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Urban waterfronts, a contested landscape?

Inquiry on the right to landscape in Oslo, Bjørvika

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Landscape Architecture for Global Sustainability



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“To claim the right to the city in the sense I mean it here is to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over how our cities are made and re-made and to do so in a fundamental and radical way.”

Harvey, 2008

Acknowledgments

A continuous search for what is the best way to do something will always be a prevalent theme in development, likewise we must always strive to achieve right and equality in our surroundings. To achieve equality in the urban space its necessary to review the connection to and importance of our surroundings, such as waterfront landscapes. Growing up in a small coastal city in southern Norway, I have come to embrace a way of life that naturally intertwines with the water. From strolling along stone pavements, passing charming white wooden houses, to finding solace and joy at the water's edge, the symbiotic relationship between humans and structures, and between water and land, has shaped my understanding of the waterfront landscape as a central experience in my life.

This thesis marks the end of six instructive and valuable years in university. With bachelors´ in Human Geography and Political science, the last two years at Landscape Architecture for Global Sustainability have given me an opportunity to delve into the way spatial surroundings mold our experiences.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude and admiration for my supervisor, Maria Gabriella Trovato. You have inspired me to follow my passions, and your guidance and support throughout this project have been invaluable until the very end. I would like to extend this thanks to the Faculty of Landscape and society and NMBU, and my fellow students for providing a creative environment. I am grateful for the opportunities, guidance, and friendships that have shaped my academic and personal growth.

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Thea Aaberge Wikander, 2023

Abstract

Following the industrial decline in the 70's, urban waterfronts have undergone significant functional changes. A global redevelopment trend coincided with a neoliberal policy shift in the 80's when development and regulation of public areas turned largely market-based, and waterfront transformation became fueled by privatization. At the same time population increase pressured accessibility to public space in the city. This thesis argues that not addressing public needs in private development creates a divide between the built and lived landscape.

For a long time in Oslo, Norway, the waterfront, with its continuous stretch of traffic and shipping, acted as a divider between the city and the water. When the first suggestion to open the waterfront ~~again~~ came forward, initiators emphasized making the sites widely accessible to the public. After years of planning, in 2008, the Fjord City plan was launched with specific targets to repurpose a 9km shoreline to strengthen Oslo's identity as a waterfront capital, taking on critical goals of accessibility. However, prevailing privatization in plan and execution has left certain parts catered to affluent groups and reduced the attention to publicness. This market-driven urban development threatens the use and enjoyment of public space.

Through the case of Bjørvika (Oslo), this thesis builds on critical landscape and urban planning theories to add to the discussion on equity, rights, and justice in the accessibility to the urban waterfront. Using methods such as document scrutiny and observational and spatial analysis it highlights discrepancies between planning visions and users' experience of the waterfront scape. The findings demonstrate that despite a large focus on participation and accessibility in the regulatory documents, Bjørvika presents issues on the just and right socio-spatial accessibility. Regarding opening the waterfront to the city, it seems that the former division of road networks has been replaced by extravagant housing, offices, and cultural institutions-leaving the waterfront to be a contrasting/ offbeat/ inconsistent landscape against urban Oslo.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

Public urban spaces, in the context of rapid urbanization and their inherently high levels of conflict and contestation, are a key place to explore the ever-changing dynamic between people and the space that surrounds them (Langhorst, 2018, 106). Oslo, one of Europe's fastest-growing cities, is currently undertaking the final phase of the Fjordbyen (Fjord City) redevelopment- an ambitious project to showcase Norway's capital by transforming the seashore into a vibrant and accessible area for leisure and recreation. Rehabilitation began in the 80s but gained momentum when a cohesive project plan was launched in 2008. The program addressed issues such as deindustrialization, economic decline, resource scarcity, and the outward migration of residents and businesses to the larger city region (Oslo kommune, 2008). Reflecting a global trend and a need for public space in the inner city, areas along the fjord have been repurposed for contemporary needs, representing Oslo's most significant urban redevelopment project with over 9 kilometers of shoreline and 11 designated areas. Bjørvika holds particular significance among these areas, representing a symbolic asset to the country to attract competence, international recognition and growth (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2008). According to planners, the area should express Norway's modern urban identity and be a source of joy for the population- and has accordingly been carpeted by luxury apartments, attractive amenities, grandiose architecture, and cultural facilities (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003, 6).

While the country has traditionally upheld principles of righteousness and democracy, the capital is currently grappling with challenges related to social divisions. Oslo is implementing densification strategies as part of its efforts to accommodate a growing population, but the public landscape is undergoing contestation with evidence to suggest that socioeconomic disparities are increasing (Ljunggren, 2018; Hanssen and Millstein, 2021). While the Fjord City redevelopment project holds the potential to enhance Oslo's urban landscape, concerns arise regarding the equitable distribution of its benefits among the city's residents and the lack of democracy in the planning process. Scholars have observed that the remarkable architectural interventions in Fjordbyen have contributed to spatial segregation, prioritized private development over public access to the shoreline, and neglected the urban fabric of Oslo- undermining efforts toward a more equitable landscape (Bergsli, 2015; Andersen and Røe, 2017; Bern, 2022).

1.1. Background

The urban landscape, consisting of public spaces where needs, preferences, and hopes to meet, constitutes a fundamental part of a democratic society. The theoretical departure points of 'Right to Landscape' and 'Landscape Democracy' considers how the right to participate and access public space is intertwined with people's perception of an area (Menatti, 2017). At the same time, public spaces are subjugated to planning regulations, barriers, and restrictions that can challenge the democratic ideals of a landscape (Menatti, 2017).

Discussions regarding public spaces have increasingly centered on the significance of waterfronts in cities. When postindustrial societies emerged, large ports became inadequate in entertaining the necessities of modern cities. New needs materialized, and the demand for public access to the waterfront led to an international trend of redeveloping the landscape left behind by industry activities (Al Ansari, 2009). A decade after urban waterfront redevelopment became widespread, new governance tools altered urban policies. With the recession acting as a catalyst, neoliberal and entrepreneurial policies allowed for more private involvement in public projects, causing market interests to drive waterfront development in the 1980s (Bjerkeset and Aspen, 2017). This change has materialized in urban waterfronts as these landscapes commonly became a way of showcasing cities internationally (Andersen and Røe, 2017). However, opposing ideals between market interest and users' right to landscapes have raised concerns about extensive privatization, commodification, and market interest prevailing in planning- resulting in a conflict of interest between public and private stakeholders (Boland, Bronte and Muir, 2017; Carmona, 2021).

Norway's dedication to democratic principles and the right to landscape is contrasted against critiques of publicness in Bjørvika. This thesis highlights landscapes' interconnectivity, stressing how structures mold our experiences. It posits that the urban landscape, as a shared public resource, is vital to equality in our landscapes. The study investigates equality aspects of planning, access, and utilization of waterfront public spaces, including opaque divisions between public and private space, subtle social restrictions, and rights infringements through development. The study aims to spark discourse on achieving equitable urban development, spotlighting the gaps between development goals and the actual experience of Bjørvika's waterfront landscape. Specifically, it delves into the interplay between neoliberal regulations and the manifestation of landscape justice at the waterfront.

1.2. Research question

How are concepts of the right to landscape reflected in the planning and development of Fjord City, specifically Bjørvika, and how has this impacted users' accessibility of the waterfront?

This inquiry is driven by the desire to explore how aspects of landscape rights are perceived along Oslo's waterfront. It posits that public access is a vital element of landscape enjoyment and aims to illuminate the tensions inherent in attaining an equitable landscape at the waterfront. Additionally, it scrutinizes how neoliberal interventions impede landscape rights realization through ownership, regulation, and privatization mechanisms. With this thesis, I wish to contribute to the existing research on urban redevelopment projects using the lens of critical landscape theory as a departure point for addressing accessibility aspects related to the redevelopment of waterfront landscapes.

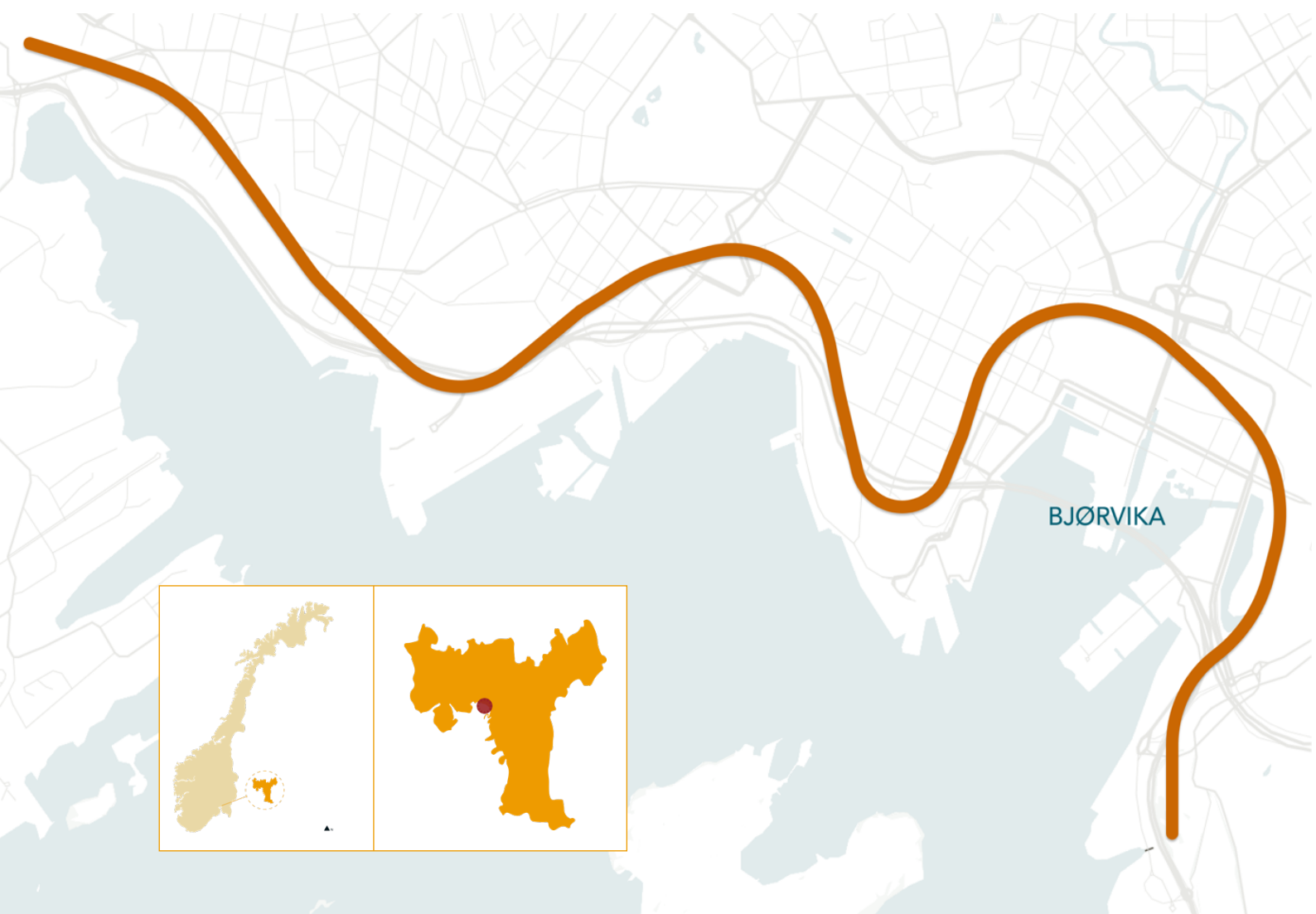
The first goal of this question is related to how goals aligning with the landscape framework is represented in the plan and ownership structure of Fjord City and Bjørvika. Even though democracy, sustainability, and equality are highly valued in the country's policies (Østerud, 2005), they are not necessarily translated into the daily urban development experience. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the primary planning process of Bjørvika and how this lays down a prerequisite for how the area is experienced. The second goal aims to underline inequalities in accessing and using the public realm and the natural elements of the shoreline, the non-readable forms of demarcation of public and private domains, the subtle forms of social restrictions, and the infringement of rights. Lastly, this thesis will therefore consider how different elements of accessibility, based on the Fjord City plan principles, are being met.

1.3. Focus and limitations

The focus of this research is primarily on Bjørvika, a significant area situated within the inner Oslo East waterfront. It plays a vital role in the broader Fjord City project, and to gain a comprehensive understanding of Bjørvika, references to the larger Fjord City redevelopment will be made throughout the study. While there will be instances where I discuss prevalent development trends in various parts of the city, it will be presented in a manner that is relevant to exploring the specific case of Bjørvika. It is important to note that the characteristics discussed in this research are primarily specific to the Oslo municipality, encompassing

political, economic, and social constellations. These characteristics may not necessarily be transferable. I would like to recognize that the environment and ecosystems are central to the experience of urban life. When talking about accessibility and participation in public space it can be said to represent a common good for the current generation, while ecosystems and biological diversity are representative of common good for future generations (Hanssen, 2015, 22). Although research highlights the diminishing biological state of the Oslofjord (Sørensen, 2020), this thesis will not address the consequences of waterfront redevelopment on ecosystems and biological protection. Instead, it concentrates on the spatial and social aspects of shoreline development. Furthermore, this thesis adopts a perspective rooted in the Nordic landscapes. While waterfront redevelopment is a global concern characterized by common traits and challenges, its success or failure in terms of rights and other factors can vary significantly. The thesis will primarily draw upon a nordic understanding of the development process, urban growth, and waterfront landscapes when referring to waterfronts.

Figure 1: National, regional, and local context of Fjord City development and Bjørsvika case.



1.4. Methodology and approach

There is no established methodology for assessing the right to landscape, due to the complex relationship between physical and social environments (Talen, 2000, 346). However, rights are commonly conceptualized as accessibility as a framework for exploration, with many referring to the preliminary work of Emily Talen (2000), who identifies two main components in assessing public space: the physical realm and its accessibility, and the conditioning factors influencing the relationship between public space and social interaction (Talen, 2000). This thesis will assume prerequisite planning to the development to be conditioning factors for accessibility. To systemize Talen's approach in an analytical starting point I have built upon Carr et al. definition of public space, which incorporates physical, visual, and symbolic assessments (Carr et al., 1992). These categorizations are appropriate for understanding socio-spatial complexities and provide a broad overview of conditioning factors that might limit right in urban redevelopment, and have been frequently explored in waterfront development research (Al Ansari, 2009; Avni and Teschner, 2019; Perić, 2020). The thesis will primarily focus on assessing accessibility to the Bjørvika urban landscape for non-residents, as a measure of the right to the landscape, and examining the role of neoliberal governance in shaping the waterfront redevelopment.

