



Between **BLOCKS** & **BELONGING**

Patching the City

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Abstract

This project is based on a critical examination of Urbanplanen in Amager, a residential area created on modernist urban planning principles. The project problematizes how the functional division, car-prioritized infrastructure, and the lack of social meeting places have created unsafe and fragmented urban spaces. Based on theories from Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl, the affordance concept, and the public domain concept, it examines how urban spaces can be rethought to strengthen safety, recreational opportunities, and social communities.

The project is based on an iterative design process, where desk research, site-specific analyses, and ethnographic methods have formed the basis for an in-depth understanding of the challenges and potentials of the place. User involvement has been an essential part of the process, where qualitative conversations and observations with residents have provided insight into experienced challenges and needs in everyday life.

With the concept of *Patching the City*, the project investigates how modernist urban spaces can be repaired through targeted design approaches that activate the spaces between buildings, create safe connections, and support the many needs of everyday life. Three strategic intervention areas have been selected as examples of how design solutions can be implemented to create more vibrant and safe urban spaces in Urbanplanen.

The project concludes with a conclusion and a critical reflection on the chosen methods, design strategies, and solutions. Here, the potentials and limitations of the project are assessed, as well as how the results can contribute to the further development of Urbanplanen and similar residential areas.

Reading Guide

To get the most out of this report, it is recommended to follow the structure of the report from start to finish. The guide helps the reader navigate through the project's themes, analyses, design development and final reflections. In this way, a coherent picture of the problem, method and solution is created.

Prologue - theme and research interest

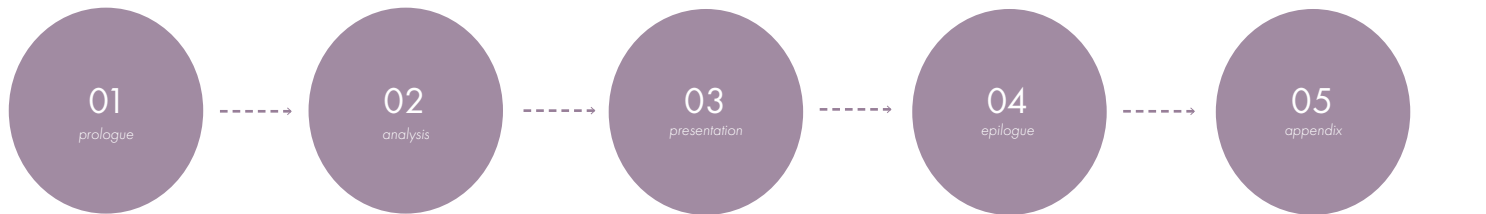
This chapter introduces the reader to the overall theme and rationale of the project. It presents the background to the problem area and the central theoretical concepts that form the foundation for the rest of the report. It is here that the reader gains insight into the professional and personal motivation for the project.

Presentation - design and principles

This chapter presents the project's design approach and overall strategy. The chapter shows how the insights from the analysis and the chosen theories have been translated into concrete design measures and principles, and how these together address the project's problem.

Appendix - resident interviews

The appendix contains additional material, including transcribed interviews with residents and own observations from the area. These serve as an important background for the analysis, but are not reproduced in full in the report itself.



Analysis - the physical place and its people

This chapter examines the specific project area through a series of analyses of the site's physical structures, social dynamics and perceived qualities. The focus is on movement patterns, use, demographics, safety and urban structure, and the chapter thus forms the basis for the subsequent design work.

Epilogue - concluding remarks

This chapter brings together the threads and provides a final assessment of the project. It discusses the project's results in relation to the original problem statement, as well as the potentials and limitations that have emerged through the process.

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Introduction

This project investigates how transforming the housing area, Urbanplanen located in Copenhagen, can integrate sociological and phenomenological perspectives to address both physical and social challenges. The study builds on Jane Jacobs' *Eyes on the Street* to analyze how urban space design influences social interaction, safety, and residents' perceptions of their surroundings. Jan Gehl's theories will further support these principles by emphasizing human-scale urban design and social life in public spaces.

A key theoretical framework in this study is *Public Domain*, which will be used to examine how access, ownership, and regulation shape the inclusivity of urban spaces. The project will explore whether the current urban design of the area fosters a sense of openness and shared ownership or reinforces social exclusion and territoriality.

Additionally, *Affordance* will be an analytical tool to evaluate how physical design elements enable or restrict social interactions and behavioral possibilities. By applying this concept, the study will assess whether specific urban features invite, guide, or limit residents' use of public space.

Where are we?

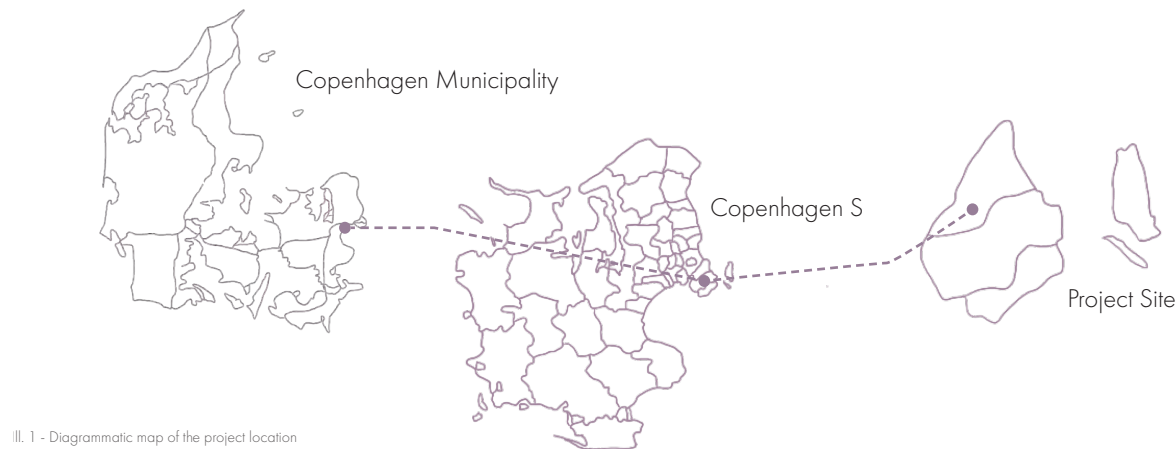
Urbanplanen is the largest public housing area in Amager Vest and is located south of Peder Lykkes Vej between Røde Mellemvej and Englandsvej. The district was built between 1965 and 1971 on the initiative of the then mayor Urban Hansen as part of a larger strategy to provide affordable housing for the citizens of Copenhagen. In total, Urbanplanen consists of 2,600 homes, housing around 5,400 residents.

The project was part of an ambitious plan to counteract the population exodus from Copenhagen. Urban Hansen wanted to build up to 50,000 new homes in the municipality, but the plan met with great resistance. As a result, only the 2,600 homes in Urbanplanen were realized. The construction was carried out by Kooperativ Bygge Industri (KBI), which was responsible for both architecture and engineering. They used an industrialized construction

method with prefabricated concrete elements, resulting in a strict, functional architecture without decorative details. The development follows a rectangular pattern known as crane track architecture and consists of four-story apartment blocks and terraced houses that surround the green area Remiseparken.

The urban plan was originally intended as an area where residents could live and live their entire lives. However, the area did not develop quite as expected and over time gained a reputation as socially disadvantaged with a high proportion of residents with ethnic backgrounds other than Danish. Since the turn of the millennium, several urban renewal projects have been underway to improve the area, and development is still ongoing today.

(Trap Danmark, n.d.).



Problem Statement

How can urban spaces in Urbanplanen be designed to enhance **safety**, provide **recreational opportunities**, and create **social meeting places** for residents?

safety

In urban design, safety refers to both physical security and the perceived feeling of being safe in urban space. It is not just about crime prevention, but about how spaces and infrastructure are designed so that people feel safe, visible, and comfortable.

According to recent research, including the Center for Safety Studies and Danish urban development practice, safety is created through:

- Good lighting
- Open visual contact
- Active use of urban space (people attract people)
- Avoidance of dark, unmanageable or isolated zones.

Arne Gaardmand (Dansk Byplanlægning, 2006) emphasizes that safety is part of the social responsibility in planning, where it is about creating environments that are humanly scaled and are perceived as manageable and welcoming.

recreational opportunities

The concept covers the urban spaces and functions that offer movement, play, relaxation, and nature experiences – elements that are necessary for a healthy and balanced urban life.

According to Arne Gaardmand (2006), recreational functions are a key component of the social dimension of urban planning because they contribute to well-being and equal access to green spaces and activity offers. They must be easily accessible, varied, and age-inclusive.

social meeting places

According to Gaardmand (2006), social meeting places are defined spaces in the urban environment where residents naturally gather for both spontaneous and organized activities. He emphasizes that such spaces, such as small squares, groups of benches, or semi-private areas, are essential for creating neighborhood and community (Gaardmand, Dansk byplanlægning).

Methodology
The evolution of Urbanplanen
Affordance
Public Domain
The effect of the modernism
The policy for socially vulnerable areas
Living streets
Design to safety
Atmosphere in urban design
Theory as a framework for understanding

PROLOGUE

The following chapter provides an introduction to the context and theoretical framework of the project. It presents the methodological approach, the development of Urbanplanen, the concept of affordance, the municipal policy for disadvantaged urban areas, and the influence of modernism on urban space. Together, these sections form the basis for further analysis and design development.

"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."

Jane Jacobs, 1961

Methodology



III. 2 - Literature research

The project is based on an exploratory and iterative design process, where different methodological approaches are used to create a nuanced understanding of both context, issues and design potentials.

Initially, extensive desk research was carried out with a view to clarifying the thematic and physical framework of the project. This phase indicated a particular focus on a modernist residential area, which led to a critical approach to modernist urban planning principles and their consequences. In order to achieve a theoretically grounded approach to the analysis of the area, key urban and architectural theorists were involved, including Jane Jacobs and her criticism of functional division and absence of street activity, Jan Gehl's work on human scale and sensuality in urban space, the affordance concept with a focus on the activating potential of space, and Hajer and Reijndorp's theory of the public domain as a platform for meetings and coexistence in urban space.

The theoretical framework was followed up by a contextual and qualitative mapping of the chosen residential area through site visits. Here, both ethnographic and spatial analyses were carried out with a view to un-



III. 3 - Desktop analysis

covering the residents' usage patterns, social relations and experiences of security and belonging. In addition, mappings, spatial registrations and qualitative interviews with residents were prepared. The area's historical development, demographic composition and institutional structures were also included in order to understand the complex whole of which the area is a part.

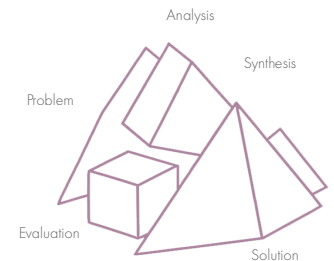
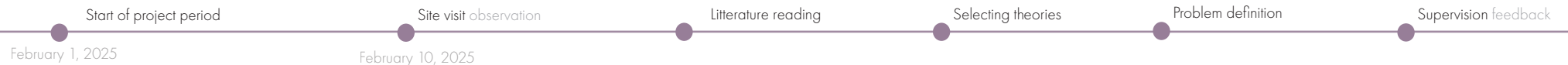
Based on the collected data and analyses, a number of preliminary mapping diagrams and thematic visualizations were completed, which were presented at a mid-term presentation, pin-up I. The presentation gave rise to feedback from supervisors and fellow students, which contributed to a sharpening of the project's angle and its problem formulation.

Methodically, each design approach has been developed based on the central issues identified in the analysis phase and tested through sketches, 3D models, and visual simulations. The focus has been on how spatial changes, with relatively simple means, can create clear improvements in the experience and use of urban space. The design solutions must not only meet functional needs but also activate the social potential of Urbanplanen and support



III. 4 - Data collecting

III. 5 - Timeline



III. 6 - Methodology



III. 7 - Design development

the project's overall ambition to rethink the modernist urban structure based on human scale, ownership, and presence.

The subsequent phase has concentrated on concept development based on the collected insights and the theoretical framework. Through an iterative process, the concept has been continuously tested and further developed through sketching, diagrams and visual aids, and it has been adapted in dialogue with the supervisor and on the basis of criticism and discussion in the study environment.

The final phase of the project has been characterized by a link between concept development and concrete design work, where the identified issues have been addressed through spatial and functional approaches.

Based on the analysis of Urbanplanen's car-oriented infrastructure, fragmented urban structure, and lack of safe and social meeting places, the project has worked towards creating a more people-centered urban space. At its core, the problem has been that the area's modernist planning principles have created large, unprogrammed and functionally divided areas that do not sufficiently support the residents' needs for security, recreation, and social interaction.



III. 8 - Feedback sessions

Through a synthesis phase, ideas and design criteria were tested in 3D models and digital visualizations, where urban spaces, connections, and living zones were concretized. This phase has made it possible to assess how the concept of "repairing" and "rebounding" the modernist urban plan can be translated into physical design approaches that support the residents' everyday lives. The synthesis phase marks the transition from the analytical understanding of Urbanplanen to the concrete development of design proposals. Here, the insights gathered from analyses, user interviews, observations, and theoretical anchoring have been intertwined in a creative and strategic process. It has been a phase characterized by testing, assessment, and adaptation, where central design criteria have been defined and translated into spatial and programmatic approaches.

In this part of the process, work has been done on concept development and idea testing through diagrams, concept sketches, and 3D models. The focus has been on ensuring that the proposed measures not only respond to the identified challenges, such as insecurity, lack of meeting places, and monofunctional structures, but also activate the qualities and potentials the analyses pointed to.

Proces of analyzing

February 16, 2025

Site visit insights

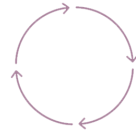
February 17, 2025

Municipal study demographics

Compile the analyses

Pin-up I presentation feedback

March 5, 2025



III. 9 - The iterative process

Design decisions have thus been made in an iterative interaction between theory, empiricism, and visual experiments. Work has been done on testing scale, visual connections, flow in movement and living spaces, and it has been assessed how the initiatives contribute to a safer, livelier and more people-centered district.

