowly and <u>on the premises of the pedestrians</u>" (Traffic at the centre, 1994, p. 7).

The statement is a re-negotiation of the car's legitimacy in the most central parts of the city as the urban space design should, to a larger degree, "*<u>accommodate aesthetic conditions and connections between the parks</u>, furthermore make it easier for crossing pedestrians*". (City council meeting, 1994). The above statement provides insight into the change in values, where aesthetic conditions are prioritised in the city's central areas. The result of the contestation is a reformulation of the car discourse that balances car use against aesthetic conditions, parks and pedestrians.

Figure 6 (below) from the Traffic at the centre (1994) shows the car using the main roads that guide them towards large parking garages, from where they can reach their end destination. Traffic at the centre (1994) elaborates that the intention is to have the car close to the centre to allow running errands without much hassle. Furthermore:

"The centre has been pointed out as the municipality's overall centre for <u>commerce, service and culture</u>. This is supported by a <u>new overall road network</u> with an extension of the Jutland Motorway" (Traffic at the centre, 1994, p. 4)

The statement, therefore, is not a rejection of the cars, however, it reformulates their value by placing them in connection with commerce, culture and service. The car remains valid as it supports these values via a great overall road network. Holding these descriptions up against Feriel's (2020) findings, the paper argues for re-negotiating the values in the car discourse to include pedestrianisation. Feriel (2020) proved how pedestrianisation was discursively adapted not to promote anti-auto-mobilisation but to collaborate with the car and support businesses. Improving pedestrianisation while having the car close is used as an argument to solve the issues of congestion while legitimising the nearness of the car as it supports commerce and gives pedestrians better conditions. In Traffic at the centre (1994), the municipality argues for restrictions the car while providing a new parking garage:

"... a limited restriction of the private car traffic was adopted while Magasin's new parking garage opened" (Traffic at the centre, 1994, p. 2).

The claim emphasizes how the car discourse has discursively adapted "pedestrianisation" as an answer to congestion to remain legitimate.

Figure 6 Map of city centre's infrastructural design (Traffic at the centre, 1994)

Figure 6 is a picture from Traffic at the centre (1994) and shows how the car can still move more or less freely within the central parts of the city. However, Roads to the Future (2005) tightens the car's movement. Roads to the Future (2005) is generally a continuation of the restrictions from the earlier traffic plan. However, there is a more significant wish from the citizens to experience the city as a pedestrian or bicyclist:

"A different topic which is prioritised compared to earlier, is the category 'path walks in the landscape' and 'green corridors'. The interest to experience the urban nature and move about freely and safely on foot or the bike is rising". (City council meeting, 2001)
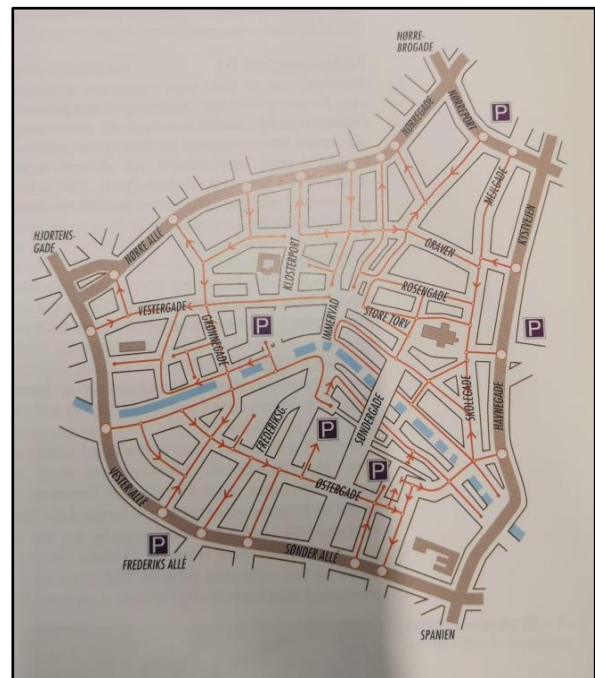
The statement above exemplifies the counter-discourses influencing how the municipality prioritises the urban space. Such changes have necessitated the car discourse to include alternative mobilities in the city's centre. A more significant prioritisation of alternative mobilities is also visible in Roads to the Future (2005). The plan expands the pedestrian streets in the centre and similar attempts to decrease the number of cars in the city's centre. This planning approach was confirmed by planner Frandsen (2022). Contrary to Traffic at the centre (1994), it is stated in Roads to the Future (2005) that:

"The traffic is as far as possible adapted to the existing urban environment" (Roads to the Future, 2005, p. 3).

It is possible to see a shift in values where the traffic has to adapt to the architectural values of the city. Roads to the Future (2005) argues for "fredeliggørelse" translated to peace restoration to protect architectural values. The peace restoration project only occurs in parts of the city's centre and would limit some of the cars' movement (Roads to the Future, 2005). The intention is to make room for alternative traffic to avoid increasing the car traffic across the ring road (Roads to the Future, 2005). By improving the larger roads and traffic sanitation of the smaller roads, the plan intends to move the traffic flow from the smaller streets towards the larger roads. Furthermore, the infrastructural changes would improve the safety and accessibility for bikes and pedestrians by extending pedestrian streets and bicycle paths. However, the preface of Roads to the Future (2005) mentions how a live and active city equals traffic availability while biking and pedestrianisation equals a peaceful city.

"The city centre shall continue to be live and active, why the city council finds it important that the traffic availability is great. The traffic plan shall simultaneously contribute to traffic that makes it possible to bring peace to parts of the city centre, benefitting the urban environment and the people living there." (Roads to the Future, 2005, p. 1).

Roads to the Future (2005) indirectly provides the reader with a vision that the car is in a harmonious relationship with the bike and pedestrian. As the car brings life and action to the city, the bike and pedestrian bring peace. Implicitly the statement is understood as the car bringing growth to the city while the bike and pedestrian provide a better urban environment.

Altogether the section describes a re-negotiation of the car discourse again. The car discourse cannot answer the conflict "congestion", why bikes and pedestrianisation, moving the car to the larger streets and similar solutions are introduced to the discourse as the peace restorers. The car, however, legitimises itself by bringing life.

Climate change as a floating signifier

Before analysing how climate change has contested the car discourse, it is necessary to elaborate on the meaning of "climate change". Climate change in this context has become an umbrella term that refers to the arguments that have occurred because of climate change. The term, therefore, covers a diverse group of phrases that refer to "a green city" or "CO_2 emissions" - topics that would not have been discussed if it was not for our knowledge of climate change.

Opposite to congestion, climate change has not had the same historical build-up regarding practical knowledge and political action. Instead, it has suddenly been introduced to Aarhus's planning and political processes and required immediate attention. The following section describes why climate change is a floating signifier by presenting summaries of the city council meetings and news articles. Climate change is deemed a floating signifier since leftist political voices use "climate change" to contest the dominating car discourse. At the same time, right-leaning/neoliberal politicians attempt to articulate "climate change" into the car discourse.

Aarhus municipality decided to become CO_2-neutral in 2030, as presented in the Plan strategy (2008) ahead of the environmental top meeting in Copenhagen in 2009. The goal to become CO_2-neutral was a clear signal that Aarhus municipality started to prioritise the reduction of carbon emissions and moved its focus to climate change. In a "Forligstekst" by Aarhus municipality, the mobility sector was mentioned as one of the primary sources of pollution and carbon emissions (Forligstekst, 2007). Since then, the mobility sector has been one of the cornerstones in all the following Climate Action plans (2007, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2020) for Aarhus to become CO_2-neutral. However, it was mentioned at the Mobility Workshop (2022) that since 2008, when surveying of the CO_2 emissions from the mobility sector began, the emissions have only been reduced very little and not to an acceptable level. The lack of CO_2 reductions is also reflected in figure 6 below from the Climate Action Plan (2020). Because of the lack of CO_2 reductions within the mobility sector, it is worth analysing how "climate change", as a floating signifier, has been included in the dominating car discourse for it to remain

legitimate, despite the car discourse not responding to the CO_2 emissions. Secondly, understand how the discursive structuring has suppressed actual initiatives to reduce carbon emissions.
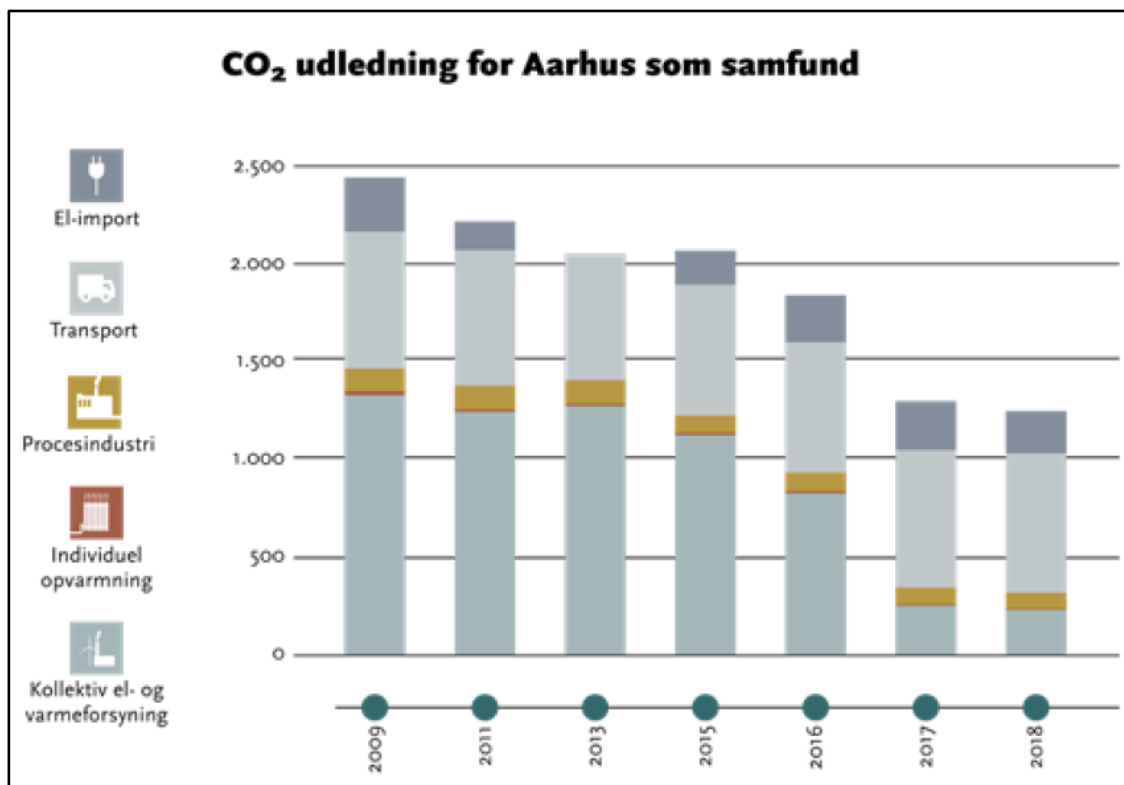