The topic is researched with a case study approach. A qualitative approach was employed by conducting observations, analyzing notes and documents, and performing spatial analysis to comprehensively understand the problem at hand. The overall aim is to gain insights into the development of waterfront landscapes, potential disparities between the envisioned outcome and the actual result, and the impact on the right to landscape in an urban setting. By gathering empirical evidence and supplementing with secondary data, the accessibility of the area is evaluated through documented results and observations.

The thesis has three main parts. Part I begins by establishing a research background, and a theoretical framework to familiarize relevant concepts. Part II presents empirical findings through observation, document analysis, and secondary data. Chapter 3 examines the historical development of Oslo and the significance of waterfronts in its expansion. Chapter 4 gives an overview of Oslo's key strategies and societal characteristics, and chapter 5 contextualizes this in presenting the case, and prevailing goals for the development. Chapter 6 will present a two part analysis. The first point of departure focuses on planning and

management to determine how the Fjord City aligns with the principles of landscape justice to determine whether diverse voices and perspectives have been considered, providing insight into Oslo's relationship between the plan and results. To assess accessibility in Bjørvika, part 2 of the study uses mainly physical, visual, and symbolic factors, following the above recommendations. This evaluation is based on observations and supplemented by secondary empirical evidence. These factors provide insights into the development's spatial, planning, and social dimensions, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their influence. Part III will conclude the thesis. Chapter 7 summarizes the findings and applies a critical discussion to evaluate the findings. It helped to appraise the overall social experience of Fjord City, determining whether the right to public spaces has been enforced. Chapter 8 concludes by answering the research question.

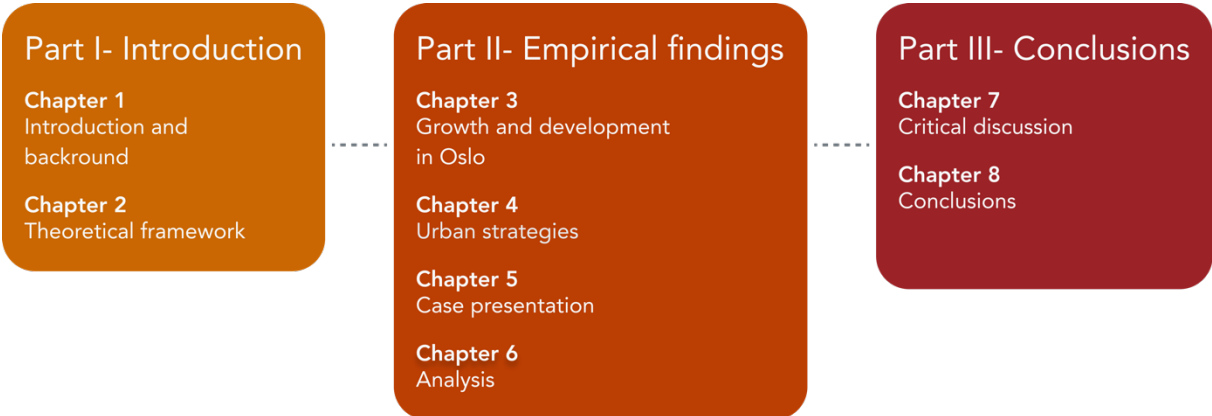


Figure 2: Thesis structure.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Perspectives on right- and contestation of Landscape

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter aims to delve into the theoretical aspects of righteousness in landscape and contemporary contestations. Present perceptions on geography and the importance of public space prevail for most of the theoretical framework. Moreover, two predominant perspectives on achieving righteousness in the landscape, namely the right to landscape and landscape democracy, within an urban context are considered. These perspectives will form the basis for understanding landscapes as a shared resource and the importance of accessibility. Furthermore, the chapter examines potential elements of contestation on the waterfront, focusing on the influence of neo-liberalization in urban planning. It considers conflicts arising from clashing interests between private and public actors and overlapping influences in urban planning. The chapter also explores how legislative matters, planning, and power can alleviate or exacerbate urban landscape conflicts. By addressing these aspects, a deeper understanding of the concept of public space on the urban waterfront can be achieved.

2.1. Perception of landscapes

Perceptions of the landscape have changed throughout history. Previously it was understood as an entity of physical environments, with classical perceptions relating it to aesthetic and picturesque ideals, while in the past decades, it has been associated with social and cultural terms (Menatti and Heft, 2020). The shift in perception has been influenced by the European Landscape Convention (ELC), which has played a pivotal role in promoting a more social and universal understanding of landscapes, defining it as follows: "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural, and human factors" (Council of Europe, n.d.). Kenneth Olwig has contributed to exploring landscape understandings, elaborating on the cultural and social interactions with our surroundings which makes a *place* into a *space* (Olwig, 2006). He recognizes that places' unique cultural, historical, and social attributes contribute to their distinct identities. Moreover, these attributes influence and are influenced by people's experiences (Olwig, 2019). It is important to acknowledge that perception is not isolated but rather shaped by various factors such as usage, politics, views, emotions, attachment, and culture. By embracing this comprehensive definition, the landscape can be understood as a common good, transcending mere physicality. It highlights complexities that shape our spatial

relationships, emphasizing the growing awareness of how tangible structures and abstract symbolism play significant roles in customizing our surroundings (Egoz, Jørgensen and Ruggeri, 2018; Olwig, 2019). This expanded perspective encourages a deeper understanding of landscapes as dynamic and interconnected systems, reflecting ever-changing interactions between nature, humans, and experience.

Waterfront landscapes

Waterfront landscapes are integral to the broader landscape, highlighting the interdependence between natural and human factors, especially in an urban setting where access to natural resources is limited. They offer unique spatial qualities that distinguish them from other forms of urban development, presenting both challenges and opportunities for planners and developers. In addition to providing access to natural beauty and recreational opportunities, waterfronts also have ecological, economic, and cultural significance. Understanding the waterfront in the context of urban landscapes, as described by Olwig and the ELC, reveals its multidimensional nature beyond its physicality, serving as an arena for interactions and contestations. Taking a holistic approach that considers both the urban and natural aspects of the landscape is essential to comprehending waterfronts in their entirety. recognizing the conscious relationship between people and their surrounding landscape and emphasizing the importance of considering the waterfront as a unified entity rather than focusing solely on specific components such as rivers, beaches, or harbor fronts.

Public space

It is necessary to determine why public access to a landscape is a prerequisite for the right to be in- and experience a landscape. In an urban setting, public spaces are key for fostering social interaction, cultural exchange, and a sense of community. They serve as a platform for materializing landscapes as a common good where people can engage with their surroundings, and thus get a shared experience- a culture. Public space commonly refers to an area or place openly accessible and available to the public (Mitchell, 2003). Carmona states that the public realm encompasses all publicly accessible and utilized space, including outdoor places such as public squares, streets, etc., and internal spaces such as libraries, and museums (Carmona, 2021). Moreover, it has been recognized that public spaces are essential

in democratic societies, as they provide a physical area where all members of the public realm can socialize, interact, and participate (Mitchell, 2003; Egoz, Jørgensen, and Ruggeri, 2018).

Miller (2007) challenges the common perception of public spaces as open, democratic, and accessible, arguing that they cannot be intended as a singular entity. Understanding public space as accessible to all is challenged by designers' and planners' lack of attention to perception, politics, and history of a place (Miller, 2007). The author suggests that public spaces are not merely physical entities but a combination of ideas, actions, and environments- calling for a comprehensive examination of the intersections between physical places, regulations, user demands, and government responses to ensure that public spaces fulfill their role in democratic life.

2.2. Approaches to Landscape and Righteousness

In the past decades, approaches to rights and justice have emerged in the landscape field. This section will provide an overview of the central aspects of landscape democracy and the right to landscape to demonstrate an inclusive process between accessibility and participation, people, and their environment. Similar to Miller's view on public space (2007), the following understandings highlight landscape as something interactive; a holistic codependency between structures and how it shapes our experience of a landscape.

Landscape democracy

One of the earliest models of landscape as a democratic place can be traced to the ancient Greek Agora, whereas the concept of democracy became rapidly associated with daily life, politics, and social interaction, providing a space to accommodate political and social needs (Tuan, 2002). Landscape democracy is a conceptual framework that explores the intersection between places and civil influence, giving valuable insights into the relationships between people, place, and power (Knudtzon, 2018, 3). Here the concept of democracy extends beyond political systems and encompasses the notion of inclusivity and participation in shaping the landscapes we inhabit (Menatti, 2017). It recognizes that landscapes are not only physical environments- but also social spaces where individuals interact with one another and nature. Moreover, by actively involving civil society in planning processes, landscape democracy seeks to empower individuals and communities, allowing them to have a say in

landscape design, use, and management. Building upon the idea that landscapes are common goods that should be accessible to everyone, this concept highlights landscapes' ethical and policy dimensions, emphasizing the need for equitable distribution and access to landscapes as a fundamental right.

Participation

By recognizing landscapes as shared resources, landscape democracy promotes the notion that individuals have the right to influence and shape the landscapes they inhabit. The approach of involving communities in decision-making processes to shape our surroundings is called public participation. When considering the production of places, Knudtzon (2018) emphasizes the importance of *public* engagement in the creation of *public* space, preferring an approach where landscape users are at the base of what should be made, built, and decide on what amenities a place should encompass. In this context, landscape users are stakeholders in a development process. This perspective considers citizens as valuable contributors, enabling the attainment of a consensus rooted in local contexts and the generation of practical solutions for future landscape interventions (Crane, Matten and Moon, 2004). The underlying theory posits that the landscape is a dynamic system that empowers communities through participatory planning and design. Participation has been promoted by a line of scholars and has been incorporated in legislation suggesting that it relays a genuine democratic influence on planning. Moreover, participation recently became embedded in the Norwegian planning act (Plan og bygningsloven, no date).

Contrary to institutional commitments, incorporating participation can be a challenge. Falleth and Saglie explain that the law is indecisive, causing uncertainty among actors in regards to where the responsibility to include participation lies (2011). Plan and design involve a range of stakeholders, including real estate developers, politicians, architects, and urban planners (Knudtzon, 2018, 3). While they all may acknowledge the importance of democratic legitimacy in development and planning, they may disagree on the practical implementation. Knudtzon draws on two main factors which impact public participation.; private or public ownership, and to what extent the planned landscape is for public use (2018). Private ownership may limit civil engagement but can also favor more holistic design. In terms of public landscapes, they usually have broader political attention (Knudtzon, 2018, 12). Another

concern is when power is shifted from elected professionals to local participants since societal inequalities might be exaggerated, as the elite has a stronger capacity to convey influence (Strand and Næss, 2017). In this case, the elite, in this case, can also refer to private or public developers who prepare a large majority of developments in Oslo (Falleth, Saglie and Hanssen, 2010). Actors who plan for economic increase might oppose public interference as the prolonged process might diminish the profit (Knudtzon, 2018, 4). Though plans forwarded by civil society would represent to legitimate democratic influence, in a Nordic context, plans are usually forwarded by private actors- meaning more pressure on planners to include democratic influence.

Right to landscape

The concept of landscape democracy serves as a foundation for understanding and advocating the right to landscape, as it recognizes the role of a participatory decision-making process and emphasizes the importance of ensuring equitable access and enjoyment of the landscape by all individuals. While democracy mostly explores the right to influence our surroundings, the right to landscape recognizes that all individuals have a fundamental right to influence, use and access the landscapes they live in (Egoz, Makhzoumi and Pungetti, 2011). In this sense, accessibility refers to freely entering, navigating, and engaging with a particular landscape, emphasizing removing physical, visual and symbolic barriers that hinder people's enjoyment and use of the landscape. (Carr *et al.*, 1992; Egoz, Makhzoumi and Pungetti, 2016). The theory intends rights as a fundamental entitlement linked to human well-being, identity, culture, and the broader notion of human rights (Egoz, Makhzoumi and Pungetti, 2011; Menatti, 2017). It recognizes that landscapes significantly impact people's lives, shaping their experiences, relationships, and sense of place. Therefore, the right to landscape posits that individuals should be able to access, use, and influence the landscapes they inhabit or connect to.

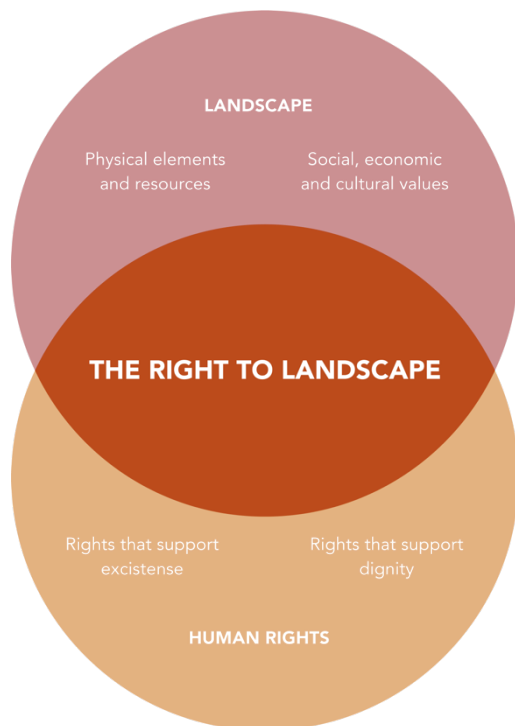


Figure 3: Merging of landscapes and human rights (illustrated after Shelley Egoz 2016).

Rights and accessibility

The right to landscape concept requires an understanding of what constitutes a right (Olwig, 2011). Menatti suggests that by framing the landscape as a common good, similar to the understanding of ELC and Olwig (2011), it is necessary to view it as a fundamental human right (2017). The main argument is that landscape and rights are indisputably connected, and the protection of one means the protection of the other- suggesting access to and enjoyment of landscapes should be considered fundamental (Menatti, 2017).

The legal concept of rights has received endorsement through international agreements, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Egoz, Makhzoumi and Pungetti, 2016). When the concept of human rights was solidified in 1948, the emphasis was initially placed on civil and political rights such as the right to life and freedom of speech, as these were closely related to the atrocities of World War II (Egoz, Makhzoumi and Pungetti, 2016). Recognizing and accepting economic, social, and cultural rights, representing a second generation of rights, took more time to establish internationally. Nevertheless, both categories of human rights form an internationally accepted framework based on the principle that all individuals possess equal dignity and worth and should have the opportunity to realize their potential. This means that rights are typically understood as inherent, universal, and inalienable, meaning they apply to all individuals regardless of their social, cultural, or

economic status. They provide a framework for ensuring dignity, equality, and fairness in society. Regarding landscape, human rights are a foundation for acknowledging the importance of our surroundings. The ability to experience and use landscapes should be a legal and moral prerogative. So, accessibility in tangible and non-tangible terms emerges as the key to understanding righteousness (Doi, Kii and Nakanishi, 2008).

