

THE URBAN HEALTH CULTURE OF THE FUTURE

HOLISTIC TOOLS TO PROMOTE
PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SOCIAL
HEALTH IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

JUUL | FROST
ARKITEKTER

THE URBAN HEALTH CULTURE OF THE FUTURE

Holistic tools for promoting physical, mental and social health in the built environment

2022

JUUL FROST ARCHITECTS

Architects, urban planners and landscape architects

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The **Urban Health Culture of the Future** is an interdisciplinary development project that seeks to develop tools to ensure the link between planning and health. The project is anchored at RESEARCH + DEVELOPMENT at Juul Frost Architects.

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A R K I T E K T E R

CONTENTS

1	INTRO	3
	Why an Urban Health Culture of the Future?	5
	Categories of needs	8
	Loneliness – Jesper Lund Bredesen	10
	Get researchers involved from the start – Morten Klöcker Grønbæk	12
	Well-being – John Pløger	14
2	CASES	17
	The 20-minute city	19
	Urban planning for a more active living – Jasper Schipperijn	26
	Superblocks	29
	Västra Hamnen, Malmö, as a prototype in a design process – Christer Larsson	38
	An city perspective from Holbæk Municipality & Aalborg Municipality – Karin K. Peschardt and Bodil V. Henningsen	42
	Gillet Square	46
	The co-creating urban space – Katrine Winther	58
	Vapnagaard Urban Gardens	60
	Healthy cities of the future – Rasmus B. Andersen	72
	Concepts and bias – Peter Hanke	74
3	TOOLS	77
	A multidisciplinary, holistic and strategic planning tool	79
	Polyphonic Planning	81
	1. Equal opportunities for well-being	82
	2. Take a needs-based approach to ensure quality of life for all	86
	3. Demand co-creation	88
	4. Use urban nature as an active resource	92
	5. Plan for everyday movement and physical activity	96
	6. Build on theory and knowledge and invite researchers to participate	100
4	EPILOGUE	105
	Our joint responsibility	106
	JUUL FROST ARCHITECTS	109
	Endnotes	110

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INTRO

1. INTRO

MENTAL NEEDS



17%

in the population as a whole suffer from poor mental health.

This is a 7% increase from 2010, when the Health Profile was first published.¹

SOCIAL NEEDS



12.4%

or around one in eight Danes exhibit signs of loneliness.²

PHYSICAL NEEDS



52.6%

of the adult population is moderately or severely overweight.

In total, 58.1% of the adult population does not meet the WHO minimum recommendation for physical activity.³

PLANNING & BEHAVIOUR



We have scanned a number of municipal planning documents from Danish municipalities. It appears that health and well-being is most often not phrased explicitly or stated as a need or strategic aim.

From the initial interviews with the think tank, it emerged that health and well-being are often indirectly addressed with concepts such as pedestrian-friendliness, social sustainability or opportunities in everyday life.

THE URBAN HEALTH CULTURE OF THE FUTURE

Health is an ethical challenge for cities. Ethical because climate, ecology, loneliness and unhealthy lifestyles are challenges where society calls for political action and the political sphere calls for community action.⁴

This requires us to work together for change across municipalities, companies, educational institutions and sectors. Only together can we create the urban health culture of the future. So, what does an urban health culture look like? Can it be created, maintained and developed? And how can it influence the way we develop cities?

Urbanisation is a challenge to health

Around the world, more and more people are gathering in cities. Today, more than 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas, and this is expected to rise to 68% over the next 20–30 years. Since 1926, the population of Denmark has grown from 3.4 million to 5.7 million, an increase of 68.1%. Growth has been particularly strong in the major provincial towns and in the capital.

As the population in urban areas grows, the design of cities and urban areas plays an increasingly important role in people's quality of life and health. This creates challenges and opportunities: On the one hand, many urban environments set the scene for inactivity and loneliness, among other things. On the other hand, health promoting measures and initiatives can have a strong impact in densely populated environments.

Urbanisation creates a need for a new urban health culture that integrates health into planning and ensures the prioritisation of well-being in the built environment. It is time for an additional bottom line in planning that measures success not just in terms of sustainability and economics but also in terms of the mental, social and physical well-being of citizens. This requires a change of culture, new values, new ways of planning and that we stand united and work across sectors.

Public health is going in the wrong direction

Today, the Danes' quality of life and health are challenged physically, mentally and socially by obesity, inactive lifestyles, loneliness and poor mental health. The 2021 Health Profile shows that public health is going in the wrong direction across a wide range of parameters.

Only 4 out of 10 Danes meet the WHO recommendations for physical activity, one in five have primarily sedentary leisure activities, and around one in eight Danes exhibit signs of loneliness.

The built environment influences our health and well-being

We know from research that there is a correlation between the design of residential areas and users' physical activity levels, psychological well-being and social networks.⁵ In other words, the design of our cities and the built environment influences our health and well-being, how we live our lives, our behaviour and the choices we make.

The city sets the framework for our urban health culture.

Need for new solutions and plans of action

Internationally, the UN's SDG 3 on 'Good health and well-being' and SDG 11 on 'Sustainable cities and communities' focus on healthy and sustainable cities, while the WHO's Healthy Cities and Novo Nordisk's Cities Changing Diabetes focus on health and cities at the policy level. In Denmark, i.a. the Health Profile highlights how the physical environment can promote health through "structural interventions that support physically active transport in everyday life (...) and facilities such as sports facilities and playgrounds that give as many age groups as possible the opportunity to be physically active".⁶

But there is a lack of tools, solutions and plans of action that bring knowledge and vision into the real world.

1. INTRO

On the municipal agenda

Our ambition is to place health and well-being on the municipal, political and planning agenda in relation to urban quality, urbanisation and climate change – and other challenges – with an interdisciplinary and holistic approach.

How can planning create spatial changes that support the development of health-promoting life-shaping in future cities?

The aim of the tool is to ensure that considerations of health and well-being are explicitly reflected in planning. We need to ensure that mental, physical and social needs are addressed from a holistic and balanced perspective and across scale – followed by a focus on the concrete effects on our behaviour.

In The Urban Health Culture of the Future, we have gathered knowledge and developed tools and new approaches with the involvement of experts. In short, we need to bring knowledge and experience into the real world. The ambition is to create proactive, applicable tools and a methodology that can inspire strategic and multidisciplinary partnerships between local health and planning actors and qualify solutions. This is the prerequisite for creating added value in the built environments of the future for citizens, municipalities, developers and consultants.

The tools can be used to map, secure and develop health-promoting physical and social environments in the city, in the landscape and in urban spaces. Strategically, they can help ensure that municipalities, developers and advisors take an evidence-based and holistic approach to planning.

The Urban Health Culture of the Future is a method that, among other things, is based on facts from the Health Profile about the individual municipalities or urban areas and a mapping of social, mental and physical needs as well as functions, mobility, social infrastructure, etc. at the levels of the city, the neighbourhood and the urban space. The Urban Health Culture of the Future will ensure that urban, health and culture aspects are integrated into a planning tool that is used in a dynamic and value-oriented way. By establishing a value addition compass that compares parameters before and after a project, the continuous assessment of synergies, effects and added value is implemented and ensured.

5 focus areas for the Urban Health Culture of the Future

Through a global outlook, we ensure innovative proposals for local solutions. In developing the project, we have looked outwards to learn. We have drawn on international knowledge and synthesised it with studies that provide an impression of the Danes' health, well-being and quality of life. This has resulted in five focus areas that have framed and set the course for the project:

1. Equality in health

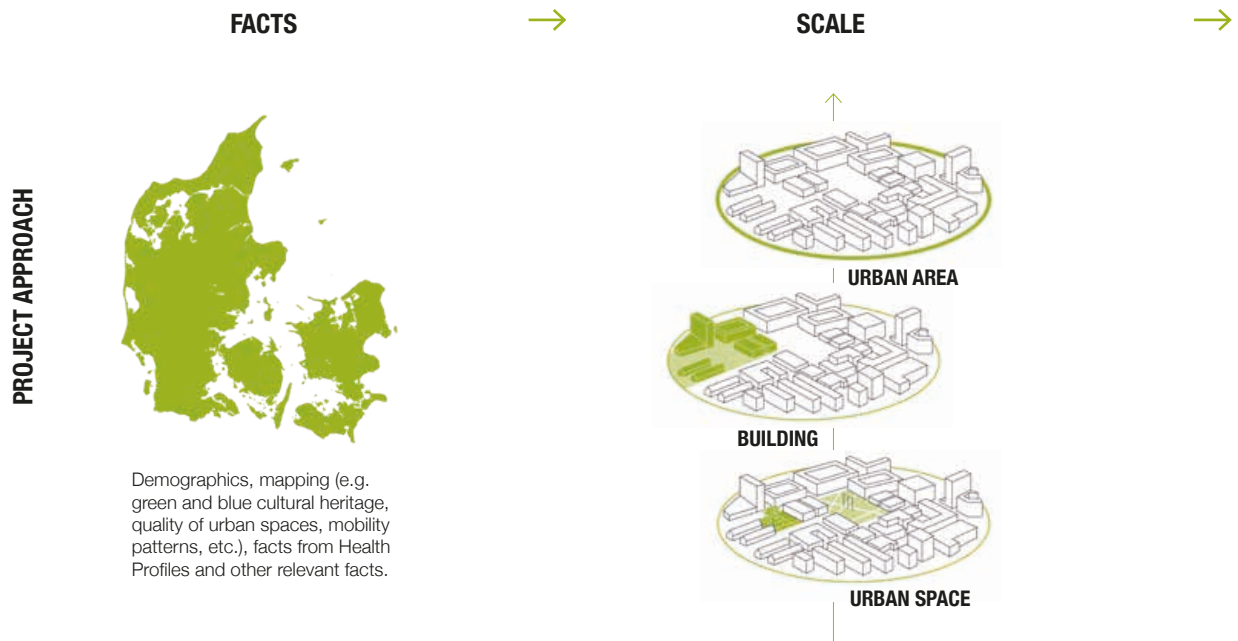
How do we ensure equal access and opportunities in the city for health-promoting choices and offers?

2. Quality of life

How do we ensure that people's basic needs are met so that the physical environment enhances the quality of life for individuals, the many and society as a whole?

3. Social neighbourhoods

How do we create new community frameworks that fulfil the basic needs of safety and belonging to counter growing isolation, loneliness and social segregation?



Demographics, mapping (e.g. green and blue cultural heritage, quality of urban spaces, mobility patterns, etc.), facts from Health Profiles and other relevant facts.

4. Green areas

How can we ensure access to nature and green spaces for all as an integral part of the city and a framework for mental recovery, rest and relaxation as well as physical activity?

5. Active living

How do we plan and design our cities, mobility, green spaces and urban areas to promote activity in everyday life?

"The goal of this project is short and simple: to bring knowledge and experience into the real world."

An interdisciplinary process

The Urban Health Culture of the Future was developed by Juul Frost Architects in close collaboration with an interdisciplinary think tank and with Holbæk Municipality and Aalborg Municipality as project partners. Interdisciplinarity has been the key to innovation but also to finding ways of working and thinking where mental, social and physical needs inform planning.

The members of the think tank and the two municipalities have continuously contributed with their experience and knowledge to the project through dialogue, sparring, workshops and health labs. The think tank has been composed of complementary disciplines, and its members have been chosen to ensure strong experience and knowledge in the five focus areas of the project.

Case studies across different scales

In the knowledge gathering, we have closely studied cases from around the world and across different scales. From major strategies – Reinventing Paris, Walkable London, Kickstart Tornhøj in Aalborg and Superblocks in Barcelona – to health certification schemes, master’s programmes in health-promoting urban development, biophilic design of buildings and the use of urban gardens.

We have chosen to go in-depth with four cases, where we include the story, the context and the effect from a holistic perspective – with room for associations and relevant perspectives on the city, planning and well-being. In parallel, urban theories have been included to shed new light on the individual cases and inspire thought fusion, where urban theories gain new relevance for the future.

The cases have been selected based on their strategic element, the extent to which they are scalable and transferable to a Danish context and because they represent different and complementary approaches to the planning and development of urban space at different scales. Each scale contains strategic considerations: Urban strategies influence the concrete space of the city, which in turn influences the actions and behaviour of individuals. Therefore, we have looked across the contexts and exchanges that take place between the city, the neighbourhood, the building, the urban space and its use.

We hope that the publication will provide a boost and inspire new forms of collaboration, partnerships as well as health-promoting urban development and projects.



URBAN HEALTH CULTURE

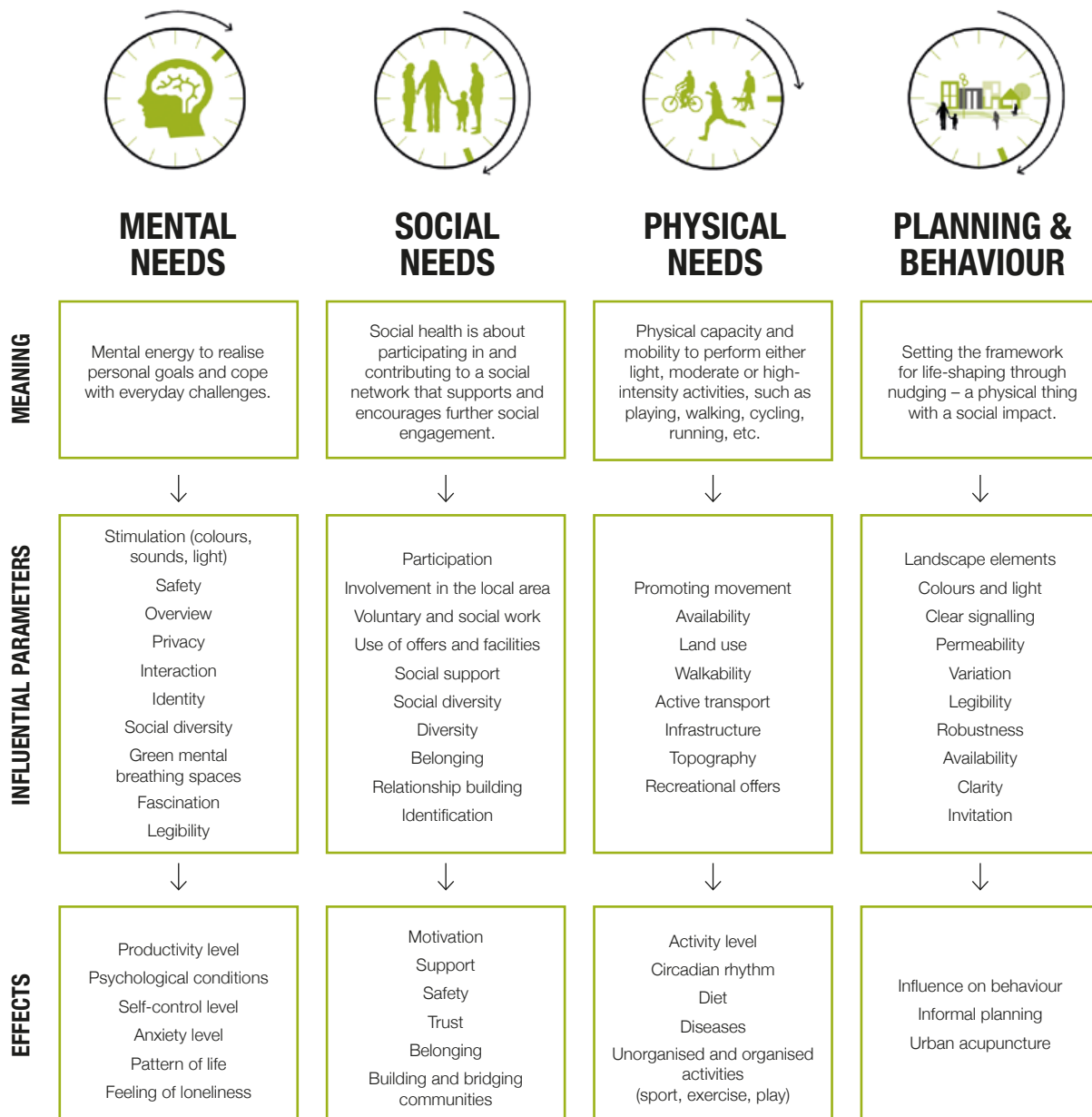


TOOLS



CATEGORIES OF NEEDS

In our work on the Urban Health Culture of the Future, we have started from a number of analytical considerations. They have been developed with a view to what mental, social and physical health mean, the influencing parameters and what effect they have on behaviour. The parameters are not exhaustive and can be complemented by other parameters that impact our well-being.





29%
**OF ADULT DANES
HAVE A HIGH
STRESS LEVEL**⁷

" ... short-term, low-intensity activities in nature and green spaces lead to positive effects on acute stress levels and cognitive function."⁸

Activity landscape as part of the Culture Axis, Værløse Air Base, Juul Frost Architects.
Photo: Counterframe Thorbjørn Hansen.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

LONELINESS

– ONE OF THE BIGGEST HEALTH CHALLENGES WE FACE

Being lonely or socially isolated is one of the biggest problems we face. We are fundamentally social beings. We form, act and become who we are through interactions with other people. While loneliness can be quantified, it is not necessarily something that should be quantified. Loneliness is subjective, differing greatly from person to person. What it means to be statistically lonely and what it means to be lonely as an individual are two completely different things.

Why should we care about loneliness?

If we look at the figures, there are 350,000 people who are severely lonely in Denmark. In comparison, 280,000 people have diabetes. So, there are far more lonely people than people with diabetes. The same is true for other diseases that are normally on the radar and treatable. We have a real problem with lonely or socially isolated people in Denmark. To highlight how seriously loneliness is taken in some countries, the UK and Japan have ministers of loneliness. Britain had one for many years, and Japan appointed one during the corona crisis because suicide rates rose sharply.

Loneliness affects our health

In medicine, we often talk about mortality rates, i.e. how many people die from a given disease. These are very concrete figures that can be used effectively when devising treatment strategies, planning and policy. The facts and quantification of loneliness vary depending on how you classify loneliness and calculate the consequences. It should be noted that loneliness is not a diagnosis. It is a condition. Just as stress is not a disease, but a condition. Why is stress so harmful? Because stress can develop into a lot of diagnoses. Stress can cause high blood pressure, reduced brain activity, an increased heart rate, etc.

Similarly, loneliness is a condition that develops over time. For example, isolation, loneliness and depression are often things that develop sequentially. Researcher Holt-Lunstad has worked with loneliness for many years. Among other things, she has conducted a huge meta-analysis with 3.4 million people.

People who were classified as lonely and have been included in research articles in some way. Articles on heart disease, diabetes, obesity and more. Some studies show that lonely people are up to 50% more likely to die than people who are not lonely, but the average is around 26%.

Research on loneliness also shows the following:

- Loneliness is likely to increase your risk of dying by 26%.⁹
- Loneliness, living alone and poor social connections are as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.¹⁰
- Loneliness is worse for you than obesity.¹¹
- Loneliness and social isolation are associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and having a stroke.¹²
- Loneliness increases the risk of elevated blood pressure.¹³
- Loneliness with major depression is associated with early mortality¹⁴, and loneliness is a risk factor for depression later in life.¹⁵
- Loneliness and social isolation put individuals at greater risk of cognitive decline and dementia.¹⁶



by
Jesper Lund Bredesen
Medical doctor

Divisional Director
H. Lundbeck A/S

THE THINK TANK THINKS

How do we identify and classify loneliness?

Finding out if people have diabetes through blood tests is easy. We cannot take blood tests that show whether you are lonely, but we can work with different scales. There are basically five scales used to measure loneliness. These are characterised by a subjective perception of loneliness and linked to concrete factors: For example, does the lonely person live alone or do they have few social contacts?

No matter how you quantify it, the increased mortality rate is a massive societal problem. And it is rising! From 2004 onwards, Holt-Lunstad has studied and followed many of these people and looked at the number of lonely people over the years. And the number is rising regardless of geography, age or gender. It is a massive problem.

"Loneliness is something that develops within ourselves, it is the feeling that arises when our social needs are not met."

In fact, I believe that this will be one of the greatest threats to our welfare society in the future. This is not just a question of how many people die, but when they die and how they die, how they feel when they die and what quality of life they had before they died. Not dying is not just a goal in itself. You need to live a good life until you die. And then you should preferably die "young" as late as possible.

Deaths among the lonely often fall into the category of deaths among younger people. For example, people who become depressed and end up committing suicide are often young. About 53,000 people die in Denmark every year. 15,000 of them die of cancer, and about half of them die of heart problems, and then 3,500 die as a result of mental disorders. 600–700 die from suicide, but there are lots of other disorders, obesity, diabetes, etc. which are also offshoots of loneliness, so there is a very high death rate among young people who could have had a good life.

The subjectivity of loneliness

Loneliness is a condition. We are social beings, dependent on sociality and having relevant and proper social interactions with each other. And if we do not have these, we can develop the condition of loneliness. Loneliness is something that develops within ourselves, it is the feeling that arises when our social needs are not met.