Figure 7 CO2-emissions from Aarhus (Climate Action Plan, 2020)

Looking at the meeting summaries from the Climate & Environment Committee, it is clear that regulating parking, narrowing the roads, prioritising public transport, road pricing and similar tools are presented as ways of reducing carbon emissions (Climate & Environment Committee meeting, 2023). However, Polly Dutschke (2022), a member of the Climate & Environment committee and political member of the social democrats, argues in Jyllandsposten that restrictions are not the answer to a sustainable mobility system:

"To me, the answer is to promote bicycling and invest massively in public transport. We have to improve comfort, frequency and availability."
"...good public transport has to be in place, and then we can make restrictions...".
"I don't believe in making complete restrictions, and for example, closing off the city's centre for cars. Then people won't come into town to shop, and that will have a negative influence on commerce and the life of the city ". (Polly Dutschke, 2022)

40

The statements hold significant value to the analysis. The first statement shows how Dutschke (2022) ignores the restrictive solutions that would have an actual impact on CO_2 emissions (Climate & Environment Committee meeting, 2023). Her reasoning for excluding the solutions is that they would bring fewer people to the city and negatively influence growth. Implicitly, the restrictions would influence people's movement negatively. Her answer is to invest in alternative modes of transport before restricting people's freedom. Instead, Dutschke (2022) wishes to invest heavily in the sustainable mobility system to develop a system that can provide the same level of comfort, frequency and availability as the car system to avoid limiting the citizens' movement.

The statement presents the general course of action that the city council have so far agreed upon to reduce CO_2 emissions. Therefore, the underlying meaning of Dutschke's (2022) statement is to attempt to claim a single understanding of "climate change". Despite Dutschke (2022) not mentioning climate change in the statement, her point of view on bicycling and public transport is understood in the context of climate change. Dutschke (2022) articulates alternative forms of mobility in the context of sustainable actions, therefore placing climate change within the existing discursive net. Her articulation disallows climate change from being used argumentatively to contest the car or the citizens' freedom. Instead, she formulates "climate change" in a way that does not require dismantling the current system but more investments in sustainable actions without restricting the current car use. In other words, she labels climate change as a nodal point under the car discourse. She attempts to reduce other possible meanings, attempting to move it away from being a floating signifier.

The definition of "climate change" becomes political as only the right side of the political spectrum adopts this definition. However, the left side of the political spectrum remains critical of whether it is possible to adopt climate change under the dominating car discourse:

"I believe that sometimes one can be in doubt <u>whether we fight for the climate or more cars in the city</u>" ((Jan Ravn Christensen - Socialistisk Folkeparti) Sag 11 – Vision for fremtidens Marselis Boulevard, 2020)

The quote presents how "climate change" is a nodal point to the car discourse and counter-discourses, making it a floating signifier. Ravn Christensen (2020) criticises the discursive adaptation and argues that "climate change" is used to legitimise the car discourse and the current course of action. In the following quote, the left uses "climate change" to contest the political right's definition concerning

the potential tunnel under Marselis Boulevard. The tunnel project has been highly controversial as it, on the one hand, tries to reduce congestion by creating a more direct road between the harbour and the highway system while creating better urban qualities on the surface. The right argues that the tunnel will improve the city's liveability as it becomes calmer and greener while addressing congestion issues. On the other hand, the left argues that the tunnel project will be a heavy pollutant during construction while contributing to more private traffic. Below is the quote from Andersen from the city council meeting (Sag 11 – Vision for fremtidens Marselis Boulevard, 2022) by Steen Andersen (Socialdemokratiet):

"This is in many ways a super good plan because it contains solutions to two issues, accessibility and a better urban environment, and those things rarely go hand in hand" (Steen Andersen) (Sag 11 – Vision for fremtidens Marselis Boulevard, 2022)

Andersen (2022) refers to the plan as good as it solves the congestion issues and provides a better urban environment without restricting the car from the area. By heavily investing in a tunnel, the car is moved below ground. The extensive construction work's CO_2 emission is naturally questioned by the left; however, Andersen (2022) is confident that:

"We are totally sure that the tunnel will in every way give <u>a more exciting and green city</u> - also in the centre" (Andersen) (Sag 11 – Vision for fremtidens Marselis Boulevard, 2022)

Despite mentioning "climate change", his definition of "climate change" does not extend to the reduction of CO_2 emissions that the politicians agreed upon but refers to the urban environment. The definition used by Andersen (2022) has Liv Gro Jensen (2022) from Socialist People's Party questioning the definition:

"When we are striving for <u>a green boulevard - what do we mean then?</u> Is it the colour of trees or grass that is poured over the area? Is it nature, environment or what is actually meant?"
"... <u>we have to create compensating actions locally when this tunnel is prioritised by a majority so that it can be done more responsibly for the climate</u>."
"And by the way, we believe we should commit ourselves here in Aarhus to have the emissions from the project as part of our emission accounting."

(Gro Jensen, Socialist People's Party) (Sag 11 – Vision for fremtidens Marselis Boulevard, 2022)

Several formulations are important in this quote. First, Gro Jensen (2022) argues that the adopted definition of "climate change" is superficial as it mainly refers to the green environment and is not coupled with the climate goals. Second, Gro Jensen (2022) couples her definition of "climate change" to the climate goals they have agreed upon.

Secondly, in the third and fourth line of the quote above, Gro Jensen (2022) argues that they must create local compensating actions when a tunnel is accepted. The statements by Gro Jensen (2022) are understood as she accepts the right's definition of coupling climate change to the car discourse but pleading for compensating actions locally. The statement is a look into the political process where alternative viewpoints, such as Gro Jensen's (2022), are de-legitimised and the process pushed forward as long as there is a majority behind the decision.

Despite the contestation, the Marselis Boulevard tunnel is a project that is a win-win solution as it is adapted to the values of the car discourse and provides a solution to the conflicts: congestion and climate change (climate change in this context has a simple definition as it only refers to a greener city). Important here is the questionable use of "climate change" as a nodal point. As the right narrows its understanding of sustainable solutions to a green urban environment, the picture of what the politicians are trying to achieve is muddied. As the left unsuccessfully contests the definition, their point of view is delegitimised. The larger scope of actually having an impact on CO_2 emissions is lost.

The above analyses of congestion and climate change have shown how congestion is understood as an issue where the car is part of the answer. The car has successfully persuaded people to believe it can be part of a more liveable city. As a result, it remains the dominating discourse. So, what does that mean when it comes to the question of reducing CO_2 emissions? Looking back at the historical development of the car discourse and how it related to congestion, the analysis suggests that the car is deeply integrated with our daily lives, therefore, not necessarily challenged by climate change.

The section *"Climate change as a floating signifier"* has shown how most politicians can agree to a definition of climate change that allows a continuation of the Marselis tunnel project. In other words, despite climate change being a floating signifier, the majority agrees with the current definition and de-legitimises contesting definitions. So, what happens when the political process is not open to

alternative discourses? Using Urry & Kingsley's (2009) theory, the car system may be *" set on a particular course, the network externalities, the learning process of organisations, and the historically derived subjective modelling of the issues reinforce the course"* (North, 1990, p. 99)

The above analysis intended to show how Aarhus' history of solving congestion has been limited by the car system being in a locked-in state. The past answers to congestion hold a growth-oriented logic that is transferred to how climate change is attempted to be solved. Because of congestion and climate change, the system's complexity has increased (Prigogine, 1997) instead of being dismantled and letting new logics, ideas and visions through. To understand the increasingly complex argumentation that legitimises the car's presence, the analysis delves further into the arguments by the car discourse.

The car discourse in Aarhus today

As stated, the car discourse remains legitimate in a world where its challenges seem incompatible with the values it represents. The following section describes how the nodal points that are part of the discourse remain legitimate and stabilise the discourse against counter-discourses. In the figure below, the nodal points have been coloured orange and the most important moments in grey.

The analysis focuses on the nodal points central to the car discourse to understand it. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, nodal points give meaning to the moments but do not hold any meaning themselves. The paper, therefore, intends to describe the nodal point with the use of moments that surround the nodal point. The car discourse is often described as adapting its discursive net by itself. This, of course, is a simplification of the daily use by a myriad of actors that shape the car discourse.
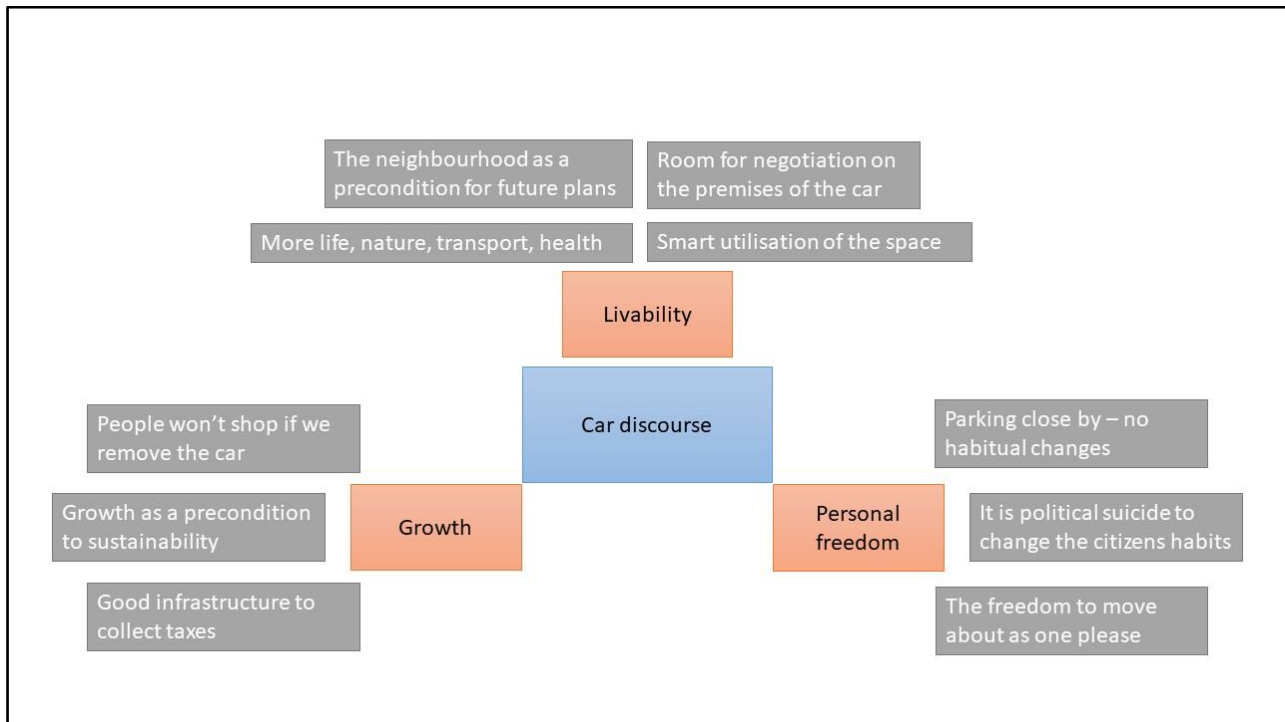
Figure 8 Summary of the car discourse. Nodal points are in orange and central arguments are in grey

Growth

The first nodal point identified is "growth", as it is the most central nodal point within Aarhus. In the municipality plan (2017), growth is generally understood as an economic surplus compared to municipal expenses. Growth is not only understood as a surplus of taxes but a surplus of jobs created (Municipality plan, 2017). The municipality sees growth as fundamental for every solution and necessary for multiple reasons. An increase in the number of citizens in the municipality is expected in the next decade. An increase in citizens requires the municipality to secure good conditions for new jobs and municipal support to vulnerable groups (Municipality plan, 2017). However, growth is not argued to be inherently good but must be balanced with sustainability and the environment.