The importance of rights in public space

Urban landscapes are subject to various pressures, including land use, development, and competing interests. These pressures often lead to conflicts among stakeholders who have different visions for the design and use of urban spaces. The Right to the city concept helps us understand that public landscapes in cities are contested, particularly regarding access. Philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre was the first scholar to introduce the Right to the City as a concept (1974). He argues that the inherent need to connect, be creative, express ourselves, and just be- is being restricted in contemporary cities because some stakeholders are not interested in promoting diversity, but rather commodifying space as means to create revenue (Lefebvre, 1974). As a result, cities are designed and built to satisfy the needs of certain social groups determining marginalization and inequalities. Public urban spaces play a crucial role in providing opportunities for citizens to contribute to the city's identity. In a just city, public space should gather the needs of all citizens, irrespective of class, gender, and ethnicity.

The 2000 financial crisis accelerated sociopolitical conflict worldwide and raised awareness of how capitalist forms of urbanization were correlated with injustice, destructiveness, and unsustainability (Mitchell, 2003; Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2012). Issues such as neo-liberalization, gentrification, spatial form, and social exclusion in global cities became common research topics (Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2012). David Harvey expanded on the relationship between capitalism and urbanization, pointing out that the right to the city is a critical element in the struggle for social justice, as urban space has been shaped by capital needs rather than the people (Harvey, 2003). This perspective serves as a means for reclaiming power over the landscape and for people to reproduce space, as it emphasizes the collective right of all individuals to participate in the use and creation of public space (Low and Smith, 2006; Li, Dang and Song, 2022). Don Mitchell highlights the role of

spatial relations in shaping urban power dynamics, stating that urban spaces are not neutral but reflect and reinforce existing power structures, impacting marginalized communities' right to access and influence (Mitchell, 2003). The right to the city encourages collective action for equitable urban landscape by empowering local communities, transparent planning, cultural diversity, and promoting sustainability (Olwig and Mitchell, 2009). However, challenges arise from institutional barriers, financial priorities, and entrenched social norms limiting marginalized groups' participation and access to public resources.

2.3. Contestations on the right to landscape- neoliberal influences

In the 1980s, economic and political restructuring led to a shift away from previous urban development strategies, prompting the emergence of a new approach to governing cities known as neoliberal- and entrepreneurial policy. As urbanization rapidly unfolds, a growing population within limited space puts pressure on public places and their ability to provide universal access to the city (Haarstad *et al.*, 2022). Scholars have noted a growing dispute over public space, with the boundaries between public and private becoming increasingly blurred (Harvey, 2003; Mitchell, 2003; Li, Dang and Song, 2022). The contestation of public space in urban areas can be understood through the lens of entrepreneurial planning and neoliberal governance. This thesis applies these theories as a foundation for understanding the Fjord City development.

The emergence of neoliberal governance

The transition from the 70s to the 80s marked a change in socioeconomic history as liberal directives swept the world economy. It emerged as a response to the perceived failures of state-led economic management, and so committed to free markets, believing that it was the most efficient way of promoting economic growth. Starting as an intellectual movement, it became an aggressive political ideology in England and USA (Harvey, 2011a). Setting precedence, tendencies of state reform unfolded globally where the change was mostly expressed through the deregulation of finance- and housing markets. Harvey describes this ideology as hitting the world like a "... wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment" (Harvey, 2006, 145). Neoliberalism currently stands as an economic and political hegemony

embedded in the praxis of governments, institutions, and private organizations (Harvey, 1989; Peck and Tickell, 2002).

The hallmark of this ideology is free markets, privatization, deregulation and minimal government intervention in the economy which has been particularly manifested in urban governance (Andersen and Røe, 2017). Nevertheless, despite promises of growth and prosperity, the concept of neoliberalist ideology has been thoroughly criticized for having consequences for social well-being in cities (Harvey, 2011a; Skrede, 2013). Critics argue that it has resulted in the transfer of public assets to private companies, prioritizing capital production over the needs of marginalized communities. Market deregulation has contributed to environmental degradation, exploitation, and a focus on short-term profits at the expense of social benefits and sustainability. Consequently, this has led to limited public space, an inaccessible housing market, and reduced democratic influence. Notably, the driving force behind neoliberal development is the belief that it must continuously expand to be sustained, creating an inherently unsustainable system (Harvey, 1989; Xue, 2018).

Entrepreneurial policies

Entrepreneurial policies in urban spaces are strategies and actions city governments implement to stimulate economic growth and development by creating a favorable environment for businesses. This approach, often referred to as urban entrepreneurialism, treats cities as commodities and utilizes marketing techniques to attract investments and cultivate a business-friendly culture (Davidson, 2012; Cheung and Tang, 2015; Avni and Teschner, 2019). Røe (2014) explains urban entrepreneurialism as viewing the city as a commodity, marketing it as an attraction for businesses to establish there, often through international attention, competition, culture, and profit. The concept aligns with the logic of neo-liberalization, which asserts that economic growth leads to employment opportunities, enhances the city's attributes, and addresses socio-economic issues in less affluent areas (Hall and Hubbard, 1996).

Privatization of public space

David Harvey has widely criticized the introduction of entrepreneurial governance in cities because democratic agencies closely with private sector actors with the aim of facilitating

private investments in the city center to create economic profit. He believes urban development to be substantially determined by those in control of, or in control of access to, resources and capital (Harvey, 1989). Specifically, he points to partnerships between public and private entities that favor economic development and investment as their political goal when developing space (Harvey, 1989, 8). Garret Hardin's famous article "Tragedy of the Commons" (1968) paved the way for arguments praising private property rights in land use and ownership, serving as an argument for the efficiency of privatization in that it will stimulate the labor market and improve the overall economic well-being of a city and its residents. (Harvey, 2011b, 101). Critics, however, argue that economic motives come at the expense of social and environmental concerns and may exacerbate city inequality and gentrification (Harvey, 1989). It's commonly referred to as post-political governance because of an absence of political governance, and that decision-making processes in urban planning are delegated to the market (Hall and Hubbard, 1996).

There is a broad consensus that implementing neoliberal and entrepreneurial policies has resulted in the proliferation of privately owned urban spaces (Harvey, 1989; Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez, 2002; Bjerkeset and Aspen, 2017). Under private-public partnerships, public authorities typically establish development requirements while the actual construction and ownership predominantly lie in the hands of the private sector (Falleth and Saglie, 2011). In instances where public authorities mandate the construction of publicly accessible spaces, these areas are still subject to regulation by private landowners. Although these urban spaces are intended for public use, they often face stricter regulations compared to those owned by municipalities (Bjerkeset and Aspen, 2017). Privately owned public spaces have more control functions than publicly owned spaces. These functions include guarding, monitoring, and using design to create a sense of privacy or exclusivity (Madanipour, 1999). While privately owned spaces encourage use, they also aim to control behavior by limiting access to those who can afford it.

2.4. A brief background of waterfront redevelopment

The phenomenon of waterfront redevelopment emerged worldwide when cities evolved into postindustrial societies. The popularity of urban waterfront redevelopment is generally attributed to the abundance of redundant port areas, usually located downtown in cities (Hall,

1993). The demand for redevelopment arose from public pressure due to long neglect of the landscape, environmental degradation, and the desire for access to the waterfront. As a result, cities repurposed their former ports and created open public spaces to meet this demand (Avni and Teschner, 2019). However, some scholars argue that redevelopment was driven more by the opportunity for large-scale urbanization processes rather than by specific demand, while others suggest that it was a logical occurrence given that ports are often the oldest parts of cities (Hoyle, 2000; Malone, 2014). This led to new uses such as retail, commerce, residential areas, and tourism. Contemporary waterfront developments have been influenced by economic motives, with waterfronts serving as marketing tools for cities, particularly through creating attractions (Avni and Teschner, 2019, 409). Consequently, urban waterfronts have become symbolic elements of cities (Hall, 1993; Cheung and Tang, 2015).

While the history of waterfront redevelopment projects is extensive and diverse, many of the challenges and opportunities they present resonate globally. A growing body of literature emerged in the 80s has recognized urban waterfront redevelopment as an arena for contestation and conflict (Hall, 1993; Hall and Hubbard, 1996). Urban waterfront redevelopment gained common reference in geography and planning literature following notable examples like Baltimore (Hall, 1993; Avni and Teschner, 2019; Bern, 2022). Baltimore's waterfront redevelopment projects have served as a precedent for similar initiatives globally, standing out as a prominent example of this type of urban strategy. The redevelopment integrated residential developments, tourism, retail and housing, parkland, and mixed-use development. The city's initiatives have showcased the economic potential of waterfront areas and the significance of the connection between cities and their waterfronts. Waterfronts hold the potential to induce large-scale development and give significant areas of land back to the city, to improve the environment, social life and place-making.

Nonetheless, managing and developing public spaces at waterfronts, present ongoing challenges that require considering practicality, functionality, aesthetics, and the diverse needs of stakeholders and users (Avni and Teschner, 2019). Two reoccurring topics in the literature are spatial justice and neoliberalism (Bruttomesso, 1993; Hoyle, 2000; Avni and Teschner, 2019; Ding *et al.*, 2023). Though a wide category, neoliberal influences have been identified as a contestation to the waterfront landscape highlighting the dominance of private interests and potential challenges to public accessibility (Bruttomesso, 1993). Scholars pay

attention to arrangements between private and public entities that primarily seek to commodify the waterfront, transforming it from a space of production to a consumption (Boland, Bronte and Muir, 2017; Avni and Teschner, 2019, 411). Literature on justice and equity examines the repercussions when symbolic and economic factors take precedence over public considerations, often resulting in the exclusion of marginalized communities (Hoyle, 2000; Ding et al., 2023). Lastly, the literature considers the role of justice in the planning processes of waterfronts, concluding that including democratic decision-making in large-scale redevelopment is related to how the plans materialize and are experienced (Talen, 2000; Ding et al., 2023).

2.5. Summary

From the theories presented above, landscape democracy and right to landscape, there are two key takeaways: Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of granting people the right to influence the creation or transformation of the landscapes they are a part of. This right is often recognized and supported by legislation such as the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in Nordic countries. Democratic input can be facilitated either directly or indirectly through public entities. However, in the context of waterfront redevelopment, where private entities frequently drive planning proposals, there may be challenges in ensuring democratic influence in the planning process. The second takeaway is recognizing people's fundamental right to access and utilize their landscapes. These theories critically examine the user experience of landscapes, emphasizing the need for equitable access and utilization. With the rise of neo liberalization in urban development and legislation, initially as a response to economic downturns, critics argue that it has become a source of contention in achieving equity in the urban landscape. This critique stems from the argument that neoliberalism prioritizes economic goals over social ones, often neglecting considerations of publicness as they do not directly generate economic growth. While waterfront redevelopment projects have contributed significantly to revitalizing redundant ports, similar issues are identified as problematic aspects within this context. The challenges related to democratic influence, equitable access, and the prioritization of economic goals over social considerations are relevant concerns in waterfront redevelopment initiatives.

CHAPTER 3

Growth and development in Oslo

3. The idea of a Fjord City

Our understanding of space as a landscape is intricately connected to history, culture, and context (Olwig, 2006). The earliest forms of waterfront development occurred as societies began to utilize waterborne transit, which until 60 years ago dominated urban waterfront development with harbors. In Oslo, the waterfront landscape played a significant role in shaping the city's identity. Geographical components are revealed in the physical structure where previous planning and development still set the frame for how present residents experience the city (Ljunggren, 2018, 18). Oslo's relationship with the fjord, forest, and rivers has been managed since the 1600s, which has created settlement patterns and molded the capital's society, history, economy and will continue to shape its future. Before moving forward with the analysis, it is necessary to display the complex story of urban development that led to the creating of the Fjord City, where centuries of waterborne industry are being transformed for new purposes.

Photo 1: Life at the waterfront of Bjørvika, Kristiana (Oslo) (Knud Knudsen, 1873).



3.1. Emergence of a capital

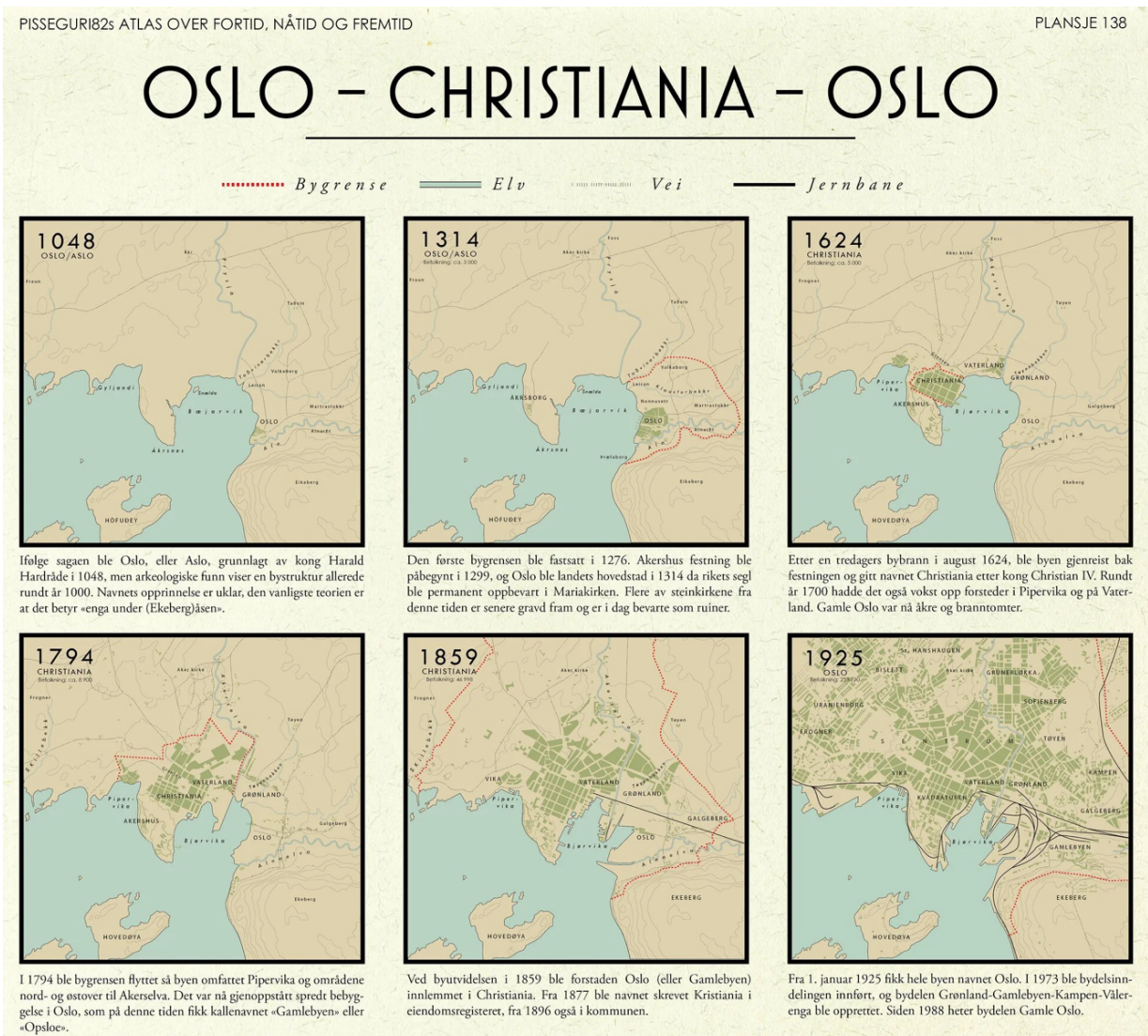


Photo 2: Urban expansion of Oslo centum (Pisseguri82, 2017).