At the same time, the project has been carried out as an individual work, where all phases from research, analysis, concept development, and design have been developed and processed by one person. Whereas previous study projects have been carried out in groups with the opportunity to distribute tasks and discuss approaches and solutions in a team, this individual work has provided greater freedom and immersion in one's own interests and methods. It has created stronger personal ownership of the project and made it possible to work more flexibly and iteratively without having to coordinate all decisions in a group process.

Conversely, it has also meant that sparring and idea development have had to be sought out more actively through guidance, feedback sessions, and dialogue with fellow students.

In line with the ethnographic approach, the spatial solutions have been tested against previously collected



III. 10 - PBL

insights from resident interviews, observations, and mappings, where emphasis has been placed on creating designs that invite both activities, stay, and social interaction at eye level with the users. The project concludes with a strategic and physical design solution that, through concrete measures, works to create security, diversity, and vibrant urban spaces in Urbanplanen.

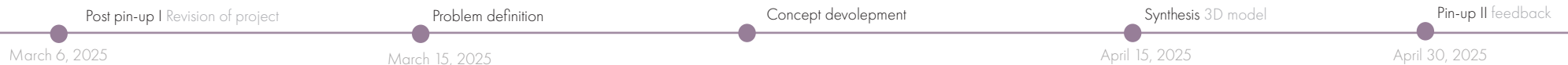
| PBL

The project has also been implemented within the framework of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which is a fundamental learning principle at *Aalborg University*.

This approach has meant that the project has been developed based on a specific problem identified through a critical analysis of the urban space and social challenges of Urbanplanen. The PBL methodology has guided the process towards finding practical and applicable solutions, where theory and empirical evidence have been actively used to qualify the understanding of the problem and shape design approaches that can meet real needs in the context.

The problem orientation has ensured a targeted and systematic approach to the project, where the problem formulation has been the guiding element throughout the

III. 11 - Timeline





III. 12 - The use of AI

| The use of AI

process. This has contributed to creating coherence between the analysis of existing conditions, the theoretical framework, and the specific design proposals presented as the project's result. At the same time, the iterative workflow and the open problem exploration have made it possible to continuously adjust focus and test different directions, which has strengthened the project's robustness and relevance.

As part of the project's methodology, the use of artificial intelligence has been a supporting tool in several phases of the design process. In addition, AI has been used as a sparring partner for text development, idea generation, and structuring the project's content.

However, the use of AI is not without problems and must, as also emphasized in the article "*AI og fremtidens byplanfaglighed*" by Professor Ole B. Jensen (Byplan Nyt, 2024), be seen in light of the ethical, social, and democratic questions that the technology raises. The article raises important considerations about whether machine learning and algorithms can and should play a role in the development of people-friendly cities. Can AI create more transparent and fair decision-making processes, or do we risk that technology will pull us away from the participatory city and citizen involvement?

In this project, AI is therefore not just a technical tool, but also part of a methodological exploration of how digital tools can be included in an ethical and reflexive design practice. The article emphasizes the importance of ensuring that AI does not just rationalize and standardize design and case processing, but that urban planning expertise remains rooted in human empathy, judgment, and understanding of local living conditions. It is precisely in the tension between automation and architectural responsibility that this project has sought to place its practice.

AI has been used in this context with the awareness that the tool is not value-neutral. It has been used as an experimental supplement – not as a decision-maker – and always in combination with qualitative methods, such as observations, interviews and resident involvement. In this way, the project seeks to balance new technology with a human-centered focus and a critical awareness of which cities and urban spaces we want to shape – and for whom. A dynamic and iterative process, where the tool has supported, but not replaced, the critical stance and architectural responsibility that lies in developing a holistic and usable design proposal.



The evolution of Urbanplanen

Urbanplanen was developed between 1965 and 1971 as part of the City of Copenhagen's comprehensive housing policy strategy in the post-war period. The initiative was driven by Mayor Urban Hansen, who wanted to create better housing conditions and address the severe housing shortage that characterized the capital in the mid-20th century. This occurred at a time when modernist urban planning ideals dominated – based on the functionalist division of the city's functions, industrialized construction and the belief in the ability of planning to shape society. (Trap Danmark, 2024).

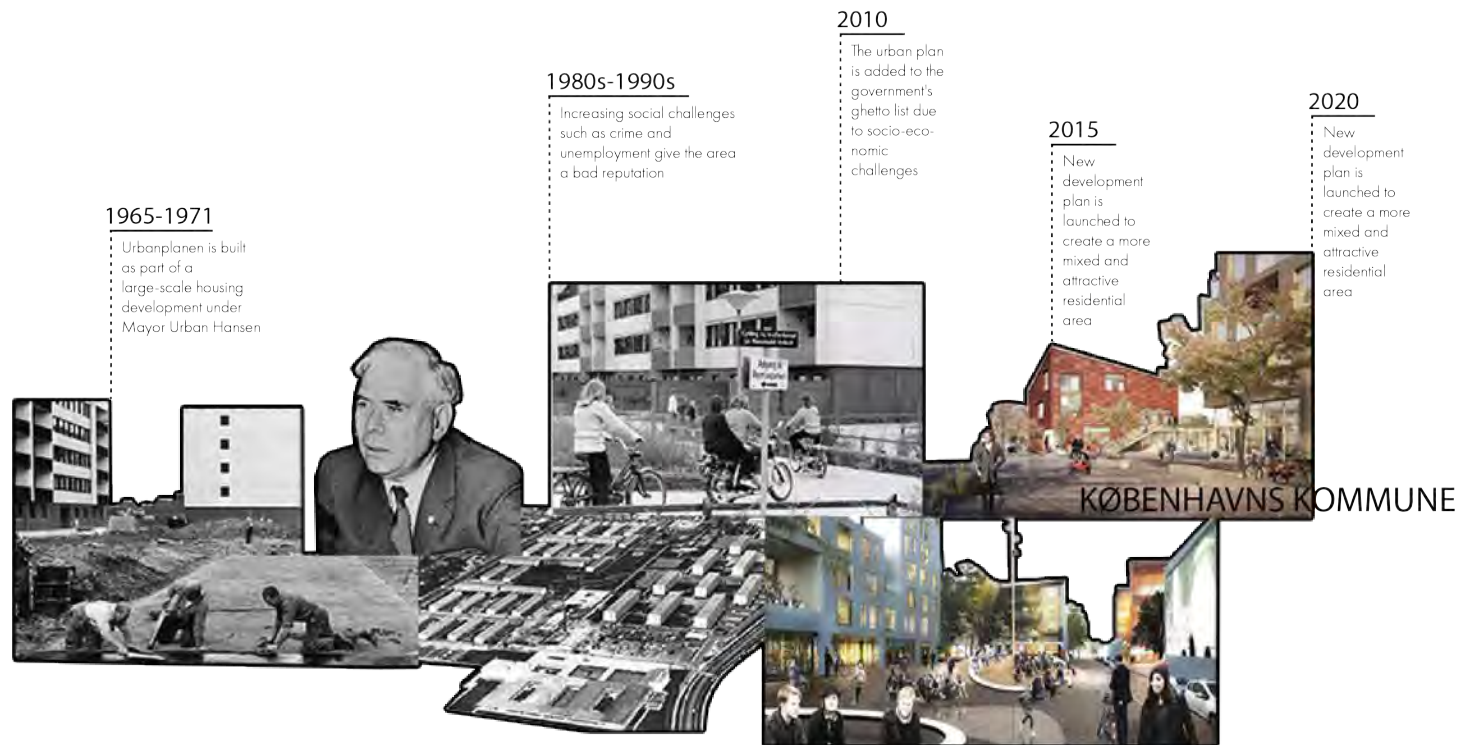
The project was created under the auspices of Kooperativ Byggeindustri (KBI), which was responsible for both the design and construction of the approximately 2,600 homes. The modernist architecture and the crane track principles used in Urbanplanen resulted in the construction of long, rectangular apartment blocks and open green areas. Despite the ambition to create a holistic residential environment – where people could live “from cradle to grave” – the functional zoning and the scale of the development led in practice to a number of social and physical challenges.

During the 1980s and 1990s, criticism of modernist urban planning began to gain momentum. The lack of human scale, the absence of urban meeting places and the monofunctionality of residential areas were identified as contributing factors to social isolation, insecurity and stigmatisation. During this period, Urbanplanen was often

mentioned in connection with ghettoisation and residential areas characterised by vulnerability and socio-economic challenges (Vagnby & Jensen, 2002). This led to the area being included in municipal and state action plans for vulnerable residential areas on several occasions.

Since the turn of the millennium, a number of physical and social transformations of Urbanplanen have been initiated, including neighborhood revitalization, area renewal and most recently a larger comprehensive plan with a focus on creating a more integrated and vibrant district. These initiatives reflect a changing understanding of urban development, where the focus is increasingly on mixed functions, security, ownership and social communities – in contrast to the original modernist ideals. Today, Urbanplanen stands as an important example of both the ambitions of modernism and its limitations – and thus also as a valuable case for today's and future urban transformation projects. (Copenhagen Municipality, 2024).

To understand how future design approaches can strengthen urban life, security and community in areas like Urbanplanen, it is necessary to take a closer look at the theoretical concepts that inform this approach. One of these is the concept of affordance, which offers an analytical approach to understanding the interaction between physical surroundings and human behavior. By examining what options the built environment offers users, it opens up a more user-driven and situation-sensitive approach to urban space and architecture.



Affordance

By looking at the historical development of Urbanplanen, it becomes clear how the physical structure of the city has had a major impact on the movement patterns, places of residence, and social life of its residents. This raises a central question in urban planning: How can the physical surroundings support or inhibit desired actions and social relations?

This very question is addressed through the concept of affordance, which offers an analytical framework for understanding the relationship between the built environment and human behavior. In other words, what opportunities for action does the space provide its users?

Affordance is a concept that describes the relation between physical elements in the environment and the actions they invite the user to perform. It is about how an object, a surface, or a structure creates opportunities for interaction based on both its physical properties and the user's abilities and intentions - as described in *"The concept of affordance"*, written by Laursen, L. N., Jensen, O. B., & Löchtefeld, M.,

"Affordance connects the physical properties of a thing, surface, structure, or sign with the reasoning and abilities of a human, to then describe the opportunities for actualizations"
(Laursen et al., 2024, pp. 8).

In an architectural and urban design context, this means that the design of a space is not just a passive backdrop, but actively influences how people move, stay, and interact with each other. The design of a bench, for example, can either encourage longer stays or prevent them, depending on its shape and choice of materials. Similarly, a space with open and clear lines of sight can support security and social interaction, while an unstructured and limited design can lead to exclusion and insecurity.

Affordance is closely linked to the user's abilities and intentions, as well as the possibilities offered by the design. Laursen et al. emphasize that,

"As such affordance is defined as the relation between the abilities and intent of the user and the properties of a designed object. It is related to behavior made possible, depending on the recipient" (Laursen et al., 2024, pp. 9).

This means that a design is never neutral but always contains an inherent invitation to certain actions and the absence of others. It is therefore crucial that urban spaces and architecture are designed with awareness of which actions are intended to be supported, and which may be unintentionally restricted.

The concept of affordance can also be related to a broader discussion about the human relation to the built environment. Traditionally, we have perceived humans as separate from and controlling their surroundings, but modern thinking challenges this idea. Laursen et al. note that,

"In modern philosophy and thinking we have been used to understand humans as powerful creatures that not only are separate from 'nature' and 'things' but also in command of them"
(Laursen et al., 2024, pp. 29).

In an urban design context, this means that we should understand urban spaces as co-creators of human behavior rather than just neutral backdrops.

In this project, the concept of affordance will be used to investigate how urban spaces can be designed to support social interaction, safety, and accessibility. By analyzing existing affordances in urban space, the project can identify where design either supports or constrains certain actions and thereby develop strategies to create a more inclusive and functional urban environment.

Public Domain

In the work of rethinking the modernist housing construction in Urbanplanen, it is crucial not only to relate to physical structures and functional divisions, but also to the social dynamics that unfold in the intermediate urban spaces. Here, the concept of the public domain plays a significant role. As the area today contains a diverse resident composition and complex social layers, there is a need to understand how the city's space can create a framework for meetings between people across diversity and ways of life.

In this context, the concept of public domain contributes with an analytical and theoretical language that can capture more than just accessibility and physical openness. It focuses on the question of how urban space can support shared presence, spontaneous interaction, and the experience of belonging - and thus also become an important piece in design strategies that aim for security and social cohesion. In continuation of the analysis of the spatial organization of Urbanplanen, it is therefore relevant to include this perspective as a key to developing urban spaces that are not only publicly accessible, but are also experienced as truly shared and significant.

The concept of public domain, as introduced by Hajer and Reijndorp in their work *In Search of New Public Domain* (2001), offers a significant critique of traditional notions of public space. Whereas classical urban theory has often operated with a physically and formally defined understanding of public space – the square, the street, the park – Hajer and Reijndorp insist that the public domain should rather be understood as a sociopolitical practice: a space where difference can manifest itself and where urban life truly emerges at the intersection of accessibility, usability and the encounter with “the other”.

They introduce a distinction between “public space” and the “public domain” to emphasize that architecture and urban space alone do not guarantee publicness in a democratic sense. It is only at the moment when people with different backgrounds, interests and identities feel invited to participate and negotiate their presence that the public domain truly emerges. In this sense, the public domain is conditioned by both social trust, spatial openness and the possibility of the unpredictable encounter.

This understanding stands in sharp contrast to modernist urban planning, where functional division and spatial determinism reduced the public to either transit surfaces or over-programmed zones – often emptied of social complexity. In response to this, the public domain becomes a critical tool for rethinking how architecture can support plurality, coexistence and informal interactions in the city.

(Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001).

In this project, the public domain functions as both a theoretical lens and a design strategy. The ambition is to identify and activate the spatial potentials where security, activity and visual openness create the conditions for precisely the unpredictable encounter.

By breaking with the monotony of modernism and instead introducing microspace, transparency and programmed activity, the project seeks to revive public space as public domain – a reparative gesture that not only patches up the architecture's faults, but transforms it into a socially vibrant city.

