One Park, Different Journeys

Rethinking Who the Park Works For

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AALBORG UNIVERSITET

Title page

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Project title
One Park, Different Journeys -
Rethinking Who the Park Works For

Project modul
Master's Thesis in Urban Design 2026
(30 ECTS)

Project period
02.02.2026 -28.05.2026

Pages
91

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Group
MSc04 URB Urban Design Group 5

Personal Position

As someone originally from Portugal and currently living in Aalborg during my master's studies in Urban Design, Østre Anlæg gradually became part of my everyday routine rather than simply a site of academic interest. I began using the park daily after getting my dog, Apollo, as it was the closest green space to where I lived. What initially started as practical daily walks slowly developed into a much deeper familiarity with the park and its atmosphere.

Living close to the park also meant that Østre Anlæg slowly became connected to my own sense of home and everyday life in Aalborg. Whenever friends or family visit me, it is often one of the first places I take them to. Over time, I also became increasingly aware of my own behaviour within the park and how differently I move through it depending on the time of day, weather, season, or atmosphere. Certain paths feel calmer and more comfortable, some areas invite longer stays, while others become avoided during darker hours. These repeated experiences made me reflect on how public spaces are never experienced in the same way by everyone.

Through visiting the park every day, both in the mornings and evenings, I also found myself observing how other people use and navigate the space. I became interested not only in the physical qualities of the park, but also in behaviours, rhythms, and patterns of use. I began noticing where people slow down, where they choose to stay, which routes feel naturally inviting, and which areas appear less comfortable or less accessible. These everyday observations strengthened my interest in how public spaces can support different ways of sensing, navigating, and spending time in the city.

Rather than understanding Østre Anlæg only through drawings, mapping, or short site visits, I came to know it through repetition, routine, and lived experience. Coming from a background in Architecture and now studying Urban Design, this relationship with the park became one of the main reasons why I wanted to work with the site.

The project therefore developed not from a desire to redesign the park entirely, but from questioning how its existing qualities, calmness, familiarity, and strong everyday character could become easier to experience and more meaningful for a wider range of people throughout the year.

Abstract

This project approaches Østre Anlæg not as a neutral urban park, but as a spatial environment that actively shapes how different people are able to move, orient themselves, and engage with space. Drawing on an understanding of ableism as embedded within the built environment, the project frames accessibility not as an additional layer, but as a fundamental spatial condition. In this sense, the study extends beyond the specific case, positioning inclusive design as a necessary approach for public space more broadly.

Although the park offers a rich and diverse environment, its current configuration reveals inconsistencies that affect how it is used. Uneven and waterlogged surfaces, fragmented path systems, and limited sensory guidance create conditions where movement becomes uncertain, particularly in less favourable weather. As a result, the park is primarily used during dry and sunny periods, limiting its potential as an everyday urban space.

The project investigates how spatial continuity, ground conditions, and sensory cues contribute to legibility and orientation within the park. Through this analysis, it becomes evident that existing spatial conditions support certain forms of use while making others more difficult, leading to unequal experiences within the same environment.

In response, the project proposes an adaptive spatial framework based on a continuous and accessible path system designed to remain functional throughout the year. This is complemented by climate-responsive winter garden hubs, providing sheltered spaces that support everyday activities regardless of weather conditions.

Through the integration of light, planting, and material strategies, the project aims to strengthen spatial clarity and support multiple ways of experiencing the park. In doing so, Østre Anlæg is not only redefined as a more legible and inclusive environment, but also used as a case through which to demonstrate how public spaces can move beyond ableist assumptions and support more equitable spatial experiences.

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Design Process

The project follows an iterative design process, where analysis and design development continuously inform each other.

Problem Framing
Identification of key limitations in Østre Anlæg related to accessibility, spatial legibility, and seasonal use.

Site Immersion & Observation
Site visits and observations are used to understand movement, atmosphere, and patterns of use under different conditions.

Analytical Mapping
Spatial, material, and sensory conditions are translated into diagrams to reveal patterns, barriers, and inconsistencies.

Concept Development through Sketching
Sketching is used to explore spatial ideas, test relationships, and develop design strategies.

Synthesis
Insights from analysis and sketching are combined into a coherent spatial framework.

Representation
The final proposal is communicated through drawings, diagrams, and visualisations.

Iterative Development
The process allows continuous refinement as new insights emerge.

Methods

The project combines site-based observation and analytical tools to understand how spatial, material, and sensory conditions influence movement, orientation, and use within Østre Anlæg.

Site Analysis

Multiple site visits were conducted at different times of day and under varying weather conditions. This allowed for an understanding of how the park changes over time, particularly in relation to light, ground conditions, and levels of activity.

User Observation

Observations focused on how people move through the park, where they stop, and which areas are avoided. These patterns helped identify informal routes, moments of gathering, and spatial conditions that either support or limit use.

Sensory and Material Mapping

Mappings were developed to analyse sound, light, and ground conditions. These revealed how sensory information and material qualities are distributed, and where they fail to support orientation or continuity.

Material Analysis

Ground conditions were studied to identify issues related to stability, drainage, and accessibility, including uneven surfaces, soft ground, and areas affected by water accumulation.

Lighting Analysis

Lighting conditions were analysed to understand visibility, safety, and spatial perception, particularly during darker hours and seasonal changes.

Sketching and Diagramming

Sketching and diagrams were used as primary tools to explore and test ideas, supported the development of strategies related to movement, hierarchy, and sensory guidance, and were also used to communicate concepts throughout the project.

The 1 INTRODUCTION

Urban parks are often understood as open and accessible public environments. In practice, the experience of these spaces is shaped by a range of spatial, material and sensory conditions that influence how people move, orient themselves and feel within the environment. Ground stability, lighting, spatial legibility and sensory clarity all contribute to whether a space can be comfortably and independently used as part of everyday urban life. These conditions become particularly significant in climates where weather and environmental change continuously affect accessibility and patterns of use.

In Østre Anlæg, these conditions are clearly visible. While the park contains strong natural and atmospheric qualities, its existing spatial organisation does not consistently support movement, orientation or year round accessibility. Surfaces shift between stable and unstable conditions, lighting remains uneven across the park, and sensory cues are limited or unclear. As a result, the experience of the park becomes variable and at times uncertain, often depending on weather conditions, visibility and individual ways of navigating space.

This raises broader questions about how accessibility and inclusion are understood within public urban environments. Spaces that appear publicly open are not necessarily experienced equally by people with different ways of sensing, moving and navigating space. Certain spatial conditions can unintentionally privilege particular ways of moving and perceiving the environment while making others more difficult, uncertain or excluded.

This project approaches Østre Anlæg as an opportunity to explore how urban design can respond to these conditions through a more inclusive and sensory aware understanding of public space. The project focuses on the relationship between movement, perception, atmosphere and accessibility, investigating how spatial interventions can support a more legible, inclusive and year round park environment.

Location

Denmark

The project site is located in Aalborg, a city in northern Denmark. Aalborg has historically developed through industrial, residential and maritime activities and today functions as one of the country's main urban centres. The city contains a strong network of public spaces, green areas and urban connections that contribute to everyday urban life.

Aalborg

Østre Anlæg is located close to the centre of Aalborg and forms part of the city's broader network of public green spaces. The park is surrounded primarily by residential neighbourhoods together with mixed use areas, public functions and urban infrastructure. Its central location and proximity to public transport connections make it an accessible and frequently used everyday public environment within the city.

Østre Anlæg

Østre Anlæg is one of Aalborg's historic urban parks and contains a variety of spatial conditions including open lawns, dense vegetation, pathways, water elements and recreational areas. While the park offers strong natural and atmospheric qualities, its existing spatial organisation presents inconsistencies in accessibility, orientation and year round usability. These conditions make the site relevant for investigating how urban parks can support more inclusive, legible and sensory aware public environments.

Fig.1 Map of Denmark showing the location of the site.

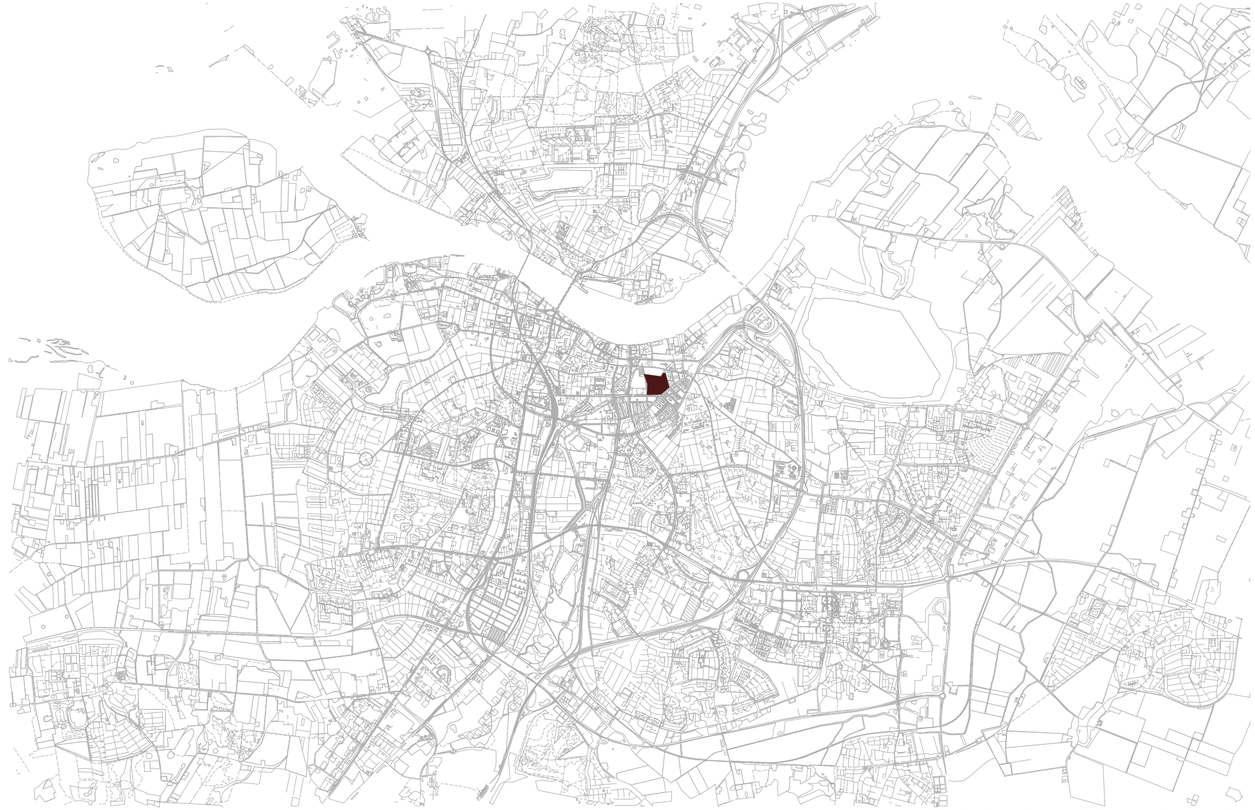


Fig.2 Map of Aalborg showing the location of Østre Anlæg.

Fig.3 Map of Østre Anlæg.

Østre Anlæg

Østre Anlæg is characterised by a varied landscape structure combining open green areas, dense vegetation, curved pathways and smaller recreational spaces distributed throughout the park. The lake functions as a central spatial element, contributing to the atmosphere and identity of the site while influencing movement and visibility across the landscape.

The park is used for a wide range of everyday activities including walking, staying, informal gathering and passing through the area as part of daily routines. At the same time, the spatial organisation of the park creates different experiences of accessibility, orientation and comfort depending on weather conditions, lighting and individual ways of navigating space. Informal paths and uneven patterns of movement throughout the park also reveal how existing circulation routes do not always align with the ways people naturally move through the site.