In the early days of settlement, the waterfront provided access to trade, production, and churches- attracting people to settle. These center functions, along with rivers, hills and forests, largely depended on the city's structure, which inhabited approximately 2-3000 people in medieval times. In 1624 a fire ravaged the town, leaving little left of the fragile wooden houses in what is now called Gamlebyen (the old town). King Christian IV decided to raise the city in northern Bjørvika, renamed Christiania. Akershus Fortress would protect the city from fire and foes, resulting in a grid urban structure much more planned out than before (Hansen, no date). Jørn Ljunggren singles out 1624 as a starting point for the social

divide in Oslo as the new plans and restrictions of building materials would force those who could not afford brick to settle in suburbs outside the city wall, where they could build affordable wooden houses (2018, 18). Christiania expanded rapidly in a grid square network around the fortress after it was founded. In the 1700s they mainly relied on trade and export of timber through Bjørvika with a modest population growth as most of the area behind the fortress was used (Ljunggren, 2018). At this time, wealthy traders and officials lived in the city core, and workers receded to the suburbs. This left Christiania with a striking social segregation, especially reflected in income and illness.

During the 19th century, Norway experienced significant transformations. Several common features characterized urban expansion during this period, including centralization, transportation development, industrialization, the emergence of publicness, and the growth of urbanity (Helle, 2006, 249). Centralization was at the core of a larger urbanization process and had the greatest impact on the landscape in terms of physical-, economic-, and social structures. Norway established a modern political system as they seceded from Denmark with Christiania established as a capital. As a result of the secession and several new state institutions, the population rose drastically through the 1830s as Christiania expanded dispersedly towards the east in new houses and street networks. (Helle, 2006; Hansen, no date). The randomness of this expansion caused despair for the government which saw it necessary to lay down a law of urban planning and building which involved regulations on materials, and zoning of urban land use (Hansen, no date). It was however vaguely enforced as it regularly came onto conflict with private property law, and it was rather road network linked to the institutions and private interests that facilitated urban development (Hansen). The law changed in 1863 stating that the municipality should have final say in urban development. Christiania was then the fastest growing city in Europe, representing the start of a conscious urban strategy with the capital as a forerunner (Helle, 2006).

To ensure integration between urban and rural landscapes when the capital became a leading economic entity- transportation networks became a planned policy. Railways, ships, roads and communication technology was also fueled by industrialization. This progress meant more trade, then production, then wealth- and soon urbanization became synonymous with prosperity (Helle, 2006, 250). Furthermore, the urbanity meant publicness. Public arenas became dedicated to democratic engagement where citizens could politically organize and

apply pressure to official agencies (Helle, 2006; Gilje, 2014). It largely built on democratic principles from the constitution in 1814. By the end of the 1800's the democratic governance peaked. Local governance/ municipal government contributed to infrastructure, water, safety, sewage and schools in the public sphere, marking the start of social democracy (Helle, 2006, 252; Gilje, 2014).

3.2. Industrial to post-industrial

Waterfronts have always been important for trade and strategic reasons, but industrialization generated ports and waterways on a much larger scale than before- leaving a legacy for contemporary urban development. During the industrial period from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, Oslo experienced significant growth and development. Especially textile industry was developed along Akerselva playing important in the urban structure (Helle, 2006). This period coincided with the first phase of Norwegian industrialization's emergence in cities all over Norway. Capital, labor, raw materials, and energy were concentrated in urban areas and were dependent on waterways for trade and production. At the beginning of the 1900s, more than one-third of the Norwegian population had resided to the capital. Their economy became further dependent on industry- and port activities, leading to the construction of large factories and workshops along the waterfront. Previously most of the industry was concentrated along the Akerselva, but as railroads were established centrally in Oslo the harbor in Bjørvika became prominent and provided an agglomeration of trade. Port operations strengthened the capital's economic position in Norway, but also gave it a more international character- driving an expansion of the physical infrastructure in the portlands, which resulted in less public space at the waterfront.



Photo 3: Industrial landscape (Stein Marienborg, 1992).

Approaching the 60's Oslo entered an industrial incline. Urban expansion, industry and housing patterns were transformed by an automobile focus, following a trend in American and industrial cities. New traffic corridors were placed along the waterfront in Bjørvika, which created both a visual and physical barrier between users and the water (Bjørvika utvikling,). Simultaneously, the social democracy and welfare system played a vital role in implementing various measures to provide social security to the population, contributing to the democratic values becoming embedded in Norwegian culture. Though the foundations of the welfare system were laid in the 1930s, it was after World War II that it fully emerged as a comprehensive model where authorities actively intervened to rebuild society. In the late 1960s, the Norwegian government established a sovereign wealth fund to manage the newfound oil revenues, enabling further investments in the welfare system and infrastructure. This model is characterized by a robust public sector financed through taxes, aiming to ensure social and economic well-being for all citizens. The implementation of a comprehensive welfare system in Norway made it possible to undertake larger socially beneficial investments,

particularly as urbanization gained momentum. Recognizing the importance of holistic planning, Norway introduced a plan and building act that served as a crucial guideline for urban expansion and development- paving the way for more planned urbanization projects (Helle, 2006, 442).



Photo 4: Bjørnvika seen from Ekeberg (Mittet & Co, year unknown).



Photo 5: Bjørnvika 1880's (Axel Lindahl/ Nasjonalbiblioteket, 1885).

CHAPTER 4

Characteristics of urban development

4. Characteristics of urban development in Oslo

This chapter will contextualize waterfront redevelopment in Oslo by familiarizing characteristics of the social landscape in Oslo, and distinguishing features of their development strategy. Furthermore, it will serve as an empirical base for exploring the case.

4.1. Nordic model of urban development

The Nordic model refers to values and characteristics that are prevalent in Scandinavian countries, mostly based on principles of the welfare state and a strong social democracy (Vike, 2018). According to Haarstad *et al.* (2021), the welfare model is widespread in development across all Scandinavian countries with a strong bearing in urban studies and is often included in descriptions of the Nordic Urban model. In terms of urbanity, the goal of the model is to create space with high standards of living and low levels of inequality. Most urban strategies in Nordic cities follow design principles that promote social cohesion, healthier environments, and economic growth, as well as aim for consistency between private and public actors. Efforts to develop this model and apply it in Nordic countries have been possible because of strong democratic principles such as transparency, freedom of expression, participation, and trust, complimented by a strong belief that governance is successful in fostering both economic competition and social mobility (Østerud, 2005; Kazepov *et al.*, 2022). Globally, planners and policymakers have referenced this model as a guideline for sustainable cities (Shirazi and Keivani, 2019).

Norway's egalitarian political obligations, strong transnational relations, and steadfast commitment to democracy have earned the country widespread recognition as a champion of righteousness (Watts, 2005; Vike, 2018). Institutional commitments to urban righteousness has resulted in the Nordic urban model becoming prominent in the pursuit of sustainable and equitable cities (Haarstad *et al.*, 2021). Firstly, on the international arena, the country is committed to the sustainable development goals (SDG) which were posed by the UN in 2015 to address global challenges. Several goals can be attributed to urban development, whereas SDG 11 specifically recognizes the importance of democratic decision-making to achieve sustainable urban space. Furthermore, Norway is committed to the goals of ELC through an European treaty that aims to promote the protection, management, and planning of landscapes and to organize international cooperation on landscape issues (Skrede, 2013;

Bergsli, 2015). The convention also promotes public awareness of the landscape's significance, encourages participation in decision-making, and emphasizes equitable access for all social groups.

On a national level, there are relatively unique, legislative approaches that are which protect the right to use water landscape, and the right to influence. The outdoor recreation act represents a cornerstone in Norwegian outdoor culture and affirms the right to free movement. It states that "Everyone is allowed to travel and stay in the countryside in Norway. Allemannsretten is a free public good and part of our cultural heritage. It gives you the right to use open land, regardless of who is the landowner". However there are disputes over the law, and it is often challenged in urban- or waterfront areas (Vistad *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, the Planning and Building Act of 2008 has been widely recognized as one of Norway's most powerful democratic tools in the field of urban planning (source). Not only does it outline the obligations and responsibilities of those involved in implementing measures and ensuring compliance with the law and plans, but it also specifically addresses the importance of public participation through sections § 5-1 to § 5-7 (*Plan og bygningsloven, no date*). According to these paragraphs, anyone proposing planning initiatives is required to facilitate public participation, while the municipality must guarantee that such involvement is upheld in planning processes conducted by other public or private entities. By enshrining this right to participate in the law, Norway reinforces its commitment to democratic principles.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the established narrative of Norway's deeply ingrained social-democratic norms is increasingly contested, with scholars highlighting the influence of neoliberal reforms and the evolving translation of democracy into everyday life (Østerud, 2005; Vike, 2018). "...deregulation, privatization, and fragmentation of a comprehensive public planning system and practices, as well as an entrepreneurial competitive turn in urban governance, have transformed the urban landscape itself and the feasibility of policies for social inclusion." (Haarstad *et al.*, 2021, 7). The research highlights several key issues that make the Nordic urban model ill-suited for contemporary challenges, including issues of segregation, economic disparities, and privatization (Haarstad *et al.*, 2021). These challenges undermine the previously unquestioned trust in fair distribution and suggest that combining economic competition with social-democratic goals may be more complicated than initially believed. The complexities faced by the Nordic urban model in

navigating these challenges require a critical reevaluation of its underlying principles and policies to ensure sustainable and inclusive urban development.

4.2. Oslo sustainable capital

The projected increase in the global urban population to 6.7 billion by 2050 highlights a need to ensure both the social and environmental quality of urban landscapes, emphasizing the importance of sustainability (Dempsey *et al.*, 2011). In Norway, sustainability has influenced goal formulation, public policy, and planning regulations over the past few decades (Hanssen, 2015, 16). The 90s marked the start of the capital's green strategies, as higher temperatures, more wind, and heavier rainfall pose the largest threat to infrastructure in Oslo (Oslo kommune, 2020). In response, Oslo has implemented strategies focused on redevelopment, compact urban development, and the integration of water, land use, and infrastructure planning. Oslo's commitment to sustainability extends to areas such as transportation, with a focus on sustainable public transit and the promotion of electric vehicles. In their more recent climate strategy, Oslo have prioritized water management, land use and infrastructure, as well as encouraging the population to make more responsible choices (Oslo kommune, 2020).

After successfully setting and achieving ambitious goals in response to urban climate challenges, Oslo was awarded the prestigious title of European Green Capital in 2019, recognizing the city's exceptional efforts (Oslo kommune, 2019). The jury responsible for the award highlighted Oslo's holistic approach to sustainability, which encompassed various aspects such as biodiversity, transportation, and social integration, all under the theme of "City for everyone, putting people first". This recognition has positioned Oslo as a sustainable and green city, enhancing its reputation and making it an attractive destination in the international market.

Adopting densification strategies in cities has become a prevalent method for expanding cities in an energy- and space-efficient way, making it a physical tool to execute sustainability (Mouratidis and Andersen, 2023) In Oslo this way of building have been necessary without encroaching upon the surrounding forests (Hanssen, 2015, 18). However, this has led to reduced open space and decreased access to natural areas in the city center (Hanssen, 2015, 22). Recent research highlights the complexity and ambiguity of the term "sustainability" in relation to densification strategies, revealing unequal distribution of

sustainable development in Oslo. Cavicchia (2021) argues that neoliberal influences in the planning system exacerbate social exclusion, leading to inequality. Andersen et al. (2018) suggests a fundamental conflict of interest between environmental and social strategies for sustainability and claims that the increase of private spaces might hinder the integration of broader elements of collective urban planning. The expanding literature on densification is uncovering significant socioeconomic divides and emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social and spatial factors in pursuing sustainability (Cavicchia, 2021; Venter *et al.*, 2023).

4.3. City of difference

One year prior before Oslo was granted the title of a sustainable city, Ljunggren (2018) drew attention to the significant socio-economic disparities within the city- raising a crucial question about who truly benefits from Oslo's proclaimed urban sustainability. Akerselva river is a natural gem starting in the northern forest and reaching its outlet in Bjørvika, but is also considered a dividing line between East and West Oslo (Østerud, 2005; Haarstad *et al.*, 2021). The socio-geographical divide in Oslo has deep historical roots and was further accentuated during the period of industrialization. Since the latter half of the 1800s, the primary urban divide shifted from urban versus rural to East versus West, with a geographical divide that surpasses many other European cities (Wessel, 2001). Oslo remains strongly characterized as a socially divided city.

In a book on the division of Oslo, contributors point out significant differences in health, school segregation, and housing standards (Ljunggren, 2018). The east-west dichotomy has varied socially, with the far east becoming a more burdened area and the inner east acquiring a more diverse social character through gentrification (Brattbakk and Wessel, 2013). Inequality between the poor and rich is larger in Oslo compared to the rest of the country, and it is increasing. Income and housing segregation in Oslo are closely associated, historically favoring affluent areas in the west and working-class areas in the east. Affluent areas are less accessible to low-income households, and housing policies in Oslo have historically prioritized housing construction for middle- and high-income households (Wessel, 2001; Ljunggren, 2018). Furthermore, discrimination in the housing market based on ethnicity

and immigration status makes it difficult for ethnic minorities to access housing in more affluent areas.

Segregation in Oslo can be traced back to the neoliberalization of the housing market in the 1980s, characterized by deregulation and privatization, resulting in a lack of price regulations across different housing segments (Wessel, 2001; Tammaru *et al.*, 2016). The consequences of densification strategies in Oslo have resulted in the concentration of high-income individuals in specific areas of the city, while low-income individuals are more dispersed throughout (Andersen *et al.*, 2018; Ljunggren, 2018). This socio-geographical divide is particularly evident along the waterfront, notably in Bjørvika (Andersen and Røe, 2017). Røe and Andersen attribute this divide to the concentration of knowledge-based companies in Barcode and the involvement of private planning processes, which may contribute to Fjord City becoming a place primarily for selected social categories (2017, 333). Efforts have been made to address the issue of affordable housing in Oslo, especially in areas with higher poverty levels. However, the effectiveness of regulations imposed on private developers in consistently addressing housing prices and amenities is questionable, and the implementation of these measures varies (Bergsli, 2015).