The effect of the modernism

Urbanplanen is a clear product of the modernist urban planning that dominated both Danish and international architecture and urban development in the mid-20th century. Modernism was driven by a strong belief in progress, functionalism, and rational planning – ideals that arose in the wake of industrialization and the desire to create better housing conditions in step with the growth of cities.

Influential architects such as Le Corbusier were the standard bearers of this thinking. In his manifesto *La Ville Radieuse* (1935), he argued for the functionally divided city, where housing, work, leisure, and traffic were separated in order to achieve efficiency and order. This ideal inspired the construction of large housing complexes surrounded by green open spaces – a typology that also came to characterize the Urbanplanen.

In Denmark, the principles of modernism were continued and adapted through public housing, especially in the period after the Second World War. According to Finn Kjærdsdam (2007) and Arne Gaardman (1993), urban development in these years was characterized by a technocratic approach, where zoning, standardization and prefabricated construction created new residential neighborhoods with a focus on rational production and social equality. The Urbanplanen was established precisely in this context – as part of a political desire to solve the housing shortage through large, uniform residential areas with green spaces and a clear traffic structure.

Although the intentions were to improve the quality of life through light, air and space, many modernist residential areas – including

Urbanplanen – have later proven to have unintended consequences. The green areas between the buildings often lack function and quality of living, and the strong division of functions has created monofunctional zones without life at street level. The criticism, raised by Jane Jacobs (1961), among others, points out that this planning has resulted in urban spaces without spontaneity, diversity and social life.

Today, many modernist residential areas are working to “repair” this legacy through transformations that reintroduce complexity, mixed-use, and human scale. This is part of a larger movement away from the top-down planning of modernism and toward more participatory and site-specific urban development strategies.



Ill. 14 - Modernism

The policy for socially vulnerable areas

Urbanplanen is an area that has been categorized as a vulnerable area on several occasions – a term used in urban planning contexts for districts or residential areas with social, physical, and economic challenges. A vulnerable area is often characterized by a high concentration of low-income households, an overrepresentation of non-Western residents, low educational levels, and limited connection to the labor market. At the same time, the physical environment can be characterized by monotonous housing structures, a lack of meeting places, and a general feeling of insecurity and isolation.

To meet these challenges, the City of Copenhagen is working on a policy that aims to create a more inclusive and socially sustainable city. The Policy for Vulnerable Urban Areas (2017) presents three central approaches that complement each other and together aim to strengthen the resilience and development potential of each area:

The Supportive Approach

This approach focuses on supporting residents directly – both children, young people, adults and families – by compensating for lack of local resources. The efforts can be social programs, employment initiatives or measures that strengthen well-being and educational opportunities. The goal is to create better life chances and increased participation in community life.

The locally Organized Approach

Here, it is about strengthening local cohesion and networks through active communities, associations, institutions and neighborhoods. By supporting existing social life and promoting new communities, the area must be made more socially sustainable and resilient to vulnerability.



III. 15 - The three approaches

The Structural Approach

The third approach focuses on the built environment and infrastructure. By changing the physical framework – for example through improved lighting, transformation of unsafe areas, new meeting places and connections – the residents' behavior, experience of the area and opportunities for interaction are affected. It is about creating security and life in the urban space through targeted design and planning.

These three approaches do not work in isolation, but are integrated into a holistic strategy, where both physical and social elements are emphasized in the development of a vulnerable area. Urbanplanen is thus not only an area in need of improvement, but also an area with potential for change through interdisciplinary and long-term efforts.

Copenhagen Municipality (2017). Policy for Vulnerable Urban Areas.

Living streets

Jane Jacobs introduced the concept of "Eyes on the Street" in her 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. She argued that safety and life on city streets are not created solely through the presence of police or technological surveillance solutions but largely through the natural, informal surveillance of city residents and users.

According to Jacobs, a well-functioning urban space is characterized by a constant visual presence of people living, working, or spending time in the area. This ensures that potentially undesirable or criminal behavior is detected and met with social control, which increases the general feeling of safety.

An essential element of Jacobs' theory is that urban spaces should be designed in a way that invites people to stay and be active. She points to three key principles that underpin "Eyes on the Street":

A clear division between public and private spaces

Jacobs argues that a well-defined transition between private homes and public streets creates a natural cohesion between the two. If homes face the street with active facades and windows, a form of passive surveillance arises from the residents, who can see what is happening in the urban space.

Active Ground Floors and Functional Mix

Streets become more vibrant and safe if there is a mix of functions such as shops, cafes, residential entrances and recreational facilities at ground level. When these functions are present, a constant flow of people moving through the area at different times of the day is created, which increases safety.

A diverse and densely populated urban space

Jacobs believes that an urban space must have a diverse composition of residents and visitors to maintain a dynamic urban life. If an area is too monotonous in its function or resident composition, it risks being lifeless at certain times, making it more vulnerable to unsafe situations.

Ill. 16 - Jane Jacobs



Design to safety

Jan Gehl, one of today's most influential urban planners, has argued in his book *Life Between Buildings* that a well-functioning urban space is not just about buildings and infrastructure, but to a large extent about the social interactions that take place between them. He introduces the concept of "life between buildings", which emphasizes the importance of designing urban spaces that invite people to stay, socialize and feel safe.

According to Gehl, an urban space is only successful when people choose to stay there voluntarily - not just because they have to pass through, but because it offers quality and functions that support daily life.

In connection with safety, Gehl points out that people feel safest in urban spaces where there is a natural presence of other people. Safety does not arise in sterile or empty areas, but in urban spaces where movement, stay and social activities create a continuous presence of life. To achieve this, he highlights three essential design principles:

Protection from traffic and crime

A safe urban space must protect pedestrians from both physical danger from traffic and perceived insecurity from social risks. Narrow streets with limited car traffic, clear lighting and visible transitions between private and public spaces can increase the feeling of safety.

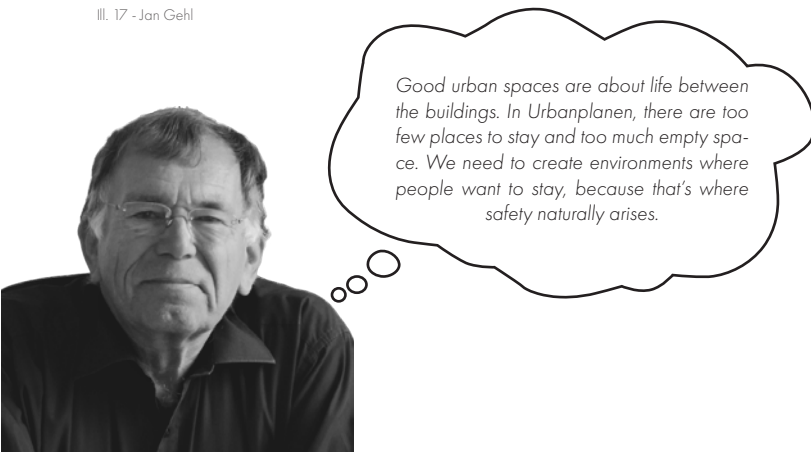
Human scale and sensory variation

Gehl emphasizes that the scale of urban space must be adapted to the human experience. Small, intimate spaces, visual variation in architecture, and green elements make an urban space more inviting and welcoming, which indirectly contributes to a sense of security.

Opportunity for social interaction and activity

A city space becomes safer when it offers natural meeting places that invite different user groups to hang out. Small squares with seating, play areas and informal living zones support social encounters and ensure that more people have a reason to be in the area.

Ill. 17 - Jan Gehl



Good urban spaces are about life between the buildings. In Urbanplanen, there are too few places to stay and too much empty space. We need to create environments where people want to stay, because that's where safety naturally arises.

Atmosphere in urban design

Where Jane Jacobs highlighted the importance of life in the street and visual contact as prerequisites for security, and Jan Gehl focused on human scale and sensuality in urban space, an obvious question arises: What exactly makes an urban space experienced as safe, inviting and human? Here the concept of atmosphere is central.

Atmosphere is often described as the overall mood that arises in a space, which is both sensory, physical and social. It is an immediate sensation that cannot necessarily be measured, but which is crucial for how we stay, navigate and feel comfortable in an urban environment. The German philosopher Gernot Böhme defines atmosphere as something that “flows between subject and object”, and which arises in the field of tension between the physical design of the place and our bodily presence (Böhme, 2017).

In urban residential areas such as Urbanplanen – characterised by large scales, functional separation and often monotonous outdoor spaces – atmosphere plays a special role. Safety here is not only about physical safety and visibility, but also about sensory signals: Is it warm or cold? Inviting or anonymous? Active or deserted? The atmosphere thus becomes a form of silent communication that tells the user whether a place is meant for staying, meetings or just passing through.

In this project, atmosphere is used as an analytical and formative tool. This means that design interventions should not only solve functional needs, but also create moods and invite presence and belonging. Lighting, scale, planting and programming are thought of as atmosphere-creating elements that can activate urban spaces and make them more human. In continuation of Gehl and Jacobs, it is about developing spaces where there are not only eyes on the street – but also emotions and life in the space.

Theory as a framework for understanding

Through the previous theoretical chapter, a conceptual framework has been established that forms the analytical and conceptual foundation for the project. Based on classic and recent urban planning perspectives, a framework has been built in which it is possible to examine how urban environments can promote both security, social interaction, and varied living options.

The last three sections of the theoretical chapter – Living Streets, Design for Safety and Atmosphere – collectively point out that urban space should not only function as a physical structure, but also as a living and sensory environment where people feel safe, included, and motivated to stay. Here, both design approaches, such as scale, materiality, facade expression, and lighting, and

intangible factors such as mood, rhythm, and activity level, play a significant role.

Together, these theoretical perspectives constitute a series of “glasses” that are used in the subsequent analysis of Urbanplanen, both to identify existing challenges and to qualify design potentials. The goal is to develop a site-sensitive and human-centered design that balances functionality with quality of life and safety in the urban space.

ANALYSIS

Demographics
The project site
Context
Use of the area
Movement in the area
Safety in the area
Living streets
Design to safety
Case studies

This chapter presents a series of analyses that together shed light on the challenges and potentials of the project area. The chapter includes a demographic mapping, a description of the selected project area and its contextual location in the city. In addition, the area's use, movement patterns and perceived safety are analyzed. Finally, the concepts of Living Streets and Design to Security are introduced, as well as relevant case studies that inspire possible design solutions.

"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."

Jan Gehl, 2010

Demographics

The population composition in the area reflects a diverse and complex resident group, which has an impact on how the urban space should be designed and activated.

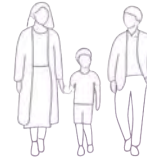
Household types

The area is characterized by a high proportion of families with children, which creates a natural need for safe places to stay, playgrounds and recreational areas where both children and adults can spend time. At the same time, there is a significant group of single people, which indicates a need for social meeting places that can counteract loneliness and support communities. The number of elderly residents is relatively low, but it is still important to ensure accessibility and accommodation options that accommodate this group, for example with seating and easily accessible paths.

Age distribution

The area has a significant proportion of children and adults of working age, which places demands on the city's functions. Playgrounds, school routes and safe paths are important elements, while working citizens may need good connections to public transport and flexible urban spaces that can be used both for living and working. Older residents constitute a smaller but still significant group, which means that the urban space must also be designed with accessibility and recreational opportunities for this age group.

families with children 45%



single 30%



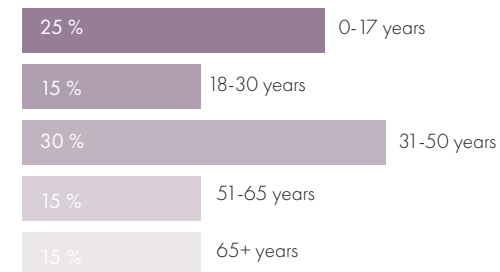
senior (65+) 30%



couples without children 15%



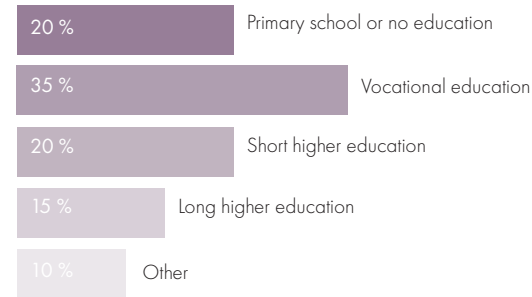
III. 18 - The population composition



III. 19 - Age distribution

Educational level

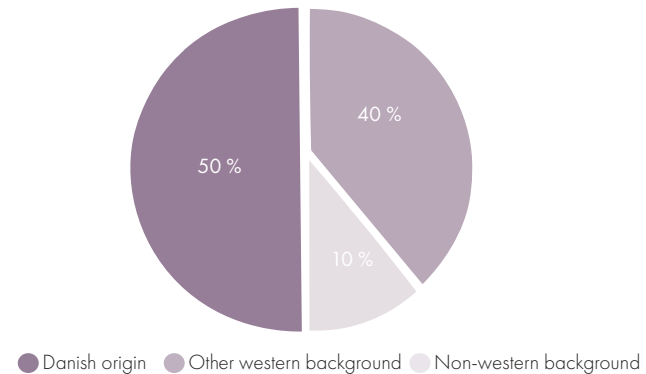
The educational level of residents varies widely, which may have an impact on labour market connections and social conditions in the area. A relatively large number have a vocational background or shorter education, while fewer have a longer higher education. This may indicate a need for urban spaces that support learning, entrepreneurship or informal working communities – for example, open workshops, study zones or areas that can be used for informal market activities.



III. 20 - Educational level

Ethnicity

The area's residents have a mixed background, with a large proportion of them being of non-Western origin. This means that the urban space must support a diversity of social and cultural needs. Common areas can be designed to be inclusive and flexible, so that they can be used in different ways, depending on traditions and everyday life. At the same time, it is relevant to consider how different groups experience safety in the urban space, as this can vary depending on background and experiences.