These existing qualities and spatial conditions make Østre Anlæg relevant as a site for exploring how accessibility, sensory experience and spatial legibility can be more closely integrated within the design of urban parks.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

ORIGINS AS AN URBAN PARK

Østre Anlæg was established in the early 20th century, during a period when Danish cities integrated public parks to improve urban living conditions (Jensen, 2000; Schipperijn & Stigsdotter, 2013).
The site, however, originated as part of Østerkæret, shaped by clay extraction linked to Vangs Teglværk (est. 1851). In 1917, the municipality initiated plans for the area, which was still partially used for waste disposal before its transformation into a public park (Aalborg Stadsarkiv, n.d.).

LANDSCAPE STRUCTURE AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The park follows landscape design principles typical of the time, combining curved paths, open lawns and a central water element (Turner, 1996).
The first paths and plantings were introduced in 1934, establishing a structure that supports movement while remaining integrated within everyday neighbourhood use.

THE LAKE AS A SPATIAL ANCHOR

The lake as a spatial anchor
The central lake remains the key spatial element, structuring both movement and visual orientation.
Beyond its visual role, water historically contributes to sensory experience in urban parks, reinforcing atmosphere and perception (Jørgensen, 2007).

A SPACE OF EVERYDAY LIFE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY

From its early years, the park supported a range of everyday activities, including play, informal gathering and seasonal uses such as ice skating.
These uses highlight its role as a lived and socially embedded space rather than a purely designed landscape (Aalborg Stadsarkiv, n.d.).

GROWTH AND SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION OVER TIME

As vegetation matured, the park became denser and more enclosed, reducing visual connections and altering spatial perception (Schipperijn, 2008).
This shift has made the space less open and more fragmented compared to its original condition.

CONTINUITY AND LIMITED ADAPTATION

While maintained over time, the park's structure has remained largely unchanged (Jensen, 2000).
At the same time, many original activities and facilities have diminished, resulting in a less programmed and quieter environment.

INTEGRATION WITHIN THE URBAN FABRIC

As Aalborg expanded, the park became embedded within the surrounding residential context.
It now functions primarily as a local green space used in everyday routines rather than as a distinct destination (Schipperijn & Stigsdotter, 2013).

CURRENT CONDITION AND CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Despite its historical value, the park does not fully respond to current expectations of accessibility, inclusivity and year-round use.
This reveals a gap between its original design logic and the needs of a more diverse user group today.

Fig.4 (c. 1950s) Direct connection to surrounding streets.

Fig.5 (c. 1950s) Areas for play and informal use.

Fig.6 (c. 1930s) Playground as everyday social space

Fig.7 (c. 1940) Industrial landscape before the park.

Fig.8 (c. 1940s) Lake used for ice skating in winter.

Fig.9 (c. 1940s) Lake as social focal point.

Fig.10 (c. 1940s) Seasonal use of the lake.

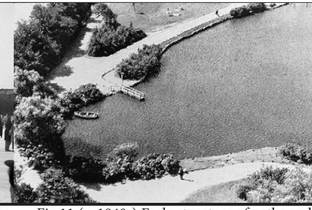


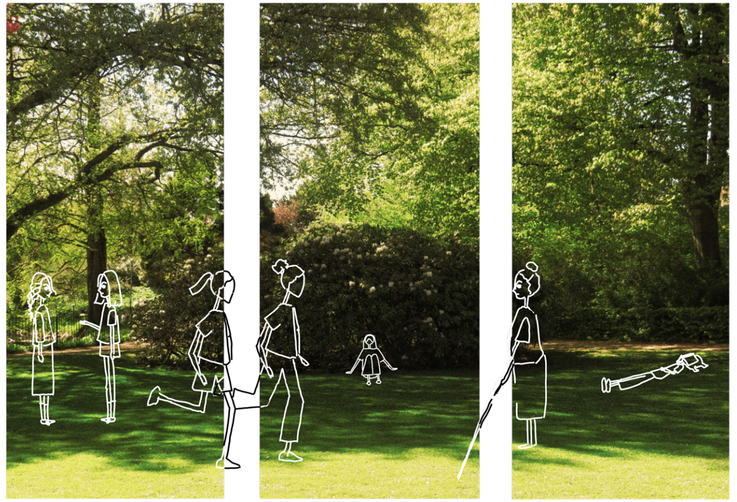
Fig.11 (c. 1940s) Early structure of paths and lake.

Identity of Østre Anlæg

Østre Anlæg is a central urban park in Aalborg, defined by its strong natural character and its role as an everyday space within the city. Organised around a central lake and surrounded by dense vegetation, the park offers a calm and enclosed environment that contrasts with the surrounding urban fabric. Recognised for its quality as a public green space, it has been awarded the Green Space Award, highlighting its ecological and spatial value.

People come to Østre Anlæg to spend time outdoors, often engaging in simple and informal activities. The park supports walking, sitting, and resting, while open lawn areas are used for picnics, socialising, or simply being in nature. Use tends to be calm and dispersed, with people occupying space individually or in small groups, rather than in large or concentrated gatherings.

As such, the park functions both as a place of movement and as a place of pause, where everyday presence is shaped by the atmosphere, the natural setting, and the opportunity to step away from the city, even if only temporarily.



The 2 THEORY

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Urban space is often understood as neutral, yet it is shaped by implicit assumptions about what bodies can do.
Through the lens of ableism, spatial conditions are understood as uneven, influencing how different people perceive, navigate, and use the same environment.

In this project, the design of public space is approached as a relationship between experience, understanding, and accessibility.
Rather than treating theory as a descriptive background, the selected frameworks are used as tools to critically examine how space is perceived, structured, and accessed.

The combination of sensory ethnography, architectural phenomenology, wayfinding theory, and Universal Design establishes a foundation for analysing environments in terms of how they are experienced, understood, and used by people with different abilities.

Ableism and Spatial Inequality

DEFINING ABLEISM

Contemporary urban environments, including public parks such as Østre Anlæg, are often perceived as neutral, yet they are shaped by implicit assumptions about what bodies are able to do. Ableism describes a system of beliefs, values, and practices that privilege certain abilities while marginalizing others (Wolbring, 2008). Rather than being limited to discrimination against people with disabilities, ableism operates more broadly by defining what is considered a "normal" or "capable" body, and embedding these expectations into spatial, social, and cultural structures.

In this sense, urban space is not designed for all bodies equally. Instead, it reflects and reinforces a preference for specific abilities, such as speed, independence, and visual orientation, while overlooking other ways of sensing, moving, and engaging with the environment, particularly in spaces that rely on informal paths, uneven surfaces, or unclear spatial organization.

EMBEDDED IN SPACE

These assumptions are not only social, but spatial. Design decisions related to surfaces, materials, routes, and spatial organization often appear neutral, yet they can enable certain forms of movement while restricting others. As a result, exclusion is not always visible, but embedded within the structure of the environment itself, often unnoticed in everyday use.

Ableism therefore shifts the focus from the individual to the environment. Rather than understanding limitations as personal deficiencies, it reveals how spatial conditions can create barriers, reduce access, and shape unequal experiences of the same place.

LIVED CONSEQUENCES

Research shows that these embedded conditions have direct consequences on how people move through and experience urban space. For some, navigating the city requires constant preparation, careful route planning, and anticipation of potential obstacles. For others, spatial conditions impose limitations, reducing independence and restricting access to certain areas. In some cases, the environment can also feel unsafe, as inadequate infrastructure creates situations of risk (Nielsen, 2026).

As expressed by one participant, "Although it's a path, it still feels like an enclosure", highlighting how spaces that appear accessible may still restrict movement and perception, particularly in everyday environments such as parks (Nielsen, 2026).

POSITIONING THE PROJECT

Understanding ableism as embedded in spatial design reframes the role of architecture and urban design. Rather than treating accessibility as an additional layer, it highlights the need to reconsider how space is perceived, structured, and used by different bodies.

This project is positioned within this perspective, using the existing park as a case through which these spatial inequalities can be examined. The concepts of sensory experience, spatial legibility, and Universal Design are therefore introduced not as separate frameworks, but as interconnected ways of understanding how the same space can be experienced differently.

Embodied and Sensory Experience

BODY AS INTERFACE

Following the understanding that spatial exclusion is not accidental but embedded in design practices, contemporary approaches to space increasingly recognize that environments are experienced through the body as a whole, rather than through vision alone. Sensory ethnography positions experience as multisensory, relational, and situated, emerging through the interaction between people, movement, and environment (Pink, 2015). From this perspective, perception is not a passive reception of stimuli, but an active and embodied process of engagement. However, the ability to engage with space is not equally accessible to all bodies, as it is shaped by conditions that enable or restrict different forms of interaction.

EMBEDDED PERCEPTION

Building on this, the concept of embodiment challenges the traditional separation between mind and body, suggesting instead that knowledge is produced through bodily interaction with the environment (Pink, 2015). Experience is therefore not abstract, but grounded in movement, materiality, and sensory engagement. At the same time, these conditions are unevenly distributed, meaning that not all bodies can access or interpret space in the same way. This has direct spatial implications: surfaces, textures, sounds, and environmental conditions become integral components of how space is understood and used, while also potentially acting as barriers.

BEYOND THE VISUAL

Extending this perspective, Pallasmaa (2012) argues that architecture has become overly dominated by vision, reducing the richness of spatial experience. He emphasizes that all senses contribute to perception, and that meaningful environments engage touch, sound, smell, and peripheral vision alongside sight. According to Pallasmaa (2012), the body is the center of experience, and architecture should reinforce the connection between the individual and their surroundings. Yet, this also raises a critical question: which bodies are considered in the design of space, and which remain excluded from these sensory environments?

ATMOSPHERIC SPACE

From this perspective, multisensory experience is not an aesthetic addition, but a fundamental condition for how space is perceived and remembered. The integration of sensory qualities, such as material tactility, acoustic conditions, and atmospheric variations, supports orientation, comfort, and emotional engagement. In response to the previously identified spatial inequalities, this project uses these principles to inform the design of spatial sequences, material choices, and environmental conditions, ensuring that the site can be experienced as a coherent and engaging environment by people with different abilities.

Spatial Legibility and Wayfinding

READING SPACE

Building on the understanding that spatial experience is not equally accessible to all bodies, the ability to navigate and understand space becomes equally critical. While sensory experience addresses how space is perceived, people must also be able to read and interpret their environment. Wayfinding theory provides a framework for analyzing how spatial organization supports orientation and decision-making. When this clarity is lacking, certain people are disproportionately affected, requiring additional effort to move through space.

DECISION IN MOTION

Within this context, Passini (1992) defines wayfinding as a cognitive process involving perception, decision-making, and movement. People continuously interpret environmental information in order to make choices about direction and route. This process relies on the presence of clear spatial cues, such as paths, edges, nodes, and landmarks, which help structure movement and support the formation of mental maps. However, when these cues are unclear or inconsistent, the process becomes more demanding, requiring increased attention, effort, and preparation.

SEQUENTIAL NAVIGATION

Legibility, in this context, refers to the clarity with which a space communicates its organization. Environments that lack clear structure increase cognitive load and create uncertainty, particularly for people with reduced spatial awareness or sensory limitations. As a result, navigation is no longer intuitive but requires constant interpretation and adjustment. Conversely, legible environments reduce cognitive effort by providing consistent and recognizable spatial elements that guide movement, supporting more independent navigation (Passini, 1992).

SPATIAL CLARITY

Extending this further, wayfinding is not limited to signage. Spatial configuration itself plays a central role in guiding behavior. The alignment of paths, the visibility of destinations, and the hierarchy of routes all contribute to how space is understood and navigated. In complex public environments, where multiple people interact simultaneously, unclear spatial structures can lead to disorientation, hesitation, and restricted movement.

In relation to the previously identified spatial inequalities, these conditions can result in environments that require preparation, impose limitations, and in some cases feel unsafe to navigate. In this project, wayfinding principles are therefore used to structure movement through the site. The design aims to establish a clear spatial hierarchy, where primary and secondary routes are easily distinguishable, and where transitions between spaces are legible and intuitive. This supports independent navigation and reduces reliance on external guidance.