"Without a well-functioning environment - naturally, supply, network-wise, infrastructurally and more - it is impossible to create economically sustainable growth and social balance. However, good economic circumstances are needed to develop an environmentally sustainable system. Economic growth is a precondition to creating new workplaces..." (Municipality plan, 2017, p. 15).

Growth is therefore interpreted to include sustainability. However, sound economic circumstances cannot be de-prioritised as it is needed to support a sustainable and social balance. The quote arguably

45

opens the door to prioritising growth above sustainable actions if it means the growth can later be invested in an economic system. There is no question that the municipality strives for sustainable solutions, but how the balance is struck between sustainability, growth and more is unanswered as the Municipality plan (2017) continues with:

"We shall prioritise <u>smart utilisation and design of our surface area</u> and commit to creating added value - <u>more life, more nature, better transport, better health and more</u>." (Municipality plan, 2017, p. 15)

The quote implies that everything can be equally prioritised when designing the urban space if the available space is used smarter. This smart utilisation allows the municipality to argue for more of everything without de-prioritising growth, mobility, health, etc. The municipality, therefore, brings solutions to climate change into the urban space by arguing that it is possible to adapt the urban space without de-prioritising anything. However, in the following paragraph, the Municipality plan (2017) argues that the prioritisation must be fitted to the individual space and its existing use and needs:

"We shall from the beginning unite the wants of good mobility and accessibility with the wants of urban life and a good urban environment adapted to the <u>character of the neighbourhood</u>" (Municipality plan, 2017, p. 44)

The implicit meaning in this statement disallows a re-prioritisation of needs, as future needs have to be found in the already existing characteristics. Since a large part of the urban environment is already characterised by parking spots and infrastructure that support the car, future needs will have to be solved "smarter" by including them in their current use. Looking at the quotes above, the paper argues that the car infrastructure (the character of the neighbourhood) and the prioritisation are a stabilisation of the current use of the urban space, in other words, a stabilisation of the car discourse. As climate change has required reprioritisation, the municipality argues that the necessary actions are possible via smart space utilisation. If one were to prioritise the urban space differently, it would mean less growth, according to Polly Dutschke (Social democrat):

"I don't believe in making full restrictions and, for example, shutting off the centre of the city for cars. <u>Then people won't come and shop</u>" (Dutschke, 2022)

Dutschke (2022) argues that going beyond the current smart utilisation with the current understanding of growth is impossible. Bünyamin Simsek (2020) argues that:

> *"Of course, there has to be money for the elderly, the children and the vulnerable. However, to* <u>*collect taxes for them, the infrastructure and the physical installations have to work"*</u> (Simsek, 2020).

Simsek, a member of the political party Venstre and former councillor of Teknik and Miljø from 2018-2022, has been very vocal in supporting the car and couples the necessity of the car to everyday needs and growth (Simsek, 2017).

The following quote from the mayor and supporting politicians is part of an open letter to the city discussing the benefits of expanding the traffic infrastructure:

"Apart from the business strategic meaning - <u>increased revenue, increased growth</u> - a tunnel under Marselis Boulevard will positively influence <u>the urban environment when more citizens and a lot more traffic is coming to the city"</u>. (Mayor Bundsgaard et al., 2021)

The quote is interesting for two reasons. First, the quote connects the nodal point growth with traffic infrastructure by arguing that more infrastructure will benefit the city's revenue and increase growth. Apart from increasing growth, the solution is part of the municipality's strategy of smart utilisation of the urban space. By building a tunnel, the municipality provides the city with a smart utilisation of the urban space where the strategic goals of better urban life and mobility are met.

Together, the nodal point "growth" has to be understood in the urban context as prioritising economically sound solutions while supporting a social and sustainable balance. The prioritisation relies on a smarter utilisation of the existing space. The statements above, therefore, stabilise the car discourse as it provides a solution where growth can continue to be prioritised despite new conflicts.

Personal freedom

The second nodal point, "personal freedom", has been identified as the underlying argument several times in statements and a strong argument supporting the car. Urban planner Jesper Frandsen mentioned how many people depend on their cars to live complex lives (Frandsen, 2022) and see it as a necessity to live their lives. The car gives citizens the freedom and flexibility to live individualised lives, which would otherwise be impossible. This point is discussed by the political candidate from Venstre, Heidi Farsøe Bank (2017) in Jyllandsposten, where she argues that the

mobility plan would make it impossible for families to do their daily chores. The car saves time for many people, and according to conservative opinions identified by Henderson et al. 2019, people have the personal freedom to do so. This places the nodal point "personal freedom" close to the findings by Henderson et al. (2019), which identified the need in the car people have placed on themselves to function as families. Heidi Farsøe Bank (2017) comments on a solution mentioned in the mobility plan (2018) where centralised larger parking garages would require people to walk to and from the city centre:

"Maybe it should be considered to have smaller parking garages so one can park close to the store, where one has to buy a few things so that a large part of the enjoyable business life does not end up in neighbouring towns." (Farsøe Bank, 2017).

The quote not only exemplifies the connection between growth and the car. Farsøe Bank (2017) couples the possible car restrictions and, thereby, people's free movement to an economic decrease. The argument mentioned above resonates with the statements made by Skou Nicolaisen (2022) in the interview. When minor habitual changes - such as limiting parking - are part of the municipality plans, it is quickly criticised for restricting citizens' freedom. In the quote by Farsøe Bank (2017), she uses the nodal point growth to criticise the removal of parking spots.

Skou Nicolaisen (2022) sees a general reluctance from citizens to adopt new habits. He mentions that when the river in the central part of Aarhus had the road above it removed and opened up, several critics described the car's loss of parking and movement. The politicians from Konservative that agreed to the removal knew the risk and lost three mandates. Skou Nicolaisen (2022) continues with that *"politicians are reluctant to commit this kind of "political suicide", as they can lose mandates and personal support"* (Skou Nicolaisen, 2022). However, in the case of the Aarhusian river, the loss of parking is no longer discussed, and a large part of Aarhusians are happy about the change. Skou Nicolaisen (2022) concludes that citizens are generally against changes as it conflicts with their way of living. Relating this to the nodal point of "personal freedom", it is possible to translate the criticism by the citizens into a restriction of their personal freedom to decide how to live their lives. Skou Nicolaisen (2022) continues that politicians are instead willing to sacrifice more money for the project to avoid changing habits.

Another conservative reflection was identified in connection with personal freedom. Frandsen (2022) stated that politicians indirectly used technological progression as a solution to the issues to avoid "political suicide". The argument "technological progression" is seen in practice among politicians, who, to avoid limiting people's personal freedom, argue for future technology that removes their responsibility and refrains them from taking the necessary actions. A compromise accepted by the politicians would be to increasingly complicate car use in the city's centre while still providing parking options (Frandsen, 2022 & Municipality plan, 2017). This is also made clear in the mobility plan (2018):

"*The public traffic shall be quickly guided through the city centre and create a good net of transport options. The car traffic shall have good access to large parking garages*" (Mobility plan, 2018 p. 8).

Because of the examples above, the analysis deems "personal freedom" a nodal point, as it gives meaning to the arguments used to keep the car infrastructure in place. The analysis argues that a significant contributor to the nodal point is the conservative ideology that argues for the freedom to move about as citizens wish. The nodal point, "personal freedom", gains its values from the right/conservative who believe the car should remain unrestricted. However, as Skou Nicolaisen (2022) mentions, the unwillingness of the citizens to change their habits plays just as large a part.

Liveability

Liveability is the third nodal point. The following section will describe how planners and politicians have included liveability to argue that it is possible to strike a balance between current priorities and climate change.

Aarhus municipality knows that the city must decrease the use of cars, especially inside the ring road (Climate Action Plan, 2020). The employees of the mobility department are very much aware of climate change and what it would take to reduce carbon emissions to an acceptable level (Mobility Workshop, 2022) and within the 2030 goals (Climate Action Plan, 2020). The mobility department uses liveability as an argumentative tool to reduce the number of cars.

When asked to describe liveability, Jesper Frandsen (2022) describes how the streets were first a space for transport and parking and re-thought into a space for living. He describes the ideas of liveability as leaning up against Jan Gehl's ideas of a "good city" or the "life between buildings"

where the city is built as low rise/high density. According to Frandsen, low-rise/high-density urban environments would allow better public transport networks and parks since the available space is used more efficiently. In addition, street-level parking would be moved to parking garages to relieve the streets (Frandsen, 2022).

"Liveability and urban quality" is a chapter in the municipality plans of 2017; however, the chapter does not directly describe liveability. By summarising the chapter, it is possible to add the municipality plan's (2017) description of liveability to Frandsen's (2022). Together, liveability can be understood as transforming the streets into leisure places by creating green/blue environments that increase the amenities of the city. However, according to the municipality plan (2017), liveability is also about balancing parking and other more functional needs. Liveability is, therefore, argumentatively used to strike a balance between green/blue environments and mobility. A balance that must be found within the earlier characteristics of that very place (Municipality plan, 2017). Asked what value green/blue environments add to the city, Morten Skou Nicolaisen (2022) said that the councillor (rådmand) values attractive urban environments because they attract customers outside the city.

Furthermore, the municipality plan (2017) describes how an attractive city attracts highly educated citizens and specialised industries. Interpreting these statements into the car discourse makes growth seem a significant contributor to why Aarhus should build a liveable city. This interpretation contravenes the original thoughts of liveability (Uitermarkt, 2009) when the municipality interprets and uses it to support commercial interests.