III. 21 - Ethnicity

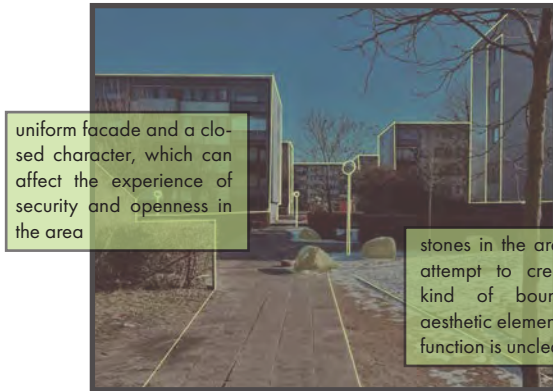
(Copenhagen Municipality, 2023).
(Danmarks Statistik, 2024).

The demographic profile emphasizes the need for a flexible urban space that can accommodate many different user groups. Safety, accessibility and social meeting places should be in focus, as should a balance between active and quiet zones. The diversity of the resident composition also means that the urban space must be able to accommodate different ways of using it – both for everyday life, community and individual immersion.

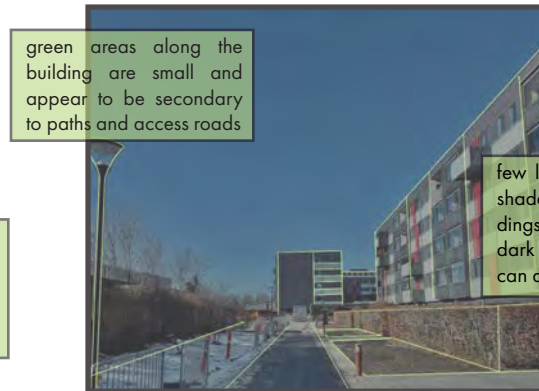
The project site

The analysis has focused particularly on the northern part of the area, as this is where residential development is most dominant, and where there is therefore also the greatest daily presence and human activity. This part serves as an important framework for understanding everyday life and forms a basis for design strategies that can enhance safety, accessibility and social encounters in the urban space.

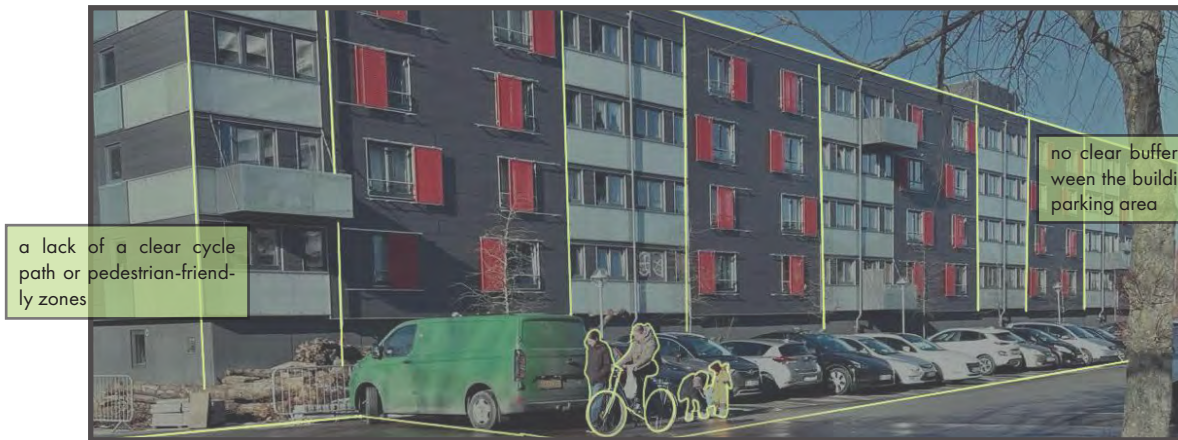
01



02



03



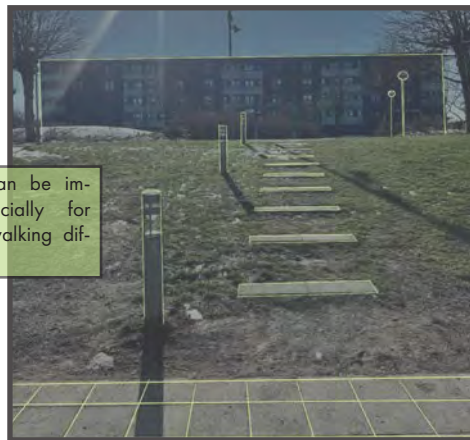
III. 22 - Photos of the area 1-3

III. 23 - Where are we?

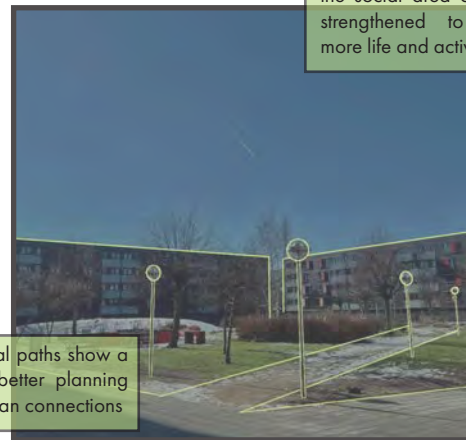
04



05



06



III. 24 - Photos of the area 4-6

Context

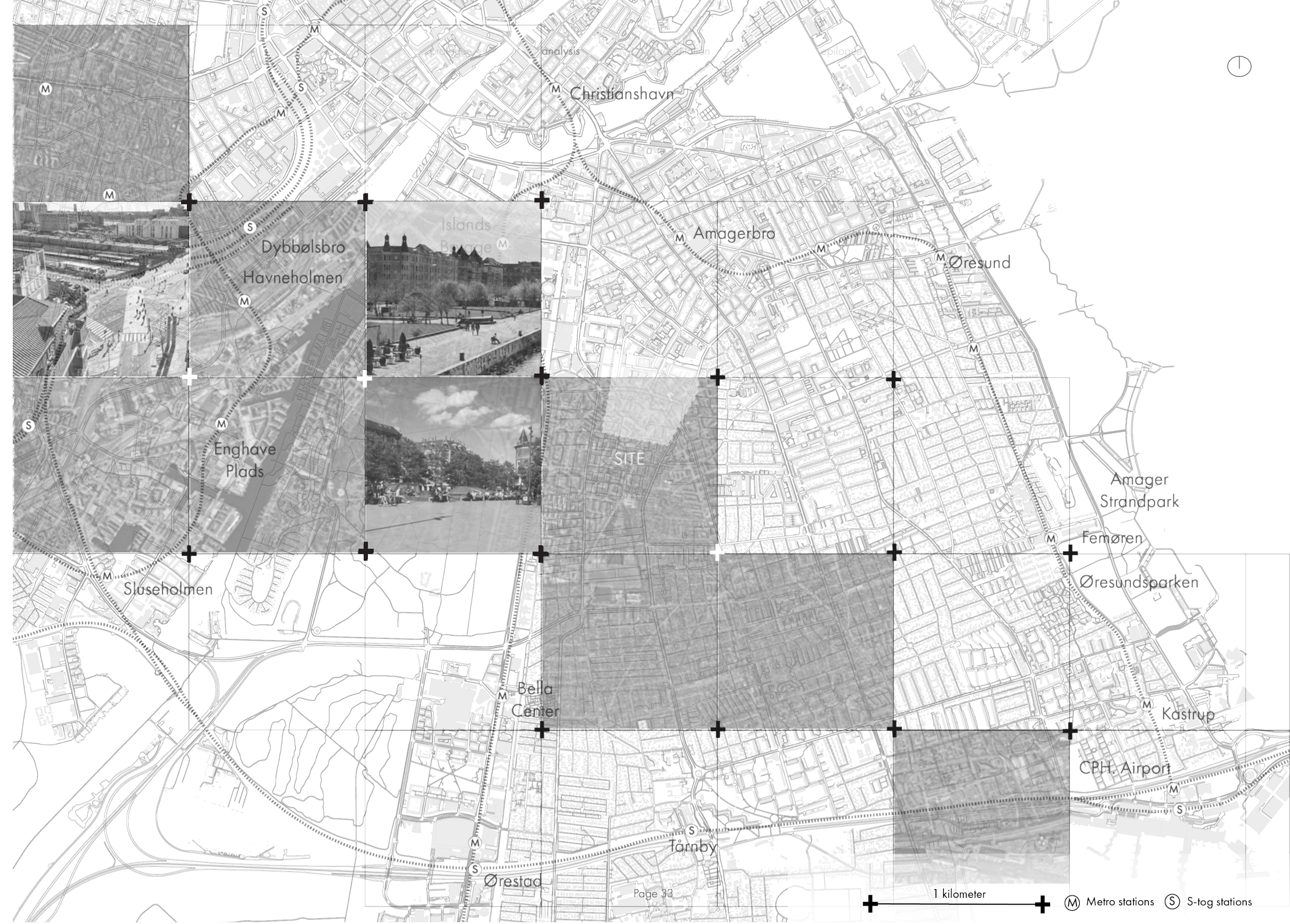
Urbanplanen is located in a transition zone between the dense, classic urban structure of Amagerbro and the more open and infrastructure-heavy areas around Bella Center and Ørestad. This location gives the area a unique position in relation to the rest of Copenhagen, as a kind of borderland between the historically dense and the modern, planned. The accompanying map illustrates how the Urbanplan is strategically connected to the city through major road connections and metro stations, making the area both physically accessible and centrally located in the Copenhagen urban structure.

Urbanplanen is surrounded by significant urban functions that are of great importance for its potential and future development. To the northwest lie Dybbølsbro and Havneholmen, characterized by newer urban development with high density, mixed functions, and recreational urban spaces. To the east are Amager Strandpark and Øresunds metro station, which connect the area to both the coast and Kastrup Airport, and which function as an important recreational and mobility resource. To the southeast lie Bella Center and Ørestad – important hubs for business, conferences and international connections.

Despite this strategic location, Urbanplanen is characterized by a modernist urban planning logic that differs significantly from its neighbors. The area is dominated by large residential blocks, separated by green wedges and wide roads. This structure, which was once thought of as a rational and functional alternative to the dense city, has today resulted in a number of challenges. Infrastructure and buildings are primarily car-oriented, and there are few natural and experiential connections between the area and its surroundings. This creates a certain isolation – both physically and socially – where Urbanplanen appears as a closed enclave in an otherwise dynamic and mixed district.

It is precisely this dual position – as both centrally located and at the same time separate – that is crucial to understand in relation to the project's purpose of creating greater openness, security and coherence between Urbanplanen's urban space and the surrounding Copenhagen.





Use of the area

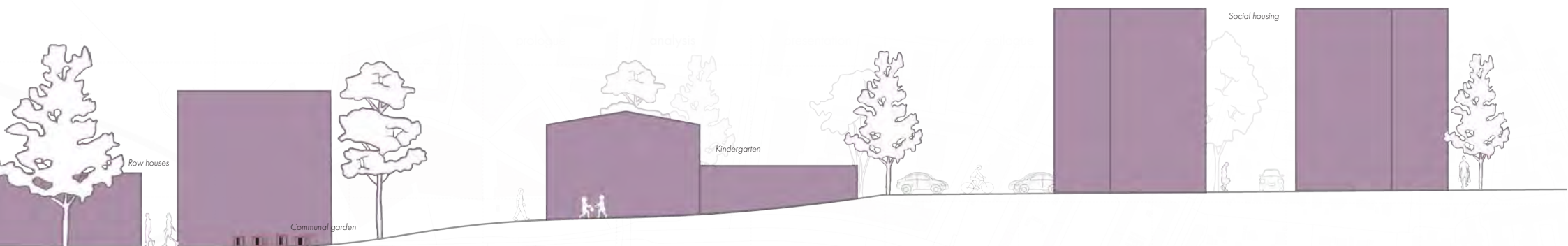
Urbanplanen is characterized by a clear functional division, where residential areas, public institutions, and recreational facilities are located separately. The dominant housing types consist of general apartment buildings, supplemented by a few older buildings and areas with mixed residential and commercial functions. This division has resulted in everyday life activities being concentrated around specific nodes, rather than being evenly distributed in the district.

The primary public functions, such as the library, school, and sports hall, are located in the southern part of the area, which creates a certain centrality and activity there. Conversely, the northern and eastern parts of Urbanplanen, in particular, are left with a more one-sided use, dominated by residential functions without associated places to stay or meet. These parts of the area appear monofunctional and lack urban elements that invite people to stay, socialize, and lead everyday life.