NON-LEGIBLE SPACE

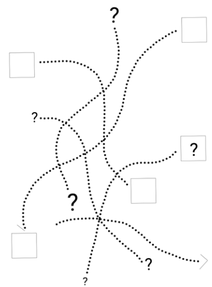


Fig.12 Diagram showing non-legible space.

LEGIBLE SPACE

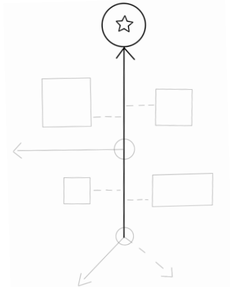


Fig.13 Diagram showing legible space.

Universal Design and Inclusion

DESIGN FOR DIVERSITY

Following the recognition that spatial experience and navigation are not equally accessible to all bodies, the question shifts from how space is perceived to who it is designed for. While sensory experience and spatial legibility address how space is understood, Universal Design addresses how space can be made usable by people with different abilities. This positions inclusion not as an addition, but as a fundamental design consideration.

BEYOND ACCESSIBILITY

Within this framework, Universal Design is defined as the design of environments that can be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation (Steinfeld and Maisel, 2012). Rather than focusing on specific user groups, it promotes an inclusive approach that accommodates a wide range of abilities, ages, and conditions. At the same time, this approach challenges the tendency to define a “normal” user, responding instead to the diversity of bodies and experiences highlighted in the previous sections.

INDEPENDENT USE

Extending this, the approach moves beyond minimum accessibility standards. Instead of providing separate or specialized solutions, it seeks to create environments that inherently support diversity. Inclusion is therefore embedded in the spatial structure itself, rather than added as an afterthought. In this sense, design becomes a way of reducing the need for constant preparation, negotiation, and adaptation in everyday movement.

EQUITY IN SPACE

Steinfeld and Maisel (2012) emphasize that Universal Design is not a fixed outcome, but a continuous process that aims to improve usability, independence, and participation. This includes reducing physical and cognitive barriers, ensuring equal access to spatial experiences, and supporting people in navigating environments independently. In response to the spatial inequalities previously identified, this approach enables spaces that can be used, understood, and experienced by people with different abilities on equal terms.

SHARED ENVIRONMENT

Building on sensory experience and spatial legibility, accessibility is understood as a combination of perception, orientation, and use. A space that is difficult to perceive or understand is inherently exclusionary. Therefore, inclusive design requires the integration of clear spatial organization, multisensory cues, and adaptable environments that respond to different needs.

In this project, Universal Design informs the development of accessible movement systems, ensuring that all people can navigate the site independently. This supports the creation of spaces that accommodate different forms of use, encourage social interaction, and allow for flexibility over time. Rather than designing for a single type of body, the project proposes a shared environment that supports multiple ways of experiencing and moving through space.

Reading Space Through Theory

Interpreting spatial experience through interconnected perspectives

The theoretical perspectives presented in this project are brought together not to describe space, but to reframe how it is understood. Rather than focusing on isolated aspects of design, they collectively reveal that spatial experience emerges through the relationship between perception, movement, and spatial organization.

Through sensory experience, space is understood as something encountered through the body, where materiality, atmosphere, and environmental conditions shape how places are perceived. Wayfinding highlights how spatial structure supports or challenges orientation, influencing how people interpret and navigate their surroundings. Universal Design extends this understanding by questioning who these spatial conditions are designed for, and how they include or exclude different bodies.

Considered together, these perspectives make visible aspects of space that often remain implicit. They reveal how environments can appear accessible while still requiring effort, adaptation, or prior knowledge to be used. They also expose how spatial clarity, material conditions, and organization can either support independence or reinforce dependence.

This integrated reading shifts attention away from isolated barriers towards broader spatial patterns. Instead of identifying individual problems, it allows for an understanding of how multiple conditions interact, shaping different experiences of the same environment. In doing so, it establishes a way of reading space that acknowledges variation, rather than assuming a singular or “normal” way of using it.

Analytical Framework

Using theory as a lens for spatial analysis

The integration of these perspectives becomes particularly relevant when understood in relation to ableism. If spatial exclusion is embedded in the way environments are structured, then it cannot be addressed through isolated or technical adjustments. Instead, it requires a critical reading of how space operates as a whole.

Within this framework, spatial conditions are understood not only as physical elements, but as factors that shape perception, orientation, and use. Paths, materials, and spatial organization are therefore not neutral components, but active contributors to how environments are experienced, interpreted, and navigated.

This perspective shifts the focus from individual ability to spatial conditions, emphasizing how access, independence, and comfort are produced through the relationship between the body and the environment. As a result, differences in experience are not seen as personal limitations, but as outcomes of how space is designed and organized.

The following analysis builds on this understanding, using these theoretical perspectives as a framework to examine the existing park. It focuses on how spatial conditions influence perception, movement, and use, and how these conditions support or restrict different ways of experiencing the same environment.

3 *The* ANALYSIS

EXPERIENCING THE PARK

This chapter looks at the park through people's experiences. By speaking with them on site, it shows how the space is used, how people move through it, and how they describe it in their own words.

Some conversations happened while walking, others were short and direct. Together, they give both a more detailed and a more immediate understanding of the park.

These different perspectives help show where the space works well and where it creates difficulties, especially in relation to movement, orientation and everyday use.

Walk Along Interview explained

Layer 1 is Movement
Records how the body moves through the park. It captures pace, direction and moments where movement slows, shifts or stops.

Layer 2 is Orientation
Identifies how the space is read while moving. It focuses on moments of uncertainty, hesitation and decision making.

Layer 3 is Staying / Use
Observes when movement turns into staying. It reveals where attention is drawn and where interaction with the space occurs.

Layer 4 is Comfort & Atmosphere
Registers how the space feels during the walk. It includes sensory conditions and perceived comfort or unease.

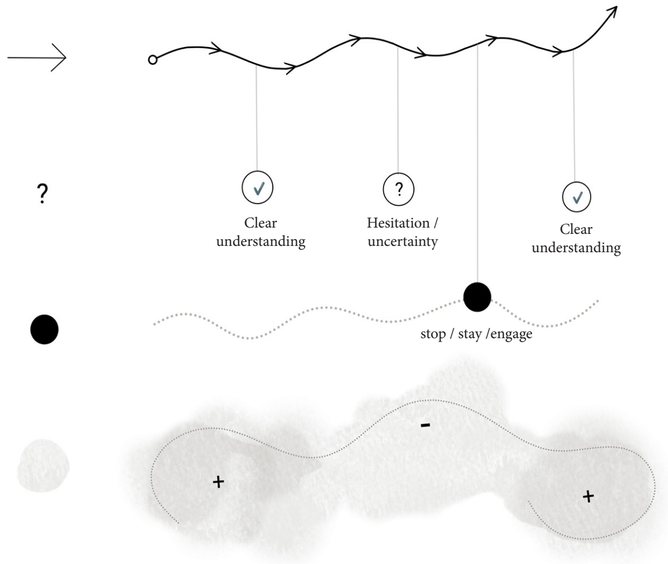


Fig.14 Diagram of walk along interviews. Walk along interviews explanation.

Fragments of experience explained

Layer 1 is Access / Frequency
Defines the relationship with the park. It captures how often people come, how they arrive and under what conditions.

Layer 2 is Movement / Routes
Describes how people say they move through the park. It highlights preferred paths, repeated routes and areas that are avoided.

Layer 3 is Use / Activity
Clarifies how the space is used. It identifies where people spend time and what they do.

Layer 4 is Perception / Comfort
Captures how the park is described. It reflects general impressions, comfort and perceived qualities of different areas.

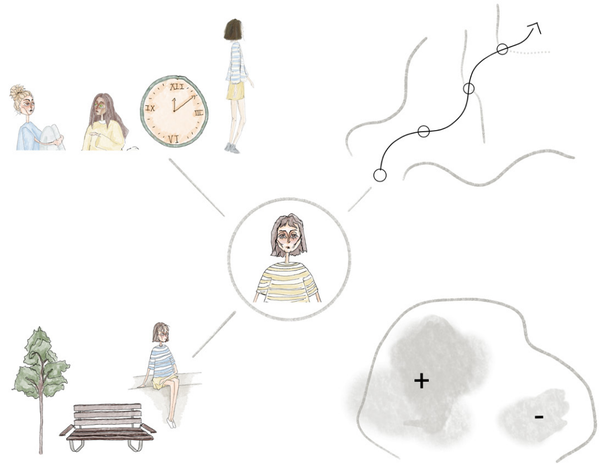


Fig.15 Diagram of fragments of experience. Short interviews explanation.

During a site visit, I met two older ladies who were close friends. What began as a short conversation about the park later developed into a walk-along interview that became an important part of the research.

Movement

Victoria and Victoria N. move through the park with ease, walking side by side at a steady pace. They follow familiar routes without needing to make decisions, repeating known paths rather than exploring new areas. Their movement is continuous and comfortable, shaped more by routine and rhythm than destination.

Orientation

Their understanding of the park is based almost entirely on repetition. They do not actively read the space, but rely on routes they already know. As a result, their experience is concentrated in specific areas, while other parts of the park remain undefined and unused. This suggests that the park does not provide a strong overall structure, but instead supports partial and habitual navigation.

Staying / Use

They come to the park to spend time outdoors together, valuing the greenery and lake as part of the experience. While they appreciate these elements, they engage with them at a distance rather than approaching closely. Their visit is mainly structured around walking, with occasional pauses in the central area. They rarely use the benches preferring open spaces for short stops before continuing. Their use of the park is continuous, but centred within a familiar zone.

Comfort & Atmosphere

Their use of the park is strongly dependent on weather conditions. During rain, they avoid visiting altogether, as the ground becomes uncomfortable and less reliable to walk on, and there are no sheltered spaces that feel appropriate for staying. They also noted that at certain times the park lacks the presence of other people, which affects their experience. For them, part of being in the park is observing others and sensing everyday activity around them. The absence of this reduces the appeal of the space. In contrast, good weather acts as a clear trigger for use, encouraging them to make the effort to come and spend time there.

Victoria & Victoria N., Older Adults

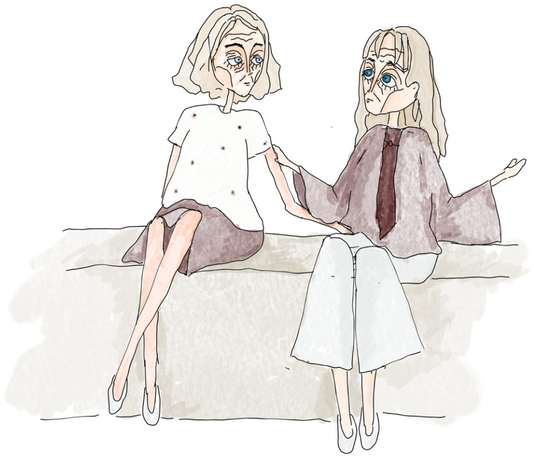


Fig.16 Draw of Victoria and Victoria N.

"It feels better when there are people here. We just like watching people go about their day."

"We come for the green and the lake, but we always end up in the same place, where is more movement, so we are part of it."

"When it's raining, there's no life here... so we just stay at home."

"If it's too quiet, we usually keep walking."

Nicolai, who had previously supported me in another project, kindly agreed to take part in a walk-along interview through the park. His reflections and experience of navigating the space without visual guidance became an important part of understanding different ways of sensing, orienting, and moving through the park.

Movement

Nicolai moved by staying close to the edges of the paths, relying on bushes, trees and changes in ground texture to orient himself. The surface itself did not provide enough feedback, so instead of walking through the centre, he shifted towards the sides to understand where he was and how the space continued. Movement was not guided by the path, but by what he could physically detect along it.

Orientation

He described the park as having no readable structure from his perspective. There are no tactile cues, no defined edges and no elements that indicate direction or continuity. At several moments he stopped, unsure of where the path continued or how different routes connected. The openness of the space does not translate into clarity. Without visual information, the park does not provide any system that supports independent navigation.