The development of loneliness is an individual process, but typically a feeling of unwantedness, meaninglessness and isolation develops into powerlessness, apathy, anxiety and depression.

"I became apathetic and felt life was meaningless. I became superfluous in my own life". This is how many lonely people describe the process.

Is loneliness the same thing as being alone? No, they are two very different things. Being alone is something we sometimes choose – loneliness is not something we choose. And it is actually more intense if you feel lonely when you are with other people.

Doctors, psychologists and sociologists have worked with numbers and charts and different scales to break down loneliness into numbers and tables. But thinkers, writers and many others have also described loneliness – especially the subjective experiences. As Maldonado says, *"Loneliness is not lack of company, loneliness is lack of purpose."*

And as Mother Teresa put it, "The most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved." Statements like these are important – they make us aware of the super-important subjective element of loneliness.

Loneliness is a pandemic

An epidemic is defined as a disease occurring more than expected in a community – an increased trend. A pandemic occurs when a disease spreads all over the world, that is, when it crosses borders – is global. Loneliness is a pandemic – loneliness also

exists in India, where people live close together. Loneliness exists in Alaska. It is a general problem all over the world!

There is a need for an understanding of how big and concrete a problem it is. There is a need for politicians, administrators, urban planners, architects and others to help alleviate this growing problem.

My appeal here is to urban planners and architects because loneliness can obviously be affected by how you live and our urban spaces – what your physical opportunities for social interaction are like. Urban planners and architects know something about planning and building houses and designing spaces. But I would like to chime in with a few obvious and completely unprioritised ideas:

- You have to try to develop so that there is room for play and music and dancing.
- You have to support the family and not just the individual and bring the generations together.
- I also think it is important to build houses and spaces where you can have animals. Having a dog is a great social experience for many people.
- I think it is very important that we are forced to go into shops and not order everything online. We need to use our digital capabilities to not isolate ourselves and somehow create communities that decrease loneliness more than increase it. We have to go down and borrow books from the library and be forced out into society where we meet other people.

Build bridges – not walls.

Photo: Astrid Maria Rasmussen.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

GET RESEARCHERS INVOLVED FROM THE OUTSET

It is important to bring research into the real world. Our scientific papers should not sit in some pile for 10 years before anything is introduced into the real world, but conversely we should be careful about launching things too quickly. We need to be sure that what we are introducing actually works.

What is the National Institute of Public Health and how do you work with health promotion and prevention?

We work with the vision that our knowledge creates public health. We select the topics and themes that have the greatest impact on public health and exclude less important issues. One of the areas we work with is social inequalities in health, which is a major problem and challenge in the field of health. We received a large grant from the Trygfonden foundation 12 years ago to establish the Centre for Intervention Research.

We research everything from the prevention of alcohol-related problems to the effects of providing fruit and vegetables for schoolchildren and how to become more physically active outdoors. We bring together experts, professors and lecturers in these fields, and we have access to a lot of data in the form of large population studies – Health Profiles – collected by the five regions in the individual municipalities.

We work on health promotion and disease prevention in the real world. I am a trained doctor myself, and I worked in hospitals for a number of years. When I talk to old colleagues who are chief physicians around the country today, they say, "Well, Morten, aren't you coming back to the real world soon?" Then I tell them "The real world is outside the hospital system. Out here, this is where it happens. And this is where we can promote health and prevent disease."

How do we get evidence that what is put in place works?

The fields of health promotion and disease prevention in particular have been the subject of many minor initiatives. What we're trying to do in our studies is elevate them to larger, randomised studies. Because we get the best evidence by doing the

randomised trials. And that can be difficult when what we are talking about is the built environment.

Of course, there are other methods, but it is appropriate that this is done on a large scale, that you have something to measure so to speak. For example, we have researchers who have examined whether physical activity depends on how close people live to green spaces. We have data on this type of study, but we do not have as much data on the effects of individual construction projects.

An important issue, as mentioned, is social inequality, and this taps into what we call structural prevention, which deals with the structure and moves away from the individual. If you recommend to resource-rich citizens that they should go out and get more exercise, they will go out and get more exercise. So, fortunately, there is a large proportion of people who actually follow a lot of the advice they get, but there is also a proportion, particularly among the less educated and people with fewer resources, who simply cannot pick up the gauntlet and take the individual advice. And that is where structures come into it. For example, where the groceries are in the supermarket, how cheap it is to buy a kilo of crisps, whether you can cycle to work and how far away you live from green spaces.

Despite our well-functioning healthcare system, free nurseries, primary schools, upper secondary schools and more, when it comes to health, there is a staggering level of social inequality. We call it the Nordic Welfare Paradox. The paradox is that we have a system that can pick everyone up, but there is still a huge gap in health. If you have no education, you live about 10 years less than those who have had a long education, even in a society like Denmark.



Interview with
Morten Klöcker Grønbaek
Professor, PhD, MD

Director of the National Institute of
Public Health, SDU

THE THINK TANK THINKS

And Nordic, because we have greater differences in the life expectancy of rich and poor than is the case in some countries with greater income differences and a more limited welfare offering.

We can see the social inequality in several areas: There will be some who can afford to live in beautiful surroundings. Places where everything works fine and where there is no pollution and noise. All the things that those who can afford it are looking for when they look for a place to live.

"Despite our well-functioning healthcare system, free nurseries, schools, colleges and more, staggering social inequality exists when it comes to health."

I also chair an expert group in the Municipality of Copenhagen that looks at air pollution. Here too, the importance of social inequality in relation to how and where people live is striking.

Copenhagen is not really that polluted, but some areas are. And it is also clear who lives right in those areas. And we are talking about both air and noise pollution, which are very important for health. There is just something about what you can afford and who is exposed to these kinds of things.

Traffic planning and urban planning in general are important here. This is something we could easily work on – in addition to the things that are important to physical activity.

Is there evidence that people who live in an area that offers a variety of housing with different forms of ownership, i.e. places with owner-occupied, rented, co-op and non-profit social housing, have a higher well-being?

It should be possible to investigate this. There are records of housing types and who lives there, but this would require a survey of well-being in different areas. It is actually super interesting.

I wrote a chapter on social inequality in health for a publication some time ago, and in the process I came across an American psychologist who has a thesis that it is not so much the social inequality itself but the visibility of social status that creates the differences. For example, he studied the experiences of airline passengers.

He compared two situations, one where economy class passengers passed business class on their way to their seats, and one where they entered the middle of the

plane and therefore went straight to their seats without passing business class.

The survey showed that in situations where people go through business class and sit in economy class there is much more dissatisfaction among economy class passengers, probably because they see that the conditions in business class are better.

I thought this was an interesting example of how experiencing the difference in reality is what makes you so affected by inequality.

How do you see a better link between health promotion research and the implementation of physical interventions?

It is important to bring research into the real world. Our scientific papers should not sit in some pile for 10 years before anything is introduced into the real world, but conversely we should be careful about launching things too quickly.

We need to be sure that what we are introducing actually works. My advice is this:

- Start by summarising what we already know will have an impact. Make the project as evidence-based as possible in terms of promoting physical activity, etc.
- Secondly, it is important to ensure that there is follow-up research on what has been initiated. This can be done in different ways, but the important thing is to get researchers involved from the start.

So that would be my recommendation as you work on this: Get researchers involved early. Then they can contribute their advice to the project and help define what should be uncovered by these studies. It's much better to be involved when the projects start up. And of course, it's important to have an idea of what you're actually measuring: Should the project help people's physical condition or should it help their mental well-being?

Get the hypotheses and ideas right from the start, and bring in researchers who know how to measure the impact. I would really recommend that you do this because a lot of things are put in place based on intuition. And then it turns out that maybe there really isn't anything to them.



Better Affordable Housing by Juul Frost Architects. Photo: Mathias Juul Frost.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

WELL-BEING

"Well-being is an expression of comfort that gives the individual a feeling of energy, courage, drive and joy in life. Well-being is originally a general and holistic concept of health that expresses both a person's subjective experience of their own situation and the environment's so-called objective assessment."¹⁷

Well-being as a concept is difficult to define. But we know that well-being is existential and vital for all of us, our social lives and our physical and mental health. Well-being is also at the heart of creating good and inclusive neighbourhoods and communities. Well-being is highlighted in district plans and regulations and by the need for informal meeting places.

But what creates well-being? Can well-being be created through spatial planning and architecture? Yes, for some, not for all. Can access to recreational activities and beautiful landscapes create well-being? Yes, for some, not for all – and not always. Can atmospheres be health-promoting? Yes, for some, but not for all.

Well-being is situations

Feeling a state of well-being is not just a mental thing, it arises from being situated in a certain environment. Statistical studies based on a functionalist approach to well-being dominate the issue of well-being, but well-being is also about ephemeral forces such as moods and about the bodily 'form on the day'.

If the complexity and diversity of factors affecting well-being are to be included in planning, we also need to understand well-being as bodily, social and mental, and therefore as the effect of situations that are related to circumstances and subjective yet site- and spatial-dependent, partly through the space's offering of functions and patterns of movement, and partly through our being influenced by the socio-spatially related experiences we have and receive.

But there is also an indeterminate factor, stemming from human beings and our diversity. Life is life stages, life-shaping and changing values and preferences, and therefore 'the way we thrive' will also change. Urban spaces must therefore have the capacity to change with changing demands, values and needs.

There are many roads to Rome – and to well-being

There seems to be a general confidence that planning for well-being can be done: that architecture, facades and green and recreational spaces have an impact. In an era of greater understanding of men-



by
John Ploger
Professor Emeritus
University of Agder

"Life is life stages, life-shaping and changing values and preferences, and therefore 'the way we thrive' will also change."

Our physical environment puts people in a situation that creates social effects. In situations, well-being is influenced by many factors: What is happening in the place, the atmosphere, the mood we are in, experiences, the relationships we enter into, smells, sounds, what we see, what we feel, functions, aesthetics and the experience itself.

tal health, cultural diversity, diversity of lifestyles and individualisation, the following orientations should be at the heart of urban health planning:

- Behaviourally stimulating environments that go beyond humans' functional needs by including both social and biopsychological conditions that can act as promoters of well-being and health.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

- Mental well-being, how people thrive in the environment in relation to the function, form, architecture, social relations and aesthetics of the environment.

The effect of the physical environment on well-being is known from environmental psychology and the design of therapy gardens. But not in relation to everyday life, its banalities of habits and routines.

Well-being and physical environment

Well-being is 'between the ears'; it is a bodily sensation, a feeling that comes and goes, but it is not random. For some, it is linked to physical health and a fit body. For others to moods, cosiness and atmosphere. People find well-being in close social relationships and experiences, like being at a festival.

We can make everyday life our point of departure: phases of life, ways of life, values lived, social and mental needs. As a starting point, we can talk about three perspectives on well-being:

1. Functionalist well-being is when necessary everyday actions can be done rationally, quickly and simply.
2. Experiential well-being is recreation, the unexpected but interesting event, the chance meeting with someone you know, attending music events, sports events or the theatre, contemplation, exercise, interaction.
3. And well-being with regards to enjoyment and cosiness (Danish: Hygge) is being in the company of good friends, in restaurants, contemplative places, light, scents, aesthetics and atmosphere.

Health planning is about providing spaces and places that allow people to experience well-being everyday and in unexpected ways, but with the opportunity to extend that feeling as far as possible.

It is about making arrangements for social relationships, functions, events, creative uses that give different life stages, cultures and lifestyles the desire to seek out well-being.

Urban design can do this by ensuring:

- Proximity related to functionality, everyday life, informality.
- Presence of (unexpected) experiences, atmospheres and aesthetic stimuli.
- Nuances, i.e. diversity, change, unpredictability.

Think in terms of opportunities and shortcomings, in terms of what links between proximity, presence, and nuances exist and can be developed in relation to the material, socio-material life worlds and everyday life that are in sight or should find the area attractive to live in.

We believe that the possibility of creating a healthy life in the city and where you live depends on how the functionality, form and aesthetics of places create situations of well-being.



Photo: Line Stybe Vestergaard.

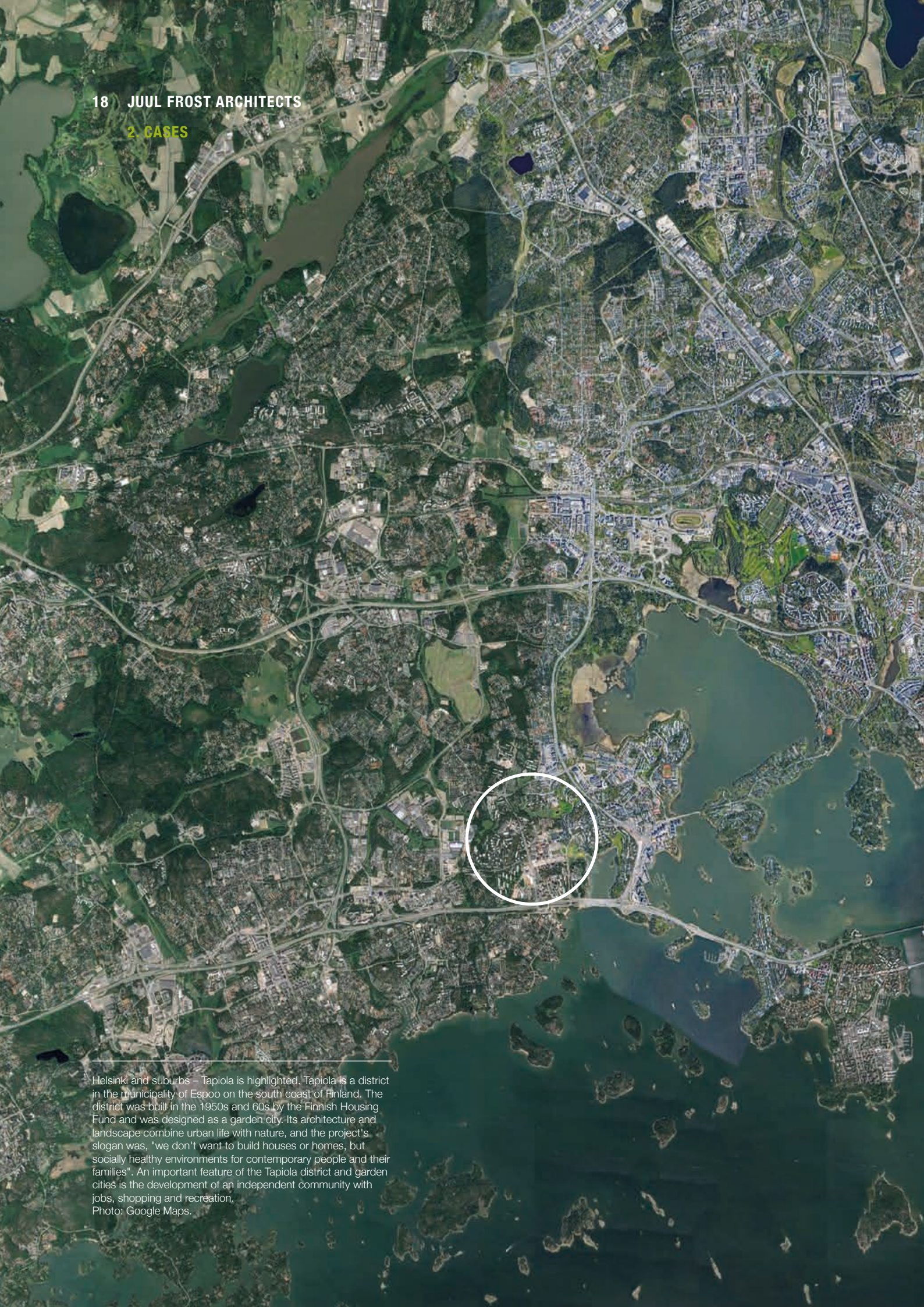
2. CASES



Tennis court between residential and commercial buildings in Copenhagen.
Photo: Astrid Maria Rasmussen.

2

CASES



Helsinki and suburbs – Tapiola is highlighted. Tapiola is a district in the municipality of Espoo on the south coast of Finland. The district was built in the 1950s and 60s by the Finnish Housing Fund and was designed as a garden city. Its architecture and landscape combine urban life with nature, and the project's slogan was, "we don't want to build houses or homes, but socially healthy environments for contemporary people and their families". An important feature of the Tapiola district and garden cities is the development of an independent community with jobs, shopping and recreation.
Photo: Google Maps.

20 MINUTE CITY

**A MIXED-USE CITY PROMOTES
ACTIVE LIVING AND STRENGTHENS
LOCAL COMMUNITY**

CASE

THE 20-MINUTE CITY

A MIXED-USE CITY PROMOTES ACTIVE LIVING AND STRENGTHENS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The 20-minute city is a strategic, holistic and needs-based planning concept that can promote citizens' health and well-being. Through the planning of "self-sufficient" neighbourhoods with housing, workplaces, shops, recreational areas, education, etc., the daily needs of residents can be met within 20 minutes by foot or by bike.

With a focus on pedestrian-friendly, dense and functionally mixed neighbourhoods, the 20-minute city promotes active transport and daily movement. It boosts local economies, increases social relations in the community and helps tackle climate change.

WHAT?

Where

United Kingdom

Architect/landscape architect

Town and Country Planning Association

When

2021

Interventions

- Guidelines for the implementation of 20-minute cities

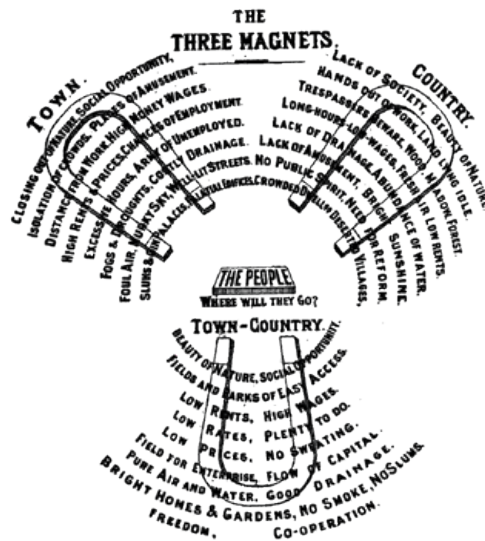
WHY?

Cities around the world face a number of pressing, interrelated problems. There is a need to reduce CO₂ emissions. There is a need to help people become more physically active in their everyday lives. Life in Danish urban centres and shopping streets is being threatened by online shopping and large shopping centres. As Jesper Lund Bredesen points out, loneliness has become a pandemic that challenges social well-being in all parts of society. The 20-minute city contributes to solutions to health, social, economic and climate challenges.

The 20-minute city is rooted in Ebenezer Howard's idea of the garden city. The garden city has been put into practice all over the world, for example in the Tapiola district outside Helsinki.

In Howard's words, the purpose was "to raise the standard of health and comfort of all true workers of whatever grade—the means by which these objects are to be achieved being a healthy, natural, and economic combination of town and country life (...)"²⁹

2. CASES



Ebenezzer Howard compares the city and the countryside to magnets, each attracting people with the advantages of living in the city and the countryside, respectively. Howard's great, but also simple, achievement was his rejection of the dichotomy between country and city in the idea of the garden city, which brings together both city and country.

20-Minute Neighbourhoods – Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities An Introduction for Council Planners in England. Town and Country Planning Association March 2021.

HOW?

Everyday needs within 20 minutes

The organisation of 20-minute cities is fundamentally about creating a physical environment where citizens can meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute walk to and from their home. Research shows that 20 minutes is the maximum time people are willing to walk to meet their daily needs locally. That's the equivalent of an 800 m walk from home to a destination and back again.¹⁸

The historical roots of the garden city

The garden city model is an urban development model devised by the English urban planner and founder of the garden city movement Sir Ebenezer Howard, who presented the idea in the book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* in 1902. The garden city model emerged in response to the overcrowded and unhealthy industrial cities of late-1800s Britain.

The original garden cities of Letchworth and Welwyn were among the first attempts at sustainable development. Howard's great, but also simple, achievement lies in his rejection of the dichotomy between country and city: "There are in reality not only, as is so constantly assumed, two alternatives—town life and country life—but a third alternative, in which all the advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country (...)"¹⁹

The garden cities were planned to provide local employment opportunities, offer different types of housing, create pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods with access to parks, and promote the social, cultural and physical health of residents. In Howard's words, the purpose was " (...)to raise the standard of health and comfort of all true workers of whatever grade—the means by which these objects are to be achieved being a healthy, natural, and economic combination of town and country life (...)"²⁰

Today, it is not only workers that need better cities. The Town and Country Planning Association (originally founded by Howard) has produced tools to implement the garden city model in today's context. With the need for climate adaptation and the recognition that urban nature and green spaces promote mental, social and physical well-being, there has been a renewed interest in Howard's fusion of city and countryside.



800 M DIAMETER

Close-up of Tapiola. The diameter of 800 m represents a 20-minute journey from home to a destination and back again. Research shows that 20 minutes is the maximum amount of time people are willing to spend walking to meet their daily needs locally.
Photo: Google Maps.