4.4. International competition

In recent years, cities worldwide have adopted culture-led urban development as a strategy to attract tourists and investors, increase economic growth, and transform underutilized urban areas (Von der Weppen and Cochrane, 2012). It represents entrepreneurial strategies where a significant aspect is to market cities internationally through cultural institutions and symbolic buildings to drive regeneration and economic growth (Perić, 2020). Being a frequent occurrence in waterfront redevelopment, culture-led development is a particularly visible approach in the Fjord City (Skrede, 2013; Bergsli, 2015). Oslo has applied this strategy in a conscious attempt to market itself as an attractive city, often accompanied by the sustainable terminology (Andersen and Røe, 2017). The strategy aims to market Oslo as an attractive city to attract tourists, investors, and companies, using culture and grandiose architecture as leverage. Oslo's international strategy is for example underlined in the Municipal Plan for Oslo 2015: "As a capital region and dominant business center, Oslo must be the natural gateway to the Norwegian market and a preferred location for head offices and the establishment of

international companies. As a capital of culture, Oslo will be a sought-after arena for festivals and cultural events and a workplace for innovative artists. (...) To keep up with international developments, Oslo must have the ambition to better use its innovation potential" (2015, 16).

Heidi Bergsli (2015) has studied Fjord City in Oslo as an example of culture-led urban development. In relation to the previously mentioned socioeconomic divide- she emphasizes that Fjord City has become an area for the most affluent in society, with amenities and housing prices that cater to this group, while simultaneously excluding other segments of the population. This is symbolized through modern architecture and exclusive amenities, while the surrounding areas lack significant investment in infrastructure and culture. Skrede further explores the impact of international competition on the urban experience, specifically highlighting the transformation of Bjørvika into a cultural hub with the presence of institutions such as the Munch Museum, Deichmann Library, and the opera. However, this development has faced criticism for its exclusivity, serving the interests of specific social classes or groups (Andersen and Røe, 2017). While investing in culture and public institutions is crucial for fostering positive urban experiences, critics highlight the issue of their concentration in high-priced areas causing challenges for accessibility. For example, the Munchmuseum was recently moved from Tøyen, where it previously stood as a vital cultural attraction in the eastern district, to the far end of Bjørvika where it now prides the waterfront. The presence of cultural institutions primarily at the waterfront raise concerns regarding the exacerbation of spatial inequality and the erosion of an equitable urban landscape. These developments can contribute to gentrification, displacement, and the erosion of local identity, raising questions about equity and inclusivity in urban development. This calls for comprehensive approaches that prioritize social cohesion and address the socioeconomic divide in Oslo's urban landscape.

CHAPTER 5

Case: Reimagining Oslo
as a modern Fjord City

5. Reimagining Oslo as a modern Fjord City

"Oslo is a city by the fjord. This natural quality has been poorly taken care of. Contact between the center and the fjord is minimal. (...) Oslo now has opportunities to rehabilitate itself as a city with an attractive waterfront – a waterfront with a rationally run port, and with other functions in addition. A seaside location where it is possible to live, work, relax, do business, buy shrimps, have fun, meet people - come to town and travel from it. Oslo has the chance to become a happier city" (Oslo By Vel, 1983, 5)

5.1. Fjord City redevelopment

Attempts to open the fjord to the city began already in the 80's after organizational initiatives to give the water back to the public. Planners travelled to see waterfront redevelopment to inspire the repurposing, looking mainly to Baltimore where the waterfront had become an attractive destination (Bern, 2022). The first initiative to create a *cohesive* plan for the waterfront was forwarded by the Association of Norwegian Landscape Architects and the Oslo Heritage Society twenty years later (Bergsli, 2020, 3). With objectives of addressing deindustrialization, economic decline, and lack of business establishment, the two associations collaborated in creating a competition called "The City and the Fjord- Oslo year 2000" (Bergsli, 2020). As ideas of doing something to the waterfront had been present already since the 80's, the competition gained recognition and funding from both public and private entities (Oslo By Vel, 1983). A jury consisting of members from the Aker group, Oslo planning authorities, Oslo Port and architectural firms evaluated close to 200 proposals. Based on the winning proposals, the jury provided recommendations for the city authorities to use as design principles for future plans, based on densification, multi-functionality, recreation and public space. This way of using competition in a way to delegate design would later become a prevailing method for Bjørvika (Bern, 2017). A suggestion for cohesive design and repurposing was put forward to the city council in 2000. The regulation plan was accepted by city council in 2003, and in 2008 the overall vision of the waterfront project was consolidated in The Fjord city Plan when it was adopted by Oslo municipality.

The Fjord City redevelopment is described as the largest urban development project in Norway since the fire in 1624 (Ljunggren, 2018). Stretching from Frognerkilen in the west to Loenga in the east, the area covers 2,261 acres (approximately 3095 football fields) and is parted into 11 sub-areas. Fjord City opened for a reimagined waterfront where urban life and

water are interconnected and considerate of Oslo's rich history with water while placing sustainability at the heart of the project. To maintain the coherence in sub-projects planners made development principles with the main goals to preserve the integrity of the waterfront while creating a vibrant and inclusive area that provides benefits and services to all its users (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2008). The principles emphasize the importance of public spaces, such as common areas, parks, and a harbor promenade. The landscape should be available to its residents and users for their enjoyment and recreational purposes- it is a means of giving the waterfront back to the city through restoring visual and physical axes of openness to increase the quality of life for residents (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2008). The vision was further enhanced by promoting Oslo as an international and sustainable city. Transforming the waterfront was overwhelmed by elements suggestive of culture, contemporary architecture, business, and international competition- the Fjord City project would open the waterfront to Oslo and the world (Bergsli, 2020). Though as stated by Bern (2017, 4) urban goals are not rooted in scientific theoretical ground, but rather a product of Oslo's general urban strategy. Overall, the Fjord City aims to make the waterfront accessible and inclusive for all users and residents through public spaces like common areas, parks, and the harbor promenade, emphasizing the opportunity and right to enjoy the waterfront and its recreational values (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003c, 2008).

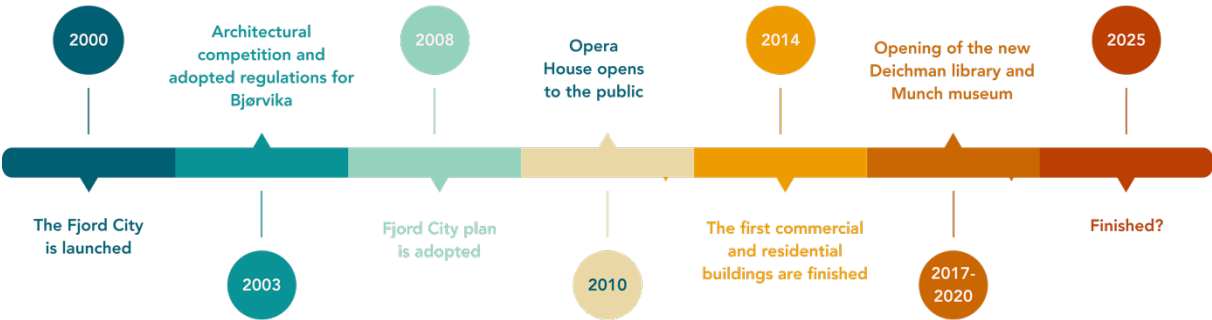


Figure 4: Timeline of the Fjord City development.

5.2. Bjørvika

Geographically, Bjørvika is a central borough located between Akershus Fortress and Gamlebyen (Old City). It is a flat area that serves as an inlet for the Oslofjord. While it is part of eastern Oslo both geographically and administratively, the redevelopment of the area has led to a contrasting social profile. Bjørvika is now predominantly occupied by high-income earners, which has sparked discussions about its fit within the eastern characteristics and its contribution to an artificial identity (Røe and Andersen, 2018; Olsen, 2019). Bjørvika is known for its contemporary architecture and is home to high-knowledge businesses, luxury apartments, public spaces, and restaurants. Moreover, it houses the country's most important cultural institutions, including the Norwegian Opera and Ballet, the Munch Museum, and the new Deichmanske main library.

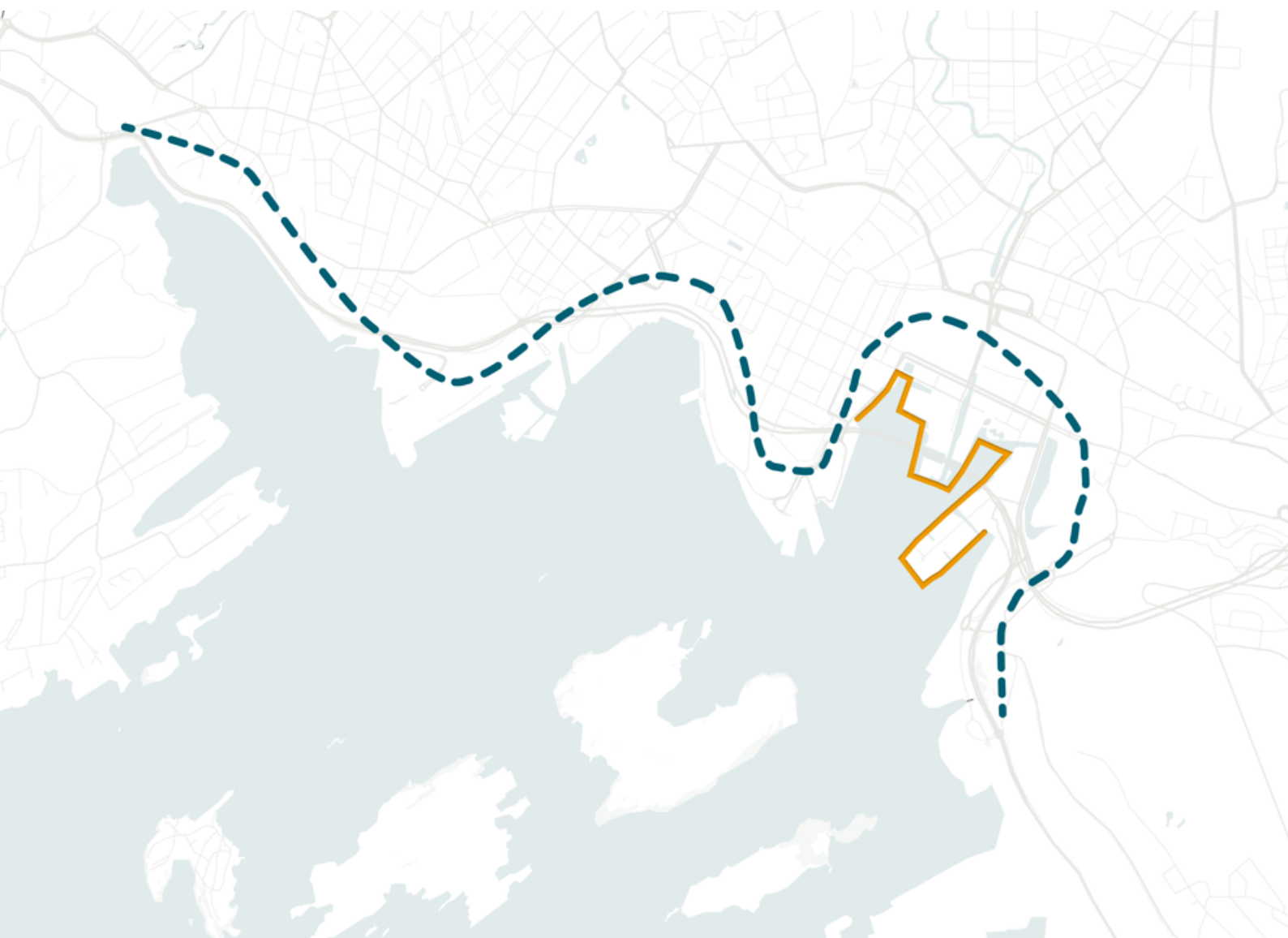
The downscaling of the industry in Bjørvika has resulted in its detachment from the rest of Oslo, as access to the area was limited by a broad railroad and traffic veins. Its traffic junction reflects Bjørvika's cultural heritage as a historically prominent area in early settlements and its significance as a transportation hub. As the largest sub-development in the Fjord City project, it became evident that Bjørvika would emerge as a new urban center, serving as a beacon for Oslo's waterfront. Today, Bjørvika is characterized by grandiose architecture and renowned cultural institutions that enhance the view toward the city center, presenting a stark contrast to the industrial landscape that existed before the year 2000. The remarkable architectural designs and cultural establishments in Bjørvika contribute to its transformation into a visually captivating and vibrant area. In an appendix to the regulation plan, the significance of Bjørvika is described as follows:

The Bjørvika area must contribute to the further development of the city of Oslo as a capital and core area in the Oslo region. (...) Bjørvika will be the gateway to Norway's capital appear as an expression of modern Norwegian urban culture and identity in architectural art, technology, and sustainable urban development. By accommodating both the capital and strategic business and cultural functions strengthen Oslo city center as a marketplace, meeting place, event and cultural arena.

(Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003, 16)

The Opera House played a crucial role in setting the tone for the significance of Bjørvika and the overall Fjord City development. Its construction began in 2000, coinciding with the initiation of the fjord development plans. The planning and construction process was notable, as the original design was altered based on feedback from the former planning director, who emphasized accessibility, as the original design cut off direct access to the water. This led to a new design for the National Opera House and ballet, which was widely embraced by both locals and tourists when it opened in 2008 (Bergsli, 2020). The building's grandeur harmoniously blends with the surrounding landscape, merging with the water and providing pedestrian access to the waterfront. The Opera House became a highly successful public space, garnering praise and generating increased interest and investment in the Fjord City Project. It also served as a catalyst in creating a positive perception among the public, laying the foundation for future redevelopment efforts- albeit later construction got a different reception from the public (Slettholm, 2012; Skrede, 2013).

Figure 5: Scope of the Fjord City, Bjørvika outlined in orange.