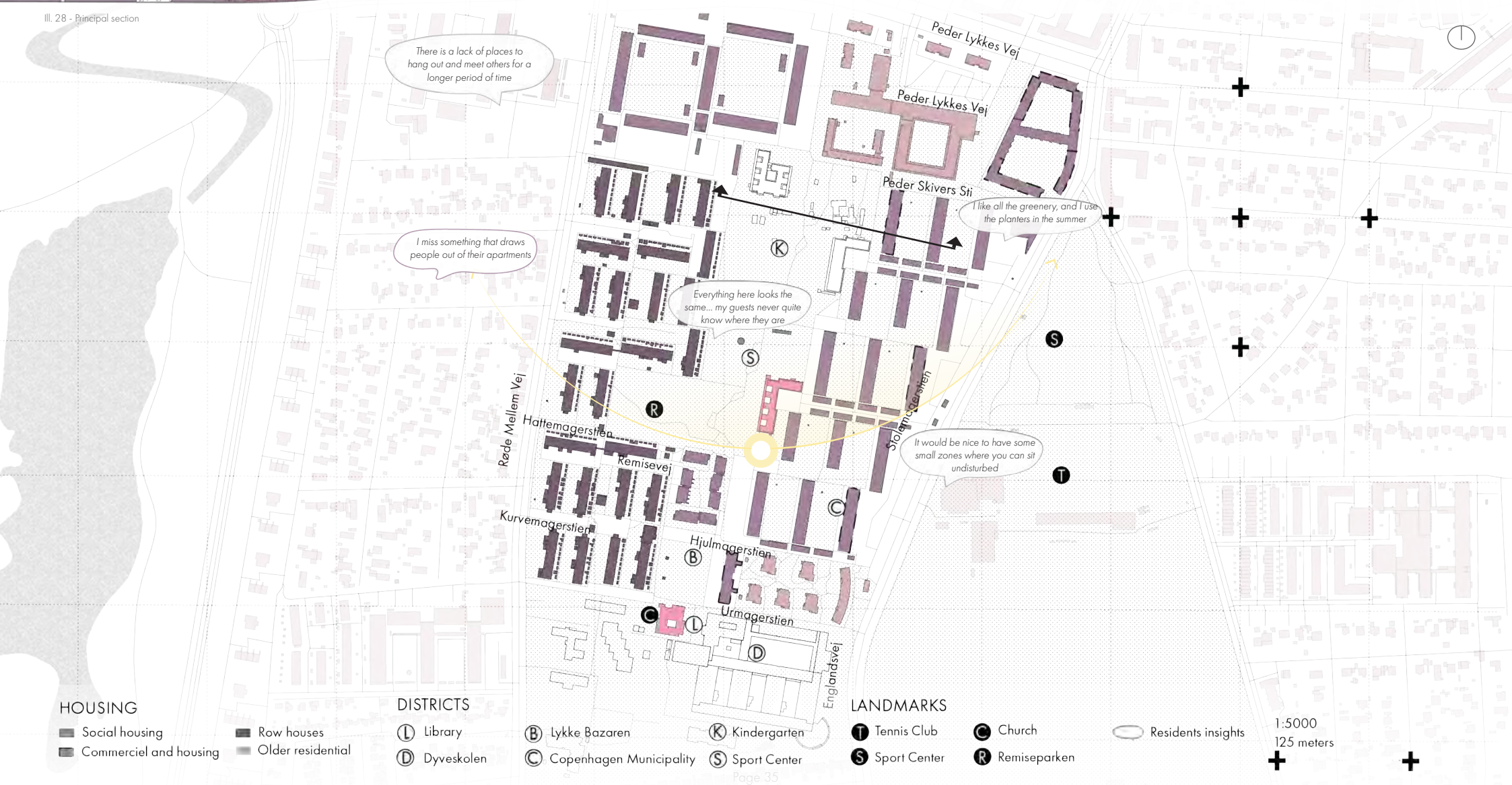
The existing structure therefore, creates challenges in terms of stimulating an active and vibrant urban life.

The lack of visual and functional connections between housing and public meeting places means that certain parts of Urbanplanen remain inactive for large parts of the day. The reduced life in streets and courtyards can contribute to a feeling of insecurity – especially in areas where natural surveillance and human presence are lacking.





III. 28 - Principal section



Movement in the area

Urbanplanen's infrastructure clearly bears the hallmark of modernist planning principles, where the needs of car traffic have been the guiding principle for the area's design. The main roads cut through the district and create a clear division between the buildings, which has resulted in a traffic structure where drivers are favoured over pedestrians and cyclists.

Across the area, there is limited pedestrian friendliness, especially in transitions between residential areas and public functions. This creates potential barriers to mobility, not least for children and the elderly, and reinforces a sense of insecurity in everyday movements. The larger roads have a divisive effect and make it difficult to move freely on foot or by bicycle between the functions of the neighbourhood. In addition, safe and intuitive transition points between busy main streets and more local streets are few and unclear.

The overall road structure has created a fragmented urban structure, where residential areas are separated by wide roads and large parking areas, which in many cases are not integrated into the rest of the urban space. In practice, these parking lots – and other

neglected areas such as areas around institutions that are empty after closing time – become places where informal activity takes place. Young people often gather here because other, more suitable zones are lacking. However, these spaces are rarely designed for longer stays or socializing and are not illuminated or programmed for evening use, which reinforces the feeling of functional separation and insecurity.

The monotonous and car-oriented traffic structure thus contributes not only to a physical division, but also to a social fragmentation, where urban life has difficult conditions. At the same time, the connections between important recreational and human quality functions are lacking, which weakens the area's potential to support spontaneous meetings, safe traffic and a vibrant everyday life.



Ill. 30 - Principal section

MOVEMENT

- High traffic
- Low traffic
- Pedestrian
- Activity spots

DISTRICTS

- Library
- Lykke Bazaren
- Kindergarten
- Dyveskolen
- Copenhagen Municipality
- Sport Center

LANDMARKS

- Tennis Club
- Church
- Remiseparken
- Sundby Vester Parken
- Parking

Residents insights

1:5000
125 meters



Safety in the area

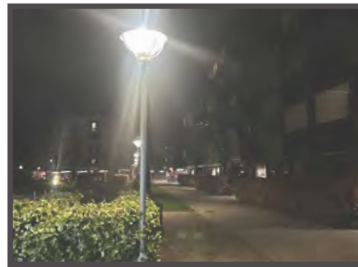
The experience of safety in urban space is complex and depends on both physical conditions and subjective experiences such as atmosphere, the presence of other people, and orientation. This analysis focuses specifically on lighting, not because it alone defines safety, but because lighting conditions are a significant factor that directly affects the experience of safety, especially in areas with low social activity and a lack of visual contact. Focusing on lighting should therefore be seen as one input to understanding and improving the perceived safety in the Urban Plan.

The analysis is based on the northern part of the area, where housing dominates the cityscape and residents often move around in the late evening hours. Here, lighting is limited to lampposts along main paths and a few areas like the playground. However, in many of the larger green areas and around parking lots, there are significant dark zones where lighting is minimal or completely absent. These unlit pockets are experienced by many as unsafe and often result in certain passages and living areas being avoided after dark.

The northern part in particular is in need of a more nuanced and strategic lighting plan, as the area contains many access routes between homes, living areas and common areas. In contrast, the southern part – where the school, library and sports halls are located – has a lower level of activity in the evening and thus less need for lighting on the same scale.



III. 31 - Light source I - Street lamp, 1.5 meters



III. 32 - Light source II - Street lamp, 3 meters



III. 33 - Light source III - Building facades

Although security cannot be solved by lighting alone, it is an essential component in creating atmospheres where people feel safe. Lighting can support presence, clarity, and social control. Indirect lighting, such as facade lighting or path lighting, can help create a more balanced and even distribution of light in the urban space. In addition, interactive or sensor-controlled light sources can be activated by movement, thereby both saving energy and creating dynamic and responsive lighting.

But security is also linked to activity. Therefore, light can be advantageously combined with functions that create life and presence, for example, small living areas, sports activities, or temporary installations that encourage use even in the evening. Together, this can support an experience of security that is not only about being able to see, but about feeling seen and participating in a living urban space.

Lack of lighting



Unsafe path



Few eyes on the street



III. 34 - Safety in the area

III. 35 - Safety in the area 1:5000





It's as if the area turns off completely when the sun goes down

In the evening it is dark and empty, and some paths are avoided

I'd rather take a detour where there's more light

The lighting suddenly stops – and you are left in darkness



III. 36 - Unsafe area I - Shortcuts



III. 37 - Unsafe area II - Parking lot



III. 38 - Unsafe area III - Bicycle shed

● Lighting from street lamps
■ Lighting from facades

Ⓛ Library

ⓑ Lykke Bazaren

Ⓚ Kindergarten

Ⓣ Tennis Club

Ⓒ Church

Ⓟ Parking

ⓓ Dyveskolen

Ⓒ Copenhagen Municipality

Ⓢ Sport Center

Ⓡ Remiseparken

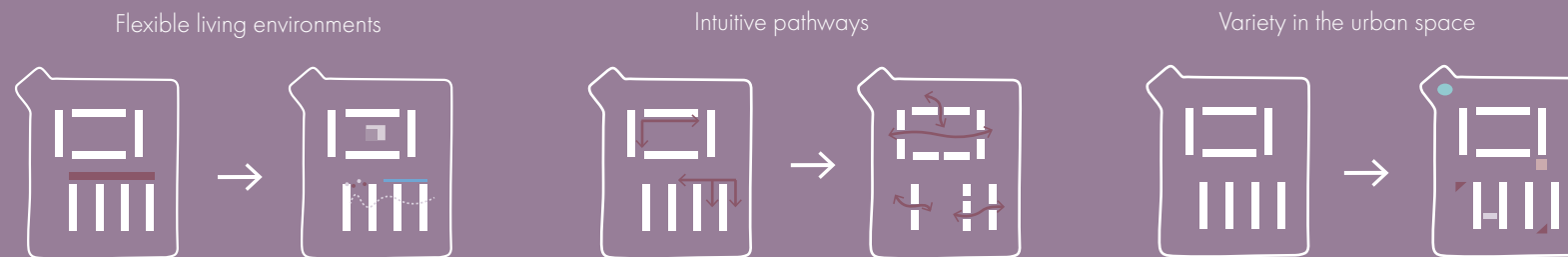
Ⓢ Sundby Vester Parken

○ Residents insights

1:5000
125 meters

Living streets

In the context of Urbanplanen, Jacobs' theory is particularly relevant, as the area contains a high proportion of families, but at the same time has challenges with unsafe and inactive urban spaces. The current apartment blocks are often oriented in a way that there are large open spaces between the buildings without clear functions, which reduces natural surveillance. In addition, monotonous facades without shops or common functions on the ground floor can cause certain areas to be experienced as deserted and unsafe, especially in the evening.



Design to safety

In the context of Urbanplanen, Gehl's theory of life between buildings is particularly relevant, as the area is currently characterised by modernist apartment blocks with large open spaces that do not support natural urban life. Many of these spaces feel empty and lack functions that invite people to stay. When residents and visitors do not have a reason to stay in the urban space, it automatically becomes less safe.

To strengthen Design to Safety in Urbanplanen, the following design measures should be considered, ill. 40.

Human-centered design and meeting places



Better lighting and transparent facades



Active building facades



Ill. 40 - Design to safety

Case study 01

Gellerup Parken, Aarhus Denmark

Gellerup City Park is an example of how architectural and landscape approaches can be used to create safer and more active urban spaces. The area, which was previously characterized by large open spaces and a lack of social functions, has been transformed into a more dynamic and varied structure that both invites people to stay and supports a sense of security.

RESIDENT COMPOSITION

Gellerupparken is characterized by a high degree of diversity, both culturally and socially. The area is characterized by a high proportion of low-income families and a relatively high unemployment rate, which has contributed to Gellerup being designated as a so-called parallel community.

The composition of the residents is also reflected in the age profile of the area, where many families with children live close together, creating a vibrant but also challenging urban environment. This complex social dynamic is of great importance for urban development, as physical changes in the area must necessarily be considered together with social initiatives.

EYES ON THE STREET

A key factor in this design is the activation of the ground floors. Previously, the large apartment blocks in the area were characterised by closed and passive facades, which created a distance between the buildings and the urban space. With the more recent initiatives, more open, transparent ground floors have been created, where functions such as cafes, communal facilities and small commercial premises contribute to a more lively and welcoming atmosphere.

This interaction between the functions of the buildings and the public space increases social control and creates more eyes on the street, making it more difficult for unsafe situations to arise.

VARIATION IN FUNCTIONS & MOVEMENT PATTERNS

Playgrounds for children, open grassy areas for recreation and recreation, and sports facilities that activate young people and adults have been established.

This variation ensures that there is activity in the park at different times of the day, which supports a constant presence of people and thus an increased sense of security.

AREA

Approximately 140 hectares

RESIDENTIAL COMPOSITION

Among Denmark's most multicultural residential areas

PREVIOUS CHALLENGES

Social vulnerability, high unemployment, insecurity and physical deterioration

TRANSFORMATION

Extensive urban development project initiated in the 2010s

KEY ELEMENT OF THE RENEWAL

- Demolition of apartment blocks to create better urban integration
- New functions on ground floors (shops, cafes, common facilities)
- Improved path systems and lighting for increased safety
- Cultural and sports initiatives to strengthen community



Ill. 41 - Gellerup Parken, Aarhus

Case study 02

Tingbjerg, Copenhagen Denmark

Tingbjerg was originally developed as a modernist development in the 1950s by Steen Eiler Rasmussen. The area is characterized by its green structure, large open areas and strict zoning of functions. However, over time, this planning has become a challenge, as it has resulted in a fragmented urban environment with few active urban spaces and a low perceived safety.

To address these issues, SLA and Vandkunsten have developed a vision plan for a comprehensive transformation of the area. The plan, which can be seen in the renderings, works to densify the development, create stronger visual and physical connections, and support a safer and more active street life.

TRANSITIONS BETWEEN HOUSING AND URBAN SPACE

The new housing types have a smooth transition between private and public space. The ground floor opens onto green courtyards and common areas, which creates a closer relationship between the homes and the urban space. This allows for greater social interaction and creates an inviting and inclusive environment.

ACTIVE FACADES

The ground floors of the new development play a central role in creating life and activity in the area. Shops, cafés, workshops and common functions are integrated here, which support a dynamic urban life. The open and varied facades ensure a strong connection between the buildings and the urban space, which creates a safe and lively atmosphere.

LIGHT, LANDSCAPE & SECURITY

Good lighting conditions and well-defined green spaces are crucial elements in the vision. Strategically placed lighting ensures safe living and traffic zones, while green areas with varied planting create a balanced transition between the city's spaces. The green landscape supports both biodiversity and recreational functions, giving residents a closer relationship with nature in their daily surroundings.

AREA	PREVIOUS CHALLENGES	KEY ELEMENT OF THE RENEWAL
Approximately 23 hectares	Social challenges, including high unemployment, low average income and a high proportion of residents with a foreign background	- Densification of the district with new private housing
VISION PLAN	TRANSFORMATION	- Renovation and modernization of daycare centers and the school
Improvement of urban spaces, active ground floors, and better connections between buildings and streets	Extensive urban development project initiated in 2018	- Establishment of new green areas and improved connections
		- Integration of new residents to create a mixed district

The vision plan creates a picture of how Tingbjerg can develop into a vibrant, inclusive and safe district. With a focus on community, green solutions and architectural quality, a strategy is presented for how a modern and dynamic urban district can grow.