Staying / Use

He used to come to the park when he was younger, often with his mother. He also recalled injuring himself there while running. Today, he described that he would not come to the park alone.

Comfort & Atmosphere

Nicolai described the park as pleasant to be in, particularly through sound. Birds, wind in the trees and activity around the lake created a clear sensory atmosphere. These elements made the space feel active and present, but they did not help him understand its structure. Near the water, the lack of a continuous edge made it difficult to judge distance, creating uncertainty in those areas.

Nicolai, adult navigating without visual guidance

Fig.17 Draw of Nicolai.

"It's nice to be here again, walk and be in the nature, and to feel the sun, but I guess it's one of those places you only come to visit."

"I stay close to the edge, I need to feel the bushes or the change in ground to know I'm still on the path."

"I can hear everything, but that doesn't help me navigate."

"I used to come here when I was younger, with my mother. All the senses in this park, was like an adventure! But now I am aware of the senses, I'm an adult, so I need more than that, I need guidance."

"There's nothing here that tells me where to go."

Fig.18 Map of the site showing where Nicolai said important information.

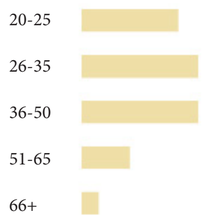
Fragments of experience

Short talks

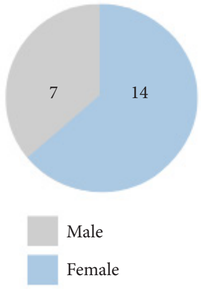
21 short conversations with people using the park in different ways, at different times of the day.

Who I talked to

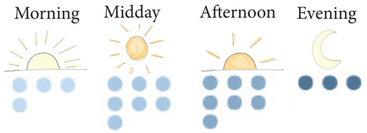
Age
Number of people



Gender
Number of people



When we talked



Younger voices

"I come here with friends mostly to hang out, not really to walk."
- Mads, 20

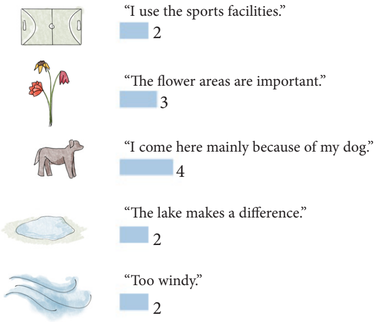
"I just come here in the evening because of my dog, otherwise i wouldn't, there's a lack of light in some parts."
- Lina, 20

"I like the open spaces, the green and everything, but some areas feel a bit boring, and yes, i don't go there."
- Villads, 21

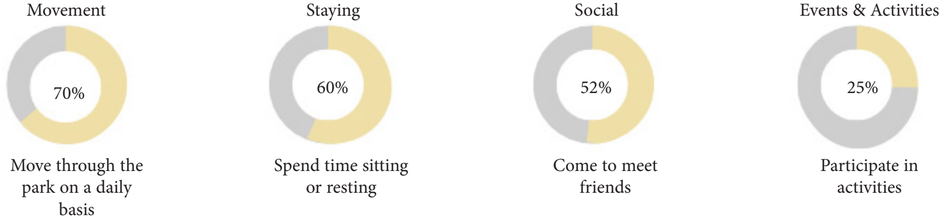
What I heard

What was most said

What was least said



How people experience the park



CONCLUSION

What was observed

People experience the park in very different ways depending on how they move and what they rely on.
Some follow the same routes out of habit, while others struggle to understand the space at all.
The park is used, but often in a limited and repetitive way.
Certain conditions, such as ground, weather and lack of structure, affect how comfortable it is to be there.

What this reveals

The space does not support all people equally.
It is possible to be in the park, but not necessarily to understand or move through it with ease.
Use is shaped by familiarity rather than clarity.
This highlights the need for a space that is easier to read, more consistent and supportive of different ways of experiencing it.

INFRASTRUCTURE

This chapter looks at the physical structure of the park and how it supports everyday use. It focuses on paths, surfaces, lighting, seating and connections to the surrounding streets.

By observing these elements, it becomes clear how movement is shaped and where the space works well or creates difficulties. Differences between areas also show how some parts of the park are more used and accessible than others.

This helps to understand how the existing infrastructure supports or limits use, orientation and overall access to the park.

Fig.19 Map showing the urban context structure.

Urban Context

Østre Anlæg is located within a central and well connected area of Aalborg, surrounded by a mixture of residential neighbourhoods, mixed use areas, commercial functions and public green spaces. Its position within the urban structure allows the park to function as an accessible everyday destination closely integrated with the surrounding city and daily movement patterns.

The surrounding context is primarily characterised by residential urban fabric, creating a strong connection between the park and nearby communities. At the same time, the presence of public transport stops, public facilities and nearby mixed use areas strengthens the accessibility and everyday usability of the park for a wide range of people and activities. The proximity to water elements and additional green areas further reinforces the park's role within Aalborg's broader network of public and recreational spaces.

Overall, the urban context reveals that Østre Anlæg benefits from a strategically accessible location within the city, where surrounding infrastructure, public facilities and urban connections contribute to its potential as an active and inclusive public environment.

Soft infrastructure

The distribution of use within the park is uneven. The most used areas are primarily located along the southern edge and around the main path network, where movement is strongest. In contrast, the central open areas and parts of the park remain largely underused.

Recreational functions such as the playground, volleyball and football areas are present but do not structure the overall use of the park. Their influence is limited to their immediate surroundings and does not extend to the larger open spaces.

Benches are mainly positioned along paths and around the lake, supporting short stays linked to movement rather than encouraging longer occupation of space. As a result, activity tends to follow linear patterns instead of forming distinct gathering areas.

Bus stops are distributed around the site and provide good access from the surrounding neighbourhood. However, this accessibility does not result in a more balanced use of the park.

Overall, use is concentrated along edges and paths, while large parts of the park remain underutilised, indicating limited diversity of use and weak spatial distribution of activity.

Fig.20 Map showing the soft infrastructure

Hard infrastructure

The surrounding street network is clearly defined, with primary and secondary roads structuring the edges of the site and ensuring good external accessibility. Several entrances connect the park to its surroundings, though their legibility and spatial definition vary, resulting in uneven transitions between the urban fabric and the park.

Within the park, the path system lacks a clear hierarchy. Primary and secondary routes are similar in width, material and direction, which reduces their legibility and makes movement less intuitive. Circulation is therefore not strongly guided by the spatial structure.

The presence of the lake and changes in topography introduce spatial variation but also constrain direct movement. Ramps provide accessible connections across different levels, although they are not consistently aligned with main movement routes.

Overall, while the park is well connected at its edges, the internal hard infrastructure lacks clarity and coherence, limiting legibility and affecting how movement is structured within the space.

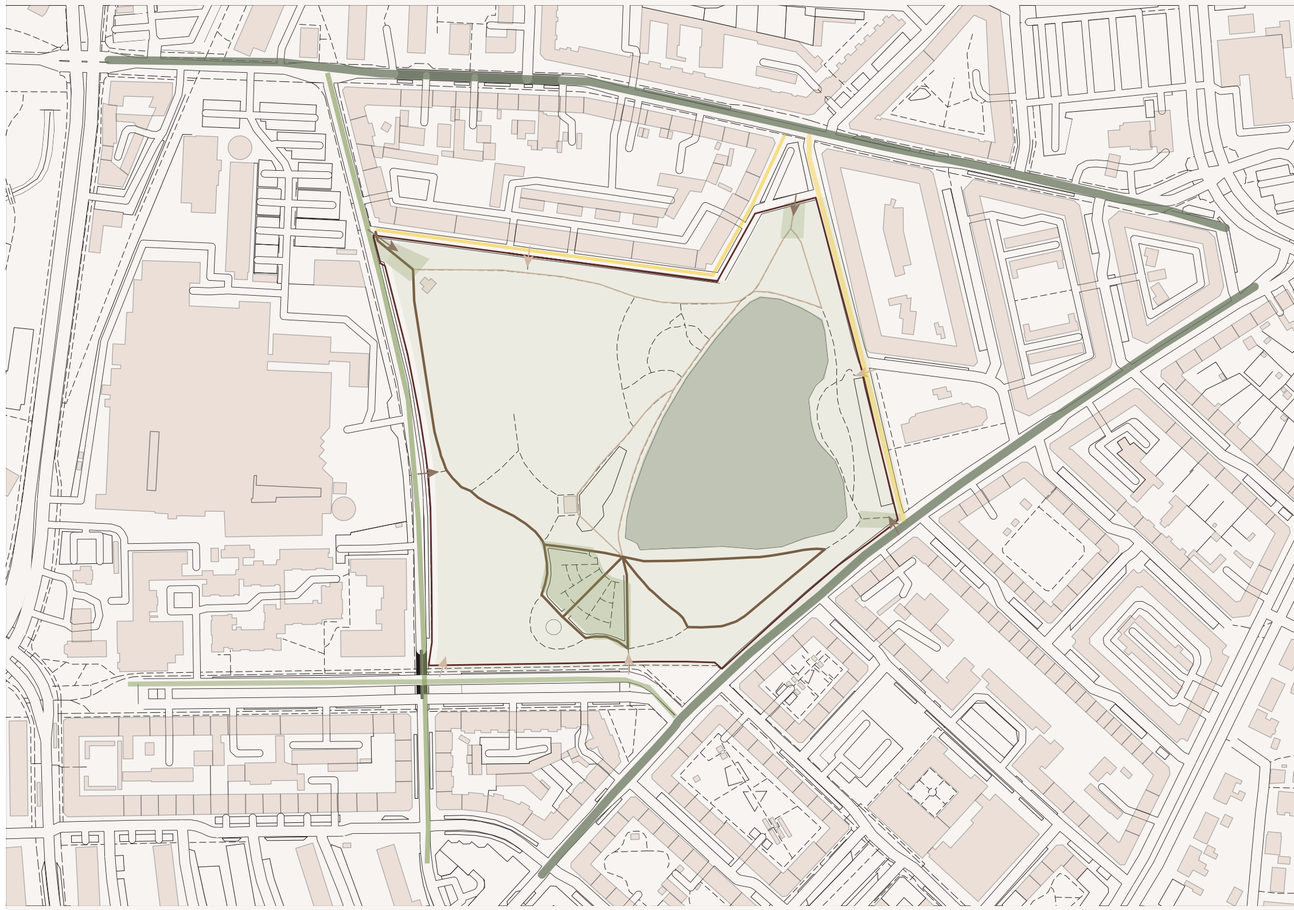


Fig.21 Map showing the hard infrastructure

ENTRANCES

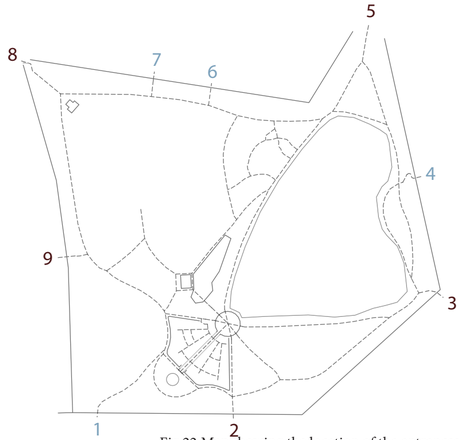


Fig.22 Map showing the location of the entrances.

People-Made Informal Entrance (South-West)

1 A secondary, non-official access created by people, flat and convenient, revealing a gap between formal infrastructure and actual use.

Secondary Entrance (South)

2 An official, well-positioned and open entrance, flat and easily accessible, providing a clear but secondary access into the park.

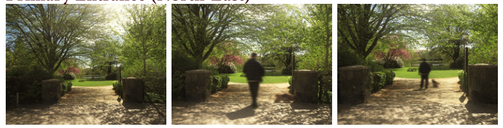
Primary Entrance (South-East)

3 A clearly defined main entrance with a gentle ramp, open visibility, and an information board introducing the park.

Secondary Entrance (East)

4 An official entrance connected to parking, characterized by a narrow and partially hidden access with steps limiting accessibility.