2. CASES

The 20-minute city promotes active living

The organisation into 20-minute cities ensures short distances from home to the destinations and functions that residents use and visit in their daily lives – shopping, school, doctor, workplaces, green spaces, etc. – and that supports movement in daily life, but also the sense of local belonging.

By prioritising attractive, safe and pedestrian-friendly local environments, people of all ages and abilities are invited to choose active transport. In other words, modes of transport where we are physically active, such as walking, cycling, skateboarding, scootering, etc. This type of physical activity, which is a natural part of everyday life, is also called active living. Jasper Schipperijn from the think tank highlights that physical inactivity is a growing problem in Denmark²¹, and that promoting active living, in addition to promoting sports, exercise or fitness, comes with the great advantage that physical activity as part of everyday activities does not consume extra time.

London, for example, is one of the cities actively promoting active transport. The 'Walkable London' strategy points the way towards a full-scale network of pedestrian routes that will create activity corridors across the whole city. It will contribute to solving the city's challenges, such as congestion, pollution, safety and public health, and it is estimated that it will strengthen economic and social capital.

Active transport promotes physical health, neighbourliness and safety

The physical and mental health benefits of regular physical activity are well known.²² Time spent walking in green spaces contributes directly to mental health and recovery.²³ People who walk and cycle to work have a reduced risk of premature death or illness compared to citizens who commute by car.²⁴

Living in a walkable local environment can also support a sense of local community and improve social interaction because residents are more likely to know their neighbours, trust others and be involved in the local community.²⁵ Increased pedestrian activity in public spaces can also improve the perception of safety through passive surveillance, which helps prevent crime by getting more 'eyes on the street'.²⁶

An adaptable concept

For a number of years, Paris, Melbourne and Portland have all been working to implement the planning approach under headings such as 'the 15-minute city' and 'the 20-minute neighbourhood'. While the number of minutes differs, the idea is basically the same. It shows that the 20-minute city is an adaptable concept that can be tailored to different contexts and scales. The superblocks in Barcelona and Bo01 in Malmö are also examples of projects where pedestrian-friendliness, density and functional diversity are in focus.

The approach can be implemented both in existing neighbourhoods and in the construction of new ones. The challenges of implementing the approach will, of course, vary from place to place. But implementation is particularly obvious in neighbourhoods or areas built before the 20th century, where urban environments were originally developed in compact local environments before modern traffic and thus for pedestrians. In smaller cities, the whole city can be planned and organised as a 20-minute city, while larger cities can be planned in connected 20-minute districts.

JANE JACOBS ON FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY

The ideas behind the 20-minute city also resonates with author and urban planning critic Jane Jacobs' view of the city. Jacobs was one of the first critics to defend street life and pedestrian-friendly streets.

In her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" she focuses on the use of pavements and describes the benefits of safe, diverse and vibrant streets through short blocks, a high population density and functional diversity. When urban space functions such as shops, cultural activities and recreational areas cater to a variety of people at different times of the day, a constant flow of people is ensured.

According to Jacobs, a high density of people is created partly by this diversity but also by the fact that housing is always established in a given area. It is important that there is a sufficient volume of people moving around, using and living in an urban area. The presence of a high number of people also ensures that businesses and entertainment activities see a benefit in locating in the area, which in turn enhances the attractiveness of the urban space.³⁰

2. CASES

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The implementation of the 20-minute city requires a strategic approach that can ensure direction in long-term planning. The planning of 20-minute cities necessitates:

- a holistic approach to the different daily needs of citizens
- planning that ensures proximity to, and a mix of, everyday functions
- integration of pedestrian mobility with the functions.

In the UK, the Town and Country Planning Association developed guidelines for working with 20-minute cities, drawing on experience from Paris, Portland and Melbourne. They highlight a number of factors that support 20-minute neighbourhoods²⁷, including:

- Diverse and affordable housing that ensures all residents have a safe and healthy home. A housing offering with a mix of housing types and forms of ownership should reflect the local housing needs of all generations.
- Well-connected paths, streets and spaces that invite people to choose to walk, cycle or use public transport.

- A network of multifunctional green spaces, parks, etc. that encourage active transport and movement, promote physical and mental health, support biodiversity and can act as climate adaptation.
- Local food production, giving communities access to healthy, local, fresh food. Local food production can take place on several scales, from allotments and urban gardens to rooftop farms and local food businesses.
- Retaining local jobs and economy. By supporting small independent businesses that are central to local communities, jobs can be retained locally. Shops, services and facilities that people can walk or cycle to reduce commuting distances and save people time.
- A place for all ages, where people can choose to live their whole lives because the needs and life stages of all age groups are catered for. This enables people to stay in the same neighbourhood for life, contributing to strong communities where people know their neighbours, which in itself supports mental well-being.²⁸



2. CASES



Tapiola Garden City.
Photo: P. Harala, Museum of Finnish Architecture.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

URBAN PLANNING FOR A MORE ACTIVE LIVING

Physical inactivity is a growing problem in Denmark,³¹ and it can be related to many non-communicable diseases and deaths.³² If we can promote physical activity among the whole population, physical, mental as well as social health will be benefitted.

Physical activity in everyday life

When most people think of physical activity, including those working in healthcare, they think of sports, exercise or fitness. Something you get dressed for and plan to do.

In fact, most people achieve the majority of their physical activity as part of their daily activities. For example, cycling to work, walking the dog, taking the stairs, hoovering or working in the garden. All of these are things that you don't typically get changed to do or do to be active, but where you unconsciously get your heart rate up and reap the many health benefits of being physically active. This type of physical activity, which is a natural part of everyday life, is called active living.³³

Promoting active living

Promoting active living, in addition to promoting sports, exercise or fitness, comes with the advantage that physical activity as part of everyday activities does not cost much in terms of extra time. Cycling 5 km instead of driving 5 km by car often adds only a few minutes to the journey time but involves 15–20 minutes of physical activity. And by integrating physical activity into the things you have to do anyway, it's much easier to engage in this physical activity more often and keep doing it compared to going to the gym (once more) or going for a run.

How much active living a person achieves in a week varies greatly and is influenced by many different factors. Age, gender, family situation and preferences all play a role, but where we live and, in particular, the way we transport ourselves, is very important.³⁴ If cycling to your destination is quick and easy, and driving or parking is inconvenient, most Danes will choose the bicycle for transport if the distance is less than 5 km.

Not because they want to be more physically active, but because it's the easiest, cheapest and maybe even fastest way. If cycling facilities are good, e.g. if there is a cycle superhighway, and with the increasing number of e-bikes, even distances of 10–15 km suddenly become cyclable.

A person who cycles or walks to work/their place of study and to do their everyday shopping usually achieves the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity of at least moderate intensity per week, even if they do not engage in sports or exercise. Conversely, most people who do not cycle or walk to work/their place of study and to do their everyday shopping often find it difficult to achieve the recommended number of minutes of exercise if they 'only' do sports or exercise once or twice a week.

If we want to stimulate active living, it is crucial that in the cities of the future we give more people the opportunity to integrate physical activity into their daily lives. How will we do this? Among other things, by reducing distances to everyday destinations by introducing a much better mix of housing, shopping, work and recreational functions in each district.

20-minute city

Most everyday destinations should be within 15–20 minutes by foot or by bike. The concept is called the '15-minute city', '20-minute city'³⁵, or 'complete neighbourhood' and is rapidly gaining ground worldwide. The concept breaks with the separation of urban functions that has become so dominant over the last 50–60 years. If we are to stimulate active living, the cities of the future should not have large shopping centres with large car parks, they should not have blocks of flats with only housing, and they should not have business parks with just commercial residents. The functions need to be mixed far more again.



by
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THE THINK TANK THINKS

Of course, it is not possible for all functions to be mixed together in a good way, nor is it necessary if, for example, a large manufacturing company or a super hospital is close to a public transport stop that is cheap to reach, has many departures (e.g. every 5 minutes) and is connected to many places.

Future investments

Furthermore, future national investments in transport infrastructure should also focus much more on pedestrians, bicycles and public transport. Investment in new roads for cars should be kept to a minimum, as all research over the past 40 years has

"Promoting active living, in addition to promoting sports, exercise or fitness, comes with the advantage that physical activity as part of everyday activities does not cost much in terms of extra time."

Better local facilities

In addition to a new urban planning approach that focuses on mixing functions, more and better local facilities for recreation and movement, such as parks, squares, playgrounds and sports facilities, can contribute to more physical activity.

Greater focus on cycling, e.g. bike streets, 15 km/h zones in city centres, cycle super-highways, charging stations for e-bikes and e-cargo bikes for delivering goods, will make a big difference. European cities such as Berlin³⁶, Paris³⁷, Barcelona³⁸ and Brussels³⁹ are quickly overtaking Danish cities when it comes to investment in cycling infrastructure. The same cities are also transforming their inner-city areas to keep cars out as much as possible, e.g. limiting the number of parking spaces and making parking expensive, introducing more attractive carpooling schemes, introducing a congestion charge and providing cheap and good public transport as an alternative.

shown that new roads lead to more car traffic and never solve traffic congestion problems in the long term.⁴⁰

Congestion can only be solved by encouraging fewer people to drive, for example through major improvements in public transport or by creating the above-mentioned districts that mix housing and business premises so that many more Danes can live closer to their work.

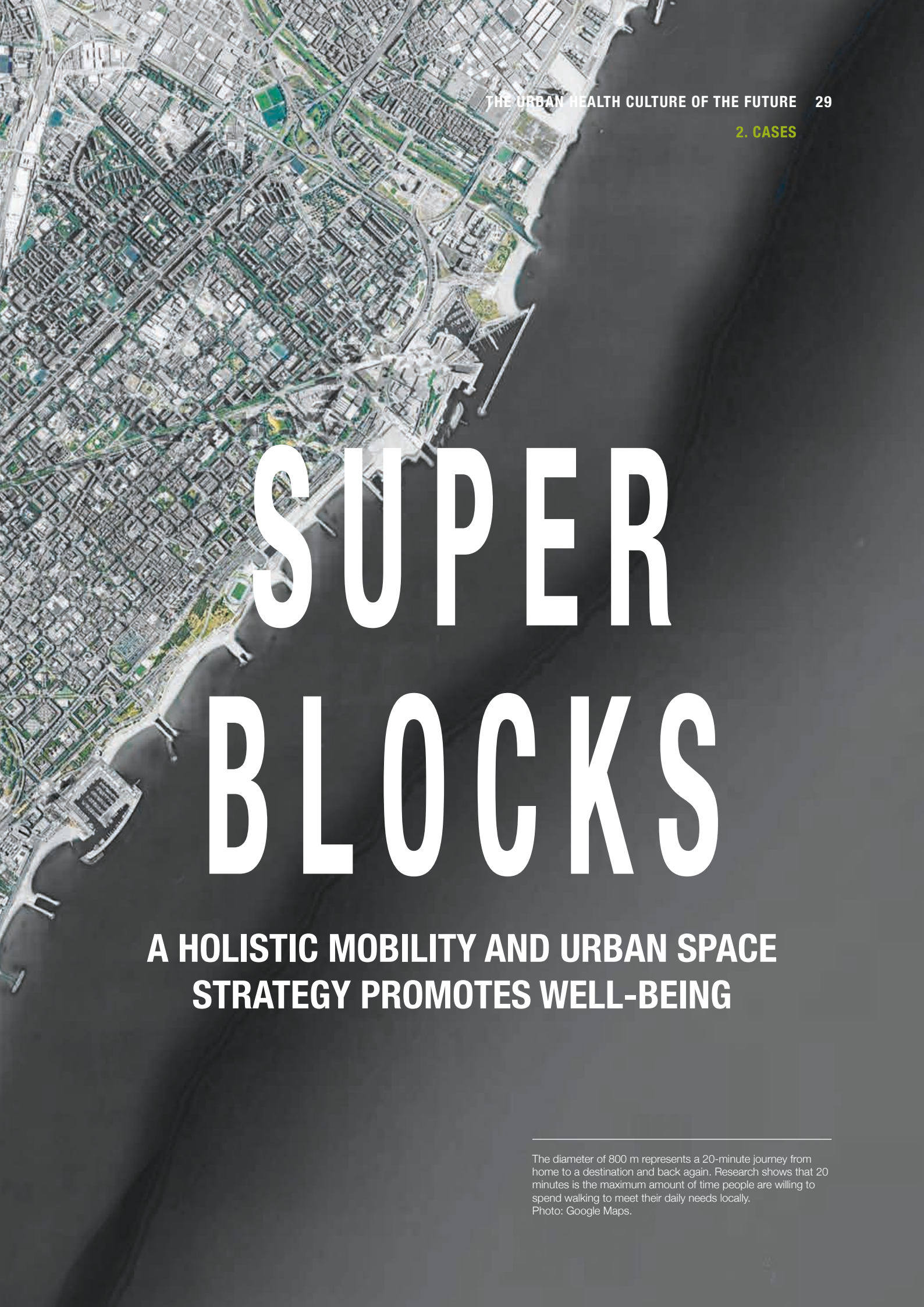
There are many co-benefits

Finally, it is important to mention that cities that stimulate active living not only contribute to more physical activity and all the health benefits associated with it, but that there are also many 'co-benefits' in terms of a reduction in noise and air pollution as well as CO₂ emissions which contribute to achieving our climate objectives.⁴¹



Bicycle and pedestrian bridge supports active transport in Copenhagen. Photo: Christian Hanak.





SUPER BLOCKS

**A HOLISTIC MOBILITY AND URBAN SPACE
STRATEGY PROMOTES WELL-BEING**

The diameter of 800 m represents a 20-minute journey from home to a destination and back again. Research shows that 20 minutes is the maximum amount of time people are willing to spend walking to meet their daily needs locally.
Photo: Google Maps.

CASE

SUPERBLOCKS

A HOLISTIC MOBILITY AND URBAN SPACE STRATEGY PROMOTES WELL-BEING

The superblock model is an innovative approach that addresses urban challenges related to health, air pollution, noise, mobility, lack of recreational and green urban spaces, as well as biodiversity and sustainability.

WHAT?

Where

Barcelona

Architect/landscape architect

Urban Ecology Agency and Barcelona Municipality

Client

Barcelona Municipality

When

1993–now

Interventions

- Integrated mobility and urban space strategy
- Implementation of temporary measures for traffic and in urban areas
- Implementation of permanent urban spaces and green areas

WHY?

Barcelona is at the forefront of urban development and planning. The city's growth has always had a purpose, and there has always been a vision: from Cerdà's plan for L'Eixample to the 1992 Olympics, when Barcelona spread new investment across the city, and the 2000 'Pro Eixample' partnership, when closed courtyards in Cerdà's plan were transformed into publicly accessible green spaces.

The latest addition is the implementation of superblocks across the city. With the project, the city's mobility strategy creates a framework for the development of new urban spaces and green areas that promote physical, social and mental well-being.

Air pollution in Barcelona is a health hazard. The city has an extremely high traffic density combined with one of the highest population densities in Europe. 44% of Barcelona's inhabitants are exposed to higher levels of air pollution than recommended by the WHO. Lowering air pollution levels to WHO standards is expected to have significant immediate as well as long-term health benefits for people living in the city.⁴² In addition to air pollution, high traffic density also causes high levels of noise pollution: 50% of the population in the Eixample district is exposed to an unacceptable noise level (above 65 dbA). Annually, reducing air pollution to the recommended WHO level would result in 3,500 fewer deaths (about 12% of all deaths among people aged 30 and over).⁴³

The large asphalt road surfaces also create heat islands, and the city is on average 2 degrees warmer than the surrounding areas.⁴⁴ This affects the well-being and health of the elderly, the vulnerable, children and sick people – and in some cases can be downright dangerous. Traffic also takes up a lot of space in the city, and there is a lack of green spaces: Barcelona has 1.85m² of green space per capita in the Eixample district, whereas the WHO recommends 9m² per capita.

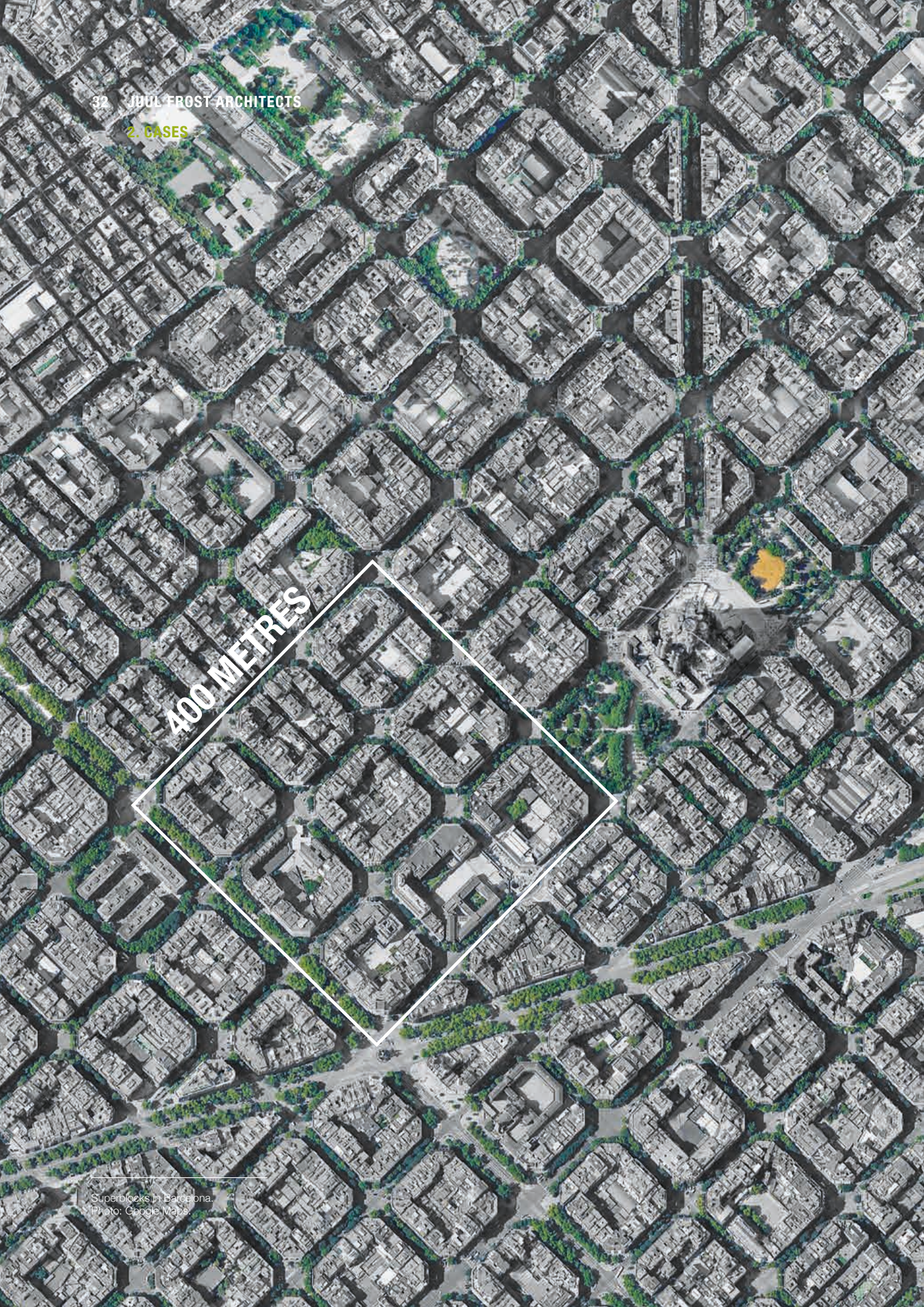
AIR POLLUTION IN DENMARK

In Denmark, 3,400 Danes die prematurely each year due to air pollution. Although air pollution is decreasing, it continues to have serious implications for the health of Danes, and Denmark struggles to meet EU air quality standards.⁴⁵ Part of this air pollution comes from motorised traffic in our cities. It is a challenge with an element of inequality because, as Morten Grønbech from the think tank points out, it is often vulnerable citizens who live where air pollution is the greatest.

Superblock by Sant Antoni / Leku Studio. Photo: Del Rio Bani.

2. CASES

400 METRES



HOW?

What is a superblock?

The basic idea behind the superblock concept is to transform roads into shared spaces with room for urban spaces and mixed urban functions. A superblock covers an area of approximately 400 x 400 metres, which in Barcelona's L'Eixample area corresponds to 3 x 3 blocks of buildings. Motorised traffic is kept on the outside of the block, while only traffic completing errands is allowed in the inner streets of the block. In the superblock, there is a speed limit of 10–20 km/h, which ensures a pedestrian-friendly environment. Cars can not drive across a superblock. Because it is closed to through traffic, it means that it makes no sense to drive into the superblock unless you need to complete an errand or the destination is in the block. The reduction of traffic frees up part of the road space for new functions, urban spaces and green areas.

The strength of the concept is that it can be "copied" or implemented across Barcelona's uniform and repetitive urban structure. It is tailored to the transformation of Barcelona's urban fabric and works on the historical conditions of Cerdà's plan.