Figure 9 Map of the alternative forms of mobility (Mobility Plan, 2018)

Liveability is rather vague in its priorities as it stands for *"incorporating urban life, mobility, accessibility, health, climate and security"* (Municipality plan, 2017, p. 45). However, when liveability is coupled with *"designing…*
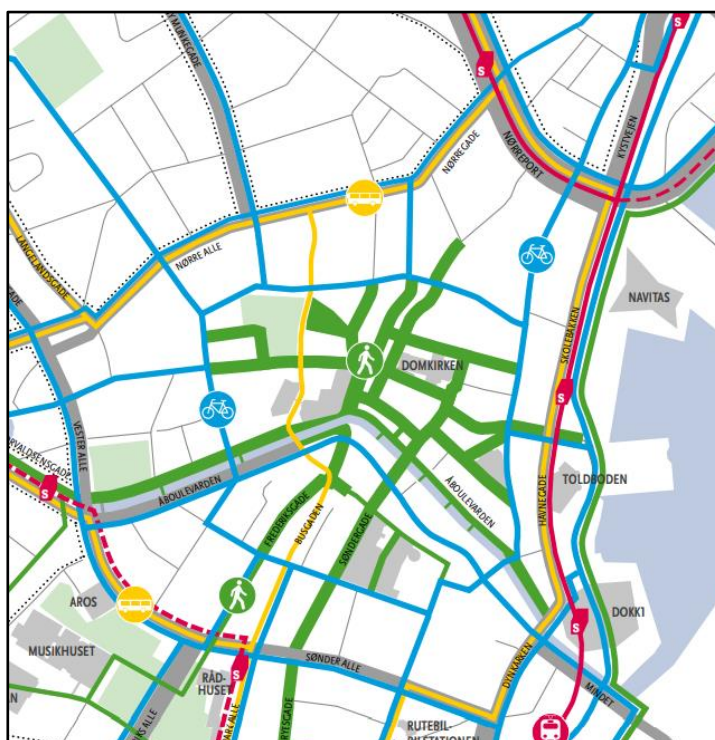
based on the very place and incorporating urban life, mobility, accessibility, health, climate and security" (Municipality plan, 2017, p. 45), then future decisions are based on the existing local infrastructure.

Frandsen (2022) was asked how the planners balance and prioritise accessibility, mobility, green/blue environments, health, and climate. He argued that their goal is to move the cars to the larger streets while smaller streets with street-level parking have their use contested. The contestation finds its argumentation from the increasing number of citizens moving to the city: *"more people living closer demands us to develop better urban spaces"* (Frandsen, 2022). Liveability, therefore, has a double meaning as it prioritises existing values incorporated in the urban space and creates room for negotiation where smaller streets can be renegotiated.

From these descriptions, planners would use liveability to consider existing physical installations and present a solution that balances mobility, climate health, etc. Liveability becomes a discursive adaptation of the car discourse to stay legitimate because it opens room for negotiation on its premises, nonetheless. Liveability stabilises the car discourse by including the conflicts "congestion" and "climate change" in the decision process, however, in a framework based on existing discursive structures. By articulating climate change into the car's discursive net, it loses its alarmist perspective, and climate change is related to the premises of the car discourse. Liveability is therefore determined to be a nodal point as it does not hold any value in itself but becomes a "buzzword" used to argue for the balance between the rights of the car against the urban space.

Including liveability in the car discourse creates room for interpretation wherein the car supporters can argue that achieving a better city with room for the car and green/blue installations is possible. The planners will look at the very space they are about to transform and evaluate how they can create a compromise that contains room for the car and green/blue environments. An example could be the illustrations of Schleppegrellsgade that Frandsen (2022) showed during the interview. Schleppegrellsgade was a street with mainly parking spots on either side of the street. The drawings, therefore, relate to its earlier use and implement parking spots in the new design. The illustration showed that more trees were planted, the street was narrowed down, and the number of parking lots was reduced minimally (See Figure 10). The drawing shows how the planners navigated the values of liveability, growth and personal freedom by creating more green installations, keeping room for the car, and not reducing the car's movement.

The planners considered the past use of the street as mainly parking and translated into a smart

Figure 10 Illustration of Schleppegrellsgade

utilisation where only a minimal loss of parking was possible. Therefore, the earlier use of the street and its physical appearance stabilises the car discourse by being an argument against alternative use of that urban space. As Frandsen (2022) said, since the city council liked the sketches, Schleppegrellsgade showed how the planners could present a solution that struck a balance between parking, trees, and recreation.

According to Purcell (2009), solutions that are essentially a compromise (everybody got what they wanted with minimal loss) benefit the dominating discourse as the status quo is uncontested,

stabilising the power of the car discourse. Using liveability to legitimise the car discourse has been useful for it to remain essentially unchallenged on its nodal points.

The analysis above has shown the most nodal points of the car discourse and how they legitimise the car's presence.

As this section has shown, growth, personal freedom and liveability have been the values planners and politicians have used to formulate solutions to congestion and climate change. So far, the solutions the municipality has provided have been win-win solutions, where a large part of the city council could back the solutions. However, despite the solutions addressing the apparent conflicts the municipality faces, they have not reduced emissions. In the next section, the paper will explore the nodal points in a political setting and what they mean to the search for alternative sustainable solutions.

The political process

The following section intends to understand how the nodal points leave politicians with little room to search out alternative solutions. The section argues that since climate change is adopted alongside the nodal points, only win-win solutions such as Schleppegrellsgade and the Marselis tunnel are possible. Not only does the car discourse make it difficult to agree to anything else but win-win solutions, the political process that strives toward compromises allows a delegitimisation of counter-discourses.

The analysis has so far answered the first part of the second sub-question. The following section will, therefore, answer the second half:

> "*How were the conflicts "congestion" and "climate change" interpreted into the Aarhusian car discourse for it to remain legitimate and* <u>*what type of issues arise in the political/planning process because of the interpretation*</u>?"

To answer the second half of the sub-question, interviews with Jesper Frandsen, and Tyge Wamstrup, the deputy director of Teknik & Miljø, were conducted to come closer to understanding the type of issues that arise in the political process because of the car's discursive structure.

How do planners know how far they can push the sustainable agenda before they no longer have broad political support? Asking Frandsen (2022) the question, it is clear that the answer is ambiguous. He argues that the solutions cannot be more provoking or radical than the city council can still accept

them. He says, *"we still have to count to 16"* (Frandsen, 2022), meaning that they want broad political support from the 16 city council members for the solution to survive. He follows with, *"I might not agree to everything, but there is something for me and something for you"* (Frandsen, 2022). Frandsen (2022) states that politicians might not agree with everything, which is why the solutions are a compromise of political ideologies where every politician can see themselves.

As described by Rostbøll & Scavenius (2018), compromises can be difficult if the conditions are not tolerable for the majority. In the interview with Wamstrup (2022), he describes how a good relationship across the political spectrum has helped the political process reach agreements. Wamstrup (2022) further explains how compromises are typically win-win solutions where politicians across the political spectrum can agree.

Figure 11 Drawing of Schleppegrellsgade

The example of Schleppegrellsgade was presented as a win-win solution to Wamstrup (2022), who agreed it could be seen as such. In figure 11 above, the urban area has been improved to fit more liveability, while diagonal parking allowed a minimal loss of parking spots (Bundgaard & Jørgensen, 2022). Suppose the drawings are reflected into the political process. In that case, it becomes evident that this plan provides the city council with a solution that can gain broad political support as there is something for everybody. Not only does the plan live up to the municipality plan (2017), but the

installations also support each side of the political spectrum's ideology with minimal loss. The left can be in favour of the compromise as it provides the city with more trees and liveability. The right can accept the compromise as it does not interfere with the freedom to drive (Henderson et al., 2019).

I wanted to dive further into "compromise" in the interview with Wamstrup (2022) and asked him, *"How do they find a compromise?"*. Wamstrup (2022) argued that politicians are willing to agree to the latest climate action plan because it is loosely formulated and something everyone can agree upon. As Wamstrup (2022) said, *"There is nothing in that plan that can hurt the politicians"*. However, Wamstrup (2022) is experiencing that politicians struggle to connect the climate action plan to concrete everyday scenarios. For example, when citizen participation meetings are held, the discussion quickly moves to the very concrete parts of the discussion, such as the number of parking spots, without bringing the perspectives from climate change into the discussion (Wamstrup, 2022). Wamstrup (2022) & Skou Nicolaisen (2022) both argued that citizens are more interested in keeping their parking spots and do not relate the removal of parking spots to the necessary habitual changes needed to accommodate climate change. Because of the citizens' lack of support, the politicians moved their focus from climate change to the parking lots and discussed the removal on behalf of their voter base (Wamstrup, 2022). This behaviour results in win-win solutions that consider the potential loss of parking spots for the citizens, potential loss of growth and similar values that must be considered in the urban space. Seen through the politicians and citizens, these compromises are best since everybody wins; however, the CO_2 emissions remain the same while actual alternatives are left out. Wamstrup (2022) argues that this gothic knot can be solved if the politicians couple the rhetoric from the climate plan they agreed upon with "parking spots". When asked to elaborate, he argues that the politicians are fully aware of climate change; however, at the same time, they are representing their voter base, who do not want to change their habits because of their busy everyday lives.

However, as the following section will show, even when politicians couple the climate goals to everyday situations, the opposition uses the critique from the citizens to argue for a modest approach. For example, Louise Lindskrog (2020) from Socialdemokratiet argues for the removal of street-level parking:

"There are 1000 vacant parking spaces every day, and in the mobility plan and parking policy, which a majority here in the city council have agreed upon, it is our intention to move the street

level parking into the vacant spots." (Lindskrog (Socialdemokratiet) in Sag nr. 11 Trafikal fredeliggørelse i midtbyen, 2020)

Lindskrog argues that the decisions taken by the city council should follow the policies they have agreed upon. However, in the following quote, Bünyamin Simsek (2020) from Venstre comments on Lindskrog's (2020) statement that, despite having agreed upon the mobility plan, many citizens do not want to have their parking spots removed.

"We have to listen to the community councils (fællesråd red.)*, and when the community councils and citizens don't want what the big Social Democratic Party wants, then you have another opinion here in the city council hall"* (Simsek in Sag nr. 11 Trafikal fredeliggørelse i midtbyen, 2020)

The core of Simsek's (2020) argument is to value the citizens' critique above the climate action goals agreed upon in the city council. The statement falls under the nodal point "personal freedom" as he uses the citizens' critique of restricting their freedom to argue that the city council is not democratic in its process.

The statements above and the comments by Wamstrup (2022) display several problems with the discursive structures which influence politics. First, the agreed-upon climate action plans are too loosely formulated for politicians to use it. The climate action plan does not add formulations that can be used to couple climate change to everyday scenarios. In the case of parking spots, formulations that could orient the citizens' focus above the possible restrictions of their personal freedom are missing. Because of the current discursive net, any attempt to remove parking spots will start a conflict between personal freedom and climate change. In other words, political power to change norms and traditions is limited by the political suicide it would be to go against the voting power of the citizens.