Primary Entrance (North-East)



5 A main entrance with a gentle ramp and open spatial condition, including an information board that supports orientation.

Secondary Entrance (North)

6 An official but constrained entrance along a parking edge, where limited sidewalk space reduces accessibility and clarity.

Secondary Entrance (North)

7 A narrow and constrained entrance shared with parking, affecting both movement comfort and spatial legibility.

Primary Entrance (North-West)

8 A clearly defined main entrance with a gentle ramp and an information board, supporting both accessibility and orientation.

Secondary Entrance (West)

9 An official, flat entrance with moderate clarity, functioning as a secondary access without strong spatial identity.

Fig.23 Photos of all the entrances and the sense of experiencing it.

Entrance Conditions and Park Structure

The park has a generous number of entrances distributed around its edges, creating several possibilities for arrival from different parts of the surrounding city. The three primary entrances are positioned at the south-east, north-east, and north-west edges, giving the park clear points of arrival from different directions. These entrances are more legible, more open, and supported by information boards that introduce the park, its history, and its main features.

The secondary entrances also play an important role. They allow the park to remain porous and connected to the surrounding streets, parking areas, and everyday routes. Although they vary in spatial quality, their distribution helps the park function as an accessible urban green space rather than a closed destination with only one main access point.

The people-made entrance in the south-west is especially important analytically. Even though it is not formally designed as an entrance, it shows how people already adapt the park to their movement needs. Its use suggests that this edge responds to a real desire line, where formal infrastructure does not fully match everyday movement patterns.

Together, the entrances shape how the interior of the park is approached and understood. The primary entrances support orientation and introduce the identity of the park, while the secondary and informal entrances strengthen permeability and everyday use. Rather than showing a lack of access, the entrance system reveals a park with strong potential: it is well connected, frequently entered from multiple sides, and already shaped by the way people move through it.

CONCLUSION

What was observed

The park is defined by a network of paths, open areas and edges, but these elements are not always clearly structured.
Surfaces vary and can become difficult depending on weather conditions.
The park is accessed through multiple entrances distributed around its edges, including three primary entrances that are well-positioned and supported by information boards, as well as several secondary and one informal access point.
While entrances are numerous and allow permeability, their spatial definition and quality vary.
Some areas are more used and maintained, while others remain underused.

What this reveals

The existing infrastructure provides multiple points of access and supports use across the park, but lacks consistency in how these conditions are experienced.
Movement is possible, but not always equally comfortable or legible.
While primary entrances support orientation and introduce the park, other access points rely more on familiarity and prior knowledge.
The presence of an informal entrance suggests that existing connections do not fully align with everyday movement patterns.
This results in differences in how easily people can access, understand, and use the park.

LAYERS OF SPACE

This chapter looks at the park through different layers, including movement, accessibility, atmosphere, sensory conditions and light.

These layers are not separate, but overlap and influence each other. Together, they shape how the space is used, how it is felt, and how easy it is to move through it.

By reading these layers together, it becomes possible to understand where the park supports use and where it creates difficulties.

Fig.24 Photo with people walking.

Fig.25 Photo with people with ducks on garden.

Fig.26 Photo with people spending time in the existing gazebo.

Sensory & Atmosphere

Østre Anlæg has a quiet, layered atmosphere that shifts subtly as you move through it. The sound of the city fades at the edges, giving way to softer rhythms, where the presence of people becomes part of this changing condition. Paths dissolve into the landscape rather than defining it, and the space unfolds without a clear sequence, allowing movement and staying to happen simultaneously.

The lake draws attention without demanding it, remaining present more as a background than a destination. Around it, people gather in different ways: sitting close to the water, watching the ducks, or occasionally reaching out to them, testing a small moment of connection. Elsewhere, the open lawns are inhabited in quiet and informal ways, with people lying in the grass, talking, listening to music, or simply spending time together.

Light filters through the trees unevenly, creating moments of openness followed by more enclosed passages, where both space and activity shift gradually. The park is not only defined by its physical structure, but by the presence of people within it, by those who pass through, those who stay, and those who return as part of their everyday routines.

It is a place that feels familiar, yet slightly undefined, where the experience is continuous but not clearly structured, shaped as much by human presence as by the landscape itself.

Fig.27 Photo with group of young people on the garden.

Fig.28 Photo with children playing on the playground.

Fig.29 Photo with couple of old people walking.

Material Conditions and Accessibility Issues

Fig.30 Photo of mixed brick and stone surface in garden edge area.

Fig.31 Photo of water accumulation on unpaved path near entrance.

Fig.32 Photo of worn soil path in interior park area.

Fig.33 Photo of eroded main path surface under night conditions.

The material conditions across the park act as continuous, everyday barriers that shape how space is used and who is able to use it. Surfaces that become waterlogged, soft, or uneven interrupt movement and break the continuity of paths, forcing users to slow down, change direction, or avoid certain areas altogether.

These conditions disproportionately affect users with reduced mobility, such as wheelchair users, elderly people, or anyone requiring stable and predictable ground. At the same time, they reduce overall comfort and safety for all users, particularly during and after rain, when surfaces become more unstable or slippery.

Beyond physical difficulty, these material inconsistencies also impact spatial legibility. When ground conditions change unpredictably, it becomes harder to read and trust the path network, weakening orientation and confidence in moving through the park.

Overall, the current materiality does not support year-round use. Instead, it introduces seasonal limitations, where accessibility and usability fluctuate depending on weather conditions, reinforcing exclusion rather than enabling inclusive and continuous use of space.

Light Distribution in the Park

Lighting within the park is limited and primarily concentrated along two main paths, forming a linear pattern that supports basic movement through the site.
The central node and key circulation routes are partially illuminated, reinforcing their role within the overall path network.
The main entrances, particularly those located along the north-east and north-west edges, are also lit, supporting visibility at key points of arrival.
Outside of these areas, most of the park remains unlit. Open green spaces and peripheral zones lack illumination, and the sports area is only minimally lit, with small light sources near the restroom facilities, some of which are not functioning.

Overall, lighting is uneven and follows specific routes rather than the park as a whole. This results in fragmented lighting conditions that influence visibility, orientation, and use during low-light periods.

Fig.34 Map of existing light on the park.

Existing lighting type

Pole-Mounted Post-Top Luminaire

This lighting type consists of vertical poles with post-top luminaires, typically installed at a height of approximately 3.5 meters. The fixture emits light in a downward and slightly diffused pattern, with a coverage radius that varies depending on spacing and intensity.

These luminaires are commonly used in parks and pedestrian environments due to their durability and standardized form, providing functional overhead illumination.

Fig.35 Illustration of the type of light existing on park.

Lighting Conditions

Urban lighting can be understood not only through physical elements, but through how light structures space and perception. The following conditions are presented as analytical references to illustrate how different lighting strategies influence movement, orientation, and spatial experience. These conditions are not currently present within the park.

1 - Path Definition

Low-level lighting positioned close to the ground creates a continuous line along paths. The lateral projection of light reinforces direction and supports movement, allowing routes to be read clearly while maintaining low impact on surrounding areas.

2 - Spatial Emphasis

A focused light source projecting a defined cone of light highlights specific points or surfaces. This creates contrast within the environment and directs attention, structuring how space is perceived.

3 - Spatial Atmosphere

A distributed system of small light sources produces a soft and continuous glow. Rather than guiding movement, this type of lighting shapes spatial perception, contributing to a more enclosed and human-scale environment.

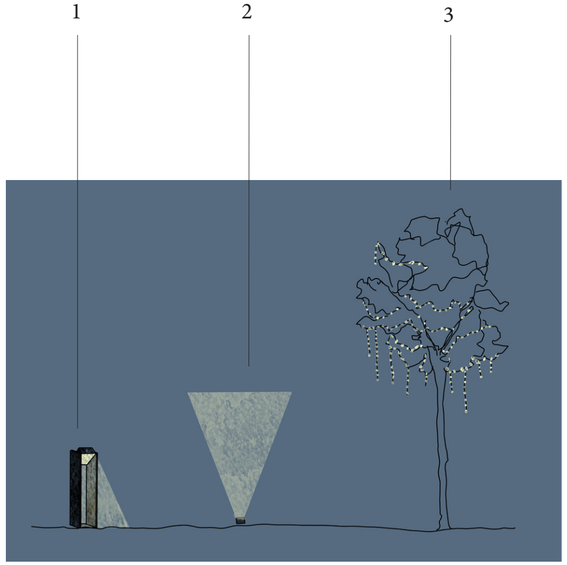


Fig.36 Illustration of the types of lighting conditions.

Activities

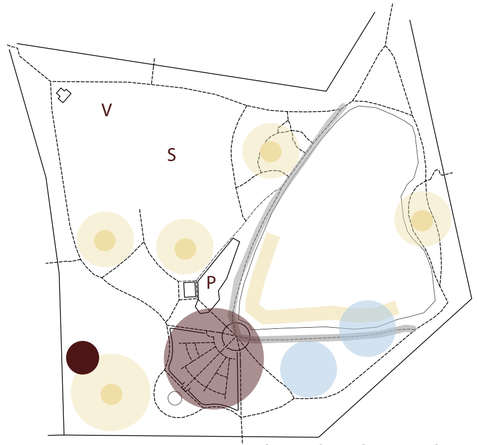
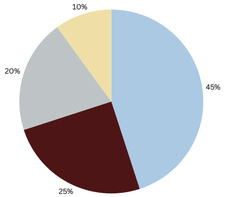


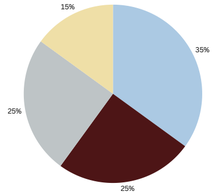
Fig.37 Map showing the used or not used areas.

- Better ground conditions to use
- Areas where people take more photos
- Areas with no people most of the time
- Area with reduce sense of comfort
- Most used paths
- Better connection with the lake
- V Volleyball
- S Soccer
- P Playground

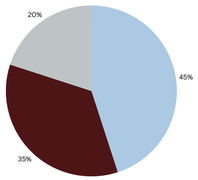
Activity type



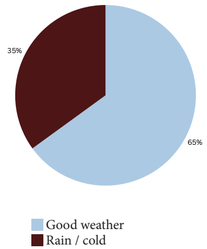
Use by group



Use throughout the day



Conditions of use



Being together / Socialising

Social activities such as sitting, talking and spending time outdoors are present, but highly dependent on weather conditions and spatial comfort. These uses are concentrated in a few favourable areas, while large parts of the park remain underused. This uneven distribution indicates that the park does not consistently support staying or longer-term use.

Dog walkers

Movement through the park is strongly shaped by dog walking, with clear and repetitive routes forming over time. These paths are followed consistently, suggesting familiarity and routine. Interaction with the space itself is limited, as most movement is continuous and oriented towards circulation rather than staying. This indicates that large parts of the park are experienced in passing, rather than being actively used.

Older adults

Use by older adults is more concentrated and careful, often limited to familiar areas with seating and stable ground conditions. Movement tends to be slower and more selective, with a preference for spaces that feel predictable and comfortable. This reveals how accessibility and clarity directly influence where and how the park is used.

Runners

The park supports continuous movement, with runners using existing paths as loops. Their presence reinforces the importance of clear, uninterrupted routes and highlights how the spatial structure prioritises movement over variation. The experience of the park for this group is defined by flow and rhythm rather than engagement with specific places.

Informal play and sport

Open areas are occasionally used for informal activities such as football, but these uses are limited and not strongly supported by the existing spatial structure. The lack of defined or inviting spaces for active use suggests that these activities occur despite the design, rather than being encouraged by it.

CONCLUSION

What was observed

The park offers a range of sensory qualities, including sound, light and material, but these are not clearly structured.
Ground surfaces are similar across large areas, with limited variation in texture, and in many cases become uneven, soft, or waterlogged, creating interruptions in movement.
Natural elements such as trees and water are present, but do not guide movement or orientation.
Lighting is limited and unevenly distributed, affecting visibility and the perception of safety, particularly during darker hours.
Changes in light, weather, and ground conditions affect how the space is perceived and used at different times.