Cerdà's plan for health

Catalan civil engineer Il·defons Cerdà (1815–1876) is the main architect of the L'Eixample (expansion) district, which today makes up the main part of Barcelona's city centre.

Cerdà's plan was revolutionary for its time, focusing on hygiene and better mobility in a grid-like structure. A key concept in Cerdà's plan is health, and Cerdà drew on 19th-century theories of hygiene. For example, the large street width in his plan is justified on the basis of hygiene, and the size of the city block (113.3 x 113.3 m) is chosen to optimise living standards by allowing an air volume of 6m³ per person.

To increase mobility and transport, Cerdà planned for every corner of a block to be rounded, and the extension was planned with street widths of 35 m and included large avenues from 50 to 80 m at the main ports and gates of the city. Like Cerdà's plan, the superblock model combines a focus on both health and mobility.

Consortium rethinks sustainable urban development

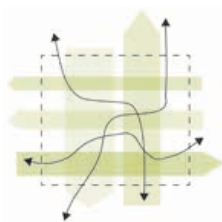
The superblock concept was developed by urban planner Salvador Rueda in the 80s and has since been further developed by BCNecologia (the Urban Ecology Agency of Barcelona) with Rueda as director. BCNecologia (now part of the Barcelona Regional Urban Development Agency) was a public consortium which was established in 2000 with a focus on rethinking sustainable urban development. It consists of the City Council of Barcelona, the Municipal Council, the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona and the Barcelona Provincial Council. The consortium identifies challenges and their causes, makes proposals, analyses their feasibility and provides administrative support for management and project implementation.

One strategy spanning multiple scales

The city of Barcelona introduced the superblock concept in 2013 as part of its overall mobility plan. The aim was to tackle high levels of air pollution, noise, car traffic and the lack of green spaces. Consequently, implementation of the plan has supported both biodiversity and a reduction in CO₂ emissions from traffic. The mobility plan is an integrated mobility and urban strategy on two scales. It is a city-wide mobility strategy that includes a restructuring of the entire city's mobility, including plans for a new bus system, new cycling infrastructure and a new network of green, pedestrian-friendly spaces across the city. On a neighbourhood scale, the implementation of the superblocks creates a framework for the development of new urban spaces and new urban life in each block.

In 2015, the city council adopted 'The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan of Barcelona', which proposes to extend the superblock structure across the entire city. With 500 superblocks, the plan is to convert approx. 70% of the city's streets to mixed use. The plan will reduce motorised traffic by 21%. A reduction that will mean that 94% of citizens will live with air pollution levels that meet the standards, compared to 56% now.⁴⁶

ACTIVE MOVEMENT



increased and safe movement
in the neighbourhoods

MOBILITY STRATEGY



which integrates
urban strategies

2. CASES

URBAN CELLS: TRANSPORT NETWORK AND TYPOLOGY DEFINE URBAN USE

Cities are characterised by the behaviour of their inhabitants. At the same time, living conditions are partly defined by the anatomy of a city. This anatomy is determined by external factors such as urban structure. Robin Renner, an urbanist, urban researcher and architect, has studied existing urban areas from around the globe, using satellite imagery and fieldwork to examine how urban structures can best be organised to promote a healthy urban environment.

Robin Renner understands the "anatomy" of the city as consisting of different urban cells. Their shape depends on two main factors: topography and transport, which form the structures and networks we know from satellite images of our cities. The cells in turn define what kind of buildings and features are typically found within a given cell. The superblock can be understood as the recipe for a cell that promotes slow internal traffic, allows for pedestrian-friendly streets, trees, centrally located parks, supermarkets and schools, which enhance quality of life for residents of this type of cell.⁴⁷

Implementation: Superblocks as a pilot project

The first superblocks were implemented in 1993 and 2005 according to similar principles but differ from newer ones in terms of scale and density. The Poblenou district was the first superblock under the new mobility plan. Today, the superblock concept has been implemented in 13 areas. The concept has thus been tested in different areas, several of which have served as pilot projects. The areas vary in terms of social, infrastructural and economic factors.

From tactical and temporary to permanent interventions

The Poblenou superblock is an example of how the concept can be implemented through temporary measures in the short term and permanent changes in the long term. The establishment consists of two phases: The first regulates traffic around and within blocks, and the second creates new urban spaces and a framework for urban life in the freed-up traffic areas.

The Poblenou project was implemented as a pilot project in a collaboration between the city, Salvador Rueda and a number of architecture students and was launched with a number of temporary tactical measures. Within Poblenou's nine-block area, through traffic was cut off and speeds reduced. At the crossroads of the block, designs were painted on the ground, tyres were laid in circles to create play areas and potted trees were planted. It brought big change with little money, but was not followed up on with promises of more permanent action – and this created some resistance to the project.

The temporary measures were used to launch a discussion on public space, asking residents what they would like to see from the reclaimed road space. This gave residents the opportunity to suggest what they wanted to do with the new urban spaces. A few months after the temporary measures were implemented, the municipality began an involvement process and mapping of residents' needs, which resulted in permanent measures. This enabled much of the opposition to the project to be overcome. Today, Poblenou's streets are vibrant urban spaces with both temporary and permanent features: picnic tables, space for occasional markets, and sports and play areas.

Superblocks have an impact

Barcelona's superblocks have a positive impact on the health and well-being of local residents and users. That is the conclusion of research done by the Barcelona Public Health Agency (ASPB).⁴⁸ Among other things, this research concludes that:

- There is a perceived gain in well-being, tranquility, quality of sleep, reduction of noise, reduction of pollution and increase in social interaction.
- Air quality measures show improvements to the intervened areas where the streets are pacified and the number of cars is reduced.
- the measures have a high potential to affect the health of the population if widely implemented.



SOCIAL INTERACTION



positive effect and increased well-being for local residents and users

2. CASES



A greener city and a healthier city

The strategy shows how mobility plans can contribute to increased urban nature. With the implementation of the mobility strategy and the superblock structure across the city, the city's green surface is expected to increase significantly to 403.7 ha of potential green space. This corresponds to an increase from 2.7 m²/inhabitant to 6.3m²/inhabitant for the whole area of the Cerdà plan.

Urban nature brings many benefits. Planted surfaces help reduce CO₂ levels and are potential collectors of pollutant particles. They help promote thermal comfort, minimising heat island effects. In addition, surfaces with trees can reduce the effect of noise and wind on the urban environment and contribute to both thermal and acoustic comfort, promoting the use of urban spaces. Many Danish municipalities already have a policy on nature and green spaces. For example, Frederiksberg in Copenhagen has a tree policy to ensure that at least one tree is visible from every home in Frederiksberg.

Last but not least, research shows, not surprisingly, that nature has a positive effect on our health. Green spaces in cities can promote human health, and therapy gardens can support healing processes. Research suggests that natural environments have positive impacts on human health, encouraging physical activity, promoting social contact and contributing to psychological and physiological restoration.⁴⁹

One example is the Therapy Garden at the Vestre Kirkegård cemetery in Copenhagen, which provides a setting for research and development of nature-based therapy for the treatment of stress-related disorders. The Municipality of Copenhagen offers various health programmes in the garden to strengthen mental health in the city, but Copenhageners can also visit and use the garden on their own.

Before and after implementation of Superblock by Sant Antoni / Leku Studio. Photo: Del Rio Bani.

Proximity has an impact on the use and impact of green spaces. Studies show that people who are within 50 metres of the nearest green space visit it on average 3–4 times a week. But if the distance is 1,000 metres, we are likely to visit green spaces only once a week.⁵⁰ Fatigue, negative stress and irritation increase the further you live from green spaces, regardless of gender, age and socio-economic status.⁵¹

But urban nature is not only about the quantity of green spaces but also about the quality. Green spaces with a focus on certain experiential characteristics tend to be both more visited and more valued by visitors. Studies have identified these spatial experience qualities and term them as rich in species, peaceful, open, social, spacious, safe, cultural and wild respectively. In particular, the combination of the experience characteristics safe, peaceful and wild has a major impact on the health of urban residents.⁵²

Extensive research has been carried out on the influence of nature on human health based on environmental psychology, Aesthetic Affective theory, Attentive Restoration Theory and Biophilia. Ulrika K. Stigsdotter, Professor of Landscape Architecture and Planning, highlights the need for future planning and design of health-promoting green spaces and therapy gardens to be based on evidence-based health design/planning. In other words, it should be based on the combination of the best available research and proven experience.⁵³

2. CASES



Superblock by Sant Antoni / Leku Studio. Photo: Del Rio Bani.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Collaboration across public institutions

In Barcelona, they are rethinking sustainable urban development in a collaborative effort across public institutions from the city council, municipality and surrounding area. Together, they identify the city's challenges and their causes, make innovative proposals and support implementation.

Adaptable and scalable strategies

The superblock model is an adaptable and scalable mobility and urban design strategy that rethinks existing mobility patterns and creates new recreational urban spaces and green areas. It is a model for sustainable mobility and the transformation of neighbourhoods, promoting mental, social and physical well-being. The concept can be implemented through temporary measures, both in terms of traffic and urban space, allowing for reversible and open planning.

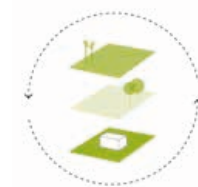
Temporary urban development

The temporary measures create spaces for spontaneous and self-organised activities in the neighbourhood. Together with the participatory process of developing permanent actions, they address the needs of residents and strengthen their belonging and ownership of the process and the urban space. The pedestrian-friendly urban spaces create a framework for social activity and interaction between the residents of the superblock.

Documented effects

Evidence-based health design and planning, combining the best available research, evidence and practice, can help ensure the impact of interventions to improve social, physical and mental well-being.

REVERSIBLE STRATEGY



creates opportunity
for experiments



THE THINK TANK THINKS

VÄSTRA HAMNEN, MALMÖ, AS A PROTOTYPE IN A DESIGN PROCESS

"If you look at what Bo01 taught us, we learned a lot about processes. To hold dialogues with stakeholders, with construction companies and the city of Malmö. We learned a lot about land issues. How we allocate land. By dividing the land into smaller parts, we got more new developers."

The development of Bo01 has resulted in a best practice mixed neighbourhood, where lifestyles, forms of ownership and housing sizes vary, but also an environmentally and socially sustainable neighbourhood. You were the city architect during Bo01. What can we learn from Bo01 in further work on health promotion planning?

If you look at what Bo01 taught us, we learned a lot about processes. To hold dialogues with stakeholders, with construction companies and the city of Malmö. We learned a lot about land issues. How we allocate land. By dividing the land into smaller parts, we got more new developers. We often allocate land to the local housing companies, which ensures stable housing production over time and that they themselves manage it for a long time.

The fair was a strong driving force. But you don't always have a fair. And then you need to create momentum together with developers through dialogue. We also learned what the web means. With the centre-right government, our environmental building programme was classified as a special requirement and thus "illegal". We then changed strategy and started using the web to influence things.

We published the ambitions of the builders on the web, and it became a strong driving force that everyone wanted to be a little better than their competitors, which eventually meant that we had Sweden's largest area of passive houses. We learned the importance of having a vision and what strategic projects can mean for a city's work for change.

Having a strategy and a wider context is important. The housing fair and Malmö University were the main actors. It is important that the strategy is politically owned and that administrations make them confident in their choices. Sometimes, stakeholders court politicians to make changes that favour a short-term economic perspective, often with far-reaching consequences for the issues at hand and often in areas where they lack knowledge. Politicians need to learn to see through this. There, we have had the advantage of having a good policy.

The spatial is understood better by politicians today. Segregation has one form, integration has another. It's about creating a good situation for residents. I think it's starting to catch on. Now I will take over the chairmanship, and I will view all questions through a spatial lens. Politicians often understand this. The community is always the one to lose out. It is the community and the long-term property owners who will have to bear the long-term consequences.

Often, developing companies have shifted their values along the way. Therefore, the long-term view needs to remain along the way. Too little work is done on the tools to achieve this. You have to find that kind of tool. 800 billion a year, property values are rising. And we have decided not to tax this, and that is strange.



Interview with
Christer Larsson
Architect SAR/MSA, KKH

Formerly director of Urban Planning.
Adjunct Professor of Architecture.

Founder of
AKTIEBOLAGET HELASTADEN



Västra hamnen, Malmö.
Photo: Google Maps.

40 JUUL FROST ARCHITECTS
THE THINK TANK THINKS



THE THINK TANK THINKS

Where

Malmö, Sweden

Who

Malmö Urban Planning Office +
Klas Tham + 16 developers

When

1999-

What

Bo01 started as part of the European Housing Exhibition in 2001 and served as a prototype for the later design of the Västra Hamnen harbour district.

I was also thinking that we considered e.g. Västra Hamnen as a prototype in a design process. It's important to carry the knowledge from one prototype to another so that we can bring the experience to the next project.

What will the project do for the city and the people of Malmö? Everything must be put into context. If you have a clear vision, the project should be put into context. Our perspectives have shifted from prototyping the design process to managing the whole city.

For example, shrinking schoolyards lead to more time spent tending to sick children by parents. This has direct costs for society. If you develop economic models for this, it will show. The cost of a young person getting involved in crime can be calculated. The cost of regular ill health is harder to calculate, but it should be possible. How we spatially organise the city to ensure outdoor spaces at schools, space for movement, etc. is crucial for health, along with many other things of course.

"We published the ambitions of the builders there, and it became a strong driving force that everyone wanted to be a little better than their competitors."

The Malmö Commission, with its health approach, identified the differences in health. Health is a good entry point. Average life expectancy differs by 7 years between eastern and western Malmö. On a global level, the difference is 50 years. You see that children's bones are weaker today, they move too little.

Loneliness is something that has gone under the radar. We didn't discover it until it was too late. This Vinnova project I'm leading is about health and loneliness. Can a social innovation match e.g. elderly and lonely people living in too large a home with a younger person who needs to get a home and share the living space.



We'll have to look at how to scale it up. We are looking at this with Uppsala as a testing ground. "Ett tak" ("One roof"), a social innovator, has a matching service that is quite interesting. In Sweden, we have 40 square metres per person. We need to get that to 20 square metres per person in order for it to be sustainable. We can't build it away, but we can share it away. We can also learn how to build the new housing on that basis.

Semi-public, non-commercial meeting places – an interesting study in Umeå shows that children from socio-economically disadvantaged groups spend their free time in shopping centres but do not have the resources to spend there – if it had been possible to have a school or other meeting place that did not require spending, this could have been countered with fairly simple measures.

Illustration: Bo01 Staden. AB Svensk Byggtjänst and the authors, 2001.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

A CITY PERSPECTIVE

FROM HOLBÆK & AALBORG MUNICIPALITIES

"Our physical environment must and should be designed to support as many health-promoting activities as possible in our everyday lives."

The urban health culture of the future and the link with spatial planning

Health is on everyone's lips, and it is central to our well-being that health is addressed at an individual level in everything we do. Spatial planning is about ensuring that our physical environment is planned and designed to provide the optimum health-promoting environment for our daily lives and movement – e.g. to address a range of known health-damaging environmental conditions such as noise, pollution, lack of daylight, etc. However, this also means that our physical environment must and should be designed to support as many health-promoting activities as possible in our everyday lives. These could be walks or runs in neighbourhoods that are safe to move in, the mental break on the nearby bench or the nice, spontaneous encounter in the neighbourhood that is an invitation into a community.

In a municipal setting, there are many planning considerations and priorities to take into account, health being one of them. And as contributors to the Future Urban Health Culture project, we see the need to develop tools to promote physical, mental and social health in the built/physical environment. Indeed, we have no doubt that the physical urban environment – architecture – plays an essential role in the development of healthier urban communities.

The question is, how do we get off to a 'good start' – and where is it currently most important for municipal planners and city builders to look?

"In the long run, mixed urban areas are the best medicine against insecurity and mistrust in society."

– Rune Scherg, chief analyst, Danish National Police³⁴



by
Karin K. Peschardt
Landscape architect, PhD

Strategic planner, Holbæk Municipality, planning and business.



and
Bodil V. Henningsen
Architect

Master in Strategic Planning, Aalborg Municipality, Urban Development and Construction.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

Both Aalborg and Holbæk municipalities work with specific health policies, and in this work they are very aware of the importance of intersectoral cooperation to ensure health promotion in all areas – across all sectors. The health policies therefore also contain ambitions in relation to spatial planning and the design of the built environment.

"The question is, how do we get off to a 'good start' – and where is it currently most important for municipal planners and city builders to look?"

Insight is needed into what it takes to also promote mental and social health for all – tools to promote the social sustainability of urban communities.

In addition, in spatial planning we ourselves work with a wide range of strategies, policies and planning tools that, together, can bring the health perspective into spatial planning. Examples include planning strategy, municipal plan, sustainability strategies (DGNB, UN SDGs), mobility strategies, architectural policies, housing policies, climate plans, urban development plans, local plans, etc. Many actions are already being taken, either because planning, building or environmental laws require it or because the local political level has its own ambitions. And currently, we are seeing a lot of attention and acceptance of the importance of physical/active/visual and carbon-neutral health in particular: active mobility, cycling cities, royal run, light rail, biodiversity, etc. – this needs to be maintained. At the same time, we see a need to understand mental and social health and the links with spatial planning.

What does the future hold? And is it time to 'build back better'?

We are currently seeing trends of increasing inequality in society, which in the housing market and in our cities is leading to increased segregation – and thus a growing divide between 'them' and 'us'.

The number of lonely and vulnerable people is increasing, partly as a result of an ageing population but also as a result of a wide range of other structural changes – and health data can document the pressure wave of negative consequences. But according to British economist Noreena

Hertz's book 'The Lonely Century', loneliness not only threatens to make us sick and isolated, it also fundamentally erodes our empathy and ability to sustain strong democracies.

In other words: We are in the middle of a paradigm shift, and taking a dive into the future will be interesting!

So, the community seems to be under strong pressure, including culturally – and we need to put it higher on the agenda. We are also spotting trends to this effect, such as the growing demand for co-housing schemes (especially for seniors). The climate crisis is also pushing us to share more in our everyday lives.

So, how do we set the framework for meaningful co-creation activities and needs fulfilment in the cities of the future – and what urbanised lifestyle will this play up against?

As a result of the corona pandemic, the current trend is towards increased time spent working from home. For example, does this mean an increased focus on meeting more needs in the immediate neighbourhood? Are the many grocery stores along access roads on their way out because fewer commuters in cars swing by on their way home? Will there again be a need to share a beer in the back room of the local grocery store – and do we mandate planners, for example, to ensure that a grocery store must always fit in with the local square and a playground (and a parcel collection point).

Are we witnessing a kind of rebirth of the 'village' as a consequence of no longer having a large part of one's social needs met through workplace life? And will this increase inclusion/reduce loneliness for the individual? There are some basic large-scale structures that can/must change.

What demands does the need to strengthen the community actually place on the housing developments of the future? For example, can we learn from our many council housing developments with built-in m² for communities, inside and out? For example, should the planner reserve x m² in each street for a playground, the urban space, the community centre – communal dining, bicycle storage, etc.?



Aalborg East, Kickstart Tornhøj.
Photo: Himmerland Boligforening and Aalborg Municipality.

Health culture: Learning from corona – and Shanghai?

Especially during the first lock-down, we saw how the outdoor public space had to provide a framework for leisure activities and communities that usually take place indoors behind closed doors.

Fitness, music and movement took over squares and parks, infecting passers-by with a zest for life and energy, making them curious, perhaps even giving them the courage and desire to participate.

Can we, as in the tradition i.a. Rick Stein experienced in Shanghai's parks, introduce more leisure activities into the open – and thus invite each other to participate in them?

A 'nice to have' health culture?

It is important that the focus on a health-promoting environment for physical movement, mental restitution and social interaction is considered from the start. This requires a political focus as well as tools that support project development processes and the physical urban development that also takes place in rural areas.

The concept of health is multifaceted, and planning with a focus on health promotion can sometimes be challenged by a lack of arguments because these are interventions that do not produce results in the here and now but are guaranteed to have a positive long-term impact on health. In other words, in the development situation it is often "nice" to have, but not "need" to have.

"A set of recommendations is needed for the design of residential areas with a focus on strengthening neighbourliness."

In Denmark, we have a solid tradition of associations (Editor's note: Communities often driven by volunteers, were people meet in the spare time around common interests such as sports, hobbies etc.). And for many, these are strongly linked to our identity (handball, choirs, etc.). Perhaps because these are examples of co-creation and have to do with movement – and are thus health-promoting.

These are values we must cherish because they create quality of life. Is it possible to spread the leisure activities of associations physically, socially and mentally? Make them more inclusive and bring them more into the public space and the cityscape? For the healthy cities of the future, we believe these are essential building blocks for socially sustainable urban living that can transcend cultures.

There is a need to delve into the concept of culture. Is "association Denmark" part of our foundation for the urban health culture of the future? Strong communities can be generated here, but does everyone have equal access? – and how can we give more space and visibility to community activities?

Ensuring that we proactively contribute to health promotion in spatial planning also requires a firm stance that long-term interventions can make a difference – and an understanding that the concept of health relates not only to disease but also to our culture and the formation of healthy, active, inclusive communities.