To bring a greater perspective into the nodal points and discursive structure, the paper will use Urry & Kingsley's theory (2009) to understand why there has not been a paradigmatic change so far. Despite the chaos point that climate change has created, it has not brought about the paradigmatic change that could have been expected. So far, the system has only become more complex as alternative forms of mobility are part of the car discourse. The reason why the chaos point has not been successful in bringing new ideas that could start a cascade of changes is partly due to the

dominating car discourse. The car discourse forms a strong discursive net that stabilises it, which makes it difficult for new ideas or solutions from counter-discourses to enter the system. In other words, black swans become improbable under the current dominating car discourse because they would create unstable conditions for institutions, businesses and citizens that rely on the system.

Suppose we are to create points in time that are more open to radical changes. In that case, climate change must be addressed differently, as the discourse and decision process analysed are against a paradigm shift. Therefore, the structures of our political and planning processes must be assembled differently to create circumstances where "*die is less cast and various futures are structurally possible*" (Urry & Kingsley, 2009, chapter 3).

Conclusion to analysis

The analysis described how the car discourse in Aarhus has slowly adapted to the counter-discourses to remain legitimate. As congestion became an increasing issue and new ideas of how the urban space should be utilised, new formulations where the car and peace restorations could go hand in hand in a harmonious relationship. As climate change entered the debate, the car discourse once again adapted by arguing for sustainable solutions, including the car, nonetheless. Including climate change as a floating signifier and a nodal point brought the analysis up to the present. Therefore, the second part of the analysis elaborated on the contemporary underlying arguments. The analysis identified the nodal points "growth", "personal freedom", and "liveability" as central to the legitimisation of the car discourse. Growth is understood as prioritising economically feasible solutions while supporting a social and sustainable aspect. However, as seen in the section, the social and sustainable aspects can sometimes be de-prioritised to prioritise income.

Personal freedom is a nodal point stabilising the car discourse as it restricts habitual changes. The citizens will criticise a plan if it limits their access to parking spots, for example, which makes it political suicide for the politicians to support such ideas.

The car discourse has included liveability as a room of negotiation where "*more life, more nature, better transport, better health and more*" (Municipality plan, 2017, p. 15) are prioritised under smarter utilisation. This formulation becomes an argument where the conflicts "congestion" and "climate change" can be handled under the car discourse, which legitimises it.

Together these nodal points legitimise the car discourse, which prioritises the car against other values. The prioritisation was illustrated in *"The political process"*, where contesting ideas were shut down because of a majority backing the dominating car discourse and a process disallowing counter-

discourses from being listened to and included in the process. The consequences are a decision process that finds a solution through compromise, which solves the apparent conflict; however, it does not provide compelling solutions to the CO_2 emissions that have not decreased since 2008 (Climate action plan, 2020).

Discussion - How an ecological voice in an agonistic democracy can bring us closer to a sustainable future

Prioritising the car against other values signifies the power imbalance between the hegemonic discourse and the counter-discourses (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). However, why does the imbalance continue to exist? As the car discourse has adapted, it has successfully remained legitimate. More concretely, it has formulated an answer to the conflicts where everyone can agree. However, the above analysis has also shown that the agreed-upon solutions have yet to reduce CO_2 emissions. This is due to the discursive structure limiting sustainable initiatives from being included in discussions. The paper, therefore, discusses the need to find an alternative to the car discourse, namely an ecological discourse that embraces the climate crisis differently. Developing an ecological discourse requires a strong discursive structure that formulates a cohesive discursive net supporting contesting ideas. Therefore, the first question is, "*Is it possible to develop a new understanding of climate change to contest the car discourse?"*. In other words, the paper discusses if it is possible to develop a new discursive net where climate change gives meaning to the car. Not the car discourse giving meaning to climate change. The paper finds inspiration in Bruno Latour's work to formulate the new discursive structures, which are later linked to "chains of equivalence" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The discussion then explores how chains of equivalence can introduce new political perspectives and lead to progression.

However, good intentions do not come far if the political process misuses its power to exclude alternatives. An exclusion of alternatives would turn the citizens' basis for giving their mandate to politicians from subordination to suppression (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Therefore, the paper discusses the possibilities of applying agonism to the political and planning process to create a process that legitimises and includes counter-discourses.

Despite every politician, official, citizen and other actor agreeing to the catastrophe that is climate change, modest changes have so far been the answer. Climate change has yet to bring us together under a common banner to be solved. Even Wamstrup (2022) stated that the climate crisis did not

mobilise the same radical structural and behavioural change as the covid-19 crisis did. In Aarhus, climate change seems to have been formulated under the car discourse to legitimise a wary approach to the conflict. Instead, the politicians easily find a compromise if the solutions *add* economic value to Aarhus without restricting personal freedom. Even the political courage to follow up on the Mobility plan (2018), as politician Lindskrog (2020) argues, has been questioned by Simsek (2020), who used personal freedom as a counter-argument. Reframing and rephrasing climate change can be necessary to transition to a sustainable mobility system. Rephrasing would shape a new reality and bring about new horizons, experiences, and conflicts, which could shape new political dynamics. In other words, climate change cannot remain a nodal point under the car discourse. Instead of adapting climate change to the other nodal points in the car discourse, we must consider adapting the car's needs to climate change. Such changes would turn the embedded power upside down as climate change no longer adapts to growth and personal freedom. As climate change takes a new shape and no longer adheres to the car discourse, new doors would open for politicians to reprioritise their politics. However, building an ecologic discourse requires formulating new nodal points to lead us away from the modest approach.

I find inspiration in Bruno Latour's (2022) definition of an ecological class and its components to formulate new nodal points. By reformulating growth, it is possible to reject the parts of growth that are at the cost of nature and ecology. Nature and ecology are used instead of climate as it is connected to a geographical nearness, making the discussion less abstract and diffuse. The thought of giving the moments "nature" and "ecology" significant value in the nodal point "growth" can be seen in connection with the statements by Wamstrup (2022). Wamstrup (2022) stated how politicians have trouble connecting the rhetoric behind climate change with everyday scenarios. By adding the moments "nature" and "ecology" that hold a geographical nearness to "growth", then it has several potentials. First, the ecology discourse does not disregard economic growth when it places it in a new frame. The planet's and society's life conditions have an extended timeframe, demanding us to look at the consequences of our actions in a timeframe beyond the shortsighted economic potentials. Extending our time frame to fit the climatic consequences of our actions would serve as a more legitimate explanation than individual needs and economic opportunities that do not address climate change. Again, this approach does not disregard economic growth; however, it asks us to look at the economic potential in a timeframe that considers the local and global consequences. Secondly, by adding geographical nearness, the abstract thought of climate change as "out there" is replaced and brought into a local decision process. By formulating the discourse from a local point of view, I argue

that politicians can more easily find support within the neighbourhood as the citizens can see a "selfish" reason to have an ecologic neighbourhood. Thirdly, the liberal market thoughts of the city constantly competing with the rest of the world can be disregarded as growth is coupled with the locale. When growth is coherent with the physical and social identity of the neighbourhood, the need to compete on a global scale seems less relevant. Therefore, the frame to growth is narrowed as it finds its geographical place locally. Moreover, its time frame is extended beyond its current time horizons.

However, the discourse does well in not falling under the "anti-capitalistic" fight but extending growth to an understanding of social progressions, such as well-being, nature, and ecology. The discourse could "tap into" the public discussions that have increasingly circled mental health and a general work/life balance restructuring. By arguing that the good life is found in the local neighbourhood, the discourse connects to our urban space. Using the term neighbourhood gives the individual ownership as it can be divided into "my neighbourhood, your neighbourhood", contrary to the approach where the ubiquitous climate is everyone's and no one's responsibility.

"the earth is reacting to our actions. This was always known at the local level; people knew that if you plow a field too often the soil will disappear, etc., but it was not known at the level of the earth system" (Bruno Latour in Pedersen et al., 2019)

The statement exemplifies how the rationale behind our actions is connected to the local circumstances but not the global ones. Coupling the discourse with the local and near would mean a shorter line of argumentation by the individual - the reasoning would be coupled with taking pride in one's neighbourhood. Coupling the responsibility to a territory gives the citizen ownership, compared to climate change, which is borderless. As the neighbourhood becomes the centre of daily life, the urban space can, to a more significant degree, be designed to support "short-distance mobility". Bikes, buses and similar forms of mobility could then become symbols of the "good local life" and, to a certain extent, replace the car.

Does that mean that the individual should only be interested in changes in their neighbourhood? No, since pollution does not care about boundaries, actions in one area are a common concern. Furthermore, the space the car seizes cannot be used to support well-being, nature and ecology.

Therefore, I include "chains of equivalence" to form a common cause across socio-economic classes. The term defines allied groups that seek a transformation of the current hegemonic structures that

oppresses them. The allied groups do not necessarily hold the same political values; however, their common cause is the unjust suppression by the hegemonic discourse. In this context, the groups (citizens, NGOs, planners, politicians) would use the above discursive structures to form an "us versus them" antagonistic picture. The "them", in this case, becomes a system of institutions and politicians that use the car discourse to allow the indifferent and egoistic approach. The "us" would consist of groups across the political spectrum agreeing to contest the society responsible for the abnormal CO_2 emissions. Essential for the group is the shared recognition of the failure of the democratic processes to include climate change responsibly, which is why they take an antagonistic shape. As Swyngedouw (2010) describes: *"The post-political environmental consensus, therefore, is one that is radically reactionary, one that forestalls the articulation of divergent, conflicting and alternative trajectories of future socio-environmental possibilities"* (Swyngedouw, 2010, p. 228) If the "us" were to agree to the reactionary environmental consensus that the Aarhusian politicians so far have discussed on the basis of, then alternative trajectories would be lost. Before I continue the discussion on how a "we" versus "them" could be handled by our democracy, the nodal point "personal freedom" has to be re-interpreted.