What this reveals

The sensory environment is present but not supportive.
It does not help people understand or navigate the space.
The lack of variation and structure reduces clarity.
This makes the park harder to use, especially for those relying on non-visual cues.

S
Strengths

Strong natural character with mature vegetation and a central lake.
Calm atmosphere that supports everyday use and retreat.
Established paths that allow basic movement through the park.
Embedded within the neighbourhood, making it easily reachable.

W
Weaknesses

Lack of clear spatial structure and hierarchy.
Poor orientation, especially for people relying on non-visual cues.
Ground conditions become difficult in wet weather.
Limited use of large parts of the park, with activity concentrated in few areas.
Absence of sheltered spaces and weak year-round usability.

O
Opportunities

Use sensory elements to support orientation and movement.
Reinforce path hierarchy and create a clearer spatial structure.
Activate underused areas to distribute use more evenly.
Introduce elements that support use in different weather conditions.
Strengthen the relationship between movement, rest and social presence.

T
Threats

Continued limited use leading to further neglect of certain areas.
Increasing exclusion of users with different abbilities.
Weather conditions further reducing accessibility and use.
Loss of relevance as a public space if it does not adapt to current needs.

The 4 BRIDGE

From analysis to design

This project builds directly on the conditions identified through the analysis. The park can be used, but it does not support all people equally, and its use is strongly limited by weather conditions. Movement is not always clear, ground conditions become difficult when it rains, and there are no spaces that allow people to stay in the park during bad weather. As a result, use becomes restricted and often depends on familiarity and favourable conditions.

The design responds by improving accessibility and making the park usable in different situations. It introduces stable paths that remain accessible in all weather conditions, and creates covered spaces where people can stay, meet and continue using the park even when it rains.

Rather than transforming the park entirely, the proposal strengthens its existing qualities while making it more inclusive, more readable and more reliable throughout the year.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

How can the spatial structure of Østre Anlæg be reconfigured to support inclusive, legible, and year-round use, enabling accessibility and spatial clarity for people with different abilities and ways of sensing and navigating space?

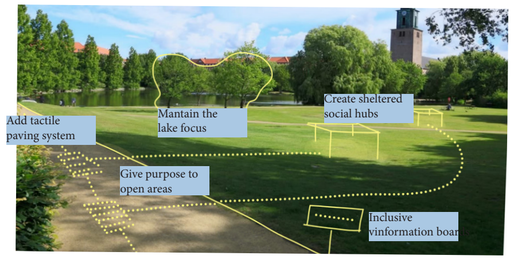
My Vision for this space

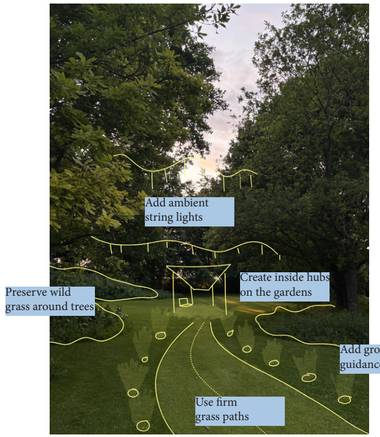
The vision is to shape Østre Anlæg into an inclusive and legible park that supports year-round use and everyday life. As a central urban space, the park should feel accessible, safe, and welcoming, allowing people to move through it with ease and to spend time there regardless of weather or season.

The project seeks to create a space that can be clearly understood through movement, light, and material, where paths are stable, routes are readable, and transitions between areas are intuitive. By introducing sheltered conditions and improving ground surfaces, the park becomes more reliable, supporting both movement and staying as part of everyday use.

At the same time, the vision recognises the importance of preserving the park's existing natural character. The presence of wildlife, such as birds and ducks around the lake, is understood as a fundamental quality of the space. Interventions are therefore approached with care, ensuring that improvements in accessibility and use do not come at the expense of ecological balance.

Rather than redefining Østre Anlæg, the project builds on what is already there, strengthening its qualities while opening it to a wider range of experiences. The aim is not to change how the park is used, but to allow more people to use it fully, confidently, and **on equal terms**.





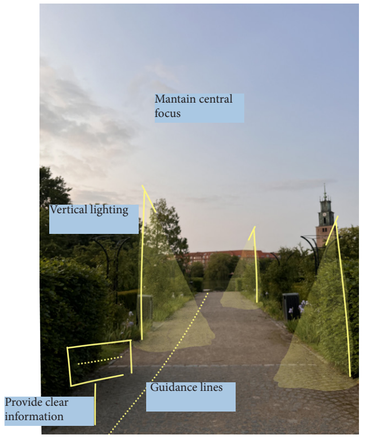


Fig.38 Pictures with design considerations.

Design Criteria

These criteria aim to support a more inclusive and legible park environment, recognising accessibility and inclusion as essential spatial qualities rather than specialised additions.

Movement & Accessibility

1. Ensure continuous and stable paths that remain usable in all weather conditions.
2. Create a clear hierarchy of routes to support easy movement through the park.
3. Improve entrances and connections to the surrounding streets.

Spatial Clarity

4. Strengthen the spatial structure to make the park easier to read and understand.
5. Use materials, light and landscape elements to support orientation.
6. Create clear relationships between paths, open areas and the lake.

Year-round Use

7. Introduce covered spaces that allow people to stay during rain and cold weather.
8. Support both movement and staying throughout different seasons.
9. Distribute activity across the park to avoid concentrated use in limited areas.

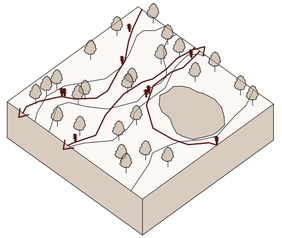
Inclusive Use

10. Ensure the park can be experienced by people with different ways of sensing, moving and navigating space.
11. Provide a variety of spaces for different ways of being: alone, together, active or resting.
12. Strengthen the relationship between people and the existing natural environment.

The Concept

One Spatial Spine

A shared spatial system supporting different ways of moving, sensing, and navigating

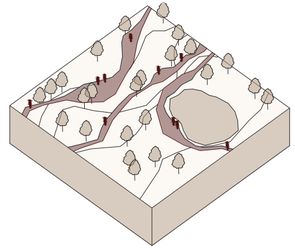


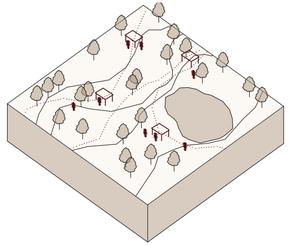
Structuring movement

The project introduces a continuous path that organises movement across the park. This path connects entrances, key areas and the lake, creating a clear and readable structure that guides people through the space.

Stabilising the ground

The ground is adapted to ensure that movement remains possible in all weather conditions.
Stable surfaces reduce mud and allow continuous use, making the park more reliable throughout the year.



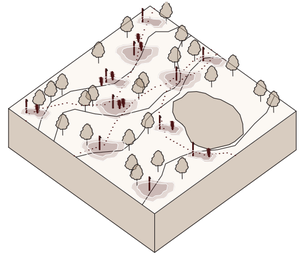


Extending stay

Covered spaces are introduced along the path as places to stop, rest and meet.
These elements allow the park to be used beyond good weather, supporting everyday use in different conditions.

Reading through the senses

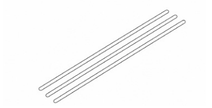
Material, light and spatial changes are used to support orientation to all.
The park becomes easier to understand through different sensory cues, helping people move and relate to the space.



Design Tools

The toolbox collects a catalogue of spatial tools and design elements that guide the development of the project. Each tool responds directly to the main spatial conditions and challenges identified through the site analysis, helping shape a park that is easier to move through, understand, and experience in different ways. Rather than functioning as isolated interventions, these elements work together as part of a connected spatial system that supports orientation, social interaction, sensory experience, and year-round use. The toolbox also helps establish a consistent design language across the project, ensuring that the different interventions remain coherent both spatially and visually throughout the park.

Spatial Navigation

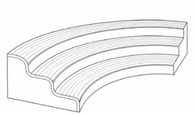


Tactile path

Information boards

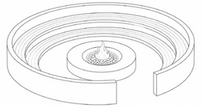
Lighting

Social Spaces



Shared seating

Sheltered spaces



Community seating with fire pit

Sensory Landscape

Sensorial experience

Stable material on the ground

Textures

Fig.39 Illustrations of Design tools.

Design Process

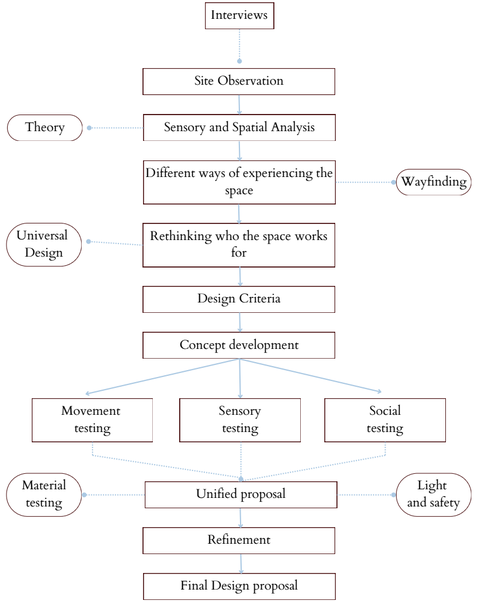


Fig.40 Diagram of the design process.

Site Observation
Observing movement, atmosphere, accessibility and everyday use through repeated visits to Østre Anlæg.

Sensory & Spatial Analysisw
Mapping paths, materials, lighting, edges and spatial conditions to understand how the park is experienced differently.

Different Ways of Experiencing the Park
Exploring how people with different abilities and ways of sensing and navigating space experience comfort, orientation and accessibility.

Rethinking Who the Space Works For
Questioning spatial assumptions and identifying hidden barriers within the existing park environment.

Design Criteria
Defining the main priorities of the project: legibility, accessibility, safety, sensory experience and year-round use.

Concept Development
Developing the concept “One Park, Different Journeys” through sketches, testing and spatial exploration.

Movement Testing
Testing circulation, path hierarchy and spatial connections across the park.

Sensory Testing
Exploring materials, textures, atmosphere, lighting and tactile guidance within the landscape.

Social Testing
Testing spaces for gathering, resting and different forms of social interaction.

Unified Proposal
Combining all spatial interventions into a coherent and inclusive masterplan proposal.

Refinement
Adjusting and refining the proposal through feedback, testing and design iterations.

Final Design Proposal
Producing the final design proposal integrating accessibility, sensory experience and spatial clarity.

The 5 DESIGN

Gathering, Moving, Sensing

The design proposal builds upon the analytical findings, interviews, and theoretical framework developed throughout the project, translating them into a spatial strategy focused on inclusivity, legibility, and year round use within Østre Anlæg. Rather than replacing the existing identity of the park, the proposal seeks to reinforce its qualities while responding to the spatial and sensory barriers identified throughout the analysis.

The project is grounded in the understanding that people experience, perceive, and move through space in different ways. In response, the design introduces a clearer and more readable spatial structure that supports orientation, comfort, participation, and independent movement across the park. Through the integration of accessible circulation, tactile guidance, lighting, gathering spaces, and sensory interventions, the proposal aims to create an environment that feels more welcoming, understandable, and usable for a broader range of people and everyday situations.

At the same time, the proposal preserves the existing atmosphere of Østre Anlæg, maintaining its vegetation, quieter areas, and natural character while introducing new opportunities for social interaction, rest, activity, and year round occupation. The intention is not only to improve accessibility within the park, but also to encourage a stronger sense of presence, inclusion, and connection between people and space.

Fig.41 Masterplan proposal.

The Masterplan

The masterplan proposes a reconfiguration of Østre Anlæg focused on inclusivity, legibility, and year round use, while preserving the existing identity and atmosphere of the park. The intervention introduces a clearer spatial structure supported by accessible circulation, sensory guidance, and new gathering areas distributed throughout the site. Extended seating elements were introduced across the park to encourage longer stays and create more opportunities for rest and informal occupation. Four community hubs were positioned within open areas that are already used or show potential for future use. Their placement within visually open spaces also supports visibility and spatial clarity throughout the park.