Current visions and experiments with the '15-minute city' should not only be seen as relevant in terms of major CO₂ savings but also supported through spatial planning as the good framework for establishing meaningful local neighbourhoods and communities in our everyday lives – and a platform for the urban health culture of the future that can embrace physical, social and mental health.





Holbæk city and the Fjord Tower by Juul Frost Architects. Photo: Astrid Maria Rasmussen.

GILLETT SQUARE

**THE OPEN AND TEMPORARY URBAN SPACE
STRENGTHENS DIVERSITY, SOCIAL LIFE
AND SOCIAL COHESION**



Photo: Anna Shpuntova

CASE

GILLETT SQUARE

THE OPEN AND TEMPORARY URBAN SPACE STRENGTHENS DIVERSITY, SOCIAL LIFE AND SOCIAL COHESION

The transformation of Gillett Square is a model for how we can enhance diversity, social life, well-being and tolerance. An example of how strategic thinking and urban strategy can contribute to the social regeneration of cities, building on existing cultural life rather than gentrification. Gillett Square has received great acclaim for its adaptive and inclusive design.

WHAT?

Where

Dalston, Hackney, London

Architect/landscape architect

Hawkins\Brown / Whitelaw Turkington / muf architecture/art.

Client

Hackney Co-operative Developments, London Borough of Hackney, SRB Haggerston, ERDF, Groundwork Hackney, MacDonald Egan

When

1990-

Interventions

- Strategies for urban development, including the 100 Public Spaces programme, Designing for London and Making Space in Dalston
- Organising partnership for the development and management of the site
- Transformation of existing buildings and urban spaces
- Kiosks and market stalls
- Container with the possibility of storing equipment for temporary activities.

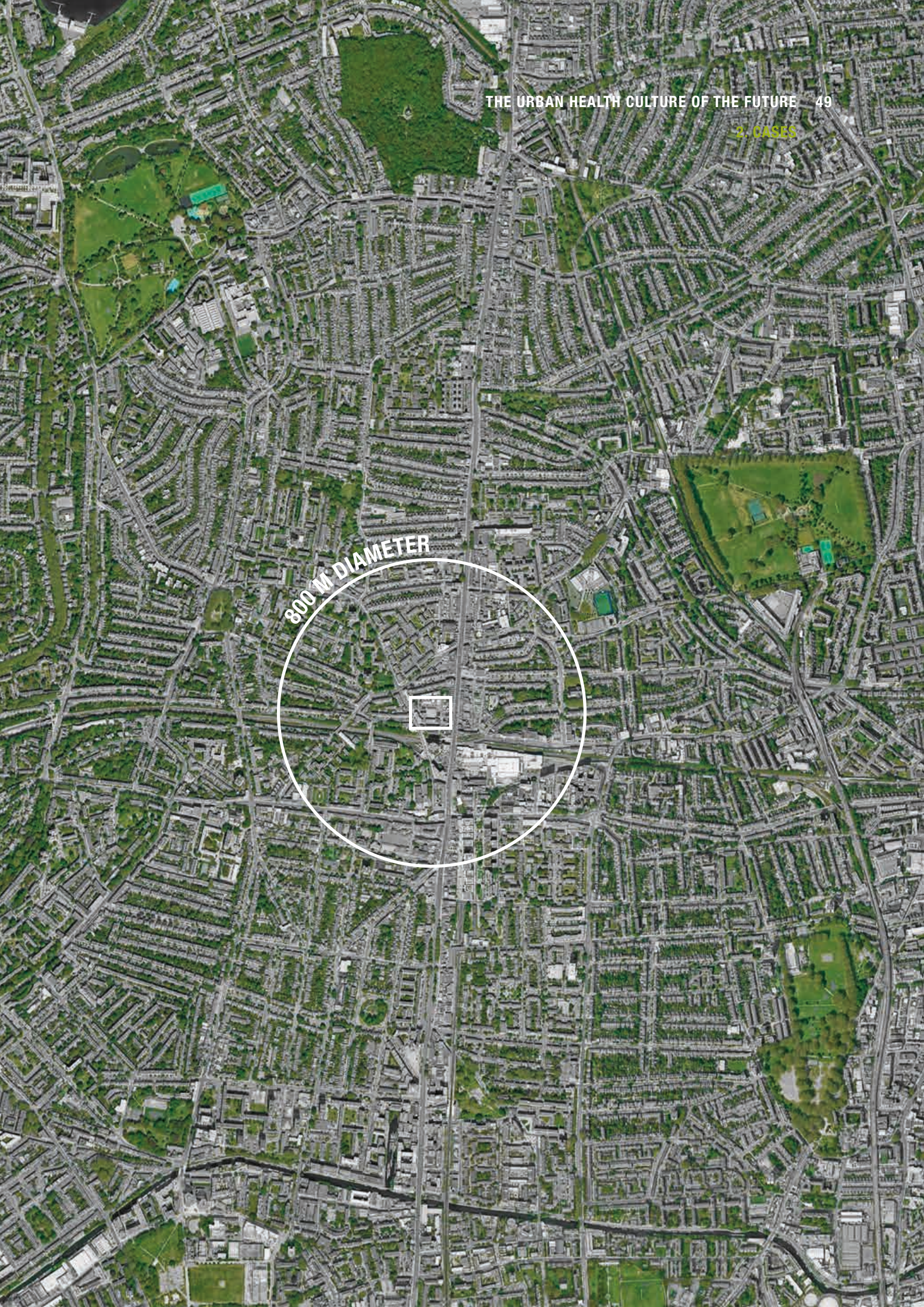
WHY?

Dalston is an East London neighbourhood in the London Borough of Hackney in great need of more and better recreational space. Hackney is among the 20% most deprived boroughs in the UK in terms of income, health, crime and the quality of the local environment.⁵⁵ The neighbourhood's urban spaces are generally dominated by car traffic, and the area has only 12% green space, compared to the London average of 38%.⁵⁶ Before its transformation, Gillett Square was a neglected, unsafe car park surrounded by derelict buildings, plagued by drug dealing and "beer drinkers" and shunned by the local community.

But Dalston is also a vibrant neighbourhood, with great cultural diversity and many different ethnic groups using the city's spaces. It has therefore been an overarching ambition to promote the long-term economic and cultural sustainability of the community by building on and preserving the area's unique cultural capital and multi-cultural character. In other words, to future-proof the sense of security, social life and social diversity and avoid the gentrification of the area.

Today, the square is a social gathering point with the potential to become anything. A strong and enduring partnership has developed and now runs the square. This ensures open events and activities that promote social cohesion and counter social isolation.

The diameter of 800 m represents a 20-minute journey from home to a destination and back again. Research shows that 20 minutes is the maximum amount of time people are willing to spend walking to meet their daily needs locally.
Photo: Google Maps.



GILLETT SQUARE



HOW?

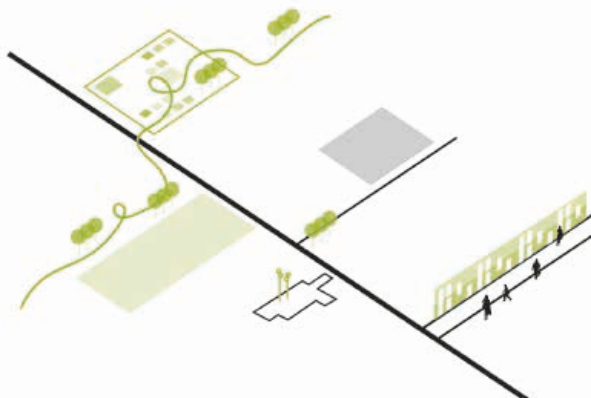
The transformation of Gillett Square has taken place over more than 20 years. The vibrant urban space is the result of the Gillett Squared partnership, strategic initiatives such as the '100 Public Spaces' programme and 'Making Space in Dalston', ongoing and open engagement processes and last but not least the open, inviting and changing design of the space itself.

The first of 10 pilot projects

The development of the square is the product of strategic urban development as well as a strong focus on participation and local needs. Gillett Square was the first of ten pilot projects in the '100 Public Spaces' programme: a large-scale political programme launched by then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone. The programme aimed to create new and improve existing urban spaces across London, demonstrating that design of the highest quality can be achieved without excessive expense. Gillett Square was "completed" in 2006.

The transformation was supported by 'Making Space in Dalston' in 2009: a strategic development project which subsequently mapped the neighbourhood's social, cultural and physical strengths holistically and developed new strategies, design approaches and cultural programmes. Through a 'bottom-up' approach and a close collaboration with local residents, businesses and organisations, a total of 76 permanent and temporary projects were identified across 10 strategic themes. Themes include temporary improvements, cultural programming, green links, wayfinding and host spaces, i.e. spaces that can "host" cultural activities and communities.

Gillett Square was identified as a potential host space that could facilitate temporary use of city spaces and create a better environment for neighbourhood communities. This resulted in containers on the site for storing various remedies that can temporarily create activity at the site. The aim was to raise awareness of the site and its many activities in order to attract new users.



A PIONEER CITY IN STRATEGIC URBAN DEVELOPMENT

London is a pioneering city in strategic urban development, setting new standards with programmes such as Design for London and current Mayor Sadiq Khan's expert panel.

Design for London was a unique experiment in urban planning, design and strategic thinking established in 2006 by Ken Livingstone. The project was set up to counter the fact that planning in London was becoming less proactive and focused instead on control and regulation. The objectives included ensuring a coherent approach to temporary interventions across the city, promoting pilot projects and engaging local communities.

Operating under local authority but outside its formal legal responsibilities, Design for London was given the freedom to question and challenge conventional thinking. Design for London was responsible for the research, establishment and implementation of the '100 Public Spaces' programme and commission of the award-winning strategic development project 'Making Space in Dalston', which included Gillett Square.

Currently, the city is setting new standards with the appointment of 50 experts as advisors. They ensure the quality of buildings and public spaces by setting ambitious design standards, conducting rigorous project reviews and examining the challenges facing London's built environment. The experts are independent and impartial and provide support, advice, criticism and expertise. They include practitioners, academics, policy makers and actors from community-led initiatives and bring experience from both the public and private sectors.

The Making Space in Dalston project developed strategies, design approaches and programmes for cultural activities for the district from a holistic perspective.

2. CASES

A partnership for the square

The transformation of Gillett Square is driven by the Gillett Squared partnership, which aims to proactively create and facilitate cultural events and activities in Gillett Square in partnership with local businesses, community groups, cultural producers and Hackney Borough Council. Independent local social enterprise Hackney Co-operative Developments (HCD) is leading the partnership. HCD helps local cooperatives and social enterprises with the skills and knowledge needed to develop their business to strengthen the local economy.

The partnership has been based on a set of shared values that maintained a core focus on preserving local diversity and multicultural communities. A long-term and collaborative approach with citizens, local businesses and charities has resulted in the local community retaining ownership of the site.

A strong vision has helped the collaboration continue beyond the usual project cycle and become a long-term and sustainable partnership. The partnership currently operates the site and facilitates activities through a permanent licence to hold events on the site. The partnership holds regular open meetings with local residents, businesses and other stakeholders, who are continuously included in the development of new events. Katrine Winther from the think tank similarly emphasises that, in Denmark, we need to work with the social architecture of space and continuously create a framework that makes it easy to participate, meet others and create something together.

From buildings to urban spaces

The project has evolved continuously since the 1990s and as new needs have arisen. Already in 1996, the abandoned buildings around the square were transformed into workshops and shops, complemented by market stalls on the square. Together, they secure affordable rentals for small, local businesses and entrepreneurs – including in particular for ethnic minorities – and contribute to the economic development and sustainability of the area.

Subsequently, derelict buildings were transformed into Dalston Culture Centre with the venue Vortex Jazz Club providing a popular destination and promoting activity on the site 24/7. With the renewed urban life around market stalls, workshops and the cultural centre, the need for a new district square also arose. This set the stage for the transformation from car park to urban space.

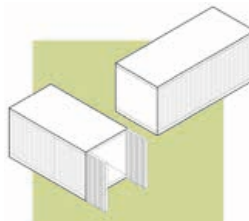
A blank canvas for free use

Gillett Square is a relatively simple, open square with a vibrant edge zone with opportunities to pause and observe city life. The unprogrammed surface acts as a blank canvas that can be freely occupied by anyone for both spontaneous and planned activities. There is room for an outdoor cinema, picnics and table tennis, and free events are held all year round. To encourage different temporary uses of the space, a container is provided to store equipment and tools that can turn the space into a pop-up play area, etc. Volunteers reorganise the space for different uses, encouraging both ownership and responsibility for the urban space.⁵⁷ As John Pløger from the think tank points out, the strength of the space is that it is an organised space but retains a spatial openness to permanently changing use.⁵⁸

"Gillett Square is an organized space, but it is keeping a spatial openness for a permanent changing use."

- John Pløger, 2008 'The ephemeral city – the difference between Røde Plads and Gillett Square'

Today, the square is home to a diverse demographic, and the relaxed architectural style and informal design reflect this diversity. Gillett Square invites everyone to contribute. This creates a framework for different users and local communities to use the space freely – and in turn, an inclusive space where everyone can participate in the many and varied public activities. The openness to the fact that citizens can define the use of the space themselves fosters a sense of belonging to the place.

TEMPORARY INITIATIVES

create the opportunity for reprogramming of the site

2. CASES



Photo: Anna Shpuntova.

2. CASES



Photo: Anna Shpuntova.

2. CASES

Balanced disorder promotes tolerance

Gillett Square is an example of an urban space that is, in Richard Sennett's words, in 'balanced disorder'. It is an urban space that signals diversity through its architecture and the people who use it. A place where difference and diversity take centre stage. This allows for the encounter of different lifestyles, life stages, lifestyles and cultures linked to ethnicity, age, gender and social classes.

"On a Saturday, if we're around we'll always come to the square to see what's happening, as there's usually something interesting and quirky going on. Also it's always free, which is really important for us and other people." – Resident⁶²

Gillett Square creates space for the uncontrolled, unpredictable and spontaneous and thus for users to be confronted with diversity as a prerequisite for understanding and tolerance. A space where strangers meet each other, both through shared activities and simply by occupying a shared space. It is a space that signals and encourages acceptance of all that is foreign to oneself and thus helps to develop a basic mutual tolerance and understanding of difference.⁵⁹

A 2016 poll of users of the square found that 78% agreed that being in Gillett Square helps them mix with people from different backgrounds and social groups,

while 71% agreed that being in Gillett Square helps them discover common interests with people from different backgrounds and social groups.⁶⁰

Evaluation provides a new basis for decision-making

In 2016, the Gillett Squared Partnership and architectural firm Hakins\Brown both commissioned internal and external evaluations of the Gillett Square project. The aim is to examine citizens' experiences of the square, identify the needs of different user groups and make new recommendations for the further development of the square, as well as to investigate the social value Gillett Square creates.

The latest 2021 poll shows that 69% of respondents agreed that participating in activities at Gillett Square makes them feel good about life, 36% believe that participating in activities at Gillett Square has had a positive impact on their mental health and emotional well-being, and 55% agreed that spending time at Gillett Square makes them feel less lonely and isolated.⁶¹

The evaluations of the site draw on both qualitative data in the form of interviews and quantitative data in the form of questionnaires. What is special about the evaluation of social impact is that the study capitalises social impact. In other words, social value is converted into economic value, and the value created by safety is quantified. This is done using a social value calculator developed by HACT, which measures well-being impact per year in pounds. In doing so, the evaluation creates a broad understanding of the value the space creates, and by expressing the value creation in economic terms, a common denominator from which to make decisions is gained.

RICHARD SENNETT ON DISORDER IN URBAN SPACE

Since the 1970s and the publication of his book 'The Uses of Disorder', Richard Sennett has been criticising the overdetermined and function-locked city. A city that does not provide a framework for improvisation in urban spaces or spontaneous activities, and a city that does not promote social interactions across differences.

Sennett emphasises the need for urban spaces without zones that act as a framework for varied, changing use of urban space. This creates the basis for a multitude of simultaneous events and the opportunity for users of urban spaces to determine the content and activities of urban spaces themselves. Creative activities help individuals grow as people and have the potential to make them more tolerant of diversity.⁶³

It's a view of the city that contrasts with the segregation of cities we see today, where neighbourhoods are increasingly divided into enclaves with a homogenous mix of residents. Therefore, Sennett emphasises the need to work with the boundaries between urban areas, neighbourhoods and districts. For it is at the periphery, at the border, that differences are highlighted. This requires porous transitions between neighbourhoods where different communities can meet – and boundaries between areas where different groups interact.

2. CASES

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Holistic perspective

The '100 Public Spaces' programme and 'Making Space in Dalston' are good examples of strategies that, from a city and neighbourhood perspective, address the need for new urban spaces and improvements to existing ones from a holistic perspective.

The development of Gillett Square is an example of how identifying and enhancing existing social, cultural and physical potential creates synergies and added value for urban areas as a whole. The development addresses the needs of local communities and existing cultural life for social expression and activity through strong involvement in the project and further development of the space.

Partnership for the square

A committed partnership drives development and supports continued cultural and social life. The Gillett Square Partnership is an ongoing partnership involving the local community.

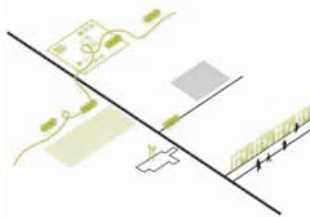
A breeding ground for tolerance

Host spaces, facilitating temporary and diverse use of urban space, address the district's need for social and cultural meeting places. Host spaces are open spaces that can be freely occupied by different users and communities at different times of the day. They strengthen social life and social encounters across differences and foster tolerance between different user groups. By intensifying urban life and creating eyes on the street, host spaces address the need for safety as an important parameter of mental well-being.

Evaluation of value creation

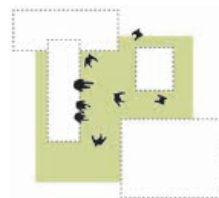
Evaluation and feedback – in the further development of urban spaces and a better understanding of social value creation using qualitative, quantitative and capitalised data.

HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE



for the development of design measures and programmes

HOST SPACE



which may be freely occupied by different user groups

2. CASES



Photo: Anna Shpuntova.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

THE CO-CREATING URBAN SPACE

There has long been a recognition that buildings alone do not create a vibrant and inclusive urban environment, and that we therefore need to involve the people who already live in and use the areas in the development of urban spaces.

Central to many of these participatory urban development projects is the concept of "community" and the notion that if we involve local communities in the development process, we create an inclusive and "socially sustainable" urban space.

But the very nature of "communities" is not only inclusive. Communities work by setting a boundary between 'us' and 'them', between 'self' and 'environment'. In this way, working with communities in the development of urban spaces can also result in the territorialisation of the city, e.g. in the form of gentrification or gendered urban spaces that address young boys' norms for use of outdoor spaces rather than girls'. In other words, a focus on communities can result in an exclusionary urban space.

The question then becomes, how do we create public urban spaces (and buildings) where it is easy for people to participate and become part of something shared?

An experiment: Social cohesion or increased stigma?

I am the head of social initiatives in the Taastrupgaard non-profit housing area. Taastrupgaard is a so-called conversion area, and the housing organisation AKB Taastrup, along with KAB and Høje Tåstrup Municipality, is in the process of a comprehensive physical transformation of the residential area into a new urban district.

With the construction of a new school, the creation of new infrastructure and the erection of private housing, the aim is to attract so-called "socioeconomically advantaged" people to the area and create a "socially mixed" neighbourhood.

The idea, in short, is that the influx of new citizens to the area will give both the residential area and the people who live there

today a "social boost". However, there is no empirical evidence for this idea. As a strategy to bring a social mix and a boost, the whole transformation process can thus be said to be a social experiment.

International experience shows that there is a risk that people already living in Taastrupgaard will experience further stigmatisation and alienation in the place where they live. This could manifest itself in increased fencing, the erection of walls, exclusionary places and activities, and the feeling that other people are perceiving you as a disruptor of safety or different. That's why, in our social projects, we work to create places and activities that open up existing communities and create new encounters between existing and future residents.

The place already has a social life

An important place in the future urban district will be what is referred to as "The Kiss" in the development plan. The Kiss is the area where privately held and non-profit housing will meet. A key issue is how to integrate the two areas as a coherent neighbourhood in the future and how to create urban spaces and opportunities to meet across them.

Historically, the area has been characterised by a lack of security, as this is where groups of young people hang out, including those who are or have been part of a criminal milieu. Among them, there is a strong community narrative about Taastrupgaard in relation to its surroundings.

In general, The Kiss is an area with many small and large defined communities: the Genbrugsgården Recycling Association, the Havefællesskabet 'Garden Community' (surrounded by wire fences and a "No Entry" sign), the Football Association, the Somalia Club, an informal girls' hang-out, a photo school, as well as others.



by
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Anthropologist

Head of social Initiatives
AKB Taastrupgaard

THE THINK TANK THINKS

Each community is aware of each other's existence, but they have nothing to do with each other. At the same time, the area also serves as a meeting place for former and current residents and for young people just hanging out. So, The Kiss already has an intense and visible social dynamic. In addition, there are the dynamics that are less visible and also part of the place: residents who park in the area, the people who choose not to walk through the area, etc.