The nodal point of "personal freedom" has been used to preserve the status quo. By arguing for the individual's freedom to act unrestricted from society, the paper looks towards new formulations of personal freedom. Instead of understanding personal freedom as unrestricted by society, I argue from a social constructivist view that no such thing exists. The differentiation between the individual and society is a blurred line as the meaning we give our actions stems from historically manifested meanings. Instead, the paper looks towards understanding personal freedom as the realisation of oneself through a collective "we". So far, demonstrations for the climate have been an attack on the selfish acts of businesses, politicians and citizens who use their personal freedom to act as they wish. However, looking at this approach through social constructivism, flaws become apparent. First, the argument falls short as it places climate change as an objective truth. The demonstrators argue that people should orient themselves towards climate change, which is of higher importance than their daily life. However, social constructivism argues that we do not orient ourselves after a deeper rational or essential structure (Stage, 2015). Instead, we should couple the geographical nearness - our relationship with the locale - and use self-interest to preserve what we value. The paper defines personal freedom as the individual's right to protest against an unjust society (James, 2017), acting *on* our neighbourhoods in ways that are contrary to our values. People have used the official

democratic ways; however, as the paper has intended to illuminate, the political process is delegitimising contesting viewpoints:

"The structural governing position of public planning to urban politics is not made to empower people, but to have participants to act within pre-determined roles between actors and a system of governing." (Pløger, 2021, p. 2)

The quote describes a system that includes the citizens based on the underlying power relations. Planners and politicians sincerely believe that the process is just as the citizens are included. However, the embedded power to tell people what kind of role to play narrows the discussion to the topics officials deem legitimate. As the planners and politicians frame the discussed area with predetermined roles, they hold onto the embedded power. By having the "power-knowledge" from which the dialogue with the public begins, the system can delegitimise any contestation if its argumentation is incompatible with the hegemonic discourse (Pløger, 2022). By manoeuvring the planning process in such ways, the process stabilises the underlying power relations and leaves out possible change. The underlying power relations are implicitly against the sustainable transition, so the ecological discourse's values are not represented in common democratic ways. Moreover, it would not be possible to enter a compromise with a system that does not legitimise one's values.

If the political process delegitimises the ecological discourse on the basis of conflicting with the underlying power relations, then we have not come any further. Pløger (2022) argues that if:

"*we only see agonism as contestation, we ignore the fact that to be able to make a change means being able to enter the ongoing 'political war' on positions, meaning an ability to institutionalise a new hegemonic discourse politically*" (Pløger, 2022, p. 9)

Therefore, it is necessary to include examples of how antagonistic discourses, like the ecological discourse, can be institutionalised by turning them agonistic. In other words, it is necessary to establish a process where counter-discourses are acknowledged despite their worldview being fundamentally different from the hegemonic discourse. Instead of shutting down the counter-discourses, the process would open up to the conflict that the counter-discourse brings to the table. The process would explore the conflict to find new ways of structuring the world "*without any final regime of justification*" (Lyotard, 1988, cited in Pløger, 2022). The action would be to give up the

hegemonic ideals and look at *"the future that has not yet become determinate"* (Pløger, 2022, p.8). I will use a practical example to delve further into Pløger's (2022) ideas on strategic navigation.

Say a neighbourhood of thousands of people has to discuss the future of their neighbourhood. The opinions within the neighbourhood would be pluralistic, and actors, businesses or groups would discuss on behalf of their interests. The planner would first create a grid of the different opinions and discourses to understand the many different opinions. Doing so would create temporary *"resting points in a sea of turbulence"* (Hillier, 2011, p. 514). The grid stabilises the different opinions and gives the planner an overview of the issues raised, the arguments and how they might have things in common. Having laid out the opinions in a grid, the planner can use it proactively to couple possible futures to the opinions discovered. The process would then move towards a temporary solution by structuring new ways of understanding the world. In other words, the planner would help the neighbourhood by binding the different opinions together.

As contemporary decisions cannot include an unforeseeable future, the decision should be temporary. Any decision has to be understood as 'right' within the context of it and not deterministically right. At the same time, the decision does place one discourse above others; Pløger (2022) argues that temporariness in the process allows actors to return to the discussion. Therefore, temporariness *"improves one's capacity to meet contingency, by allowing interests at any time to approach the core of irreducible disagreements without meeting exclusionary mechanisms"* Pløger (2022, p. 11). This approach allows actors or counter-discourses to return to the discussion if new knowledge or worldviews have presented themselves and contestation is necessary.

Pløger's (2022) attempt at an agonistic decisional process is valid as it gives counter-discourses a platform to speak, but I would like to add to the method. Pløger (2022) argues from a social constructivist point of view when he describes how the grid can provide a view into possible futures dependent on the connectivities found. Seen in the light of climate change, this is arguably a paradox. As climate change plays a large role in an unknown future, I argue that the decision process cannot ignore this, despite what the results from the grid might provide. However, at the same time, social constructivism disallows placing climate change in an almost deterministic view. Despite these considerations, I argue that the planner would have to take a more political stance on climate change, than Pløger (2022) argues for. The planner's job would therefore add their concerns on climate change to the grid to include climate change to the future unknown.

"Subordination" and "oppression" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) can help determine officials' role in the context of climate change and the car discourse. Subordination refers to the unequal distribution of power between people, e.g. the power we give politicians in a representative democracy. In other words, an imbalance of power that is acceptable. Oppression, however, refers to the structural problems that exclude certain opinions and exploit their power (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). To decide whether or not the structures, e.g. the car-oriented infrastructure and the values connected to it, is either oppressing one's wishes or an acceptable imbalance of power is individual. The power of the officials would be to support a debate on *"what is legitimate and what is illegitimate – a debate which is necessarily without any guarantor and without any end"* (Lefort, 1988, cited in Wingenbach, 2011). I, therefore, argue that officials should clarify the issues with the current hegemonic discourse to create perspectives that would bring the individual's agency into play. By illuminating how one's actions and opinions stem from the structures placed upon oneself, the officials would help the individual define whether they are oppressed and require action to be taken or under subordination and can live with the current power structures.

Conclusion to discussion

Attempts at bringing down the CO_2 emissions with the current car discourse have been unsuccessful so far, which is why the paper saw the need for a new ecological discourse. The discourse was built to contest the current nodal points to present a compelling counter-discourse. First, the nodal point growth was reformulated and extended to have a local point of view and include ecology and nature. Therefore, the nodal point was narrowed geographically while its time horizon extended, arguably bringing a more legitimate worldview. Personal freedom was reformulated because social constructivism disregards a separation of the individual and society. Personal freedom was therefore understood as the individual's freedom is expressed by being part of a common cause right. Secondly, personal freedom is used to protest against an unjust society. I bring these nodal points together and see them as possible markers for mobilisation via chains of equivalence. Our shared concern for our neighbourhoods is a tangible source to mobilise people. The mobilisation would become antagonistic as the movement would not agree to a compromise that would implicitly be on the premises of the hegemonic discourse. However, as the paper's work is not a call for action among people but an exploration of how planners can provide more just processes, I saw the need to elaborate on agonistic processes. Agonism is beneficial as it does not find solutions on behalf of existing hegemonic discourses. The paper, therefore, built a practical approach to include counter-hegemonic discourses.

Building a grid in a sea of turbulence allows the planner to gain an overview of the issues and formulate possible futures. The process is temporary as it allows new knowledge and opinions to return to the discussion. However, in light of climate change, I believe the planner must take a more political stance than Pløger (2022) argues. Therefore, I saw the need to add "oppression" versus "subordination" for the planner to include the structural power relations and make them visible to the citizens. From there, the citizens would have to decide whether they could accept it as subordination.

Conclusion

Despite its relatively young age, the car discourse has cemented its position in all aspects of society. Because it has helped societies create growth and freedom, it is considered indispensable and unavoidable. Unfortunately, however, a continuous focus on the car through the second half of the twentieth century led to congestion and an uncomfortable urban environment in Aarhus.

However, the cars *"... simultaneously create precisely the sorts of problems which they also promise to overcome"* (Urry, 2000). As seen in the analysis, the car discourse criticised the infrastructure for not being good enough. Later the rhetoric switched, and now the car had to be fitted to the peace restoration project while still giving space to the car, nonetheless. As Frandsen (2022) explained, the municipality slowly tightened the car's movement with the tools they had at their disposal. Nevertheless, he said, *"we still have to count to 16"* (Frandsen, 2022), referring to the compromise-seeking approach. This approach has been central to the research question of the paper. Because the CO_2 emissions from the transport sector have not been reduced since 2008, begging the question, "why exactly is nothing happening?". The analysis of congestion has shown that the historical choices have brought Aarhus on a path dependency that has been very difficult to diverge from. The reason is that the car is coupled with growth and personal freedom. As climate change entered the discussions, it was formulated into the car's discursive structures to answer the conflict. Placing climate change among growth, personal freedom, and liveability watered down its alarmist perspectives and allowed a reluctant approach. Furthermore, it limited the politicians from giving climate change the needed attention as going outside the car discourse resulted in arguments supporting the car.

The paper has, therefore, discussed the need for an alternative ecological discourse that would extend the growth orientations beyond economic growth and include terms such as well-being, nature and ecology. Growth would be understood in connection with the neighbourhood, coupled with the

reformulated nodal point "personal freedom". Personal freedom would be contested by arguing for the individual need to demonstrate against a discourse taking advantage of its hegemonic position. As people would, to a more considerable degree, care for their neighbourhood, pollution would not be accepted; however, as it travels across territories, people would come together in chains of equivalence.

Nevertheless, the compromise-seeking approach is part of the political process, and alternatives to the status quo are left out to benefit the dominating car discourse. The paper, therefore, saw the need to introduce a practical use of agonism in the decisional process to open the process up to antagonistic discourses. Doing so, would bring about new political horizons and allow political courage. The agonistic process, therefore, found inspiration in Pløger's (2022) strategic navigation, which opened the process up to counter-hegemonic discourses. By developing a grid, the planner can map out the different opinions and guide the process towards new ways of structuring the future. As a temporary hegemonic discourse is found, it is also subject to counter-discourse. New information, values and knowledge allow actors to return to the decision and contest it. However, I would argue that since climate change has a short history, it has not "settled" yet, which in the eyes of social constructivists, is how "objectivity" is determined. Therefore, I argue that planners need to raise their concerns regarding climate change in a way where the citizens' agency is put into play.