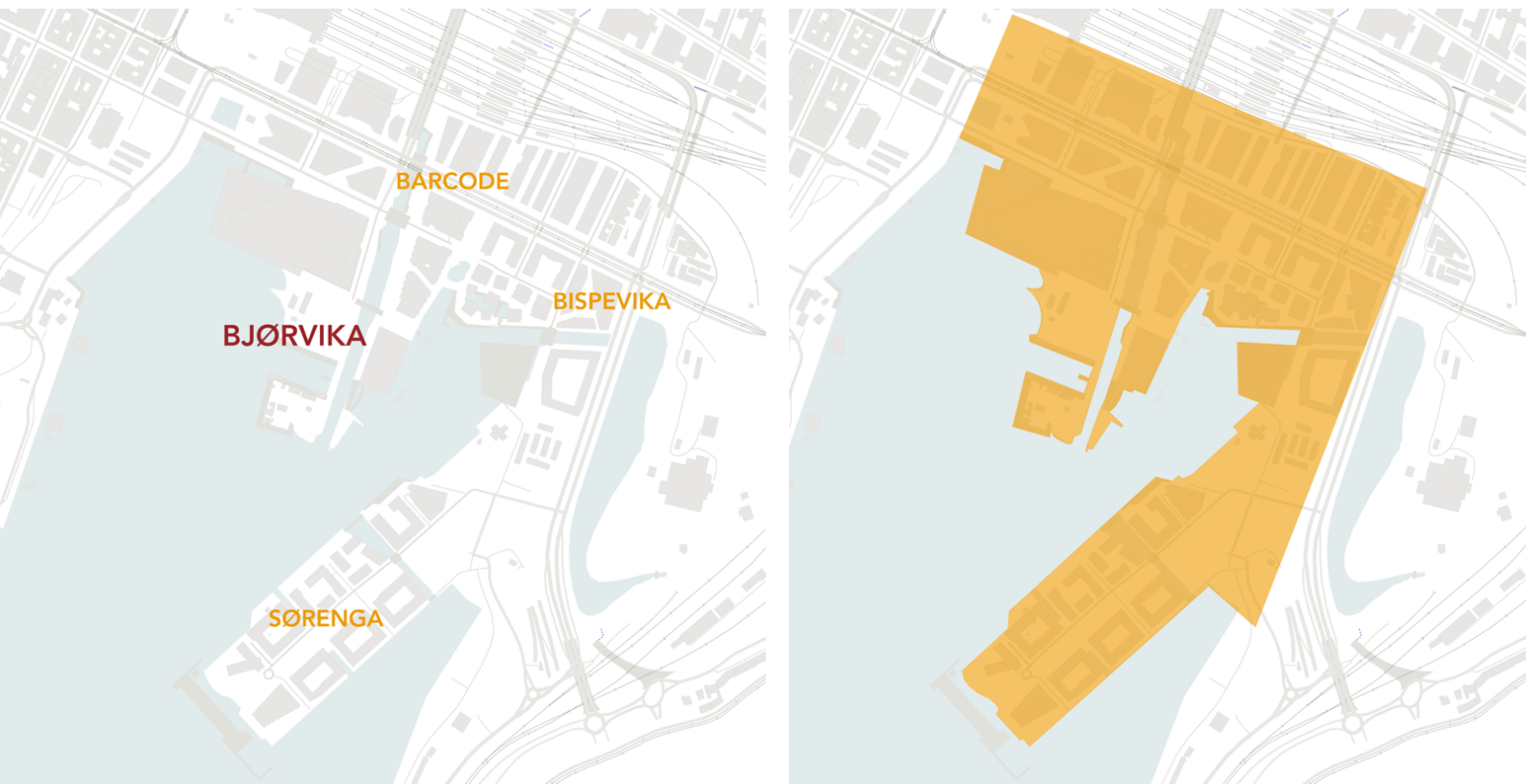


Figure 6: Outline of Bjørvika case and relevant sub-areas.

Goals and visions

Goals, visions, and plans for Bjørvika are primarily communicated through the Bjørvika Utvikling website, the Fjord City plan (2008), the regulation plan (2003), and supplementary appendixes (2003). These sources outline the overarching goals and visions, physical design, land use allocation, and responsibilities- providing rigorous plans for the area that leaves little to the imagination. Although Bjørvika consists of sub-areas, it has been planned as a unified development. Achieving this required significant changes to the area's ownership structure and legislative adjustments (Bern, 2022). The outcome has been substantial private-public partnerships that have enabled municipal agencies and owners to engage in property development.

The main strategies of the development focus on establishing public spaces and creating accessibility to the waterfront through an inward axis to the city and a traffic-free ocean promenade with appealing stops along the coast. The main ambition for the Bjørvika area is to develop as a continuation of Oslo's distinctive character, with the length of the project being entirely publicly accessible (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003, 16). Moreover, Bjørvika should be a core destination within the region as a gateway to the capital and appear as a modern expression of Norwegian urban culture in art, technology and sustainability (2003, 16). Generally, Bjørvika is envisioned to be aesthetically pleasing, functionally diverse, and sustainable, offering a variety of residences, commercial spaces, cultural, and recreational activities. The intent is to cater to all, meeting the needs of various population groups throughout different life stages (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003, 16). The planning documents also envision a diverse range of activities and housing options to attract various population groups and achieve universal accessibility. For example, a 2017 report outlines plans to achieve ten percent affordable housing to ensure social mix and diversity (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2017).

Despite the original visions for Fjord City and Bjørvika, research indicates that the area has already become a haven for affluent residents, tourists, and investors (Andersen and Røe, 2016; Bergsli, 2015). While most of the project has been completed, the final phases, including Loenga and Kongshavn, are scheduled for completion by 2035. Once the area is fully developed around 2035, Bjørvika will encompass approximately 5,000 apartments, provide around 25,000 jobs, feature 3.1 km of harbor promenade, and dedicate approximately 30 hectares (40% of the entire development) to parks and public urban spaces (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2018).

Main landowner has described the goals of public space:

"The main goal for the urban spaces in Bjørvika is that they should have high quality, varied content and contribute to creating an urban environment for the good of those who visit, live and work in the district." (Bjørvika Utvikling, 2018).



Photo 6 (top): Bjørvika 1998 (Lasse Tur).

Photo 7 (bottom): Bjørvika, 2018 (Google maps).

CHAPTER 6

Analysis

6. Analysis

Bjørvika symbolizes a landscape with unique relationships between the urban environment, the water, and the people. It has been undergoing a specific transformation since 2008, with public space and accessibility underlining the scope of the project.

Over the past decades, there has been a significant increase in residential and commercial interest in waterfront areas, which several scholars associated to neoliberal policies and new urban governance strategies where private entities increasingly prevalent in the planning and execution of public space. By adopting a landscape democracy and rights framework, the analysis investigates whether similar factors have been elements of contestations in the Oslo waterfront. The following analysis is parted in two to answer the research question of how the Fjord City redevelopment has impacted accessibility and enjoyment of the waterfront landscape in Bjørvika. The first part will be related to how democratic principles of landscape are considered in planning, ownership and execution, while the second part will deal with how these regulations are met by users, using measurements of accessibility as a symbol of right.

Photo 8: Oslo byleksikon.



Part 1: Plans, Ownership, and Regulation

In Bjørvika, accessibility and democracy are contextualized by established premises and tools at municipal and ministry levels. These frameworks are fundamental for public and private actors in realizing redevelopment and laying down an important framework for how the waterfront is experienced. Part 1 is connected to the first goals of the research question and examines the landscape contestation in Fjord City, specifically focusing on Bjørvika's development plan, exploring the implications of planning, ownership, regulation, and production of space. This will involve examining the power dynamics, and values of both public and private actors involved. While acknowledging the complexity of legislation and policy, the study concentrates on the commitments and goals related to landscape democracy and the critical characteristics of the planning process. As is prefaced in the theoretical framework, this initial development phase is crucial for establishing democratic values and enabling democratic influence in the project. By examining these factors, the study aims to provide insights into how public and private influences are incorporated into development policy and what regulations were accounted for initially. The findings will contribute to understanding the planning system's strengths and weaknesses in Bjørvika and provide insights into potential enhancements for achieving a fair and accessible landscape. Additionally, this research will illustrate the involvement of various actors, primarily the municipality, private developers, and landscape users, in the planning process.

6.1. Planning and the beginning of private influence

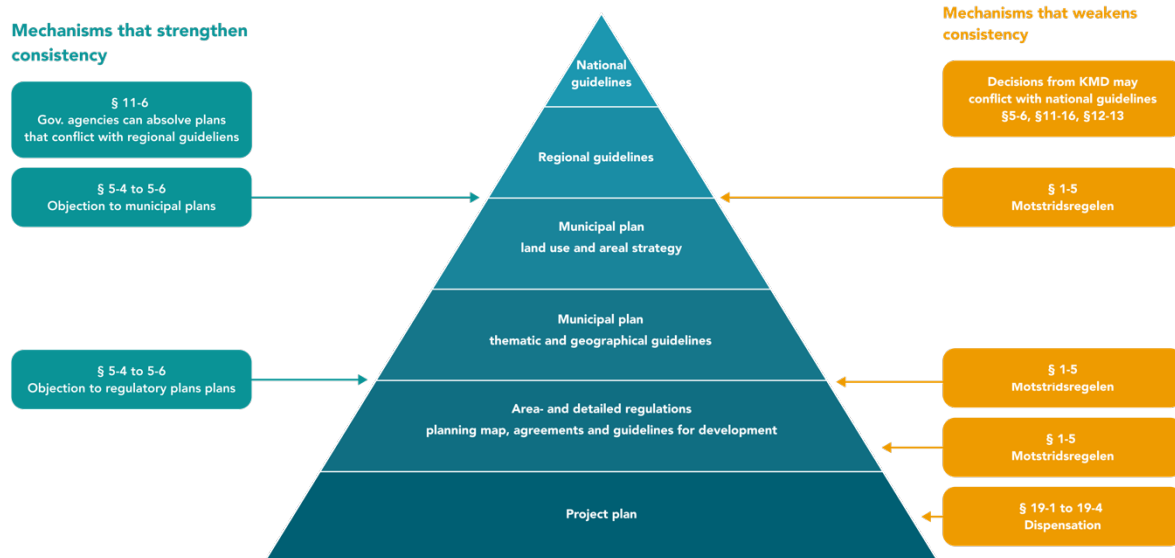


Figure 7. Planning hierarchy in Norway (reproduced after Stokstad et al., 2020).

The Oslo city council initiated a fjord redevelopment plan in 2000 after receiving public engagement since the 80s. The zoning plans for Bjørvika were created in 2003, and the official Fjord City plan was adopted in 2008. Even before 2000, small-scale interventions at the waterfront had already begun. Tjuvholmen, located further west, was transformed following inspiration from waterfront redevelopments in other parts of the world, particularly the US. It became an attractive place with restaurants and some of the city's most expensive apartments (Bern, 2022, 173). While it appeared public and was used as a popular tourist destination, it was privately owned and regulated by private security (Bjerkeset and Aspen, 2017). Nonetheless, elements of this preliminary development were incorporated into the overall planning process of Bjørvika and Fjord City.

During most of the 20th century, public concern influenced the urban development with Oslo municipality acting as an urban planner (Andersen and Røe, 2017, 308). Still, much of the responsibility is delegated to the private market today with municipal governance working more as a regulatory power (Andersen and Røe, 2017, 309). Oslo municipality is responsible for planning and regulating how the city will develop. Still, the actors who equip the city are a long line of authorities, enterprises, institutions, agencies, and traders (Oslo kommune, no date). The triangle above displays the planning hierarchy that regulates the interaction between three democratically chosen levels of government: National, Regional, and local

(Stokstad *et al.*, 2020). All levels are equipped with instruments to impact the final result, but the most crucial authority lies with the municipality- the local government (Hanssen and Millstein, 2021, 84).

However, during the time between the first suggestion of the Fjord City and the revised plan in 2008, there were considerable changes to the responsibility of central actors in urban planning, and private actors have gotten an essential role in the planning hierarchy (Falleth, Saglie and Hanssen, 2010). The Plan and building act of 1985 represented a major legislative change in Norway. It allowed private actors to submit privately developed plans for political approval- representing the start of large-scale neoliberal urban planning in Norway (Bern, 2022). Though the municipality sets limitations, private actors primarily develop the properties and are practically responsible for realizing policy guidelines (Bergsli, 2015, 18). Today, most planning suggestions are market-oriented; Falleth *et al.* found that in 2010 90% of all regulatory plans were forwarded by external private actors (2010, 64). These must comply with laws, regulations, and plans that set the framework for development. However, developers have considerable flexibility within these parameters as the municipal program does not specify accessibility in terms of prices or what amenities can be established.

6.2. Actors and ownership organization

Given the complexity of ownership and the size of the area, before planning the waterfront it was necessary to ratify initial agreements to address ownership structures, organize the redevelopment and determine financial commitments (Vibe, 2007). Initially, there were three large owners in the area: Oslo Port Authority (OHV)/ Oslo municipality, ROM Properties (subsidiary of VY- national railway), and Oslo S Utvikling (OSU). The establishment of a joint property company was deemed necessary to facilitate the overall development of the area and ensure comprehensive solutions rather than individual landowners solely pursuing their own property interests. This company would prioritize collective functions in planning and promote high utilization while incorporating shared facilities. In July 2001, discussions between landowners and the Oslo municipality began regarding public-private partnerships for this project. Subsequently, an agreement was reached between the state, Oslo municipality, and major landowners to initiate negotiations promptly to establish the joint property company.

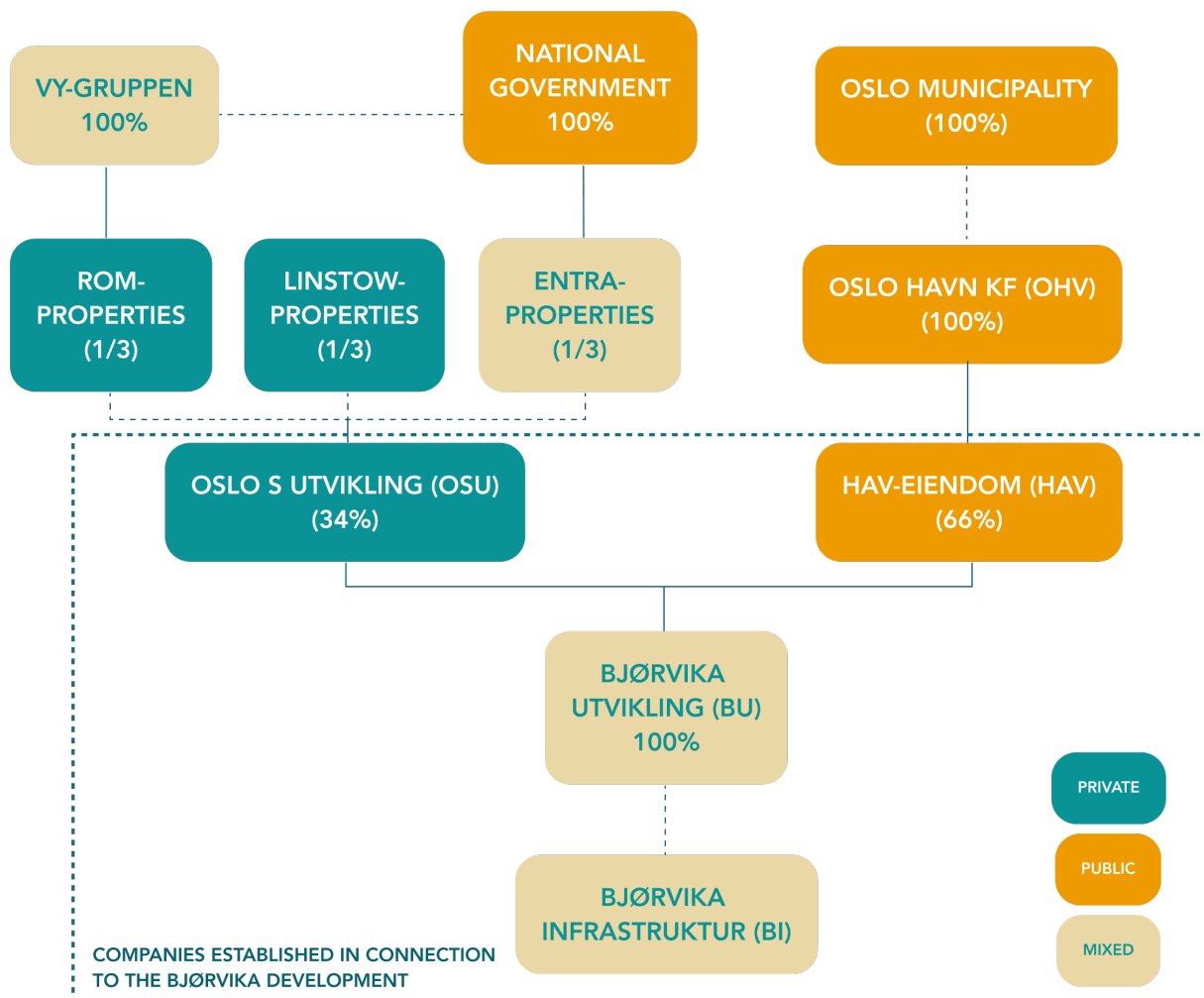


Figure 8: Ownership structure of Bjørvika.