"Communities work by setting a boundary between 'us' and 'them', between 'self' and 'environment'."

The projects in The Kiss aim to make hidden resources visible as well. Here, we are working with research professor Morten Nielsen from the National Museum of Denmark, who is setting up a research centre for social urban models based on the thesis that people themselves often have a solution to the problems that exist in urban spaces if only we examine them and bring the solutions forward.

From community of interest to community of action

Places can be said to have a social architecture consisting of communities, territories, encounters, conflicts, contexts and boundaries. These are the dynamics we work with at Taastrupgaard when developing places and activities.

Specifically in The Kiss, the approach has been first to map the immediate dynamics of the area through fieldwork and then to initiate activities with different groups in the area, all aimed at exploring, supporting and challenging the existing social architecture. Challenges are continuously how to work with involvement without contributing to some particular groups taking ownership of the place.

One of the things we're testing is building what we call communities of action. That is, we engage individuals and groups in creating something concrete together in one place. In The Kiss, residents are working with artist and architect Gitte Juul to develop a baking pavilion that will accommodate different baking traditions while providing a setting for new encounters and the development of local products. Another model we will be working with is to create some physical space in the form of workshops where people can work on testing or producing together.

Products can be anything from garden furniture to signs. The point is that communities are established to create something together.

Urban space hosts facilitate co-creation

However, it is an essential experience that we still need to facilitate the urban space, the workshop, etc. to open up and invite in. At the citizen-driven cultural space INSP!

in Roskilde, where I am a board member, we work with social hosts and urban hosting. Here, young people in particular have the task of introducing, facilitating and building bridges between people who use the urban space and ensuring that it is possible for newcomers to participate in different ways.

Hosts welcome people and support individual users' needs and ideas and connect them to other users and communities. So, they may still be different social groups, but we're always linking them to something common.

For example, homeless shelters for young people have been set up on the former slaughterhouse grounds, and young people have been linked to a social host at INSP! who is responsible for integrating young people into some of the communities in the area. But not in such a way that they have to be part of something. There must also be room not to be. I could imagine that we would develop urban hosting in Taastrupgaard as a method to work with social cohesion and socially inclusive urban spaces.

Start by creating the social life, not the buildings

What I advocate is working as much on social architecture as on physical architecture. Places are created by social relationships, and it is important to work with them while developing the urban space. What we often see is that large sums of money are allocated to buildings and physical infrastructure, while social architecture is either not worked on at all or in some cases only temporarily.

In my experience, if we want to create an urban space that is socially inclusive, we don't just work with the immediate communities and include them but work with the social architecture of the place and continuously nurture the framework for it to be easy to participate, meet others and create something that is shared.



Baking day in Taastrupgaard.
Photo: Katrine Winther.

An aerial photograph of an urban garden courtyard. A central stone path leads from the foreground towards the background. The courtyard is lush with greenery, including various trees and shrubs. On the left, there are multi-story residential buildings with balconies. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a well-maintained and vibrant community space.

URBAN GARDENS

**URBAN COMMONS RETHINK
CO-CREATION AND STRENGTHEN
SOCIAL WELL-BEING**



Still from the film 'The Urban Gardens of Vapnagaard' by Anders Find, Projektland, for the Centre for Social Housing Development (CFBU) 2017.

CASE

URBAN GARDENS

IN VAPNAGAARD

URBAN COMMONS RETHINK CO-CREATION AND STRENGTHEN SOCIAL WELL-BEING

Urban gardening is the paradigmatic example of the urban commons phenomenon. Urban commons are not just places that facilitate communities but must be understood as co-creation processes where citizens share responsibility for, for example, urban spaces. Urban commons are a way of thinking about communities and co-creation. The urban gardens in Vapnagaard are a concrete example of how co-creation can foster social relations between residents in a residential area to counter loneliness and segregation.

WHAT?

Where

The non-profit housing development Vapnagaard, Helsingør

Architect/landscape architect

Bo&Gro and the residents

Client

The non-profit housing secretariat in Elsinore and the non-profit association "Haver til Maver" ("Gardens to Bellies")

When

2016

Interventions

- Implementation of two urban gardens
- Foundation of an urban garden association

WHY?

In Vapnagaard, two urban gardens were established in 2016 to improve neighbourliness and foster new social connections across the ethnic groups in the residential area. Vapnagaard is a non-profit housing estate with around 4,000 residents, 32% of whom are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. The area is rich in social activities, but residents typically met with other residents similar to themselves in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and education.⁶⁴

In many places, urban gardens are used as a tool to strengthen local networks and communities. And international research shows, among other things, that urban gardens are a relatively well-tested tool for improving neighbourliness in residential areas.⁶⁵

At the more general level, a 2015 survey of neighbourliness in marginalised residential areas by the Centre for Social Housing Development found that just 23% of residents in deprived neighbourhoods rated their neighbourhood as positive, compared to 75% of respondents nationally.⁶⁶ Loneliness is, generally and currently, a problem, with approx. one in eight (12.4%) Danes feeling signs of loneliness. Furthermore, a relatively high proportion of the unemployed (22.2%) and other people outside the labour market (28.2%) show signs of loneliness.⁶⁷ There is therefore good reason to focus on neighbourhoods and communities in vulnerable housing areas, in Denmark defined in terms of their residents' links to the labour market.



800 M DIAMETER

The diameter of 800 m represents a 20-minute journey from home to a destination and back again. Research shows that 20 minutes is the maximum amount of time people are willing to spend walking to meet their daily needs locally. Photo: Google Maps.



HESTENS BAKKE

TRELLEBORGHAVEN

HOW?

The historical roots of the urban gardens

Urban gardening is not a new phenomenon. In Denmark, we have a long tradition of allotments, dating back to 1884. The allotments were established as working-class gardens, where working-class families could get away from the dense inner city. But they also functioned as utility gardens, where families could grow supplements for their food supply, which was particularly important in times of crisis. In the US, the history of gardening also goes back to the austerity of the 1890s, when so-called potato gardens were planted on a large scale to stem hunger. Since then, the urban gardening movement has developed into grassroots movements worldwide. Movements that focus on sustainability, organics, healthy food, neighbourliness and social cohesion with urban and rooftop farms, courtyard gardens, roof gardens, pavement gardens and school gardens.

Share and cultivate the community

The urban gardens in Vapnagaard were established as part of Bo&Gro, a project that established urban gardens in three marginalised residential areas in Elsinore through activities focusing on gardening and food: Tibberuparken, Vapnagaard and Nøjsomhed. Bo&Gro was established as a collaboration between the social housing secretariat in Helsingør and the non-profit association "Haver til Maver". The project was supported by the Nordea Foundation.

The urban gardens in Vapnagaard have been established in close cooperation between the residents and Bo&Gro. Fundamentally, the idea is to bring residents together around a common interest in cultivating the soil and eventually reaping the rewards of the work. The residents cultivate the gardens together, and there are no individual plots or beds.

The residents themselves take part in the planning and establishment of the gardens, while Bo&Gro facilitates the process, helps the residents with construction and provides advice on the further operation and maintenance. Subsequently, the residents as local driving forces have continued to run the urban gardens through the Garden Association Trelhest.

Gardening contributes to a sense of community as well as both quality and enjoyment of life

An analysis of the social network formation around the urban gardens in Vapnagaard shows, among other things, that the urban gardens attract a mixed group of residents. Therefore, there is a good basis for building bridges between different groups of residents. Many of the new relationships between regular participants in the urban gardens cut across ethnic groups.⁶⁸

"We can see that the gardens are a great platform for creating strong new relationships between the users of the gardens. Almost everyone knows each other internally in the gardens, and most of the relationships that have been created are strong relationships that have great value for both the individual and the neighbourhood." - Søren Brink Larsen, consultant at CFBU.⁶⁹

In general, international research suggests that gardening can improve physical, mental and social health in general, which from a long-term perspective can alleviate and prevent various health problems.⁷⁰ Studies from the US, Europe, Asia and the Middle East show that participation in gardening reduces both depression and anxiety symptoms, as well as body weight, and that gardening contributes to a sense of community, quality of life and enjoyment.⁷¹

Urban commons – more than urban gardens

Urban gardens are the paradigmatic example of the 'urban commons' phenomenon, which encompasses much more than gardens, however. Historically, the concept has its roots in 'commons': common grazing areas for animals that belonged to the village community, as we know them from Amager Commons ("Amager Fælled") in Copenhagen, now converted into recreational areas.

The concept of 'urban commons' has attracted renewed interest in urban planning and research for a number of years. Roughly speaking, the term covers new ways of creating, owning and sharing the city together. And it is used specifically to refer to places in the city that are collectively managed in a way that crosses the clear boundary between the public and private.

The 'urban commons' concept is based on the idea that urban spaces should be accessible to, and actively used or exploited by, urban communities. Both to produce food but also to provide local and citizen-driven cultural activities, for example, as at El Campo De Cebada in Madrid, where a group of architects and local citizens transformed an abandoned plot into a public urban space and cultural forum.

Urban commons are an alternative to formal public planning and allow citizens to directly influence their local area together.



2. CASES



Still from the film 'The Urban Gardens of Vapnagaard' by Anders Find, Projektland, for the Centre for Social Housing Development (CFBU) 2017.

Local drivers are essential

Urban commons are created and managed by different forms of citizen collaboration, involving communities, local authorities, businesses and local non-profit organisations. In this way, urban space becomes a platform that is used and optimised by citizens from different backgrounds and social strata.

Urban commons are not just places that facilitate communities but must be understood as processes reflected through the concept of 'commoning', which refers to co-creation activities and shared management of places in the city. To be sustainable, i.e. for urban commons to sustain themselves, local driving forces are essential. Therefore, such local driving forces can be supported both by municipalities and privately by housing associations, owners and landlords.

Empowerment

Resident-led activities such as urban gardens and urban commons can promote empowerment in urban development. Empowerment is about creating opportunities to influence policy frameworks and strengthening conditions for participation. This requires critical reflection on how structures affect underprivileged groups and why emphasis is placed on improving their agency, i.e. taking control over and taking responsibility for their own lives, including in relation to their well-being and engaging with communities. When citizens jointly organise and lead activities, and thus have a say in the activities, they become better coordinators and at leading.⁷²

How do we ensure open communities?

An important point, as Katrine Winther, member of the think tank, emphasises, is that community is not necessarily a universal good. Communities also exclude, territorialise and create boundaries. A crucial point of attention is who is included in the co-creation and community. The pressing question becomes how to ensure open communities and urban commons that are able to build bridges between people.

"Associational Denmark" as a catalyst

Karin K. Peschardt and Bodil V. Henningsen from the think tank further highlight that the voluntary sector is a powerful tool for promoting well-being and generating strong communities if we give voluntary activities more space and bring them to the fore. This points to the Danish tradition of associations as a possible catalyst for new communities, co-creation, new urban commons. (A Danish "forening" or in English association is a democratic, organization based on, and run by, membership with a common theme, goal, or activity. Many people form a network outside work and school in these associations. Almost all sports clubs, leisure activities, interest-based clubs and societies, and many of the volunteer organisations in Denmark work this way.) How can "Associational Denmark", which already makes a major contribution to society, be brought out of the premises of associations and given an even more prominent place in the cityscape and the development of urban spaces? Perhaps particularly in socially vulnerable areas where health inequalities are distinct.

BOURDIEU ON DISTINCTIONS

In Bourdieu's view of society, everyday actions are organised according to our dispositions of taste. Dispositions act as a tuner for our view of the world and as a catalyst for certain actions. In other words, our social position indicates a tendency to do things a certain way. Bourdieu refers to this tendency as habitus.

According to Bourdieu, tastes and preferences are absorbed into the social field, and the safe is imitated: what is already classified as good taste. In this context, Bourdieu operates with the concept of distinction, which denotes a tendency to separate oneself from certain lifestyles or social segments. Distinction is based on a recognised difference in value among a segment, where it is confirmed that something is better than something else. Therefore, habitus can provide a common framework of understanding, where a community is created from a consensus on something, while at the same time trying to distance themselves from other social groups.⁷⁴

A pressing question is how to overcome this distinction when working with co-creation activities and urban spaces. How do we ensure inclusive communities that counter social exclusion, especially of vulnerable groups, in our society?



2. CASES

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Common-creation

Urban commons can enhance social well-being by promoting diverse communities in urban spaces and contributing to empowerment. Focus is on co-creation activities, rather than ready-made community frameworks.

It is important to focus on openness and the ability to broaden the scope of who can participate in the community. As an approach, urban commons rely on strong local driving forces to facilitate activities.

The urban gardens concretely demonstrate how urban commons, through citizen-driven communities, have the potential to transcend barriers between ethnic groups in residential areas. Urban gardens can promote both the social well-being of individuals and the social cohesion of an area.

Urban gardens demonstrate the value of neighbourhood action based on interests that cut across different groups of residents. It would be useful to think of other neighbourhood interventions that build on other communities of interest: Choose interests that are broad and that many people can participate in.

Communities of interest

Gardening can promote physical, mental and social health and contributes to a sense of community, as well as both quality and enjoyment of life.⁷³ Resident-run urban gardens or other gardening offerings such as utility and allotment gardens can be usefully implemented in urban areas and residential blocks where residents do not have their own gardens. Specifically, work can be done to identify and establish other types of communities of interest that, individually or collectively, promote social, mental and physical well-being.

CITIZEN-DRIVEN ACTIVITIES



around common interests

OPEN COMMUNITIES



which extend the framework for who can participate



2. CASES

"I've come to feel that I've sort of moved home now. The garden has done that, and so have all the people I've got to know. I've made friends and things like that that I didn't have before at all. And that's worth its weight in gold."

Helle Larsen, garden participant. From the film "The Urban Gardens of Vapnagaard".⁷⁵



Still from the film 'The Urban Gardens of Vapnagaard' by Anders Find, Projektland, for the Centre for Social Housing Development (CFBU) 2017.



The canopy in Brooklyn Bridge Park is an example of the transformation of a disused industrial site, which can be used for various activities and temporary measures such as basketball, yoga, reading, outdoor teaching, food markets and flea markets. Photo: Rasmus Strebøl.

2. CASES



THE THINK TANK THINKS

THE HEALTHY CITIES OF THE FUTURE

Urban development is about quality of life, about people and how the physical environment affects our daily lives. Urban planning has traditionally been about the physical structures. Focus is on optimising the use of space, on the internal organisation of buildings and their external expression.

There is currently no distinct practice of focusing on the links between the functions of the city, their location and the life it generates. The interactions and relationships between building and landscape define a framework that shapes and influences our behaviour and well-being. It is here that experiences, encounters, connections and communities are created and emerge as fundamental elements of our lives.

Urban development of the future

Today, we have become adept at building environmentally sustainable housing, and the next natural step must be to couple this with socially sustainable cities. The cities of the future must be built around human factors and designed for human life, behaviour and well-being. The cities of the future must be built around well-being and social communities, at the level of urban development, neighbourhoods and buildings, and include opportunities for citizens to engage and form voluntary communities of interest across boundaries.

Facilities for sport, leisure and culture, our recreational areas, meeting places and communities, etc. are often among the last areas to be addressed in urban development, making optimal areas, locations, connections and synergies very difficult to establish. But imagine if the approach was reversed and the main focus was not on the buildings but instead on the urban environment and on the social and health qualities – and based on these objectives it was defined how buildings and spaces were to be organised.

Cities for people

In order to work successfully on the development of healthy and socially sustainable cities, new approaches need to be explored and developed that integrate health, well-being, movement, sports associations and communities even more into urban development processes and

that create close, synchronised and equal co-operation practices between administrations and disciplines.

In a partnership with Copenhagen Municipality, DGI Greater Copenhagen (a sports association) has focused on developing a practice around master plans, where areas for public sports and leisure facilities and facilities for recreational, active and social functions are integrated with the "general urban development" of housing, schools, etc. This is done on the basis of analyses of demographics, sports and exercise habits and trends.

Interdisciplinary cooperation – common vision

In concrete terms, the cooperation is based on four different local areas in Copenhagen. For each area, multidisciplinary working groups were set up across administrations, involving local actors such as sports associations, schools, institutions, local committees and area renewal, housing and development companies, as well as local users and citizens. This provided a broad insight into many of the different needs, challenges and aspirations that exist in each of the areas.

Based on input, dialogue and workshops with all stakeholders, a programme will be drawn up in which all the different municipal, private, public and voluntary actors can see themselves. The programme describes a common vision and the values



by
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THE THINK TANK THINKS

and approaches that will guide the process going forward. The programme thus serves as an important steering tool in the process, focusing on the big picture and what can be achieved by standing together and having a common direction.

Mapping and analysis of social values and qualities

People must live, and lives must be lived in the buildings and urban areas developed. Therefore, the local situation and needs must be taken as a starting point, and analyses of the local area's school

provides an overview of where and which activities and facilities are missing, and at the same time it can be used to predict expected sports mobility within a district and between districts.

Development strategy

For each local area, a development strategy is drawn up, identifying possible future scenarios. The scenarios carefully coordinate, and aim to create links between, the various interests, future and ongoing construction projects and future development opportunities.

- Identify potential future building areas and indicate possible main approaches, themes and directions.
- Add new programmes and activities to areas, opening up new uses, new users and new encounters between people.
- Co-ordinate different programme areas such as parking, climate adaptation, sports, meeting places and recreational qualities.

Healthy cities of the future

Creating the healthy cities of the future requires urban development to focus much more on the connections and relationships between human life and activity and physical spaces and structures. Movement, mental health, associations and communities are included as central themes in the planning phase so that the necessary political decisions can be taken as a basis for further concretisation of activities, areas and functions.

This requires that we insist on seeing and working with the issues from a broader perspective, and that we act as part of a larger reality where city, housing, work, leisure, health, climate, sustainability and well-being are interrelated factors, and that there is close cooperation across administrations and disciplines.

Only when we master this can we develop the socially sustainable cities of the future.

"A basic premise for the healthy cities of the future must be to ensure that all people and social groups are considered, mixed and included, and that spaces and settings are created for everyone in the city – including those who differ from ourselves."

and institutional offerings, sports facilities, meeting places, cultural centres, outdoor recreational facilities, as well as their development needs and potentials, must be carried out.

Which sports facilities are located where and what is accessibility like in relation to which age groups? What covers which areas? What facilities are missing and where? Are there facilities whose use could be optimised by new uses or different organisation? Is there potential in the local area to create and ensure implementation and ownership?

The demographic sports compass

A basic premise for the healthy cities of the future must be to ensure that all people and social groups are considered, mixed and included, and that spaces and settings are created for everyone in the city – including those who differ from ourselves. There must be a link between the physical structures, the inhabitants of an area and the public and municipal services available.

For example, for younger children aged 3–9, it is essential that local clubs are available for motor skills, gymnastics, football and swimming. As you get older, your range of movement expands and it is possible to take advantage of activities in other urban or local areas.

One tool we developed for the partnership was a "demographic sports compass", which gave an overview of what offerings and facilities are distributed by age and availability in a given district. The tool

The development strategies point to a number of approaches that strengthen both mental and physical cohesion by creating new links and relationships between physical structures and lived life, for example:

- Create and build organisation and ownership around construction and commissioning of new buildings and premises.



Deck and stage in Frederikshavn pedestrian street. Photo: Trine Sofie Dusine Schmidt Nielsen.

THE THINK TANK THINKS

CONCEPTS AND BIAS

– HEALTH AS A POLYPHONY OF ZEST FOR LIFE AND DISCIPLINING

As a concept, health has a number of inherent paradoxes, straddling asceticism, zest for life, absence of disease, self-discipline and lots of good advice for prevention. Impossible to balance pragmatically with Danish consensus in the cacophonous noise.

Instead, try to think of the difficult dilemmas of urban health planning as a polyphony, as a structured multiplicity of necessary harmonies – much like a master of music composes a fugue. Here, paradoxes become counterpoints, a collection of counter-voices and counter-movements that can be united in a whole where the contrasts are taken seriously and become reflections.

Thus, a fugue with two themes and basso continuo to inspire decision-makers to approach health issues with several voices at once – much like the thematic treatment in a polyphonic piece of music.

Theme 1 – Danish Health Health as absence of disease

The Danish health care system is characterised by a negative conceptual thinking that focuses on what health is not: i.e. that you are healthy when you are not sick. In itself a sympathetic way of thinking, which with a cool, minimalist distance and focus on free choice leaves it to the individual to take responsibility for their health.

The problem, however, is that Danes smoke and drink and sit on the sofa so much that the absence of illness alone cannot be used as a definition of health, which is why some of the focus has shifted to prevention.

The famous "KRAM" factors ("DSAE" – diet, smoking, alcohol and exercise) have therefore become central to the understanding of health – still based on the absence of disease. Diet, smoking, alcohol and exercise have now become a kind of creed for health thinking in Denmark.