References

- Aarhus Kommune (1994) *Trafikken i centrum* (Traffic at the centre)
- Aarhus Kommune (1994) *Trafik- og parkplan for området omkring Musikhusparken og Rådhusparken.* City council meeting, 1994 (Online access from stadsarkivet)
- Aarhus Kommune (2001) *Forslag til grøn prioriteringsplan* (City council meeting, 2001) (Online access from stadsarkivet)
- Aarhus Kommune (2005) *Veje til Fremtiden (Roads to the Future)* (Trafikplan for Århus Midtby-Handlingsplan-TIL TRYK.indd (light rail.dk))
- Aarhus Kommune (2007) *Forligstekst* (https://www.aarhus.dk/media/19012/forligsteksten.pdf)
- Aarhus Kommune (2008) *Planstrategi, 2008* (Plan strategy, 2008)
- Aarhus Kommune (2008) *Klimaplan 2008-2009* (https://www.yumpu.com/da/document/read/33651115/klimaplan-2008-2009-pdf-709-kb-aarhusdk)
- Aarhus Kommune (2009) *Klimaplan 2010-2011* (https://www.dn.dk/media/6541/klimaplan-2010-2011-web.pdf)
- Aarhus Kommune (2011) *Klimaplan 2012-2015* (https://www.dn.dk/media/6542/klimaplan-2012-2015.pdf)
- Aarhus Kommune (2015) *Klimaplan 2016-2020* (https://endelafloesningen.aarhus.dk/media/5442/klimaplan-2016-2020.pdf)
- Aarhus Kommune (2017) *Aarhus Kommuneplan 2017* (Aarhus Kommuneplan 2017 – Hovedstruktur (livedition.dk))
- Aarhus Kommune (2018) *Mobilitetsplan Aarhus Midtby (mobilitetsplan-aarhus-midtby.pdf)*
- Aarhus Kommune (2020) *Sag nr. 11 Trafikal fredeliggørelse i midtbyen* https://dagsordener.aarhus.dk/vis/pdf/bilag/0caee106-a464-4d17-8334-9d4572e9615e/?redirectDirectlyToPdf=false (Simsek & Lindskrog)
- Aarhus Kommune (2020) *Grøn Genstart af Aarhus - Klimahandlingsplan 2021-2024 (Climate Action Plan)* (https://endelafloesningen.aarhus.dk/media/62187/klimahandlingsplan-2021-2024.pdf)

- Aarhus Kommune (2020) *Sag 11 – Vision for fremtidens Marselis Boulevard* (City council meeting with Jan Ravn Christensen, Steen Andersen & Liv Gro Jensen

- Buhl Thomsen, K. (2015) *Da de danske byer blev revet ned. Praksis og ideologi i dansk sanerings- og byfornyelsespolitik* (Ph.d. afhandling, Aarhus Universitet)

- Ball, P. (2004) *Critical Mass.* London: William Heinemann (p. 283)

- Brinkmann, & Kvale, S. (2018). *Doing interviews (2nd edition.)*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Bundsgaard, J., Simsek, B., Budde, C., Stavnsbo, S., Vendelboe, K., (2021) *Marselistunnelen styrker vækst og bymiljø i Aarhus* (jyllands-posten.dk)

- Climate & Environment Committee (2023) *Climate & Environment Committee meeting* (https://dagsordener.aarhus.dk/vis?id=ba904c2b-02b9-4a69-bbf8-cf0ca4bc8bc2)

- Capra, F. (1985) *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture*

- Carrabine, & Longhurst, B. (2002). *Consuming the car: anticipation, use and meaning in contemporary youth culture*. The Sociological Review (Keele), 50(2), 181–196. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00362

- City of London (2020) *Climate action strategy 2020 - 2027 (https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Services-Environment/climate-action-strategy-2020-2027-20-10-20.pdf)*

- City of Paris (2018) *Climate Action Plan* (a10afc931be2124e21e39a1624132724.pdf (paris.fr))

- City of Barcelona (2018) *Climate Plan 2018 - 2030* (climate_plan_maig.pdf (barcelona.cat))

- Crowley, & Head, B. W. (2017). *The enduring challenge of "wicked problems": revisiting Rittel and Webber.* Policy Sciences, *50*(4), 539–547. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-017-9302-4

- Dennis, & Urry, J. (2009). *After the Car*. Polity Press.

- Dutschke, P (2022) *Ny vigtig stemme i klimadebatten* (Ny vigtig stemme i klimadebatten: Vi skal investere massivt i kollektiv trafik (jyllands-posten.dk))

- Farsøe Bank, H. (2017) *Plan for midtbyen giver kaos* (Plan for midtbyen giver kaos (jyllands-posten.dk))

- Foucault, M. (1991) *'Governmentality'*, in G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller(eds) The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, pp. 87–105. Chicago, IL:University of Chicago Press.

- Feriel, C. (2020) *The Revolution That Never Was? Pedestrianization in a Transnational Perspective, Europe and North America (1960s–1980s)*

- Frandsen, J. (2022) *Mobilitetsplanlægning i Aarhus Midtby – et historisk overblik* (Mobility planning in Aarhus) (received 28/11/2022)

- Gejl. (1995). *Århus: byens historie Bind 4.* Århus Byhistoriske Udvalg.

- Gunn. (2013). *People and the car: the expansion of automobility in urban Britain, c.1955-70.* Social History (London), 38(2), 220–237. https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2013.790139

- Henderson, J. (2013). *Street fight : the politics of mobility in San Francisco*. University of Massachusetts Press.

- Henderson, J. and Gulsrud, N. (2019)*Street Fights in Copenhagen : Bicycle and Car Politics in a Green Mobility City*. Elektronisk udgave. Abingdon, Oxon ;: Routledge, Print.

- Hillier, J. 2011. *Strategic Navigation Across Multiple Planes. Towards a Deleuzian-Inspired Methodology for Strategic Spatial Planning.* Town Planning Review 82 (5): 503–527. doi:10. 3828/tpr.2011.30.

- Jørgensen, M. and Phillips, L. (2002) *Discourse Analysis: as Theory and Method.* (Chapter 2)

- Mikkelsen, E. (2018) *Stort flertal oplever mere trængsel på vejene* (jyllands-posten.dk)

- James, D. (2017) *Hegel's Elements of the Philosophy of Right: A Critical Guide.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139939560

- Kühn, M. (2021). *Agonistic planning theory revisited: The planner's role in dealing with conflict.* Planning Theory (London, England), 20(2), 143–156. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095220953201

- Laszlo (2006) *The Chaos Point.* London: Piatkus Books

- Laclau, Mouffe, C., & Laclau, E. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy : towards a radical democratic politics*. Verso.

- Latour, B. & Schultz, N. (2022). *Notat om den nye økologiske klasse.* (1. udgave.). Hans Reitzel.

- Lewis-Beck, Bryman, A. E., & Liao, T. F. (2004). *The SAGE encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods.* (Elektronisk udgave.).

- McClymont. (2011). *Revitalising the political: Development Control and Agonism in Planning Practice.* Planning Theory (London, England), 10(3), 239–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095211399398

- Mouffe. (2013). *Agonistics : thinking the world politically*. Verso books.

- Mouffe. (2014). Hegemony and ideology in gramsci. In Gramsci and Marxist Theory (pp. 168–204). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315794396

- North, D. (1990) *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (p. 99).

- OECD, Environment Committee (1975) *Better Towns With Less Traffic*. OECD Conference. Paris, 14–16 April 1976. Proceedings (Paris: OECD, 1975)

- Paxton, M. (2020). *Agonistic democracy : rethinking political institutions in pluralist times.* Routledge.

- Pløger, J. (2004). *STRIFE: URBAN PLANNING AND AGONISM*. Planning Theory (London, England), 3(1), 71–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095204042318

- Pløger. (2022). *Contingency, decision, unfinished planning: let's quarrel more.* European Planning Studies, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2022.2088229

- Pooley, Turnbull, J., & Adams, M. (2006). *The Impact of New Transport Technologies on Intraurban Mobility: A View from the Past.* Environment and Planning. A, 38(2), 253–267. https://doi.org/10.1068/a37271

- Prigogine, I. (1997) *The End of Certainty.* New York: The Free Press (p. 64).

- Prigogine, I. and Stengers, I. (1984) *Order out of Chaos.* London: Fontana (pp. 140–1).

- Purcell. (2009) *RESISTING NEOLIBERALIZATION: COMMUNICATIVE PLANNING OR COUNTER-HEGEMONIC MOVEMENTS?* Planning Theory (London, England), *8*(2), 140–165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095209102232

- Rostbøll, & Scavenius, T. (2018). *Compromise and disagreement in contemporary political theory*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315317823

- Simske, B. (2017) Aarhusianere holder i kø (jyllands-posten.dk)

- Simsek, B. (2020) Borgmesteren glemmer klima og fremkommelighed (jyllands-posten.dk)

- Sheller. (2004). *Automotive Emotions: Feeling the Car.* Theory, Culture & Society, 21(4-5), 221–242. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404046068

- Sheller, & Urry, J. (2006). *The New Mobilities Paradigm. Environment and Planning.* A, 38(2), 207–226. https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268

- Stage, C. (2015). *Socialkonstruktivisme, sprog og identitet: Identitetsforhandlinger på Eva Dien Brine Markvoorts sygdomsblog 65 Red Roses.* Scandinavian Studies in Language, 6(3). https://doi.org/10.7146/sss.v6i3.20648

- Stein Pedersen, Latour, B., & Schultz, N. (2019). *A Conversation with Bruno Latour and Nikolaj Schultz: Reassembling the Geo-Social*. Theory, Culture & Society, 36(7-8), 215–230. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276419867468

- Swyngedouw. (2010). *Apocalypse forever?: post-political populism and the spectre of climate change*. Theory, Culture & Society, 27(2-3), 213–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409358728

- Torfing, Dreyer Hansen, A., & Bech Dyrberg, T. (2000). *Diskursteorien på arbejde*. Roskilde universitetsforlag.

- Uitermark, J. (2009) *An in memoriam for the just city of Amsterdam, City*, 13:2-3, 347-361, DOI: 10.1080/13604810902982813

- Urry, J. (2000). *Sociology beyond societies : mobilities for the twenty-first century*. Routledge.

- UN Environment Program (UNEP) (2022) *The Closing Window - Climate crisis calls for rapid transformation of societies*

- Wingenbach, (2011) *Agonistic Democracy : Post-Foundationalism and Political Liberalism*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011. ProQuest Ebook Central

- Wood, A. (1966) *Foot Streets in Four Cities. Dusseldorf, Essen, Cologne, Copenhagen* (Norwich: Norwich City Council, 1966)

Appendices

A short conversation with Nina Bundgaard & Benny Jørgensen regarding the drawings of Schleppegrellsgade

I asked Benny & Nina about their work with Schleppegrellsgade. They told me that the drawings were prepared in connection with the mobility and plan department, who told them how many parking spots had to be integrated into the space. They told me that by placing the parking spots sideways it was possible to integrate more green elements in the urban space as well as bike parking.

A workshop for the mobility department on the 2nd of December

A workshop was held for the mobility department to discuss how green and sustainable initiatives could be better integrated into their daily work. The workshop started with a presentation on the issues regarding mobility and carbon emissions. The presentation showed how the mobility sector in Aarhus has not significantly decreased its carbon emissions in the last 10 years. The presentation continued with the municipality's goal of reducing fossil-fuelled traffic by 75%. The workshop continued with a broad discussion of the issues that the department is facing. The employees mentioned that the climate plan has changed the prioritisation, however, they are not experiencing the city council follow through on the prioritisation. They argue that the city council is not following up on the sustainable actions that are wanted.

Furthermore, they have not seen any political requests/initiatives that support green forms of mobility. Perhaps because of a lack of interest, understanding or wrong prioritisation. The employees argue that they cannot carry out the task of sustainable actions on their own and that political action is needed to support them. Furthermore, they describe how the planning department is overburdened by politically requested analyses. If one department is overburdened, then political action is needed to change the scope.

The debate is diverted towards what the department can do within the existing political structures. The employees are divided into groups and have to think of solutions that would promote sustainable mobility. Ideas such as removing parking, no car zones, reframing of the issues and better public transport are mentioned. Next, the employees have to think of issues standing in the way of carrying out the solution.