OHV has historically been the principal landowner and administrator along the waterfront in Oslo, granting specific rights through the Harbor Act, which assumes that the area is used for harbor-related purposes (Whist and Christensen, 2012, 68). However, if going on an economic limb, this would only support executing a large-scale redevelopment for mixed-use. The government, therefore, put forward a legislative change called the harbor act 2002, which enabled OHV to enter property development (Whist and Christensen, 2012, 68). They created a subsidiary called HAV- properties to take advantage of the legislative change, which have since been a major actor in the redevelopment with 66% ownership. The remaining 34% are owned by Oslo S Utvikling (OSU)- a real estate company and property developer specifically established in 2001 to develop the Barcode of Bjørvika and is still involved in the current development process. In turn OSU is owned by three companies with 1/3 stake, two of which are subsidiaries of the national government. As landowners, OSU and HAV established

Bjørvika utvikling (BU) with to be a joint interest- and coordinating body for the landowners when dealing with public authorities in the development and expansion of the area ((Whist and Christensen, 2012, 70). Initially the municipal agency of property would be a coordinating actor between the municipality and developers, but this role was later reduced and taken over by BI.

BU's website stated that the parties entered an agreement where the main purpose was to ensure that public functions would receive a holistic approach. However, documents from 2001 reveal that the primary goal of the joint company was partial to market profits: "The purpose of the company shall be to ensure comprehensive and good urban development in the area as well as to ensure the owners the highest possible increase in value of the properties." (Oslo kommune 2001). Though there is a strong emphasis on public space and accessibility in plans and goals, the market- and growth-oriented goals show that the plans for Bjørvika have a strong neoliberal influence, in accordance with what Harvey describes as entrepreneurial planning (1989). This is underlined by the private-public partnerships where the public influence is diminished, and they act more like private companies.

Public-private cooperation is common under neoliberal governance but is also necessary in large-scale development as public means are limited (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez, 2002). This constellation makes it possible to favor a large and holistic development. The problem however that often occurs in waterfront redevelopment is a contestation of local planning systems, often favoring economic growth and elitism while disregarding public and democratic influence is neglected (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez, 2002). In the case of Bjørvika, legislative changes were made to reduce fragmentation by keeping ownership within public subsidiaries and providing them with the necessary resources to become property developers. However, this has also concentrated ownership among the two major landowners, HAV and OSU. Although the municipality initially owned the majority of the space, the ownership structure has been altered, potentially reinforcing existing power dynamics. Subsidiaries of public entities or the municipality may be subject to public directives but function as independent companies (Bern, 2017, 9).



Photo 9: "Fjord City: owned by you and me" Signage marketing public ownership of Bjørvika, presented by HAV properties (Thea Wikander, 2023).

6.3. Regulatory tools for Bjørvika

After the competition initiated by NLA, Oslo Heritage community, and Oslo municipality in 2000, proposals gained public attention as six of them were awarded (Bergsli, 2020, 4). The main outcome of this initiative was that the general principles for the area development were set and that they became part of further regulation. Following the signing of the development agreement in 2003 under the shared objective of enabling comprehensive development, Oslo adopted the regulation plan for the remaining stages of development (Whist and Christensen, 2012). The involvement of public and private actors, initiated by the government, allowed for the development of public space, apartments, and businesses. This process aimed to benefit both the private sector and the public. Their commitment to the regulatory plan is attributed to how Bjørvika has successfully aligned with plan goals (Whist and Christensen, 2012).

The key document in this context is the zoning plan, anchored in the Plan and Building Act of 2008, and binding for all stakeholders. Since it was adopted in 2003 it has represented a fixed legal framework (Bergsli, 2020). They provide the planning authority with instructions on prioritizing relevant considerations and circumstances when enforcing legal provisions. During the assessment of building plans and framework permission applications, the Planning and Building Agency highlights these guidelines, allowing for deviations within the framework of the zoning plan if the overall objectives are maintained (designhåndbok, 6). Changes to the guidelines within the provisions of the zoning plan can be made without necessitating new

political procedures, and such changes can be initiated by the planning authority or proposed by others. Additionally, a handbook accompanied by three appendices was adopted to ensure aesthetic, cultural, and environmental quality and spatial cohesion. This vision was enhanced by emphasizing Oslo's identity as a green and competitive city.

Reguleringsforslag Bjørvika- Bispevika - Lohavn

The regulation plan for the area Bjørvika, Bispevika, and Lohavn lay down general guidelines and structure for the development to ensure Bjørvika becomes a pride and joy for Oslo's population (2003, 6). The main goals are to ensure a holistic urban development of Oslo's most important port- and traffic veins and provide a blueprint for involved actors. In line with plans and building laws, it lays down certain regulations for what the area must entail, especially to ensure quality in the meeting between the fjord and city and become a contemporary symbol of Oslo (Bjørvika Utvikling, 2023). It was approved by the city council in 2003 with a conservative majority.

Regarding the composition, the regulation states that 40% of the space should be set aside for property development, 40% for parks, promenades, and common space, and the remaining 20% for streets in sidewalks. §5 provides building regulations, stating that the height should offer variation, and the ground level should be of public service. §15.4 states that the public promenade should have an average width of 20 meters to ensure pedestrian cyclists' access and still have leisure space. §15.5 states that designated swimming areas should satisfy recreation, activities, and leisure needs. According to the plan there will be room for flexibility for future solutions as the construction itself is delegated to external actors and will not be detail regulated until several years after the plan is accepted. This agrees with the comment that private actors have a lot of leeway in municipal plans. Thus, public accessibility to water is a prevailing principle of the plan. Worth mentioning that these seem general at times due to a lack of detail.

Photo 10 (below): Regulation plan ([Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003](#)).

Designhåndbok – Bærekraft I Bjørvika

In connection with the zoning plan for Bjørvika, Bispevika and Lohavn, a design manual was prepared as an indicative appendix¹. This is an important expansion of the regulation plan, specifying quality and aesthetic goals. The design manual (DHB) contains guidelines for outdoor areas, piers, streets, parks, and buildings, and their interaction- forming a basis for further work in the planning area (Designhåndbok, 2003, 6). It emphasizes that Bjørvika must strengthen Oslo's identity as a fjord city while complementing the surrounding districts. Bjørvika should not be a nuisance, but a positive addition of urban qualities that are missing from the inner east (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2004, 16). The DHB specifies that the commons are universally accessible, and each should have an urban uniqueness to underline the relationship between land and water, and also stresses requirements for facilitating public use in the area between the buildings (2003, 32-33).

Kulturoppfølgingsprogram – Bærekraft I Bjørvika

The cultural follow-up program (KOP) concretizes ambitions and expectations for the cultural dimension in the new district (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003b). It gives concrete recommendations to give a cultural profile to Bjørvika. KOP also provides guidelines that must form the basis for all work within the planning area. The plan highlights the unique potential of Bjørvika to supplement Norway as a whole in line with national decisions regarding the placement of the new Opera house in the area (Whist and Christensen, 2012). The appendix indirectly comments on using neoliberal and entrepreneur-based instruments in urban development (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003, 11). It states that culture is used as a competitive factor to build a positive vision and branding of Oslo (2003, 12). To ensure a good cultural offer, the plan stipulates that associated areas must be public and flexible (2003, 17). This is followed up with a recommendation to the landowners and plan and building authority that states "All measures that may limit/reduce certain user groups' accessibility to, and use of, the district must be prevented. Measures that lead to the privatization of public

¹ One more appendix was made in addition to the design manual containing the environmental program. Together they make up a manual named "Sustainability in Bjørvika". The latter have not been described as it is not relevant for the research question. Furthermore, five more thematic documents were released which provide specific recommendations for quality of the space. That can be explored further here: <https://www.bjorvikautvikling.no/portfolio-item/planer/>

spaces are avoided” – reflecting an understanding of how private regulation limit publicness (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003, 18).

6.4. Participation and production of space

When evaluating the effectiveness of the combined efforts of public-private companies and consecutive regulations in addressing accessibility, it is essential to consider the extent to which democratic influence has been considered. According to the theoretical framework, participation stands out as the most legitimate form of influence on public space, making it a key factor in realizing the right to the landscape. In general, the participation process plays a critical role in ensuring that projects accurately reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities. Participatory measures are normally laid down to involve the community in the planning process and ensure that the plans align with the desires of the local population and promote a sense of ownership (Crane, Matten and Moon, 2004). As mentioned, Norway has mandatory commitments to participation in planning in plan and building act 2008, in planning. Though the municipality has the responsibility to facilitate open dialogue and ensure that various groups can voice their concerns in both private and public developments, there is a lack of special requirements on how it has to be carried out (Falleth, Saglie and Hanssen, 2010; Bern and Røe, 2022; *Plan og bygningsloven*, § 5-1). Studies on participation in Norwegian planning have identified a disconnection between the intended principles of the law and their actual implementation (Ringholm, Nyseth and Sandkjær Hanssen, 2018). Interestingly, the law permits delegating planning initiatives to private developers, granting them significant influence and an active, proactive role. Citizens frequently find themselves in a passive, reactive role, perceiving the planning process as lacking transparency and being difficult to engage with (Bern, 2017; Ringholm, Nyseth and Sandkjær Hanssen, 2018).

The concept of Fjord City emerged through a civic intake, with suggestions presented to the public, generating substantial interest, and resembling a public hearing. Before the adoption of regulation plans by the city council, these plans underwent a public hearing, demonstrating a commitment to participatory processes as a key element in the planning hierarchy. This indicates a dedication to participatory compliance. Furthermore, the public has been informed about the ongoing process through online information channels (BU). One notable flaw of the participation process in Bjørvika was the lack of support from the public

when the project was initially presented. According to Bergsli, the public expressed concern that the area would be physically removed from its eastern district (Bergsli, 2020, 14). As most housing has been developed, the concern has manifested in an ongoing criticism of the lack of housing accessibility for lower-income classes (Slettholm, 2012; Bergsli, 2015; Røe and Andersen, 2018). This has led to Bjørvika being referred to as an *enclave* for wealthy citizens who oppose characteristics of the adjacent eastern district (Andersen and Røe, 2017; Yngvild Margrete, 2019).

Competition has played a significant role in the discourse surrounding Bjørvika, influencing both the area's significance for Oslo as a whole and its development process. Contemporary cities commonly compete with globally renowned architectural firms to market their respective waterfront as modern frontiers for emerging trends (Madanipour, 1999; Gabr, 2004). It has been argued that the competition format used for the project has contributed to a lack of participation (Bern, 2017, 2022; Bern and Røe, 2022). One key issue is the involvement of foreign companies, which poses a cultural challenge. While there is a strong emphasis on preserving Oslo's identity in the plans, foreign firms may struggle to authentically replicate the necessary characteristics and create a public space that meets local needs. The architectural design of Bjørvika has primarily been entrusted to a Dutch firm. In an interview, it appears that the firm perceived Oslo's urbanity as traditional and boring, prompting them to aim for an international transformation through their design (Andersen and Røe, 2017, 312). While they were required to adhere to specific regulations, their main priority was to comply with goals set by the property developers of creating an attractive area that would generate revenue. Another aspect that emerged from interviews with architects is that the participation process was considered complete once the assignments were handed over to different actors. While architects and planners initially expressed a positive stance towards participation, Bern and Røe highlight that the conceptualization of participation through competition and public hearings was a selective and curated approach to democracy. The public's indirect representation was only presented with limited proposals (Bern, 2017). As the planning has aided capital accumulation, there is an inherent contradiction between public interest and the ownership of land (Matthews and Satsangi, 2007, 496).

6.5. Summary Part 1

The creation of space in Bjørvika is a result of a complex relationship between political, economic, and cultural factors. Part displayed the relationship between public and private involvement in Bjørvika. We see that Norway, Oslo, and specifically the Fjord City regulations have had a clear approach to accessibility. This is displayed through the use of publicness, culture, social, sustainability, which is frequently mentioned both in public and the planner's documents, notably aligning with the literature on the right to landscape. The development goals of Bjørvika prioritize both public functions and market profits, reflecting a strong neoliberal influence. The regulatory tools for Bjørvika serve as a legal framework that emphasizes Oslo's identity as a green and competitive city, allowing for deviations within its provisions. However, meaningful participation and democracy in urban planning are often lacking, creating tensions and challenges. It is important that local democracy is taken into consideration, as is reflected in the plan hierarchy, so that all parties can influence the planning process in its early stages. However, that is not the case (Falleth & Hanssen, 2015:187). The demand for participation and democracy creates tensions and challenges in urban planning because meaningful involvement beyond the minimum requirement is uncommon. The current ownership and governance structure in Bjørvika present challenges in regulating it as a public space, as it is evident property developers have had motives that might deviate from publicness. The planning structure aligns with entrepreneurial and neoliberal governance, and because the lack of specificities in regulatory documents and fragmented governance have caused firstly, private developers to have a lot of leeway in the creation of Bjørvika, and this might have disregarded social aims set by the municipality.