Physical and mental discipline has made health a duty for the population

Danes are already characterised by a thoroughly Protestant work ethic, which has made the nation rich and prosperous for generations. And this utilitarian triumph also reflects the view of health.

Just as the duties of paid work involve deprivation and sacrifice, the work of keeping oneself and one's surroundings healthy is characterised by duty, asceticism and self-control. The problem is that the yoke of paid work is matched by the breathing space of leisure, while health obligations cannot be waived at any time and become a permanent mental strain.

In many health promotion projects, there is even a strong focus on personal representation, largely due to the aforementioned demands of self-discipline and duty, where a successful "health outcome" must be showcased in all its glory on social media.



by
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Conductor

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"Polyphony is controlled diversity, and each theme must have its place in the fugue, both the flamboyant motifs and the dull backdrops that form harmony and confrontation in turn."

THE THINK TANK THINKS

For some, the demand for permanent, attractive health achievements is a successful tool in the self-promotion of late modern man, for others an unavoidable fall from grace.

Urban development should be very aware of this disciplinary paradox.

Theme 2 – WHO and the Mediterranean lifestyle: vitality and tolerance

The WHO definitions of health contain a very important concept: well-being, which should be introduced immediately in Denmark.

It would be an important concept renewal and significant improvement if the Danish health care system could accommodate self-realisation and zest for life in its approach to the terms.

Moreover, medical authorities could incorporate a solidarity with the citizen's life choices rather than a competition to look the best in one's performance of health.

This theme also includes the very attractive Mediterranean lifestyle, where both food and lifestyle are characterised by high quality and discerning aesthetic choices. The archetype is life in the compressed Tuscan urban environment with piazzas, beautiful views and self-realisation. The conventions of the good life are age-old and still seem very attractive.

More dynamic urban environments can be found in the Spanish rambra, with its high pulse, room for walking, room for playing, parks, street food and community.

And the strongest symbol of the Mediterranean way of life is that alcohol is considered desirable, even healthy, in moderation – a considerate drinking culture that a healthy city in Denmark should embrace.

Everyday life as a basso continuo

The rhythm and trivialities of everyday life are necessary as a base for the two contrasting themes of discipline and zest for life. Ultimately, the repetitive, daily enjoyment of the city must be able to bear both the unspectacular and the accommodating. Maybe even the cosy?

A critical concept of cosiness (In Danish: Hygge) might even be included in the evaluation criteria for a healthy city – is a location cosy? Are you encouraged to create your own cosiness wherever you happen to be?

Coda

Recommendations for urban planners, architects and decision-makers:

- Be aware of when you are demanding discipline from your neighbour, and especially what kind of discipline. The implicit disciplinary requirements should come to light.
- Talk more about well-being, self-realisation and desire in the urban space, and find attractive role models.
- Revitalise cosiness as a solution to noisy and uncomfortable elements – and help the health debate develop positive concepts in describing attractive solutions.
- Keep everyday life as the end goal in planning, and allow the paths to emerge.

Polyphony is controlled diversity, and each theme must have its place in the fugue, both the flamboyant motifs and the dull backdrops that form harmony and confrontation in turn. Polyphony as a planning strategy can thus challenge conventional planning terms and allow for attractive unpredictable scenarios and outcomes.

For example, listen to J.S. Bach: Goldberg Variations, BWV 988, Variation No. 30.

First a small-talking basic theme with many notes and soon after, an elegant bell-like counter-voice, known by Danes as the children's song "Bro, bro brille". Throughout the movement, you hear the two themes intertwined in many different ways. It's all supported by a simple base of long notes in the bass.



*Aria Da Capo e
Fine*

3. TOOLS



3

TOOLS

SUM UP FROM CASES

NEEDS-BASED



urban development

20-minute city

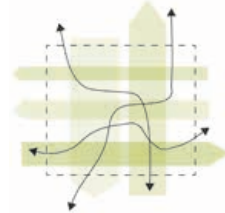
DIVERSITY



both in relation to housing types and ownership types

20-minute city

ACTIVE MOVEMENT



increased and safe movement in the neighbourhoods

Superblocks

MOBILITY STRATEGY



which integrates urban strategies

Superblocks

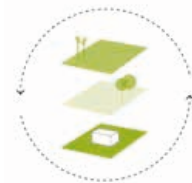
SOCIAL INTERACTION



positive effect and increased well-being for local residents and users

Superblocks

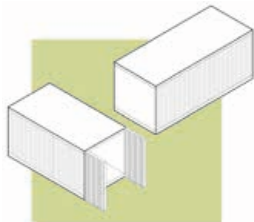
REVERSIBLE STRATEGY



creates opportunity for experiments

Superblocks

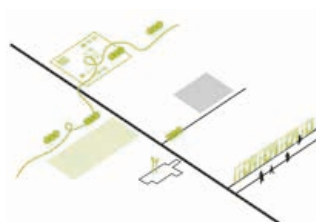
TEMPORARY INITIATIVES



create the opportunity for reprogramming of the site

Gillett Square

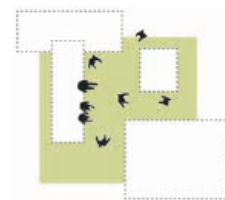
HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE



for the development of design interventions and programmes

Gillett Square

HOST SPACE



which may be freely occupied by different user groups

Gillett Square

THE URBAN GARDENS



builds bridges between resident groups

Vapnagaard Urban Gardens

CITIZEN-DRIVEN ACTIVITIES



around common interests

Vapnagaard Urban Gardens

OPEN COMMUNITIES



which extend the framework for who can participate

Vapnagaard Urban Gardens

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY, HOLISTIC AND STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOL

The involvement of the interdisciplinary think tank has made it clear that a multitude of perspectives must be considered in the development of the urban health culture of the future: We need to balance agendas across sectors, disciplines and diverse but sometimes conflicting needs. Today, much thinking and development takes place in separate professional environments, but there is a need to think across disciplines. A holistic approach to planning must be based on a broad interdisciplinary foundation.

This requires a new mindset, new tools and a methodology that facilitates collaboration and ensures a single coherent perspective across scales and needs. In other words, an integrated approach as a basis for joint interventions. We address this by working with a multidisciplinary, holistic and strategic planning tool.

A catalogue of ideas and inspiration

The tools are a catalogue of ideas and inspiration, aiming to put well-being on the agenda and put initiatives to work. They are a synthesis of the experiences of the think tank members, the analysis of cases and the ongoing knowledge gathering.

The tools are aimed at policy makers, planners, developers, housing associations and advisors and address the strategic work and specific projects. They have different areas of focus and prerequisites and must always be adapted to the local context and concrete needs.

We hope they will inspire a new interdisciplinary and holistic practice across scales and needs that can be the starting point for new interdisciplinary pilot projects. Projects that can contribute new knowledge on the impact and added value of addressing multiple themes such as well-being, climate adaptation and sustainability at the same time. The knowledge we need to secure the urban health culture of the future.

"In other words, set explicit requirements so that well-being becomes a shared responsibility of developers and consultants."

THINK TANK

+

KNOWLEDGE
GATHERING

+

CASES

↓

TOOLS

3. TOOLS



POLYPHONIC PLANNING

In this phase, Juul Frost Architects have developed a new and operational method for mapping, securing and developing health-promoting environments in the city, landscape and urban space. The strategic approach contributes to providing municipalities, developers and advisors with an evidence-based basis for planning.

The methodology is based on holistic assessment of social, mental and physical needs. It is based on facts from the Health Profile etc. for the specific urban area and combines these with a physical mapping of the identity of the place, functional mix, mobility etc. at the levels of the city, the neighbourhood and the urban space. Based on the mapping, the tools are used to develop targeted initiatives and solutions in planning strategies, city and district plans, local plans, etc.

Seek inspiration in music

Planning through change is essential. It is therefore substantial to bring value-oriented potential planning back to the fore. An open planning tool that can continuously incorporate the changes that take place. We seek inspiration in interdisciplinarity, philosophy and music.

"As a narrative model, the musical piece has considerably more in common with architecture and landscape description than linear literary models." – Peter Hanke, Byens rum 1, Det fremmede i det kendte

As Peter Hanke points out – with inspiration from music – interventions can be planned in a more open process, like a polyphony: a managed diversity, where each theme must have its place. "It's about looking at the difficult dilemmas of urban health planning as a plurality of voices, as a structured plurality with necessary harmonious interventions."⁷⁶

Synchronous, polyphonic and changeable

The approach can therefore be used to strengthen the synchronous and balanced work with a multitude of social, physical and mental needs. In this way, the strategy will be coloured by the specific place. In some places, there will be a need to work specifically on community and community creation, while in others active living and green mental breathing spaces will be the prominent themes.

The polyphony points to the possibility of planning with different pulses, where a given area is developed with different time horizons, with the areas facing immediate development are planned to a greater extent than the areas with a longer time horizon.⁷⁷

Thus, the strategy contains the capacity for change with changing demands, values and needs, as John Pløger highlights. As he writes, life is "life stages, life-shaping and changing values and preferences, and therefore 'the way we thrive' will also change."⁷⁸

A polyphonic approach can thus challenge conventional planning paradigms and allow for attractive, unpredictable scenarios and outcomes.⁷⁹

WHERE CAN IT WORK

For municipalities and municipal planners, public and private developers, council housing companies, decision-makers, students, citizens/citizen groups.

planning strategy

guidelines

city and district plans

local plans

tender documents

health policy

ACROSS

3. TOOLS



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WELL-BEING

Health inequalities are increasing in Denmark. The area where you live and your socio-economic background have a big impact on your chances of good health, the length of your life and your well-being. Health inequalities are complex. School, housing and health policies as well as planning and the physical environment are important. The perception of inequality in the physical environment can also in itself affect our well-being – this is a challenge we need to address in the design of the physical environment.⁸⁰ It should be easy for everyone to translate good advice into behaviour and lifestyle.

CREATE INTERDISCIPLINARY VISIONS THAT COMMIT

If urban development is to contribute to well-being and quality of life, it requires shared visions as a basis for action. Visions that ensure shared goals, ambitions and commitment across municipal administrations, sectors, relevant actors and different disciplines. Start by creating shared visions that commit you to partnerships, and then make explicit demands. Ensure that pragmatism and demands do not stifle creativity in the visioning process, but rather let the vision define the requirements for development.

Set up multidisciplinary working groups that, together, can develop consistent visions for which all relevant actors feel ownership: Make sure that all actors are able to see themselves, their concrete goals and ambitions in the vision. This ensures commitment to and responsibility for the process and project.

Clarify the effects that can be achieved by having a common direction: can we together make more people cycle to work, ensure more equal access to leisure activities and/or reduce the number of lonely people in the neighbourhood?

3. TOOLS



3. TOOLS



MAKE EXPLICIT DEMANDS

Health-promoting planning requires a firm focus on the importance of both concrete and long-term interventions. And this requires that social, physical and mental well-being are all considered from the start.

The design of the city should make it easy to make healthy choices and invite movement, social encounters and mental recovery. In concrete terms, this means ensuring that everyone has access to opportunities, choices and services that promote well-being and quality of life. For example, recreational green spaces, safe pedestrian and bicycle connections, and healthy housing without noise and air pollution.

Several Danish municipalities have implicit requirements for health in policies, strategies, planning documents and competition programmes, but explicit goals and requirements are needed. Such explicit objectives and requirements would create greater awareness among all regarding the physical environment as the framework for new behaviours and lifestyles.

Make explicit and concrete demands and put health on the agenda. This gives planners a mandate to act which serves as a foundation for new planning practices.

Work closely across administrations to ensure coherence and synergy between policies, strategies and plans, and coordinate the work of administrations.

Well-being must be a norm in planning, not just an ambition.

FORM PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES AND INVITE MORE ACTORS IN

We need to work together on the healthy cities of the future from a broader perspective. We need to look at city, housing, work, leisure, climate, sustainability and social, physical and mental well-being as interlinked factors. This requires a new, closely synchronised and equal cooperation practice between administrations and disciplines as well as early involvement of relevant actors where everyone feels ownership and responsibility for the process.

Prioritise cooperation and appoint a cooperation officer who can organise cooperation across administrations, disciplines and actors on an ongoing basis. The person responsible can ensure close communication about the project. The municipality does not necessarily have to be the lead partner. Give responsibility to local organisations and associations and support the cooperation.

PLAN HOLISTICALLY ACROSS SCALES, NEEDS AND SECTORS

Work holistically and based on needs across scales to ensure coherent urban development and synergies between interventions. For example, an integrated mobility and urban space strategy across scales can ensure space for the creation of more recreational and green urban spaces. Implement temporary measures that allow for reversible planning, where new ideas and measures can be tested and evaluated before being implemented permanently.

Use the 20-minute city as a guideline for integrated urban development across scales, addressing the needs of the city and its citizens from a holistic perspective. Targeted urban development requires a basic needs assessment. At its core, this is about addressing the needs for:

- Different types of housing with varying ownership types at affordable prices, reflecting local housing needs, mixing all generations.
- Well-connected paths, streets and spaces that invite people to choose to walk, cycle or use public transport. Which promotes active transport and physical well-being.
- A network of multifunctional green spaces, parks, etc. that encourages active transport and movement and promotes physical and mental well-being.
- Allotments and urban gardens for rooftop farms and local food businesses that give people access to healthy food and can strengthen social networking.
- Space for small independent businesses that are central to local communities and can retain jobs locally.
- A place for all ages, where people can choose to live their whole lives because the needs and life stages of all age groups are catered for.



TAKE A NEEDS-BASED APPROACH TO ENSURE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL

For some, well-being and quality of life are linked to physical, mental and social well-being and a fit body. For others, it is linked to self-realisation and zest for life or moods, cosiness and atmosphere.⁸¹ The concept of health encompasses a number of inherent paradoxes, stretched between asceticism, zest for life, absence of illness, self-discipline and thousands of tips for prevention. Life is stages, life-shaping and changing values and preferences. Therefore, 'the way we thrive' also changes. This calls for adaptability in urban space and planning.

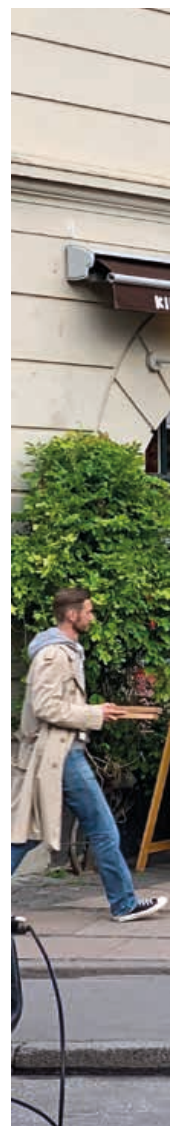
REMEMBER THE MENTAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

There is a need for a needs-based and coordinated approach, recognising the multiple, changing and sometimes conflicting needs that underpin different people's well-being and quality of life.

Seek inspiration for your planning in the polyphony of music, a controlled diversity where every theme has its place: both the flamboyant motifs and the dull backdrops of everyday life.⁸² This ensures room for the unforeseen and unpredictable.

There is great focus on movement, cycling and physical activity – and that is good. But if we are to plan for the complexity of factors that affect our well-being, we need to understand well-being holistically as bodily, social and mental. Health-promoting planning is about designing the environment to support everyday activities that create well-being.

Work holistically with social, physical and mental needs. No two places are the same. Use the needs assessment to adapt and target initiatives and interventions to the specific location. Work on the link between the environment and influential parameters in planning that can positively push our actions and behaviours. For example, social and mental needs can be addressed holistically: communities of action foster a sense of social belonging and invite participation in positive communities. This is also important for promoting mental health.⁸³





Kihoskh, Vesterbro, Copenhagen.
Photo: Trine Sofie Dusine Schmidt Nielsen.

CREATE SPACE FOR EVERYONE, THE MANY AND THE FEW

Our cities are home to a diversity of people. We are growing in numbers and in differences. A basic premise for the cities of the future is to ensure that all people and social groups are considered and involved. We need to create space for everyone in the city – including those who differ from ourselves.⁸⁴ This requires an approach that recognises that different population groups in different areas have different needs.

Work strategically with a demographic approach to the development of urban spaces and green areas, addressing needs across age, gender, education level, type of household, employment, culture, ethnicity, etc. This ensures coherence between the physical environment, residents' needs and public and municipal spaces and services.

Create a demographic compass to chart a course for development. This could be a sports, nature or community compass – or one that cuts across categories of needs. Map the availability of services and facilities in cities and urban areas according to citizens' needs. Use the compass to create dialogue on which urban spaces, green areas or facilities to create as well as where and what activities they should provide a setting for. For example, knowledge from the Health Profile can be used to identify demographic differences and target efforts. Among other things, the Health Profile shows a higher prevalence of signs of loneliness among early retirement pensioners (26.7%) and others outside the labour market (28.3%) than employed people (9.3%).⁸⁵



DEMAND CO-CREATION

We are fundamentally social beings. Loneliness and social isolation challenge our well-being, and social segregation erodes our empathy and tolerance for those who differ from ourselves. According to the Health Profile, about one in eight Danes experience signs of loneliness, and 9.1% of the adult population often experience being alone even though they mostly want to be with others.⁸⁶ Put social well-being and loneliness on the agenda. Several countries already have a minister for loneliness.⁸⁷

PRIORITISE THE SOCIAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE PLACE – NO ONE CAN CREATE COMMUNITIES ALONE

The social contexts we live in and our interpersonal interactions with other people make us who we are. No one can create communities alone. Participation and involvement in communities, belonging, trust in others and safety are all parameters of social well-being.

We need to prioritise the social initiatives – even after the physical project is completed. One way is to work with social hosts and urban hosts to facilitate communities as in INSP! in Roskilde. Create citizen-driven initiatives, such as cultural centres and cultural spaces, where young volunteers can be tasked with introducing and building bridges between people using the space and ensuring that everyone is invited into the community.⁸⁸ Repair cafés, citizen-run community centres, communities for exchanging things, meeting places for men and community dining are just some of the many examples of communities.⁸⁹

Continuously prepare the ground for communities to grow: Use social and urban hosts to bridge the gap between people using the buildings and urban spaces. Strong local driving forces or a strong volunteer organisation can secure the hosting. Hosts can welcome people and support users' needs and introduce them to other users – in other words, make it easy to join communities.

THE URBAN HEALTH CULTURE OF THE FUTURE

3. TOOLS



3. TOOLS



Helsingborg harbour front, Sweden.
Photo: Line Stybe Vestergaard.

CREATE COMMUNITIES OF ACTION AND STRENGTHEN CO-CREATION

Resident-driven communities around shared interests can bridge cultural and ethnic divides in residential areas, promoting social well-being and empowerment. This strengthens social cohesion and resilience. Initiating and sustaining activities requires strong local driving forces: Give local sports clubs, leisure activities, interest-based clubs and societies a place in city spaces as catalysts for strong, inclusive communities that address loneliness.⁹⁰

Realise innovative social interventions based on common interests and facilitate communities of action: places that engage individuals and groups in creating something concrete together, such as developing local products.⁹¹ What we see in Taastrup is genuine, something everyone can learn from: involve other professions in rethinking and facilitating social networks and co-creation. Examples might be an artisanal baking pavilion that brings people together around different baking traditions or more practical communities around growing gardens, making ceramics or repairing bikes. It is fundamental to ensure openness as to who can participate in the co-creation.

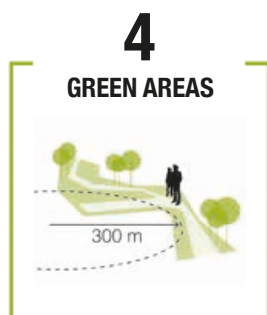
REINFORCE THE TEMPORARY AND CREATE SPACE FOR THE UNPLANNED

Spaces for various spontaneous activities that attract a diversity of people, strengthen social life and encounters across differences. According to Richard Sennett, encounters with "the strange" create a breeding ground for tolerance between different users of urban space. Create spaces that can be freely reprogrammed for temporary use and occupied by all for self-organised activities. Spontaneity intensifies urban life and gives ownership to the urban space, it creates eyes on the street and can increase safety, which strengthens social and mental well-being.

Temporary social interventions can be used to test new ideas and evaluate them before they are implemented permanently.

Create spaces that encourage temporary, spontaneous and diverse use of urban space. The meeting of different users is the prerequisite for tolerance. Address the city's need for complementary social and cultural venues. There must be urban spaces for everyone, but not all urban spaces must be for everyone.

Digital opportunities can foster communities.⁹² Apps can act as access keys to borrow equipment or as social platforms where users can connect with other people who want to join a game of petanque or go for a walk, for example. Use the digital layer and social media to support communities and new uses of urban spaces, such as running clubs or street football. Use apps as social connectors and access keys to, for example, lockers from which balls and table tennis bats can be borrowed.⁹³



USE URBAN NATURE AS AN ACTIVE RESOURCE

Green urban environments improve health, well-being and quality of life. Fatigue, negative stress and irritation increase the further you live from green spaces. Conversely, spending time in green spaces is linked to lower stress levels and higher well-being, regardless of gender, age or socio-economic background.⁹⁴ Improving access to good green spaces in disadvantaged neighbourhoods helps to address health inequalities.⁹⁵

PUT URBAN NATURE ON THE AGENDA

Use urban nature and green initiatives as an active resource in urban planning. Strengthen the green cultural heritage: parks, green belts and gardens can invite people to exercise, relax and socialise across social and cultural divides.