III. 42 - SLA & Vandkundsten - Vision plan for the area

PRESENTATION

*Concept
Masterplan
Plan
Section
Diagram
Before and after*

This chapter presents the project's design proposals through plans, sections, diagrams, and visualizations. The material shows how concepts, analyses, and design criteria are translated into concrete solutions that strengthen safety, meeting places, and everyday life in Urbanplanen.

Concept

| Patching the City

The concept of “Patching the City” should be understood as a form of urban architectural healing – where the interventions do not necessarily change everything, but work strategically and sensitively with the existing structures. New layers of life, security and flexibility are added, which can activate the potential that already exists in the area.

The illustration symbolizes this approach: a patchwork, where the city is not torn down, but is given new functions, connections and meanings. It is about sewing new together with old – creating sequences of presence, activity and accessibility that invite stay, community and movement.

With this vision as a framework, the work is continued in concrete design proposals that are based on the atmosphere of the place, the voices of the residents and the needs that have emerged through the analysis.



Ill. 43 - Concept - Patching the City

Walking through the site

Illustration 44 shows a sequence through the area, where the overall design concept – Patching the City – is translated into concrete architectural and spatial measures. Here, a multifunctional urban space is created, where homes, cafes, clubhouses and temporary functions such as pop-up shops interact and support a vibrant, active and safe everyday life.

By mixing different functions and inviting both spontaneous and planned stays, social encounters and a more dynamic use of the urban space are promoted throughout the day. The movement through the area is defined by intuitive connections, clear sequences and varying living zones, which together create a flexible and inclusive environment.

The illustration reflects the project's design strategies to break down the monofunctional modernist urban structure and instead strengthen a people-centered urban life, where security, variety and belonging are central qualities.

Ill. 44 - Conceptual proposal



Masterplan 1:2000



Plan 1:500

presentation

Greenhouse

Planters



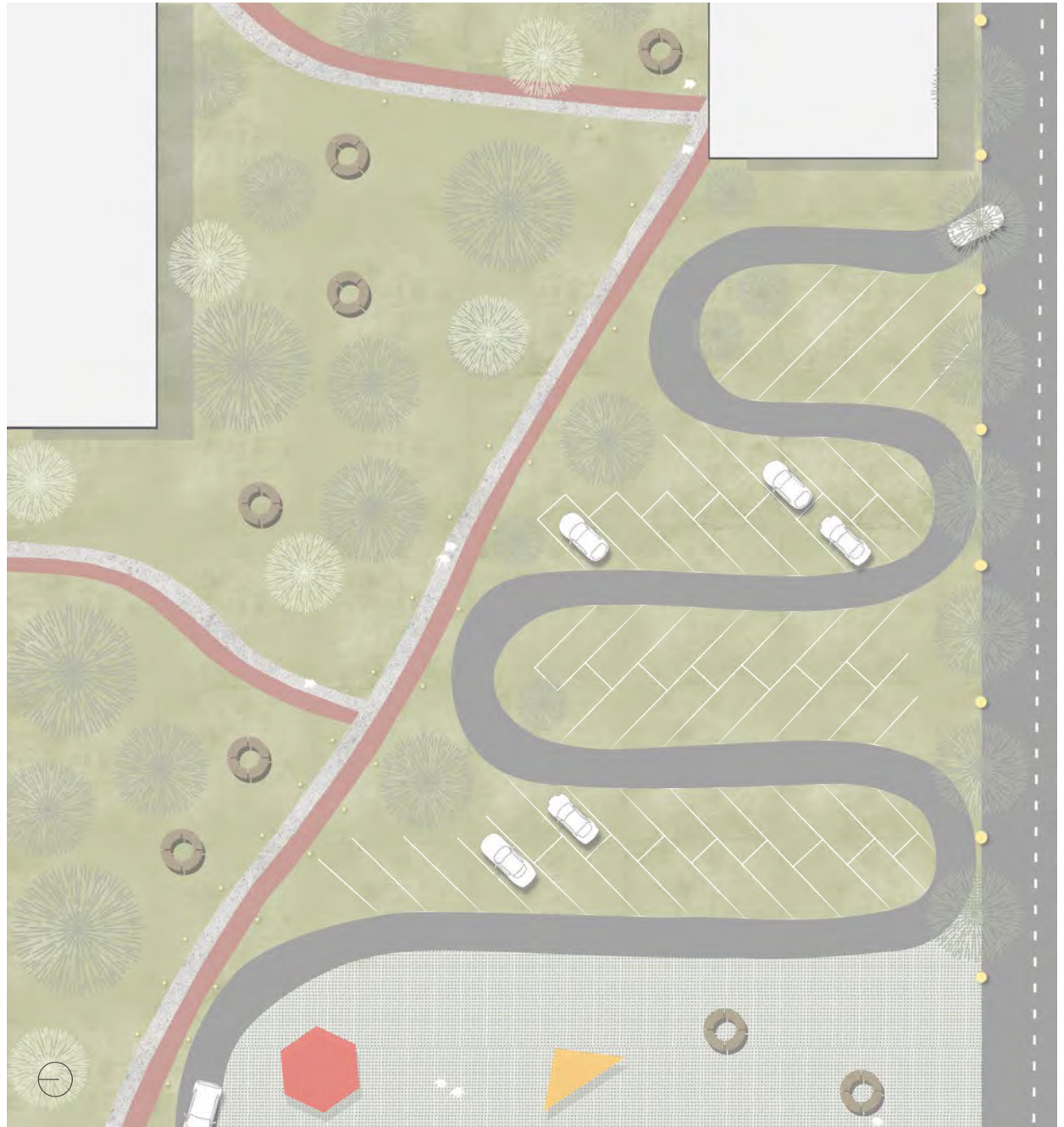
Plan 1:500

Parking

This proposal rethinks the parking lot as more than just a functional area for cars. By introducing a winding, one-way road structure, car speeds are reduced and greater clarity and safety are ensured for pedestrians. At the same time, the curved movement creates a more organic and human street layout that breaks with the monotonous expression that often characterizes parking areas.

A dedicated seating area has been incorporated along the new road structure – activating the area as a social meeting place and creating life and presence at times when the parking area is traditionally empty. This supports the project's overall vision of activating neglected and monofunctional areas through design that creates both safety, seating and social interaction at eye level with the users.

Ill. 47 - Plan of parking 1:500



Section 1:500

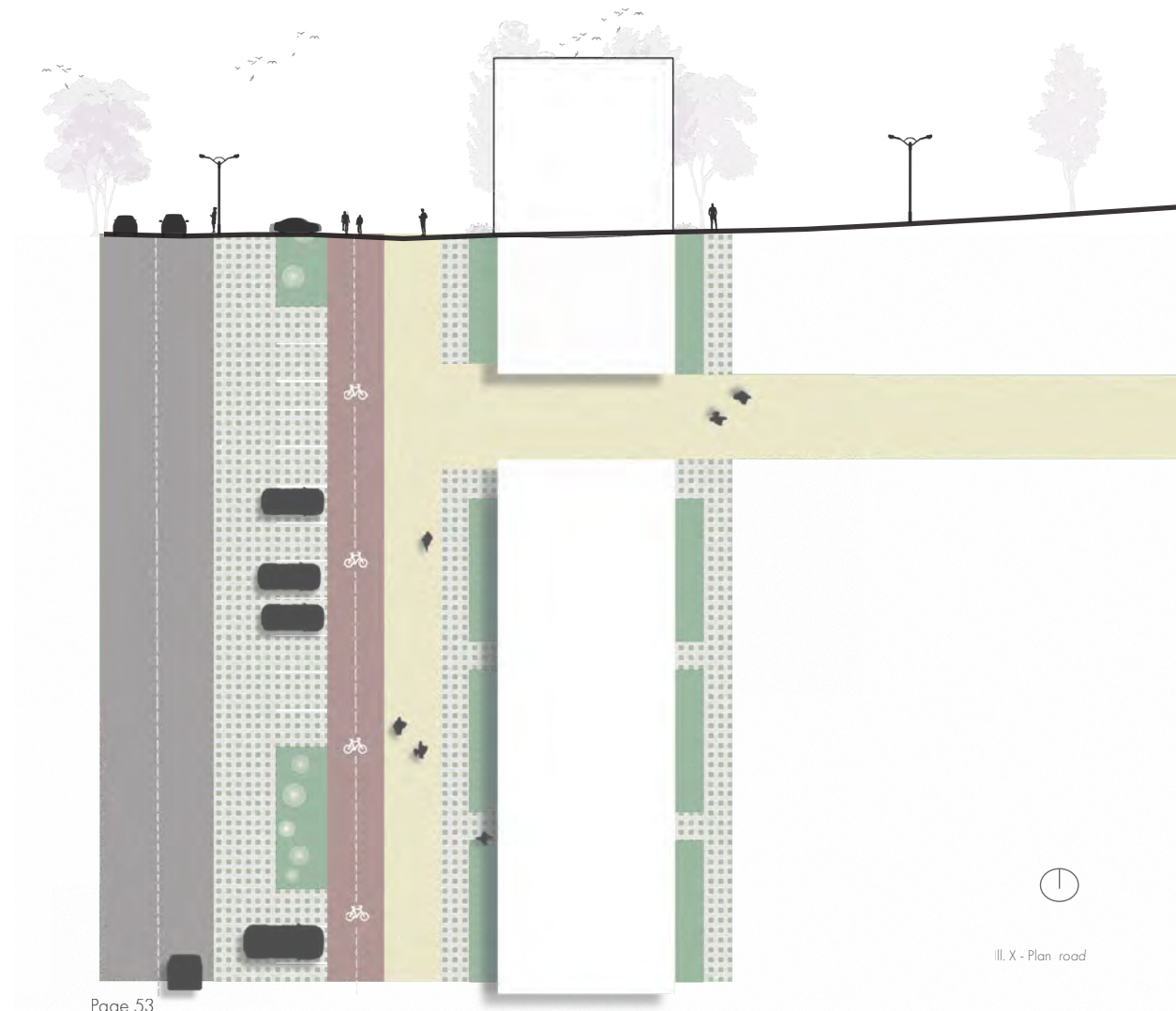
Roads

Illustration 48 shows how a new cross-section and floor plan are combined to create a clearly divided and hierarchical traffic structure that prioritizes safety and accessibility. From the left, the roadway for cars is seen, followed by parking areas integrated with green elements that act as both visual screening and shock absorption. Next to it is a dedicated cycle path that creates safe and direct access for cyclists.

The outer part of the profile consists of a pedestrian-friendly footpath and a buffer zone in front of the residential facades that acts as a transition between public and private space. This division supports the principle of "soft edges", where the boundary between housing and urban space is activated through living and planting, which both increases the quality of life and creates social control.

By clarifying the distribution of roles between the different road users and creating a balanced rhythm between movement and living, the design actively contributes to a safer and more people-centered urban environment.

III. 48 - Section A road

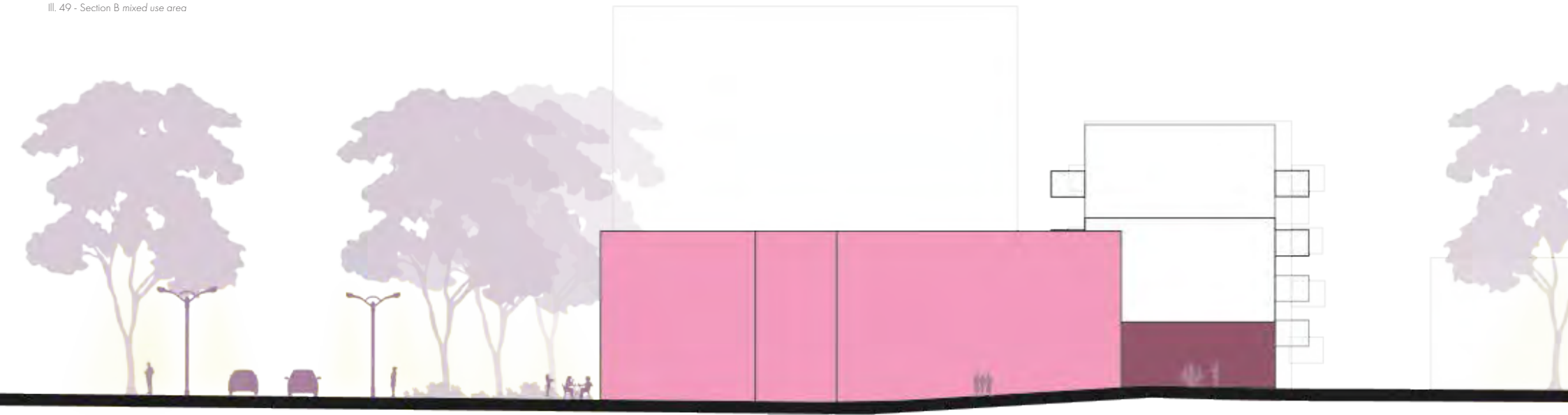


Section 1:350

Mixed Use Area

- Residential
- Clubhouse
- Café
- Indoor garden

III. 49 - Section B mixed use area





Section 1:250

Recreational Area



Ill. 50 - Section C Recreational area



Section 1:250

Active facades



III. 50 - Section D active facades

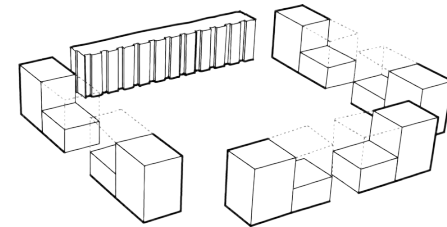
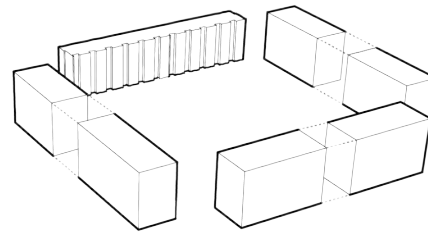


Residential area

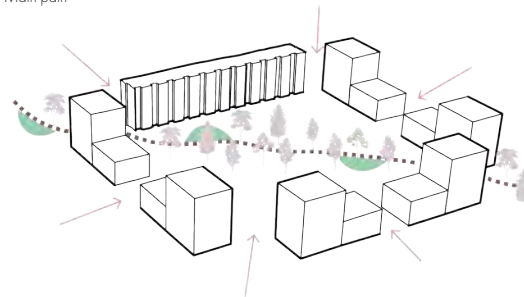
The diagram shows a gradual transformation of a closed residential area, which through strategic processing is opened up and adapted to the scale of the human being. By dividing the original blocks into smaller building bodies and scaling down some of them to two and four floors, a more accessible and visual variation in the urban space is created.