Jesper Frandsen

- **Kan du fortælle om din rolle i forbindelse med mobilitetsplanen?**
    - Projektgruppe på tre, Morten og Susanne
    - Planen står oven på tidligere mobilitetsplaner
    - Det er en videreførelse af tidligere principper, men den er strammere ift. Transportvalg. Jesper beskriver hvordan de for hver plan strammer skruen.
    - Mange af principperne omkring prioritering kommer fra kommuneplanen. Mobilitetsplanen er en opfølgning på disse principper
    - Snakken om den gode by, liveability taler mobilitetsplanen ind i.
    - Det er ikke alle emner der er interessante for politikerne, eller som "vinder stemmer"
        - Vi kan godt uddybe hvordan mobilitet hænger sammen med andre emner men politikerne er sjældent interesseret i miljø og sundhed
    -
- **Hvordan blev mobilitetsplanen lavet?**

- **Hvilke aktører var involveret?**
    - Vi har haft borgermøder, men det var ikke omfattende, eller der kom noget særligt ud af det. Borgerne var mest interesserede i hvad der skete omkring deres bopæl særligt flere/færre parkeringspladser
    - Vi har prøvet at italesætte det ved at at nævne at vi bliver flere og flere, og at aarhus vokser, derfor er vi nødt til at kigge på aktive transportformer og offtenlig transport
    - Mange af de ting vi skal løse, er nemmest i den tætte by
    - Det er klart at når vi bor tættere så skal vi gøre plads til livet mellem husene. Det har byrådet accepteret, men selve løsningerne er de mindre enige i
    - Vejen er gået fra at være et rum for transport til et rum vi kan opholde os i - en del af liveability
    - Man tænker vejen og mobilitet som en del af resten af byen, tingene hænger sammen

- Bilen bliver prioriteret nederst - hvad skyldes det? Ved ikke om det er byrådet som ikke har bidt mærke i prioriteringen eller om de var klar på prioriteringen
- Skitseringer har været centrale for at få budskabet frem - byrådet var meget interesserede så snart de fik billeder på hvad de fik i stedet for parkeringspladser - grønne træer og ophold frem for parkering. Nyt våben til lejligheden.
- <u>Grænsen for hvordan vi prioriterer er flydende</u>. Vi vil gerne have bred opbakning og samtidig også er nødt til at tilpasse sig det politiske spektrum.
    - Havde de prioriteret hårdt på aktiv trans og off trans, så var det ikke gået i gennem det politiske.
- Hvis du lavede en spørgerunde i mobilitet så tror jeg ikke særlig mange vil fjerne bilen helt. Bilen har sin plads i byen
- Som politiker kan man udsætte det hårdere valg. Politikerne har ikke muligheden for at træffe de svære beslutninger, da det kan ødelægge deres politiske karrriere.
    - Teknologisk fix der vil redde os bliver brugt som argument for at tage færre "hårde" beslutninger.
    - Teknologisk fix kan ikke løse trængselsproblem, vi skal deles om pladsen.
- Bilen spiller stadig en stor rolle - vi ønsker at fjerne goderne for bilen, således at du stadig kan køre i bil, men det bliver mere besværligt, færre parkeringspladser, omkørsel. Vi forhindrer dig ikke i at bruge din bil.

- Det er de kortere ture som prioriteres til aktiv transport og kollektiv. Langs mindre gader inde for ringgaden.

- **Hvordan afvejer i værdier?**
    - Hvilke værdier er vigtigere end andre?
        - Der ser ud til at være en forskellig prioritering alt efter hvor i landskabet vi befinder os. Bilen prioriteres højere på de større veje for at øge fremkommeligheden, mens at cyklen og den aktive transport samt offentlig transport prioriteres ved mindre veje og korridorer. Det

grundlæggende argument er at cyklen mv., skal prioriteres for at tillade liveability i byrummet. Altså at byrummet kan bruges til grønne løsninger samt ophold. Miljø og klima nævnes også men argumentet er ikke nær så fremført.

-

- **Hvordan ser i bilens rolle i henhold til aktive transportformer?**
    - Hvilke argumenter har været centrale for at kunne argumentere for mindre bilisme inden for ringvejen?
        - Bus og cyklisme kan flytte flere mennesker
        - Liveability - bilen fylder meget både når den kører og holder parkeret. Det byder at vi ikke kan prioritere andre installationer.
        - Bilen har stadig sin plads, og det er særligt langs større gader, hvor fremkommelighed kobles til vækst og værdiskabelse.
        - Vækst er stadig et centralt argument for at beholde bilen og tillade dens muligheder.
        - Dog vil den i centrale dele af byen blive udfordret - vi tillader den stadig men det er mere besværligt. Dette argument er fordelagtigt, da planlæggerne både "løser" trængselsproblemerne og ikke udfordrer det enkelte individs frihed.

Morten Skou Nicolaisen

Indflyvning:

- **Hvordan afgører man i hvor høj grad der skal være bilparkering eller grønt? Hvor går grænsen så at sige?**
    - Ofte løsninger gennem kompromisser og kattelem, du får noget jeg får noget
    - Hvis løsningerne er kompromisser hvor vi tager udgangspunkt i laveste fællesnævner, så vil jeg sætte spørgsmålstegn ved hvorvidt vores politiske og planlægningssystem er gearet til at finde svar på de konflikter som er klimaforandringer bl.a.

- **Udfolde liveability noget mere. Hvad indeholder liveability for dig?**

- Liveability er også den herlighedsværdi som det skaber - borgere udefra kommer til byen for at få en oplevelse samtidig med at de handler. Hvis det drejede sig om parkering, så ville de tage til Tilst eller lign.

- **Udfolde personlig frihed til at tage bilen**.
    - Typisk ser jeg at man ikke "ulovliggør" bilen men indskrænker dens muligheder for at undgå at tage folks "frihed" dem → for at det kan gå igennem politisk også.

- **Udfolde smart vækst - hvad betyder det?**
    - Jeg har set at det typisk kobles til det individuelle sted. Vækst kontra andre værdier skal altså afvejes ud fra de behov der måtte være det gældende sted og typisk sigte efter løsninger hvor alle eller de fleste af behovene efterleves.
    - Eks. parkering inde for ringgaden - skal det være træer/byparker eller fortsat parkering? Hvordan afgøres det?

- **Hvor meget fylder klimaforandringerne i det politiske og kommunale?** Jeg har ikke oplevet at det har fyldt meget, men ofte er blevet tolket til mere lokale problemstillinger såsom forurening, trængsel, grønne parker osv.
        - Det er ofte at borgerne er mere interesserede i deres hverdag. Hvis vi kommer og ændrer noget omkring deres bolig jamen så oplever vi konflikt. Det kan være træer, parkering osv.
        - Da man i sin tid valgte at fritlægge åen, så mistede konservative 3 mandater. Efterfølgende har der været stor opbakning. Så større løsninger kræver politisk mod.

- **Mobilitetsplanen**
    - Jesper fortæller at mobilitetsplanen baserer sig på mange af de tidligere principper, men at man hver gang har "strammet skruen". Kan du uddybe hvad det vil sige at stramme skruen?
    - Hvilke mekanismer tillader jer at stramme skruen hver gang?
    - Hvordan ved i hvor meget i kan stramme skruen?

Tyge Wamstrup

- **Kan du beskrive dit arbejde og grænsefladen mellem det politiske og embedsværket?**
    - Magistratstyret kommunen:
        - Magistraten består af borgmesteren og rådmændene og kan sidestilles med regeringen.
        - Byrådet kan sidestilles med folketinget
        - Vi servicerer rådmanden, han er både politisk og teknisk → typisk driver rådmanden for teknik og miljø oppositionspolitik da teknik og miljøs rådmand ofte går til mindretallet
        - Rådmanden kan både udfordre nogle af de beslutninger som bliver truffet i byrådet, men skal samtidig også indrette sig efter beslutningerne
        - Tyges opgave er at oplyse rådmanden
        - Rådmanden taler om at man skal ikke mobbe bilerne ud af byen → Tyges rolle er så at forsøge at vende tilbage til det nødvendige og objektive i at skabe restriktiv "bil-politik"

- Være opmærksom på biases mellem fagligt ladsiggørligt og politisk ladsiggørligt.
- Det er mere bekvemt at køre i sin bil - vanens magt er enorm stærk → folk vil hellere holde i kø de sidste
- Under coronakrisen brugte vi 3 uger til at implementere teams → havde det ikke været pga. krisen så havde det taget 3 år at få det implementeret → nødvendigheden af at implementere er drevet af krisen

- **Hvordan finder man så kompromisset? For ofte ender det i win-win situationer som eks. Schleppegrellsgade, hvor der ikke er nogen politisk retning men pleaser alle?**
    - Lad mig starte et andet sted - alle partierne kunne blive enige om klimaplanen som var meget ambitiøs, men samtidig er den også meget løst formuleret
    - Politikere er glatte som ål de er gode til at undgå at skulle stå på mål for deres udsagn. Det er den proces vi er i nu - vi skal få dem til at stå på mål overfor klimaplanen bl.a.

- Vi er nødt til at gøre dem bevidste om at når man vælger at placere et parcelhuskvarter i et område uden opkobling til den offentlige transport, så vælger folk bilen. De skal være bevidste om at valgene de træffer føre til bestemte handlemåder.
- Hele diskussionen om roadpricing er man gået uden om fordi man ved på forhånd at det vil have for store konsekvenser for borgernes hverdag, man vælger i stedet at kigge forslag som ikke har indgriben i borgernes hverdag.
- Ydermere, politikerne er bundet af deres bagland, så når det rammer deres bagland, så bakker de ud af hvad de ellers havde lovet i klimaplanen
- Hvordan kan vi så skabe det politiske mod der kræves for at kunne gå imod deres bagland og i stedet prioritere større værdier såsom klimaforandringerne?
    - For konservative der valgte at åbne Aarhus Å op og skabe et bedre bymiljø, var det politisk selvmord. Det har taget dem lang tid at komme igen
    - Der er flere veje ind i at skabe konsensus hvor alle kan se lyset
        - En anden vej end politisk selvmord er at skabe en mulighed for ham til at sige til sit bagland, *"jeg har kæmpet for det i ville men byrådet har bedt mig om noget andet"*. Det tror han mere på i en magistratstyret kommune
    - Det der batter noget er at få yderligere borgerinddragelse ind for at skabe nye politiske rum hvor politikerne kan finde ny opbakning eller blive udfordret.
    - Det er svært at bevare det større abstraktionsniveau i borgersamtaler, fordi deres fokus flyttes fra klimaforandringer til hvor mange parkeringspladser klimaforandringerne fjerner fra dem → betyder at politikernes fokus ligger samme sted, og de kan undskylde deres handlinger ud fra at stå på mål for borgernes ønsker → procesproblem!
    -