Two larger tiered seating areas were introduced to support gathering and flexible occupation across different levels. One is located in the western area of the park to activate a less used space, while the second is positioned more centrally to reinforce activity within the core of the park. Both are directly connected to the main circulation paths.

The outdoor gym was relocated closer to the sports corner of the park to create a more organised relationship between active functions. A new entrance was added at the south western edge of the site in response to an existing informal access point frequently used by people, formally integrating this movement pattern into the park structure.

Additional interventions include the fire pit seating area, a new seating and fountain area complementing the existing fountain, seating and table areas integrated within the playground, and the preservation of the existing memorial located within the fire pit area. A sensorial corridor was also introduced to connect two areas of the park through planting and sensory experience.

Throughout the park, tactile paths and differentiated ground textures were integrated as part of the accessibility and wayfinding strategy. The existing density of trees surrounding the edges of the park was largely maintained and selectively reorganised to preserve the acoustic buffering, sense of intimacy, and environmental character already present within Østre Anlæg.

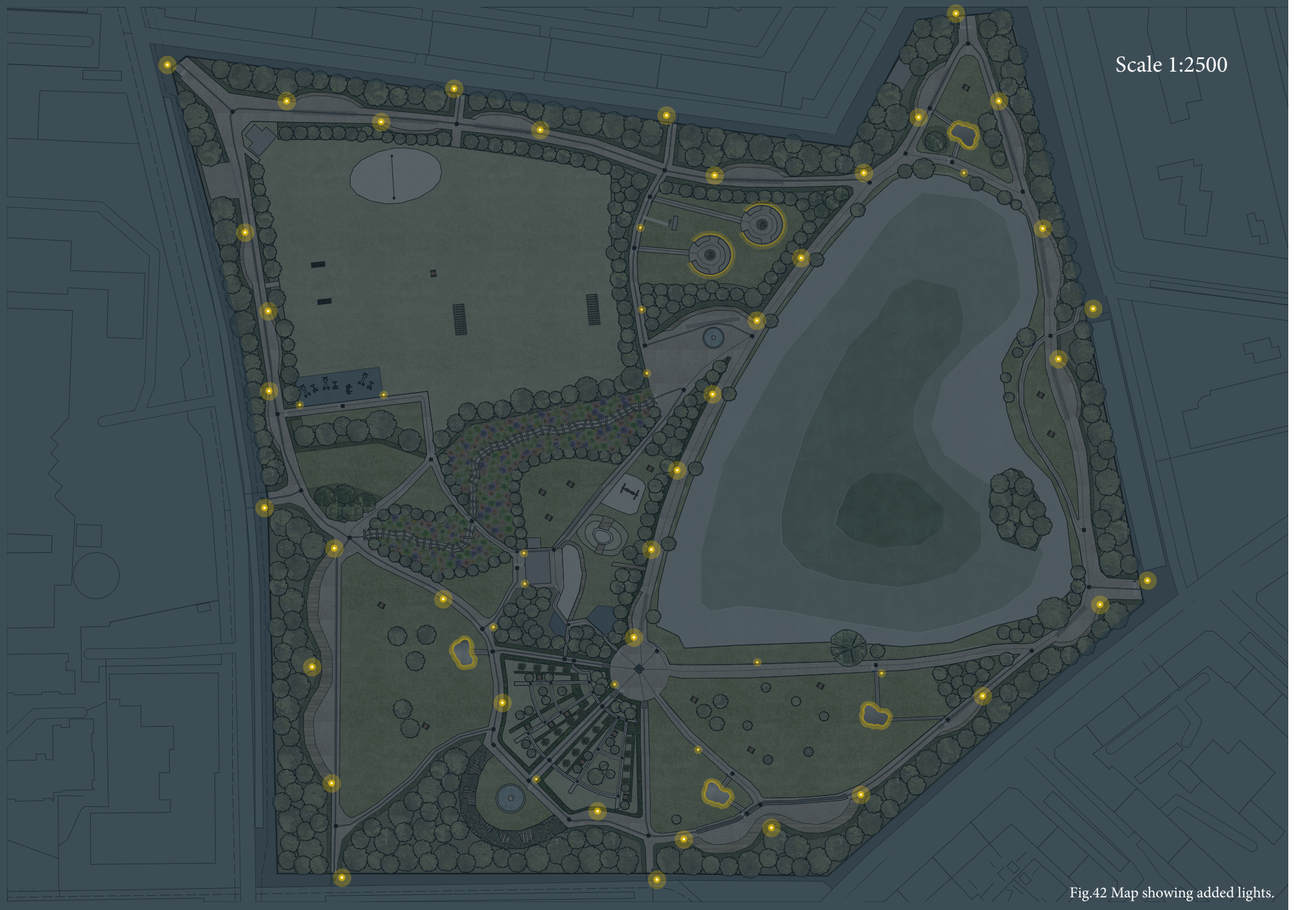


Fig.42 Map showing added lights.

At night

The lighting strategy was developed to improve visibility, orientation, safety, and year round usability throughout the park while creating different spatial atmospheres according to the character of each area. Additional lighting was introduced along the main paths of the park to strengthen legibility and support movement during darker periods of the day and throughout the winter months.

Within the fire pit seating area, more discreet LED lighting was integrated to create a calmer and more intimate atmosphere, reinforcing the quieter character of the space without introducing excessive brightness. The four hubs incorporate integrated lighting elements within their structures, allowing activities and movement inside the spaces to remain visible and inviting during evening hours.

Lighting was also introduced at the entrances of the park, as well as around key facilities such as the outdoor gym and the public restrooms, supporting orientation, accessibility, and an increased sense of comfort and safety across the park.

The
Fire Pit Seating Area

The fire pit seating area is designed as an intimate social space that encourages gathering, interaction, and longer stays within the park throughout different seasons of the year. Organised around two central fire pits, the circular seating layouts create a sense of collective gathering and spatial focus, reinforcing the idea of the space as a shared community element within the landscape. The curved arrangement of the benches allows people to face both the fire and each other, supporting informal social interaction and moments of rest.

Accessibility and inclusivity were considered as part of the spatial configuration. Openings between the seating elements are integrated to accommodate people who use wheelchairs, allowing everyone to participate within the shared space rather than remaining positioned outside the seating arrangement.

The seating area is surrounded by trees and vegetation that create a greater sense of enclosure, privacy, and protection from surrounding circulation paths. This softer vegetated edge helps establish a calmer atmosphere within the park, while also contributing to shade, sensory qualities, and seasonal variation throughout the year. Combined with the fire elements, the space aims to support use during colder periods and encourage year round occupation of the park.

Fig.43 Zoom In of the Fire Pit Seating Area.

Sections

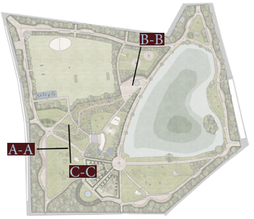


Fig.44 Map showing section locations.

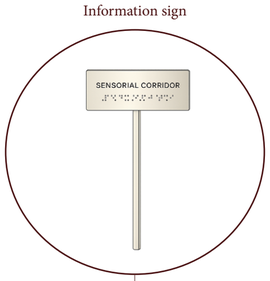


Fig.45 Section A-A scale 1:200

Fig.46 Section B-B scale 1:200

Fig.47 Section C-C scale 1:200

The Community Anchors

The community hubs are introduced as sheltered gathering spaces distributed across different areas of the park, supporting social interaction, rest, and year round occupation. Positioned within open and visible areas already used, or with potential to be more actively used, the hubs aim to strengthen activity within the park while maintaining a strong visual connection with the surrounding landscape.
The structures are designed as lightweight and semi open interventions, creating protection from rain, wind, and strong sunlight without fully separating people from the outdoor environment. Their open character allows activities and movement within the spaces to remain visible from surrounding paths, contributing to a greater sense of comfort, orientation, and presence within the park.
Integrated seating and lighting elements support both individual and collective use throughout different times of the day and year. Rather than functioning as isolated architectural objects, the hubs are intended to become part of the everyday experience of the park, offering flexible spaces for meeting, resting, observing, or simply remaining within the landscape during changing weather conditions.

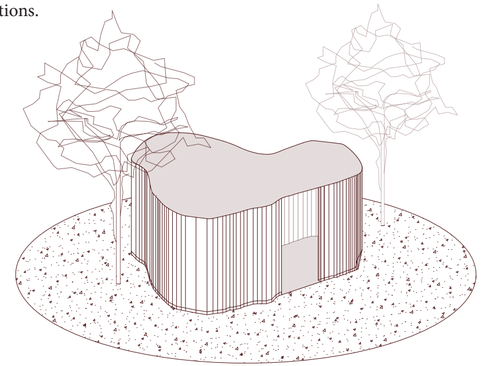


Fig.48 Tecnical perspective of the community hub.

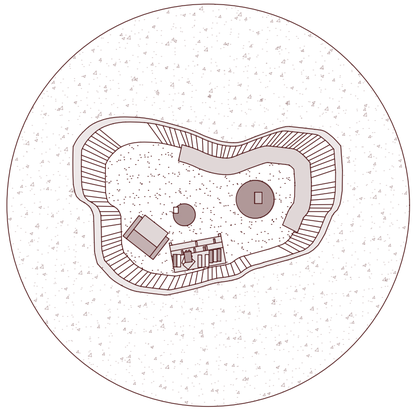


Fig.49 Plan of the community hub.

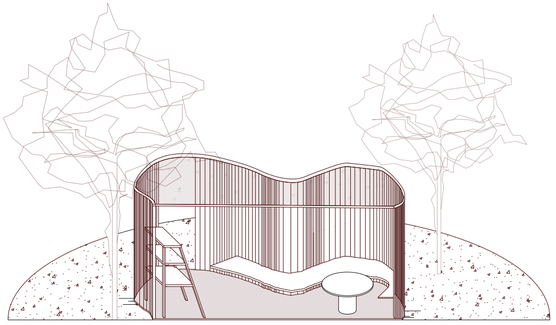


Fig.50 Section of the community hub.

The Sensorial Corridor

The sensorial corridor is designed as a spatial transition connecting two areas of the park through sensory experience and movement. Organised along the existing path structure, the intervention introduces a more immersive landscape condition where planting, texture, smell, sound, and enclosure become part of the experience of moving through the space.
The corridor incorporates vegetation with different sensory qualities, including aromatic plants, varied textures, and seasonal changes, encouraging a stronger awareness of the surrounding environment beyond visual perception alone. The denser vegetation along the edges also creates a greater sense of intimacy and separation from the surrounding circulation areas, reinforcing the corridor as a quieter and more focused spatial experience within the park.
At the same time, the intervention contributes to orientation and spatial recognition, allowing sensory cues such as smell, texture, and vegetation density to become part of how people understand and navigate the park.

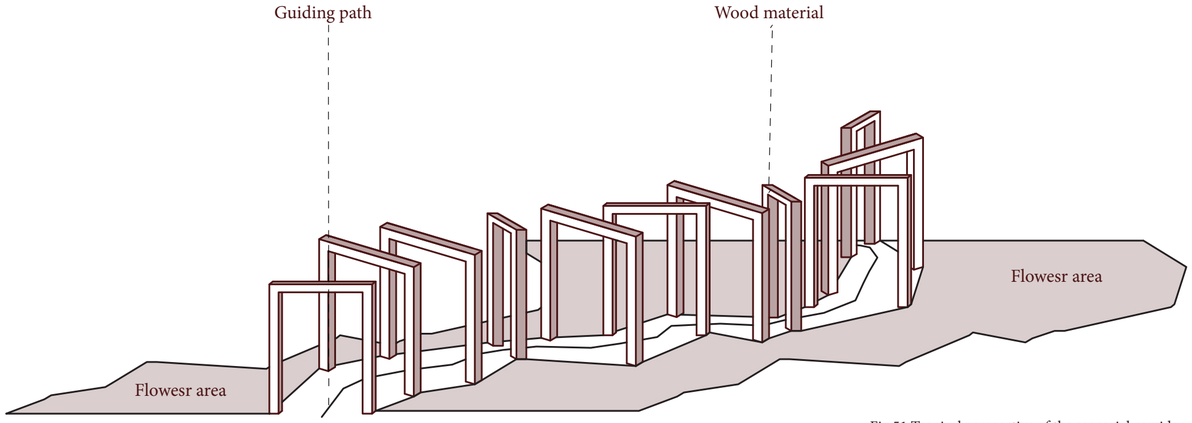


Fig.51 Tecnical prespective of the sensorial corridor.