This division provides better connections between buildings and the urban space in between – both visually and physically – and makes it easier for residents and visitors to move freely and intuitively through the area. The scaling down also contributes to promoting a more safe and inviting atmosphere, where proximity, identification and social encounters can occur.

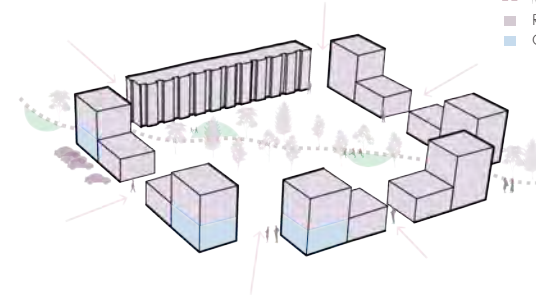
The transformation supports the idea of “life between buildings” and breaks with the monofunctional housing structure of modernism by putting the human being at the center and creating conditions for everyday life and living close to home.



→ Entrances
■ Meet-up pockets
- - Main path



→ Entrances
■ Meet-up pockets
- - Main path
■ Residential
■ Commercial



III. 51 - Diagram of residential area

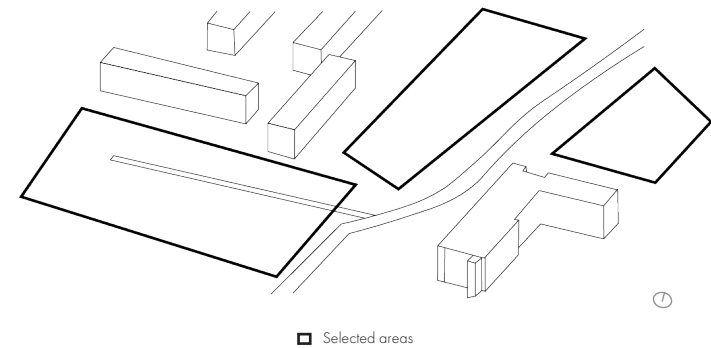
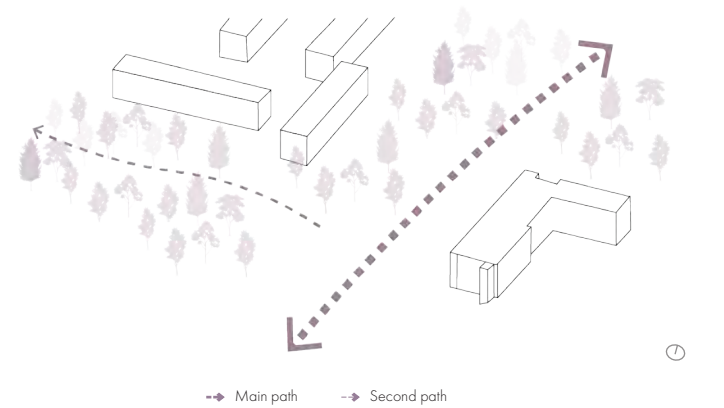


Recreational area

The diagram illustrates how the previously uniform and undefined greenspace in the project area is transformed into a diverse and activated recreational landscape. An area for temporary use, such as pop-up markets or events, provides flexibility and dynamism in the urban space and invites spontaneity and community. A shared communal garden gives residents the opportunity to engage in urban agriculture and plant activities, and functions as a social gathering point with a focus on ownership and identity. A skate area adds a youth-oriented and movement-based function, which caters to a target group that is often overlooked in classic urban space solutions.

This recreational division creates a richer and more inclusive use of the green space – a landscape where diverse activities can unfold side by side and contribute to both social life and community in everyday life. All this is adapted to the area's diverse resident composition.

Ill. 52 - Development of recreational area →



Meeting places

Green Pockets

The project introduces strategically placed green pockets – green pockets in the urban space, which create small oases for recreation, meetings, and community. These pockets function as micro-social spaces where residents of all ages can sit down, hang out, or simply take a break while walking through the district. Unlike the larger recreational areas in Urbanplanen, these green pockets have a more intimate and local character, and they are embedded close to the homes, along the paths, and in transition zones between functions.

The purpose is to strengthen everyday life and promote the spontaneous use of the urban space. By creating visual contact surfaces for ground floors and ensuring lighting, the pockets support both security and social interaction. They vary in design and planting, which invites both tranquility, play, and informal meetings, and thus they strengthen the overall concept of repairing the modernist urban space and bringing it closer to human needs.

Ill. 53 - Green pockets



Smaller scaled buildings

Life Between Buildings

This part of the proposal involves scaling down the building stock to 2- and 3-storey buildings, which creates a more human scale and better interaction between residents and the surrounding urban space. By breaking up the previously large and continuous apartment blocks into smaller units, new passages, views and connections arise, making it easier and more intuitive to move around the area.

This division not only contributes to improving orientation, but also creates small niches and spaces between the buildings, where everyday life can unfold. It becomes easier to meet neighbours, take a shortcut or simply stay in zones that do not feel too cramped or too open. Life between the houses will improve as the scale approaches the human scale, and the space becomes more active and accessible.

III. 54 - Life between buildings



Safety in the area

Lighting Strategy

Illustration 58 shows the treated area in the evening, where a new lighting strategy has been integrated to increase safety and create more life in the urban space after dark. The existing short light sources, which are already in the area, have been redesigned and placed with greater density along the primary paths. This ensures more even and coherent lighting, which makes it safe and clear to walk.

A central feature of the strategy is the light in the treetops – a special quality that exploits the existing potential of the area's many large trees. By integrating discreet light sources in the branches, a soft, diffused light is created that both creates atmosphere and improves visibility in the green spaces.

Finally, the focus is on illuminating the green pockets and recreation zones where residents can gather and spend time. By placing targeted lighting in these areas, both safety and usability are supported – regardless of the time of day. The strategy aims to create active, visible and inviting urban spaces where light not only functions functionally, but also invites people to stay and socialize.

1



Ill. 55 - Light in trees

2



Ill. 56 - Smaller scale lampposts

3



Ill. 57 - Light in resting areas



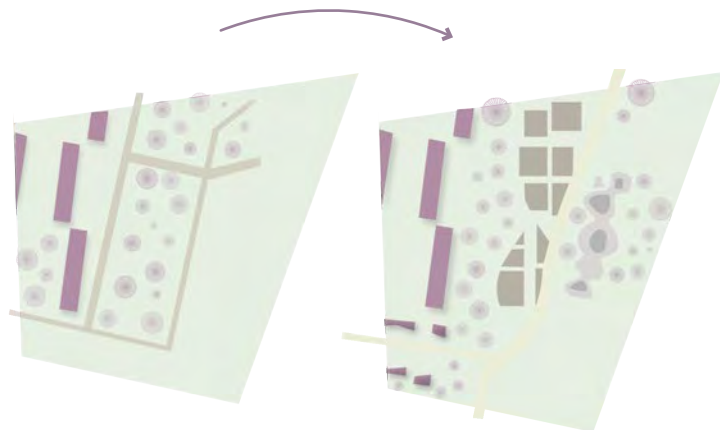


III. 58 - Lighting in the area

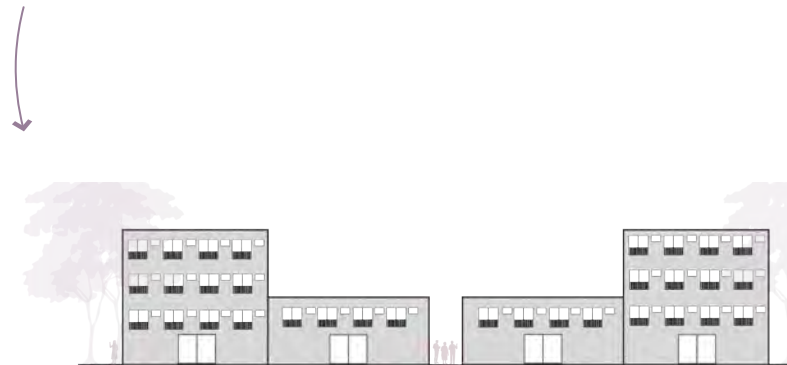
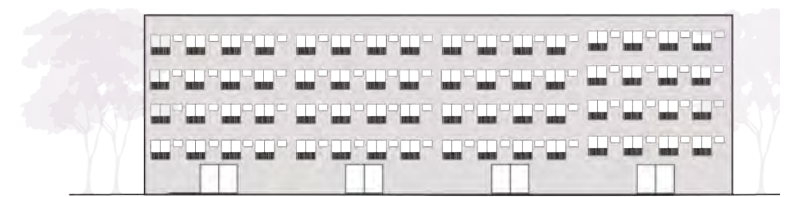
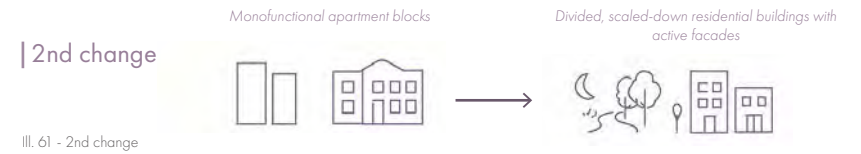
Before and after

Design interventions & impacts

This overview shows the primary design interventions and their intended effects on the project area. Based on the analysis of the existing challenges of Urbanplanen's, strategic approaches have been developed to transform the area from a fragmented and car-oriented structure to a safe, inviting, and diverse urban space with people at the center. The focus is on light, movement, functional variation, and social meeting places.



III. 60 - Before and after: Recreational area



III. 62 - Before and after: Building scale

| 3rd change

Ill. 62 - 3rd change

Undefined and uninviting places



Defined paths and seating areas



Ill. 63 - Before and after: Defined area

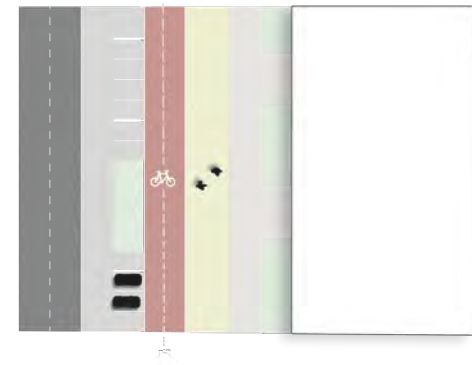
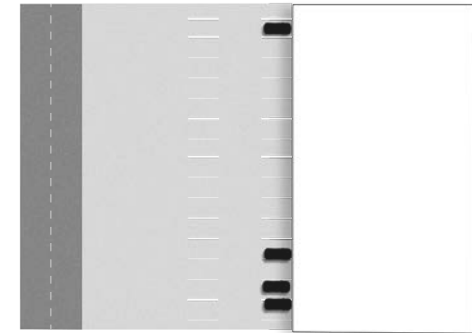
| 4th change

Ill. 64 - 4th change

Through traffic and large parking areas



Traffic-reduced zones and defined paths



Ill. 65 - Before and after: Safer paths

EPILOGUE

Conclusion
Reflection
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This final chapter brings together the project's most important insights into a conclusion that assesses how the design proposals address the challenges in Urbanplanen. The chapter concludes with a critical reflection on the process, methodological choices, and the project's applicability, as well as perspectives on how the work can form the basis for further development of socially sustainable urban spaces.

"We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us."

Winston Churchill

Conclusion

The Problem Statement

This project was based on an ambition to rethink and improve the urban spaces in Urbanplanen, focusing on three central goals: to increase the perceived and physical safety, create better recreation opportunities, and support social meeting places. Through critically examining Urbanplanen's modernist urban structure and its spatial challenges, the project has worked on how targeted urban design can help transform a vulnerable residential area into a more inclusive, active, and people-centered urban environment.

The problem statement: *How can urban spaces in Urbanplanen be designed to enhance safety, provide recreational opportunities, and create social meeting places for residents?* – has formed the common thread throughout the study. The project has sought answers through a combination of theory, analysis, and concrete design approaches, all of which have aimed to connect user experiences, site-specific observations, and professional considerations to a holistic strategy for urban space transformation.

The following concludes on how the project's approach and results overall address the three main tracks in the problem formulation, and how this translates into a design proposal that is based on both contextual insights and architectural principles. Through the project's research and development phases, it has become clear that the design of urban spaces in Urbanplanen can actively contribute to creating greater security, supporting recreational opportunities, and strengthening social meeting places when done based on site-specific analyses and human-centered design principles.

Security has been addressed by identifying and intervening in the spatial conditions that create insecurity, such as poor lighting, lack of activity, and limited visual contact between homes and outdoor spaces. Through design measures such as improved light orientation, open facades, and the placement of living areas in visual proximity to residential areas, proposals have been developed that support both surveillance and social control at eye level.

The recreational opportunities have been strengthened through the introduction of flexible urban spaces that accommodate different age groups and types of activity. This includes, among other things, programmed spots, green pockets, and zones for play, recreation, and movement, which can both function in the rhythm of everyday life and for spontaneous use.

Social meeting places are created through a deliberate architectural organization, where functional and social layers are thought together. Small but strategically placed meeting places and sequential paths are used as a means of creating proximity, meetings, and a sense of community in otherwise fragmented residential clusters.

On this basis, it can be concluded that it is possible to rethink and redesign modernist structures so that they support safe, recreational, and social communities to a greater extent through local, inclusive, and people-focused urban design.

Theory & Methodologies

The project's approach is grounded in an interdisciplinary framework, where sociological, architectural, and phenomenological perspectives are combined to create a deeper understanding of both place and human behavior. Theoretically, Jane Jacobs' concept of "eyes on the street" has been central to understanding how social relations and visual contact contribute to perceived safety in urban spaces. Jan Gehl's principles of life between buildings have supported an architectural approach where urban life at eye level and human scale is actively considered in the design of the physical structures.