Urban nature creates added value: it contributes not only to well-being but also to climate-resilient cities, CO₂ storage, enhanced biodiversity, pleasant urban spaces and a good microclimate, as well as being able to counter noise and air pollution and increase housing prices.

Proximity affects the use of green spaces and their impact. Studies show that people who live less than 50 metres from the nearest green space visit it 3–4 times a week on average. If the distance is 1,000 metres, this number drops to just once a week.⁹⁶

Several Danish municipalities have explicit requirements for urban nature. For example, Aalborg Municipality has a policy for nature, parks and outdoor life, Roskilde Municipality has a clear focus on urban nature with detailed planting schemes in district plans, and Odense Municipality plants two trees for every one that is felled.

Green Cities has further developed the Green Standard 2.0⁹⁷, which can be used as inspiration in the preparation of policies and planning documents.

Make demands on the number of green square metres, the distance to green areas and the number of trees. Actively use biofactor to map green spaces and urban nature and put a value on their environmental performance. Supplement with functional and demographic mapping to ensure that areas complement each other in terms of offerings and functions. Specifically, work is needed to increase the number of parks and gardens, transform urban roofs into green oases and kitchen gardens, transform grey facades into green and vertical forests, transform asphalt courtyards into natural spaces, promote urban gardens and urban agriculture, and create networks of green corridors linking parts of the city.⁹⁸ Require new buildings to contribute to more urban nature.

3. TOOLS



3. TOOLS



WORK WITH LANDSCAPE-BASED INFRASTRUCTURE AND HYBRID SOLUTIONS

A battle for square metres is taking place in many Danish cities. New solutions are needed to bring more urban nature and biodiversity into our cities. The coordinated work across e.g. mobility and urban space can optimise traffic management and create space for new urban nature. This requires multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation. New solutions do not develop themselves: in Sweden, for example, the Swedish Transport Administration and SLU established a new professorship to strengthen future skills and knowledge in landscape-adapted infrastructure.

Work on landscape-based infrastructure, where considerations of landscape and mobility are integrated. Prioritise landscape-based mobility plans, integrating planting and urban nature into the construction of roadways, station areas, stops, etc. Create a network of multifunctional green spaces, parks, etc. that encourage active transport and movement.

Apply hybrid programming to green spaces so that they have more than one function and/or can be used differently throughout the day. For example, work with nature-based climate adaptation that functions as recreational green spaces, movement paths or school yards. Or integrate therapy gardens into existing parks and cemeteries where there is a setting for tranquillity. They can be used for both relaxation and unwinding after work and nature-based therapy sessions during the day. At the same time, therapy gardens contribute to new knowledge on the link between nature and health.

DESIGN SAFE, PEACEFUL AND WILD GREEN SPACES – ALL YEAR ROUND

The quality of parks and green spaces matters. Studies show that the combination of the experience characteristics 'safe', 'peaceful' and 'wild' has a strong influence on the health of urban residents.⁹⁹ In the Nordic countries, it's not always green, but grey, cold and wet for much of the year. The lack of daylight in winter affects our well-being. Therefore, green spaces need to be designed to promote activity and social life during the winter months.

Design green spaces with different spatial qualities to allow for mental recovery, social gatherings and physical activity, without running and playing interfering with areas for rest and contemplation. Design parks and green spaces 1) that are perceived as safe with space to relax. Good visibility, lighting and maintenance ensure that parks and green spaces are safe around the clock; 2) are peaceful and well-maintained, where people can experience tranquillity; 3) have free-growing vegetation that is perceived as wild – this can also enhance biodiversity; and 4) invite people to enjoy the outdoors and physical and social activity all year round.



PLAN FOR **EVERYDAY** **MOVEMENT** AND **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Physical inactivity is a growing problem in Denmark. The Health Profile shows that a total of 58.1% of the adult population fail to meet the WHO minimum recommendation for physical activity (at least 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week).

Physical activity is well documented to prevent a wide range of common diseases and conditions, including type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It is estimated that physically inactive people live, on average, approx. seven years less than physically active people.¹⁰⁰

3. TOOLS



3. TOOLS



MIX UP THE CITY AND PAVE THE WAY FOR AN ACTIVE MOVEMENT CULTURE

Plan for physical activity as a natural part of daily life.¹⁰¹ In other words: Focus on active living. Integrating movement into everyday activities makes it easier to be physically active.

Mixed use cities promote active living and provide a framework for active transport. This requires a break with the zoned city. Functions must be mixed to encourage new mobility habits and behaviours. We must ensure access and short distances from home to the destinations and functions we use and visit in our daily lives: shopping, school, doctor, workplaces, green spaces, public transport and more. This supports movement in everyday life but also the local sense of belonging. A person who cycles or walks to work/ their place of study and to do their everyday shopping usually achieves the recommended 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week.

Map functions, services and mobility to ensure accessibility to housing, shopping, jobs and leisure functions within 800 m in the city or individual district. That's the equivalent of a 20-minute round trip. Make a mixed city a requirement in master plans and district plans, and coordinate with mobility plans.

Plan attractive, safe and pedestrian-friendly local environments that invite people of all ages and abilities to choose active transport. Think across all age groups to promote lifelong movement: provide safe school routes for children and benches where senior citizens can take a rest. Promote cycling and establish cycle lanes, 15 km/h zones in city centres, cycle superhighways and charging points for electric bikes.

Use mobility plans to ensure access to public transport in planning. Ensure people only have to travel short distances to public transport linking urban areas to functions that cannot be located locally, such as hospitals, major educational institutions, etc.

CREATE LOCAL AND SOCIAL RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL, REGARDLESS OF BACKGROUND

Access to local recreational facilities and services plays a role in physical activity. Movement and physical activity can create social encounters and communities, helping to build new relationships and cohesion across society. Integrate sport and exercise facilities into their surroundings and make them local meeting places that reach out and invite participation in movement, sports, play, exercise – and community. Explore co-use and multi-use options. Can the car park be used as a playing field during the day?

Create more and better local facilities for recreation and movement such as parks, squares, school yards, playgrounds and sports facilities that invite more physical activity in the form of play, walking or exercise. Give as many age groups as possible – regardless of social and economic position – the opportunity to be physically active. Open up closed facilities to invite more people in, and work with multi-use, hybrid programming and overlap between activities to bring people together across generations.

Think beyond the needs of the athlete and look at local exercise needs and habits. There must be a link between the needs of residents and public recreational facilities and municipal sports facilities. Make the local situation the starting point. Map and analyse the area's school and institutional facilities, sports and exercise facilities, cultural centres and outdoor recreational facilities that invite planned and unplanned activity. Use master plans to link needs mapping and potential identification to development opportunities. Consider mobility. Children and the elderly have a smaller range of movement than young people and adults and need playgrounds and local facilities to be accessible within shorter distances.¹⁰²

Recreational opportunities on and along Christianshavn Canal, Copenhagen.
Photo: Astrid Maria Rasmussen.

6

INTEGRATE RESEARCH



BUILD ON THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE AND INVITE RESEARCHERS IN

There is plenty of knowledge to draw on! Knowledge that needs to be brought into the real world and can contribute to urban development with impact and effectiveness. The National Institute of Public Health prepares the Health Profile. The Centre for Intervention Research conducts research in health promotion and prevention. The Nature, Health and Design research group at the University of Copenhagen is investigating how health design and nature-based therapy can be applied in practice. And the Active Living unit at SDU is researching how integrating physical activity into everyday actions creates an active everyday life and healthier lifestyles. Research is always just a phone call away.

USE THEORY AS INSPIRATION FOR INNOVATION

The theories we have identified in this publication can inspire the development of new approaches to anchoring well-being and health planning and thereby change our behaviour in urban spaces. The theories come from different periods and academic paradigms, but all address either the social, the mental or the physical needs of human beings at all stages of their lives in relation to the city, space, social behaviour or bodily movement.

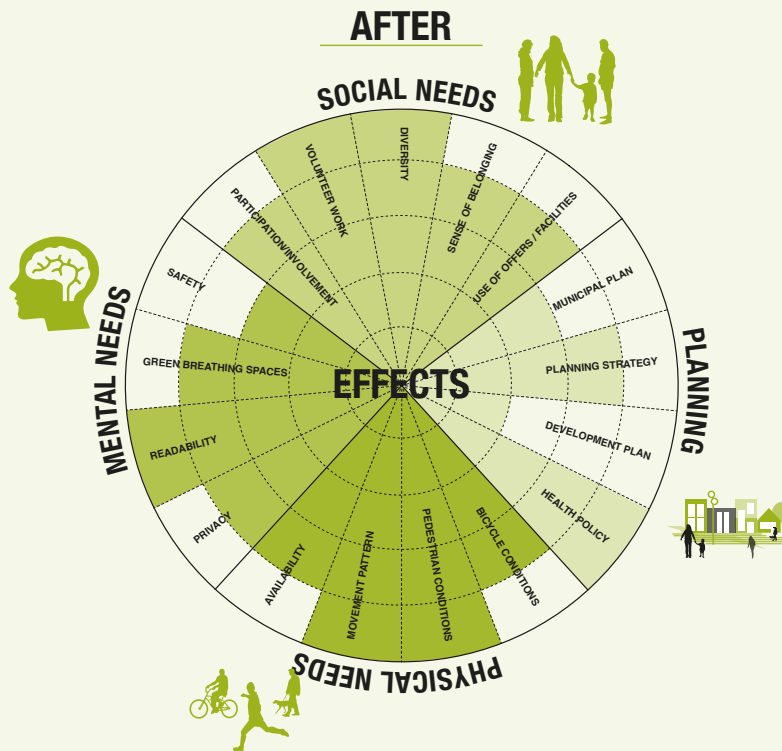
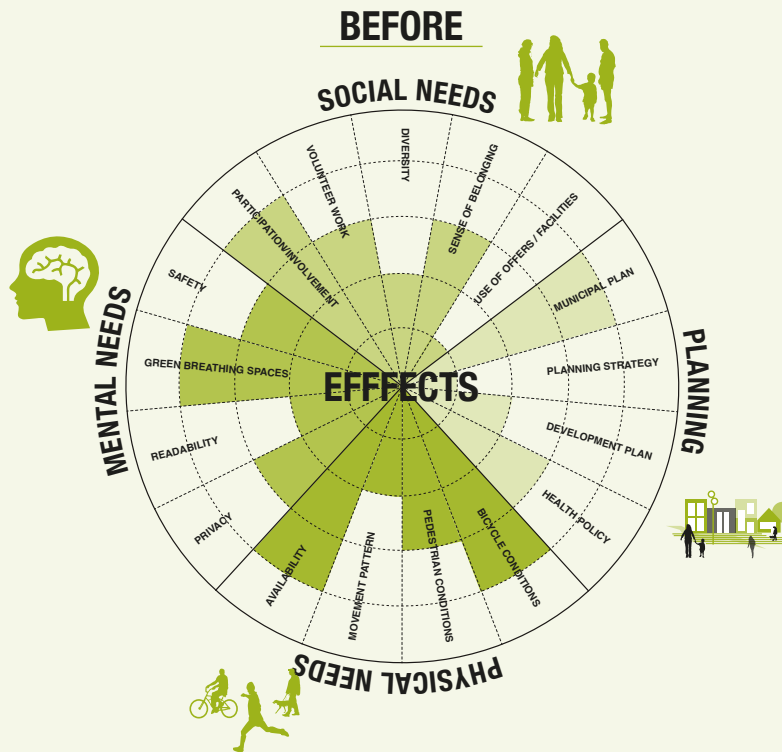
Use theory as a framework for analysis to understand challenges and to find inspiration for innovative solutions. Draw on theory from different disciplines and include conflicting viewpoints that can challenge and inspire the project's thinking and analysis. For example, get inspiration for a green and health-promoting urban development in Edward O. Wilson's theory of biophilic design, or explore Richard Sennett's ideas on how we socialise and participate in urban communities.



PULSPARKEN

In Juul Frost Architects' design of the Pulsparken integrated climate adaptation and activity park in Bolbro, researchers and students from SDU contributed to the process. Both in the design of the park's activity zones as well as the evaluation, where the park was assessed using the SOPARC method (System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities).

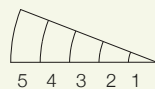
3. TOOLS



Compass: Evaluation with a starting point in factual studies (e.g. the Health Profile), scanning of plan documents or perceived quality in selected areas.

Evaluation on a scale from 1 to 5

- 5. Innovative
- 4. Optimal use
- 3. Above standard
- 2. Unchanged
- 1. Below standard



GET THE HARD FACTS ON THE TABLE TO ENSURE POLITICAL PRIORITISATION

Health profiles and safety surveys are just a part of the knowledge that can be drawn on in health promotion planning. Use these to raise awareness of challenges and potentials. What is the impact of the choices we make? Expand the health dialogue beyond the KRAM (Diet, Smoking, Alcohol and Exercise) factors.

Get the facts on the table. Draw on knowledge from relevant studies to raise awareness and political priority for both challenges and impact of initiatives. For example, the Danish Health Profile emphasises that increased physical activity can contribute to significant socio-economic savings, including reduced public costs for treatment and care.¹⁰³

INVITE RESEARCHERS IN – FROM START TO EVALUATION

Extensive research is being carried out on the influence of the physical environment on our well-being and health promotion and prevention. But there is a need to bridge the gap between research and practice so that knowledge can be translated into practice in society.

Involve researchers from the start of the project so that they can contribute to the development of the project as well as the process and evaluation of impacts. Involve researchers to support projects with knowledge of what works. Involving researchers from the start of the project can ensure that follow-up research, evaluation and impact measurement of interventions can be carried out. Evaluate projects using both quantitative and qualitative methods to create a broad understanding of value creation.

For example, communicate evaluations in a value-added compass, comparing selected parameters before and after changes. Use the compass as a dialogue tool in the process to first identify challenges and then show the impact and added value the project has resulted in.

SET UP AN INDEPENDENT COUNCIL AND GET A "SECOND OPINION"

Several Danish municipalities now have an architectural council to advise them on architectural issues in urban development and in individual cases. Open up the professional discussion: Invite independent and impartial experts into the development. They can be academics, policy makers and representatives from community initiatives that bring together experience from both the public and private sectors. Together, they can provide support, advice, criticism and expertise on the built environment.¹⁰⁴

Set up independent expert groups, councils or committees to ensure a holistic, cross-disciplinary focus across urban development, sustainability and well-being. These may include doctors, health researchers, sociologists, architects and urban planners. Use them to comment and provide professional input that informs urban development. This underpins the political mandate and the negotiating space with builders, developers and others. It requires them to be involved in processes early and can result in, for example:

- An interdisciplinary and consistent assessment of whether, at an early stage, specific projects or plans set out concise values, requirements or objectives in line with other objectives.
- General guidelines for urban development, which may lead to a municipal plan appendix with new guidelines for urban development.
- Inputs to urban development strategies.
- Innovative architectural competitions where experts can continuously contribute both to the development of a strong competition programme and, subsequently, as expert judges. Rethink the competition programme and split it in two. Start with a visioning process that can form the basis for a programme of concrete requirements so that the requirements do not stifle the vision. Keep experts involved throughout to ensure continuity and that knowledge is not lost in the process.





EPILOGUE



OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

We are navigating a different reality to the one which existed when we launched the Urban Health Culture of the Future in 2019. Covid-19 has put health on the agenda and created a new awareness of the link between the built environment and well-being.

Today, we are at a paradigm shift where everyone involved in the planning and design of our cities must address health on an equal footing with other global challenges.

A new mindset

We are witnessing a momentum and a new awareness about, among other things, the importance of green spaces, social challenges and increasing loneliness. We must seize this momentum. Because when the pandemic subsides, health in a broad sense – and not just the absence of disease – will still be relevant. It is our common responsibility to contribute to the solution and set new standards.

Health, well-being and quality of life must be rooted in our shared consciousness and in the way we think and plan our cities, urban development and urban spaces. A new mindset is a prerequisite for bringing knowledge out into the real world and creating an impact. Therefore, the project the Urban Health Culture of the Future is also an invitation to partnerships and collaborations across municipalities, decision-makers, politicians, developers and our own peers to take on a shared responsibility.

Municipalities have a special role to play. As highlighted in the interview with Christer Larsson on Bo01, cities themselves set the rules for urban development with quality requirements in policies and planning documents. In other words: Set explicit requirements so that well-being becomes a shared responsibility of developers and advisors – and stick to them.

From pointing fingers to quality of life

We have no doubt that we should eat healthily, smoke fewer cigarettes, drink less alcohol or exercise more. There is plenty of advice on prevention of disease and health promotion. But developing the healthy cities of the future requires us to look beyond the factors like diet, smoking, alcohol and exercise and think and plan from a broader, holistic and multidisciplinary perspective. Urban development must contribute to raising the well-being of Danes in new ways.

How we thrive and our perceptions of health are changing, and planning must adapt to the changing role of health. We see a need for conceptual renewal to bring health holistically into planning across disciplines

and scales. "Health" brings associations of orders being issued and discipline being required. Nevertheless, health is an important issue. But we can express health in new ways. We can talk about the impact on social, physical and mental well-being and quality of life, and we can focus on invitations, manifestation of life and joy in urban spaces rather than pointing fingers.

Together, we can develop cities that make healthy choices easy. Cities with housing and urban spaces that inspire co-creation and the creation of new communities. Cities with landscapes and infrastructure that invite us to walk or cycle.

In short, together we can create irresistible offers and opportunities in our cities that foster self-realisation, quality of life and well-being.

Change requires new competences

Nationally and internationally, certification schemes are setting new standards. The International WELL Building Institute and the Danish Green Building Council have developed certifications that put human health and well-being at the centre of the design, construction and operation of buildings. That's good. But we need to strengthen the policy debate and ensure that well-being is on the agenda across scales, from the individual building to the neighbourhood and the city as a whole.

Are certifications and checklists the way to a new agenda and innovative solutions or will we end up with rigid bureaucracy that neither recognise the context nor the needs of citizens?

We believe that new skills, new knowledge and new attitudes towards urban development will ensure that values such as well-being and quality of life are put on the agenda in urban development. A shared skills boost through education can embed new values in our practice.



Photo: Line Stybe Vestergaard.

In developing the Urban Health Culture of the Future, we have been in dialogue with UIC – Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, which offers a master's degree in the planning of healthy cities. This provides students with an interdisciplinary, evidence-based and practical approach to integrating well-being and sustainability into urban development. It is in education that the architects, landscape architects, urban developers and planners of the future will learn to translate health promotion into pragmatic solutions that create value for society.

We need education, training, master-classes as well as continuing education to learn how we can develop the healthy cities of the future together.

Art and culture can also show new ways

Collaborations and sparring with other disciplines are needed in order to be challenged and bring the unexpected questions that point to new ways forward into the development.

Arts and culture play an important role in our lives – including in our health and quality of life. Arts and health is an area of focus at the WHO. In 2019, they published a report¹⁰⁵ which compiled evidence on the link between art, health and well-being. Based on evidence from a wide range of disciplines, the report concluded that there is potential for the arts to play a critical role in health promotion and treatment.

Art and culture can contribute to new solutions. But innovation is not free. There is a need to include finances for new initiatives and interdisciplinary processes already in the budget phase. This is how we ensure innovative solutions to today's and tomorrow's global challenges.

Helle Juul
Founding partner, Architect MAA/MNAL, PhD



JUUL FROST ARCHITECTS

Juul Frost Architects is an award-winning multidisciplinary design studio with a holistic approach and a human focus. The purpose of our architecture and urban development is to promote quality of life, health and well-being.

Our work starts with our customers' needs and good communication. We take pride in our excellent teamwork and strive to be a reliable and solution-oriented partner.

Our core competencies include long-term strategic urban development and innovative housing. We are a preferred supplier due to our extensive experience in urban spaces, landscape design, campuses and residential and commercial areas.

We work internationally and across Scandinavia, and for more than 25 years, we have helped transform existing urban environments, spaces and homes – and develop new ones. We give advice for all scales and phases, while always focusing on the meeting between people and the connection between details and the project as a whole.

Research and development are an integral part of our innovative practice. That is why we are able to create socially relevant and future-proof architecture that supports development and delivers long-lasting value for clients, users and society.

We are a strong multidisciplinary team organised across three development departments who work closely together to consistently provide future-oriented solutions to meet today's complex challenges.

**City + Space + Landscape
Building + Construction
Research + Development**

We create sustainable solutions that promote social, mental and physical well-being, strategically based on the WHO concept of health and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being and Objective 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

"Our ambition is for architecture and urban development to promote people's quality of life, health and well-being"

Helle Juul, Founding Partner

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