Boards

Fig.52 Map showing all the boards.

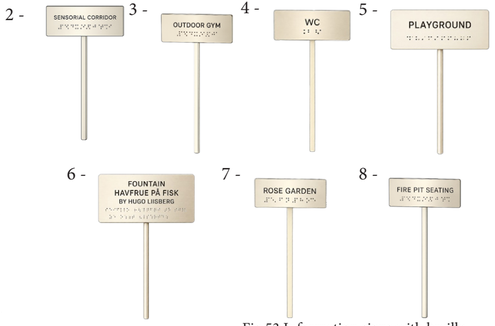


Fig.53 Information signs with braille.

Information sign

The information signs will be distributed throughout the park as part of the overall wayfinding and accessibility strategy, helping people identify their location and understand the character of each area. Positioned at key points, the signs support orientation and spatial recognition across the park.
Each sign combines written information with braille translations in English, allowing both visual and tactile interaction and contributing to a more inclusive and legible park experience.

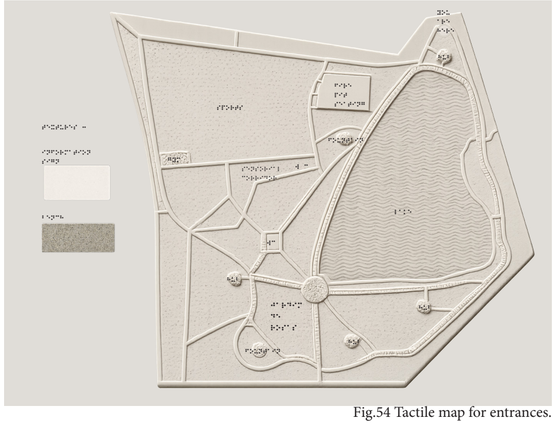
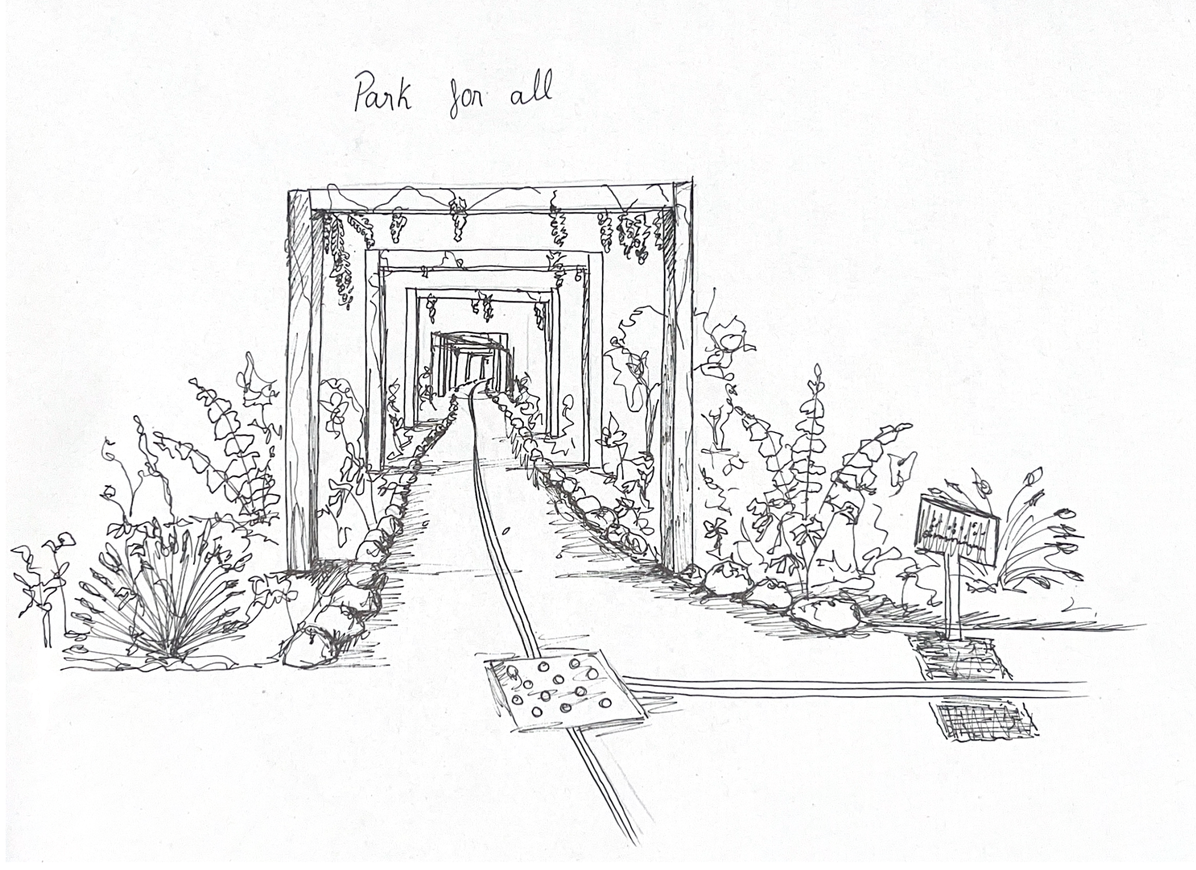


Fig.54 Tactile map for entrances.

Information board

The information boards will be placed at all main entrances of the park, functioning as accessible orientation points and supporting spatial understanding from the moment of arrival. The image presented illustrates an example of the board located at the northern entrance.
Each board is designed as an inclusive informational element integrating a tactile map of the park, allowing blind and visually impaired people to perceive the overall spatial structure, main paths, entrances, and key areas through touch. Braille descriptions in English will accompany the tactile elements, identifying the different spaces and supporting independent orientation and navigation throughout the park.
The tactile map is also accompanied by two additional textures used as orientation references, identifying the locations of information signs and seating areas within the park.



The 6 OUTRO

CONCLUSION

The project explored how Østre Anlæg could be reconfigured to support a more inclusive, legible and year-round public park for people with different ways of sensing, moving and navigating space. Through site observation, sensory and spatial analysis, interviews and iterative design development, the project investigated how everyday spatial conditions can shape experiences of accessibility, orientation, comfort and belonging within public space.

Living close to the park and frequently moving through it as part of everyday life allowed the project to develop through long-term observation rather than isolated site visits. Experiencing the park repeatedly across different seasons, weather conditions and moments of activity made smaller spatial details, atmospheres and patterns of use increasingly visible throughout the design process. This helped strengthen the focus on how public space is experienced through movement, sensory perception and everyday routines.

The proposal focused on working with the existing qualities and identity of the park while improving accessibility, spatial clarity and year-round use. Interventions such as continuous accessible paths, tactile guidance, improved lighting, community hubs, tiered seating and sensory planting were introduced to support different forms of movement, orientation, gathering and rest without separating or isolating different groups of people.
The project ultimately argues that accessibility and inclusion should not be understood as specialised additions to public space, but as essential spatial qualities embedded within the overall structure and experience of the environment. By questioning assumed ways of moving and experiencing space, the proposal demonstrates how urban parks can become more inclusive, socially open and spatially legible environments that better support different bodies, rhythms and sensory experiences within everyday urban life.

Ultimately, the project highlights the importance of designing public space through a wider understanding of human experience, where accessibility, sensory perception and everyday use are considered fundamental parts of the spatial structure rather than secondary additions.

Throughout the project, one of the main challenges was understanding how inclusion could be translated into spatial design without reducing it to technical accessibility standards or isolated architectural gestures. At the beginning of the process, accessibility was often understood through measurable solutions such as path dimensions, surfaces or physical access. Through continuous observation, interviews and sensory analysis, the project gradually shifted towards a broader understanding of how public space is experienced through orientation, atmosphere, comfort, uncertainty, rhythm and everyday movement. Working closely with Østre Anlæg over a longer period of time fundamentally changed the way the site was understood. Rather than experiencing the park through isolated visits, the repeated act of moving through it made smaller spatial conditions increasingly visible. Certain paths felt open and intuitive, while others became uncertain or disconnected. Some areas naturally attracted activity and informal gathering, while others remained empty despite being physically accessible. Light, sound, visibility, edges, material transitions and subtle changes in pace began to influence the understanding of how the park was experienced spatially. These observations reinforced the idea that public space is not experienced equally by everyone, even when it appears physically open or publicly accessible.

One of the most important reflections developed through the project concerns the assumption of neutrality within urban space. Parks are often designed around dominant and socially accepted ways of moving, sensing and occupying space, while other experiences remain less visible within the design process. As a result, many spatial barriers become normalised because they are not perceived as barriers by those the space already works for. This became particularly evident when analysing movement, orientation and sensory perception within the park. Certain spatial decisions that initially appeared insignificant, such as unclear entrances, inconsistent materials, lack of tactile guidance, uneven lighting conditions or undefined edges, revealed themselves as elements capable of shaping entirely different experiences of comfort, independence and belonging.

The project therefore became less about designing specific solutions for specific groups, and more about questioning which bodies, rhythms and sensory experiences public space is unconsciously designed around. In this sense, inclusion was not approached as the addition of specialised interventions, but as a spatial attitude capable of influencing the overall structure, atmosphere and legibility of the environment itself.

Another important reflection concerns the limitations of representation within architectural and urban design processes. Many aspects explored within the project, such as sensory perception, atmosphere, comfort or feelings of orientation and safety, are difficult to fully communicate through plans, sections and diagrams alone. While drawings can describe spatial organisation, they often struggle to represent the lived and bodily experience of moving through space. This became particularly relevant within a project centred around sensory and spatial perception, where many of the most important qualities exist through experience rather than form alone.
The project also revealed the limitations of working with inclusion within a thesis framework and limited timeframe. Human experience is complex and constantly changing, making it impossible to fully resolve accessibility and inclusion through a single proposal. Many aspects could have benefited from further testing, temporary installations, long term observation or direct collaboration with a wider range of lived experiences. At the same time, this incompleteness became part of the project itself, reinforcing the understanding that inclusive design is not a final solution, but a continuous process of observation, questioning and adjustment.

Ultimately, the project reinforced the importance of approaching urban design through a wider understanding of human experience. Accessibility, sensory awareness and spatial clarity should not be treated as additional layers applied after the design process, but as fundamental qualities embedded within the way public space is imagined, structured and experienced in everyday life.

The 7 SOURCES

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Illustration list

Unless otherwise stated, all illustrations are self produced.

Page 12 (Aerial photo of Østre Anlæg)

Figure 3: Skraafoto. (2023). Aerial imagery of Østre Anlæg. Dataforsyningen. Available at: skraafoto.dataforsyningen.dk.

Page 14-15 (History)

Figures 4-11: Olsen, J.E. (n.d.). Kalenderlåge 14, Gamle Aalborg i farver, Østre Anlæg. Facebook post. Available at: Facebook.

Page 78 (Tactile Information board)

Figure 54: Base of the tactile map OpenAI. (2026). AI assisted visualisation produced using ChatGPT.

AI tools

Page 2

The audiobook linked through the QR code was generated using Speechify, an AI-based text-to-speech platform.

The 8 APPENDIX

Roads

Brainstorming for the Design

Master's Thesis in Urban Design 2026 (30 ECTS)
Urban Design MSc04
Aalborg Universitet

Rafaela Sofia Junceira de Jesus