The concept of affordance has contributed to an understanding of how the physical properties of urban spaces can invite specific behavior and togetherness, and how design choices can either promote or limit the way users interact with their surroundings. Finally, the concept of the public domain has been used as an analytical framework to assess the social accessibility of spaces and their potential to support publicness and community.

Methodologically, the project has integrated both qualitative and spatial studies. Through ethnographic methods – including field observations, informal conversations, and semi-structured interviews – insight has been gained into the residents' experiences, needs, and daily use of the area. This has been combined with mapping and spatial analyses of movement patterns, lighting, functional distribution, and perception of safety.

Together, these methodological and theoretical approaches have contributed to qualifying the design decisions and en-

suring that the project's proposals are rooted in both contextual conditions and user experiences.

Design

Based on the analyses and theoretical insights, several specific design approaches have been developed, which aim to improve the urban spaces in the northern part of Urbanplanen and meet the three central themes of the problem formulation: safety, recreational opportunities, and social meeting places. To strengthen safety, work has been done with light and orientation as an active design parameter. Strategically placed lighting solutions – both in the form of warm path lighting, facade lighting, and lighting in living areas – have been proposed to reduce dark zones and increase the perceived safety. In addition, the design contributes to visual contact between homes and outdoor spaces by opening facades and ensuring that ground floors are active and transparent, which both increases presence and social surveillance.

Recreational opportunities have been considered through the establishment of flexible living areas and programmed urban spaces that can be used by different age groups and for multiple purposes. Microspaces and green elements have been incorporated that support movement, play, and tranquility, with a focus on creating everyday places that invite people to stay and socialize.

Social meeting places are created through the design of intimate zones and connections between residential blocks, where previously there were empty or undefined spaces. By adding smaller-scale meeting places, such as benches, tab-

les, beds, and semi-private niches, new layers of community and opportunities for spontaneous meetings arise. The new connecting routes are sequentially planned to support movement and interaction through the area.

These approaches are organized in a conceptual design diagram with three key themes: Light & Orientation, Social Activation, and Visual Contact & Sequencing. Each of these points directly into the design criteria: Flexible living environment, Intuitive pathways, Variety in the urban space, Human-centered design, Better lighting, and Active building facades – and thus helps to translate complex urban planning issues into spatial and human solutions.

| Case Perspective & Transferability

Although the project has focused on the northern part of Urbanplanen, it should be understood as part of a larger urban planning discussion about the potential and challenges of modernist residential areas. Urbanplanen is far from unique – on the contrary, it is an example of a widespread planning logic where functionalist zoning, large apartment blocks, and car-centric infrastructure have created fragmented urban spaces without strong social or spatial cohesion.

In this context, Gellerup Parken in Aarhus and Tingbjerg in Copenhagen have been included as cases. Both areas, like Urbanplanen, are the result of the modernist era and have undergone or are facing major physical and social transformations. Through the analysis of these areas, the project has been able to reflect and put into perspective the issues in Urbanplanen, both concerning urban space, resident composition, and social challenges. The strategies used in Gellerup and

Tingbjerg – including the work with green connections, open ground floors, recreational programs, and social meeting places – have inspired and informed the project's approaches. This comparative perspective emphasizes that the chosen design strategies are not only locally relevant but also transferable to other places with similar structures. The proposed design concept can therefore be seen as a proposal for how modernist urban areas can be rethought with a focus on human scales, social interaction, and safety, regardless of geographical location.

| Finally

Based on analyses, theoretical studies, and concrete design proposals, it can be concluded that it is possible to rethink and improve modernist urban spaces through strategic, site-specific, and user-oriented approaches. The project has shown how a human perspective on urban planning, with a focus on safety, recreational opportunities, and social meeting places, can create more vibrant and inclusive residential areas.

By combining theoretical insights with qualitative and ethnographic methods and basing the design development on the residents' experiences and needs, a design proposal has been created that both respects the existing qualities of the place and works for a more social and experiential everyday life in the urban space.

The project's approach can be seen as a critical response to the one-sided planning principles of modernism, and at the same time, a proposal for how the urban space of the future can be promoted through spatial solutions that build bridges between function, community, and identity.

Reflection

This reflection marks a final but essential part of the project, where experiences, choices, and insights are processed and put into perspective. Where the conclusion aimed to answer the project's problem statement and compile the results, the reflection seeks to go beyond the process and ask questions about how knowledge has been acquired and applied, both professionally and personally.

The purpose of the reflection section is not only to assess the project's strengths and weaknesses, but also to examine the learning and development that has occurred along the way. It is about highlighting the methods and approaches that have had particular significance and about placing the project's approach in a broader professional context. This reflection thus creates an awareness of how one navigates complex social and physical issues as an urban designer, and how design and analysis can go hand in hand in the development of more humane urban spaces.

The project's methodological approach has been characterized by a combination of qualitative analyses, theory-informed design, and iterative approaches, which together have made it possible to capture both physical, social, and sensory dimensions of the urban space. The process began with a broad research phase, which was quickly transformed into a focused, problem-oriented study of a modernist residential area, with particular attention to safety, social meeting places, and urban spaces on a human scale.

The ethnographic approach has played a central role in the collection of local knowledge. Through interviews, field observations, and mapping, it was possible to gain insight into the residents' everyday lives and experience of the city's space. This method proved particularly valuable, as it opened understandings that could not be captured through traditional planning alone. The users' voices and bodily experiences became active parameters in the development of design approaches.

The iterative process – where design ideas were constantly adjusted in interaction with theory, analyses, and feedback – created a dynamic and exploratory working environment. In particular, mid-term presentations and professional sparring have contributed to a sharper design angle and a more precise strategy.

It is also important to emphasize that the entire project has been prepared as a solo project, in contrast to previous group work. This has provided a unique opportunity to immerse oneself in each step of the process and take ownership of all choices, but has also led to periods of increased complexity and responsibility. The absence of ongoing sparring and division of labor has required self-management, prioritization, and methodological clarity – a challenge that has been educational and strengthening from both a professional and personal perspective.

Learning & Professional Development

Throughout the course of the project, there has been a significant development in the understanding of how social, spatial, and theoretical dimensions can be integrated into an overall design approach. It has not only been an exercise in developing a physical proposal, but equally a process in which complex issues have been analyzed and translated into concrete urban space solutions with people at the center.

An important learning has been to understand how architectural and planning tools can be used to support security and community in vulnerable residential areas. By working with concepts such as “affordance” and “public domain”, it has been possible to identify nuances in the use of public space that go beyond the purely functional – and instead point to relationships, interactions, and opportunities for life between the buildings.

The theories of Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl have served as valuable compasses in the design process and have sharpened attention to the rhythms of everyday life, social dynamics, and human scale. Their perspectives have not only been used as references but have shaped the strategic view of how urban spaces can be improved through presence, activity, and variation.

Furthermore, the transition from group-based to individual work has given rise to a new professional awareness. Standing alone with a complex urban development project has required analytical rigor, planning, and the ability to combine theory, empiricism, and design. This experience has given a stronger grip on the overall design process, from problem identification to concrete design, and has strengthened the ability to act as an independent professional in an urban design context.

The project's strengths & limitations

The strength of the project lies in its holistic approach, where social, spatial, and theoretical layers have been integrated into a comprehensive understanding of the place. The combination of site-specific analyses, user insights, and theory-informed design approaches has created a qualified basis for developing interventions that consider both local context and overall urban issues. The focus on safety, social activation, and visual contact has been consistent and has formed a clear common thread from problem formulation to concept and proposal.

The ethnographic approach has provided a strong anchoring in user experiences and everyday life, which has given the project authenticity and down-to-earth relevance. The critical look at modernist planning and the desire to rethink these structures through concrete, human-centered initiatives have also given the project both a professional edge and topicality. However, the project also has certain limitations. The work alone has at times meant fewer opportunities for ongoing professional sparring and qualification of ideas in an early phase.

Furthermore, the complexity of the problem area, including the relationship between physical form and social dynamics, made it difficult to capture all aspects within the given timeframe. Certain design approaches could have been developed in more detail, and the relationship between proposal and implementation strategy could have been further strengthened. Furthermore, the work on user involvement could have been expanded, for example, through more qualitative interviews or participatory workshops, which would have provided even deeper insight into the needs and desires of the residents.

Overall, the project balances between ideal and reality, with an ambition to create urban spaces that are not only functional but also meaningful and alive for those who use them.

| Perspective

The challenges and potentials identified in Urbanplanen are not unique to this particular area. On the contrary, they reflect a broader problem that many modernist residential areas in Denmark and internationally are facing today: an urban planning characterized by functional division, large green areas without clear functions, and a predominance of car-based infrastructure, which together inhibit social encounters and create experiences of insecurity.

The project can therefore be seen as an example of how a critical, human-centered approach to urban planning can be used to reconnect and reactivate these areas. The approaches and design principles that have been worked on – including safety through presence, recreational zones, and visual contact – have transferable value to similar contexts. In extension of this, the case studies of Gellerup Parken and Tingbjerg have contributed concrete examples of how physical transformation can go hand in hand with social ambitions.

There is a growing need for urban planners and designers to not only rethink the physical structure, but also work strategically with the social fabric of the city. The project's methodological and theoretical approach may therefore be relevant in the development of future strategies for socially sustainable urban areas – especially in contexts where trust, ownership and togetherness need to be strengthened through the built environment.

Seen in this light, the project can be read as a contribution to a broader professional discussion on how we rethink post-war residential areas with a focus on quality of life, community and local identity – a discussion that will only become more important as cities grow and social divisions intensify.

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Appendix

Appendix A Semi-structured interviews

Interview dates: February 10–12, 2025

Place: Urbanplanen, Amager

Purpose: *To gather qualitative insights into residents' experiences of urban space, safety, social relations, and everyday use of the area. The interviews were conducted as part of an ethnographic study and complement observations from site visits and spatial analysis.*

Interview 1: Fatima, 52 years old – Resident since 1988

How have you experienced the development of Urbanplanen over the years?

Fatima: When I moved here, there were many more children, and the courtyards were full of life. You sat outside – there was always someone to talk to. It was more informal and cozier. Today it feels different. Many keep to themselves, and the courtyards seem empty and sad.

How do you use the urban space today?

Fatima: I still go for walks, but I rarely sit down. The benches that are there are in the middle of everything – it doesn't feel safe. I miss places where you can sit a little bit in a sheltered place. If you created some cozy corners with a little greenery and shelter, I think many more people would use the urban space.

What do you think about the community in the area?

Fatima: The community is there, but it needs a little help on its way. If we had more places to meet, we would also get to know each other better again.

Interview 2: Adam, 19 years old – Young resident, born and raised in Urbanplanen

Where do you and your friends hang out in your daily life?

Adam: We mostly hang out at the kiosk or some open spaces. There aren't really places made for us. Most places are for small children or the elderly, so we try to find some corners where we don't get in the way - but it's hard.

How do you think other residents perceive you?

Adam: It's a bit mixed. Some people seem to feel unsafe just because we're standing and talking. It's probably because we don't have a place that's "ours". If there were a place that was made with young people in mind, it might change people's perception.

What could make a difference?

Adam: A place where we can be ourselves, preferably something covered, with benches or places to sit, without us feeling like we're "borrowing" someone else's space.

Interview 3: Lis, 44 years old – Mother of two children

How do you and your family use the urban space in Urbanplanen?

Lis: We mostly use the playgrounds and Remiseparken. But we avoid certain areas in the evening – especially the dark paths between the buildings. I never walk alone with the children there after dark.

How do you experience the safety in the area?

Lis: It's a lot about light and people. There are many places where you can't see who is coming, and that creates insecurity. If there were better lighting and more active zones, it would make a big difference.

What do you miss most in the urban space?

Lis: More variety. Many areas are just asphalt and grass – it doesn't feel like a place you get stuck in. If there were more to do, and more places where you could meet – both spontaneously and organized – the area would be much more lively.

Interview 4: Jørgen, 75 years old – Retired, has lived in Urbanplanen since 1969

How do you experience moving around the area as an elderly person?

Jørgen: I go for walks every day, but it is getting harder. There are few places where I can rest my legs. The benches that do exist are either in the middle of the sun or hidden away. I often feel a little alone.

How has the urban space changed over time?

Jørgen: In the past, we elderly people would meet outside. Now that rarely happens. There is a lack of places that invite you to linger. It seems more functional than social – you walk from A to B and then back in.

What could improve it?

Jørgen: Place benches by the paths where there is life and a view. Make it pleasant to be outside – with shelter and shade. Then you might meet others in the same situation, and that would make everyday life richer

Supplementary insights from informal conversations

- "You just walk through here. It's not a place you stop."
- "It's not that we don't want to talk to each other - there's just no place to do it."
- "It gets completely dark here at night. I'll take a detour."

My observations during the site visits

Courtyards and places to stay: Many courtyards seem empty and are not actively used by residents. The existing benches are often isolated or very open, which can make them less inviting.

Youth and places to stay: Young people gather at kiosks and open spaces, but there is a lack of dedicated places to stay for them. They often choose to stand in areas where they can be a "nuisance" to other residents.

Safety and lighting: Certain paths and areas feel unsafe, especially at night, due to lack of lighting and poor visibility.

Temporary meeting places: People rarely stop in the urban space - most are just passing through. There are few places that invite shorter stays or spontaneous meetings. Lack of variety in the urban space: Several areas feel monotonous with large open areas of asphalt and grass, without elements that create curiosity or places to stay.

Elderly people and places to stay: Elderly residents go for walks in the area, but there are few seats close to the paths where they can rest. The existing benches are either very exposed to the sun or are out of the way.

Children and play: There are playgrounds in the area, but many children also play on the footpaths, which may indicate that they lack more varied or easily accessible play areas.

Social zones: There is a lack of smaller, intimate zones in the urban space, where people can naturally gather in smaller groups without feeling exposed.



THESIS TITLE PAGE

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