Part 2: Accessibility and right to public space in Bjørvika

Access, as a measurement of the right to be somewhere, indicates how an area is experienced (Doi, Kii and Nakanishi, 2008). Space is planned, designed, produced, and assessed based on assumptions of what the space should become. As is apparent in a neoliberal urban planning, this is more likely to be representative of goals of designers and private actors, which does not necessarily address public needs (Carr *et al.*, 1992; Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez, 2002). Regarding waterfronts, accessibility is considered vital for a successful redevelopment project, and essential in creating inviting public spaces, mirroring the rhetorical visions for Bjørvika and Fjord City. Theoretically, public space should be accessible anytime, as defined in private and public space (Mitchell, 2003). But as privatization of space is frequent in urban waterfronts, the lines between public and private are becoming faint, contesting accessibility at the waterfront. Scholars highlight that there are significant variations to the concept of accessibility since its interdependency with other factors and its changes throughout the day - nature of the land use, physical and economic factors (Al Ansari, 2009; Lotfi and Koohsari, 2009; Jian, Luo and Chan, 2020). Carr *et al.* have combined both tangible and non-tangible factors in their measurement of accessibility. They use space's physical, visual, and symbolic aspects to assess how users experience it. Part 2 of the analysis builds upon Carr *et al.*'s (1992) conceptualization of accessibility to determine the right to the waterfront in Bjørvika, Oslo. Examining how users access different areas and aspects/services within this area will indicate how ownership, regulations (as discussed in Part 1), and development efforts have materialized in this specific part of the Fjord City. Furthermore, it allows us to assess how the developers have successfully fulfilled the municipal objectives of enhancing public access to the waterfront. This is contextualized by accessibility objectives in the plans and the historical context of Bjørvika to provide a comprehensive understanding of

socio-spatial experience. Finally, this investigation illuminates on the symbolic significance associated with achieving a sense of righteousness in the waterfront landscape of Oslo.

6.7. Physical accessibility

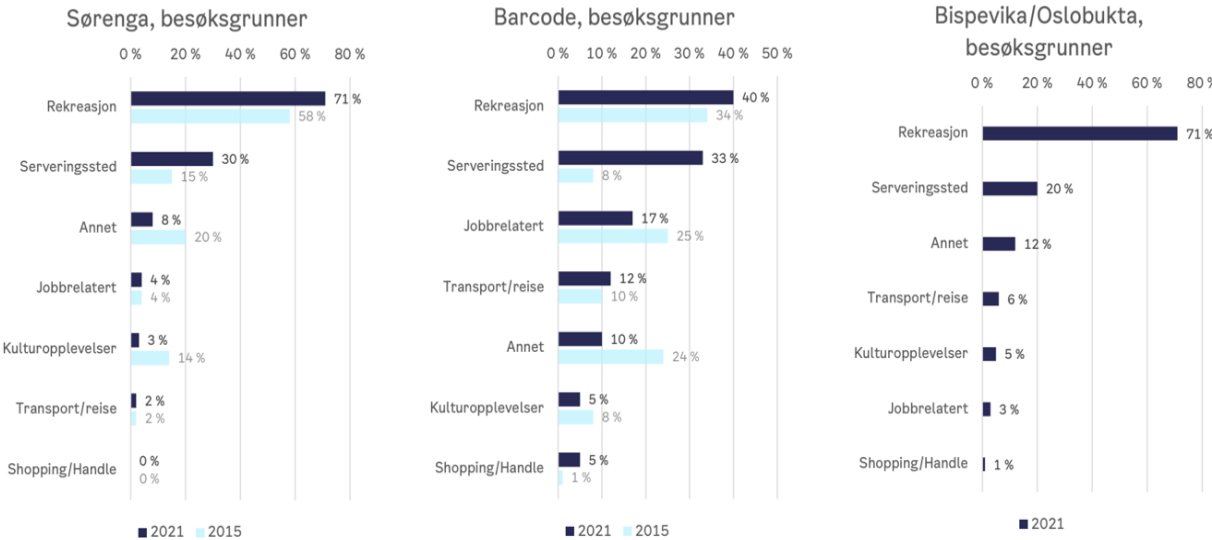
Physical accessibility is vital to ensuring equitable opportunities for individuals to access and engage with public spaces (Olwig, 2011). It involves examining tangible and intangible barriers that may impede access and movement within an area. Tangible elements within the landscape, such as maintenance, regulations, and physical barriers, can limit people's ability to fully utilize and enjoy a particular space (Olwig, 2011). Additionally, the provision of public spaces plays a crucial role in fostering inclusivity, democratic participation, and social cohesion (Carr *et al.*, 1992). In the context of Bjørvika and the Fjord City project, ensuring physical accessibility has been a key consideration. The Planning Agency's report in 2017 outlines the principles for the physical design of the area, highlighting the importance of public accessibility, diverse offerings, and connectivity between the city and the fjord (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2017). This indicates a commitment to creating an inclusive and connected waterfront space. It is essential to delve into the tangible aspects of Bjørvika's waterfront to assess the effectiveness of physical accessibility measures. By examining land use arrangements, the presence or absence of physical barriers, and the provision of amenities and infrastructure, we can gain insights into the degree of inclusivity and ease of movement within the area. This analysis will shed light on whether any physical or immaterial barriers hinder access and connectivity in Bjørvika and Fjord City, ultimately shaping the experiences and opportunities available to residents and visitors alike. By examining factors such as land use, infrastructure, amenities, and the presence of barriers, we can assess the extent to which Bjørvika promotes inclusive and barrier-free physical access for all individuals.

Composition, use and maintenance

The composition and use of Bjørvika are relevant in understanding physical accessibility as they provide insights into how the area is designed, organized, and utilized to facilitate or hinder people's ability to access and navigate the waterfront space. Firstly, it's relevant to describe the physical composition of the space regarding usage and how the regulatory allocations from 2003 have been realized. The physical composition of Bjørvika, like other

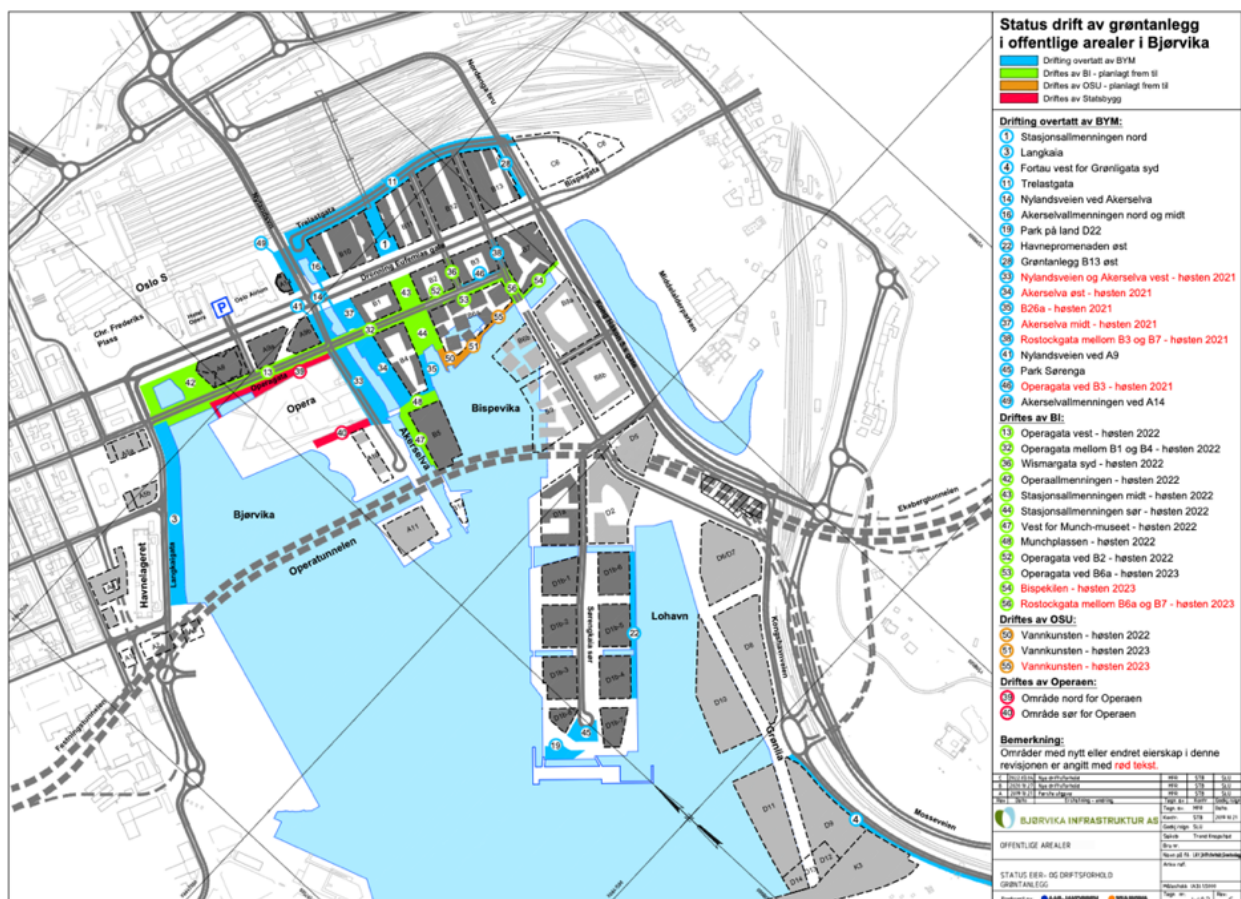
areas in Fjord City, is primarily characterized as a semi-public space. Recent calculations from 2019 indicate that there have been changes in the spatial distribution since the zoning plan of 2003 (BU). Buildings now occupy less than the originally allocated space, accounting for only 31%, while the street networks have expanded by 9%. The remaining area is still designated for public space and recreational activities, although ongoing construction in Bispevika and Lohavn may have introduced further changes in 2023 (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2022). Currently, Bjørvika accommodates approximately 20,000 workplaces and 5,000 residential units. It features eight commons, two beaches, four swimming areas, pedestrianized streets, and a 2.9 km uninterrupted promenade. In the context of Fjord City, a common refers to a public space connecting the water and the city, enhancing connectivity between different areas and streets (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2008). Over the past five years, there has been a significant rise in the number of people using the space, with a report on the area's demographics reveals that a larger proportion of individuals are now incorporating it into their daily routine- most likely due to the increase in amenities (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2022). An overwhelming majority use Bjørvika for recreational purposes. All though there is a high number of offices in the area, work poses a smaller reason. A subsequent section will provide further details regarding the users' demographics.

Figure 9: Reasons for visiting sub areas (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2022).



Private maintenance of public space, might threaten the democratic accessibility of public space as it prioritizes owners and is regulated as a private space (Harvey, 2011a). In Bjørvika, the public space responsibility is handed over to a municipal agency after completion, while the remaining areas are managed by landowners (see complete maintenance overview in map below) (Bjørvika utvikling, 2023). During field observations, the assessed areas were perceived as clean and well managed. On some occasions it has been mentioned that the quality of public space in Bjørvika have sunken, which might be a result of unclear division of responsibilities between private and public, which is often the case in waterfronts (Davidson, 2012). Private maintenance in Bjørvika can hinder accessibility to public spaces by prioritizing commercial interests, such as high-priced restaurants, which may limit access for certain individuals. This focus on profit-driven experiences can create exclusivity and potentially marginalize population segments, undermining the goal of providing inclusive and accessible public spaces in Bjørvika. Balancing private interests with the public's right to access and utilize these spaces is essential for promoting inclusivity and enhancing accessibility in the area. In Bjørvika the privately managed were monitored with cameras and signing, which underlined its privateness. This will be elaborated on under regulations.

Figure 10: Maintenance of Bjørvika, lastly updated march 2022 (Bjørvika Utvikling, 2022)



Accessibility by promenade and commons

By removing physical barriers, such as improving pedestrian pathways, providing wheelchair accessibility, and enhancing transportation infrastructure, waterfront redevelopment projects strive to make these areas accessible to a wide range of users (Olwig, 2011). The redevelopment of Fjord City is already a drastic measure to improve public open space. The most significant challenge to opening up Bjørvika to the public and beginning the redevelopment was traffic veins, with the E18 highway as the most significant barrier. E18 cut off access to the shore, determining an unpleasant character. After political discussions it was decided to place in an underwater tunnel below Bjørvika, leaving the space open to other use, based on arguments of efficacy and urban development (Whist and Christensen, 2012). The move is acknowledged as a significant investment in physical accessibility and dramatically changed the previous industrial landscape into one where water and the city could be connected (Whist and Christensen, 2012). A key element of the Fjord City plan (2008) to public open space, was establishing an ocean promenade and commons for leisure activities. In Bjørvika, the promenade, spanning from west to east, connects the fjord and the city and enhances accessibility in the area. Stretching 9 kilometers along the waterfront, it provides a minimum 6-meter width to accommodate diverse activities such as leisure, walking, and cycling.

The map below describes the connectivity between pedestrian routes, the ocean promenade, and the commons, with grey being private buildings, and white area are the publicly available spaces. Overall, the accessibility of the promenade is closely tied to existing walking patterns, with commons being accessible for various use. However, there are limitations and unclear divisions between public and private spaces. First, the ocean promenade was not sufficiently wide on busy days. There are large variations to use of the public space at the waterfront between seasons, with approximately 160% increase in pedestrians at the waterfront compared to winter seasons (Gehl Architects, 2014, 65). The promenade, with a minimum width of 6 meters which is the case in Bjørvika, is too narrow, leading to conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, and recreational users (Slettholm, 2012).



Figure 11: Connectivity to public space by pedestrian routes, promenade, and commons.

Furthermore, the area has been under construction since the year 2000- and is still undergoing development. Large trucks in otherwise car free-space, fences, and ongoing construction made it difficult to approach some waterfront areas. Moreover, signage suggests an ambiguity in the publicness of the space. Some pedestrian routes which should be accessible, are impeded by signage and barriers, limiting the accessibility and ability to navigate the area freely, which will be elaborated on below.



Photo 10 & 11: Construction at Sukkerbiten over the years (Thea Wikander 2019, 2023).

Regulatory mechanisms

In an urban setting, distinguishing between public and private spaces relies on the spatial behavior of individuals. Though public space should hypothetically be accessible by anyone at any time, private semi-public space is often more closely regulated than completely public areas. The right to be in this space physically is therefore an important factor in determining the accessibility of the waterfront (Al Ansari, 2009, 45). Regulatory mechanisms are often a consequence of excessive privatization and commercialization of the waterfronts, often reflecting neoliberal urban policies. Madaripur has described the difference between public and private as the following:

Some places are protected and set apart from the rest by a complex system of signification: boundaries, fences, walls, and gates; or by temporal means such as predetermined working hours. This complex system of codes, expressed through physical objects and social arrangements, signifies private places where strangers cannot enter without permission or negotiation. Public places, on the other hand, are expected to be accessible to everyone, where strangers and citizens alike can enter with fewer restrictions. (Madaripur, 1999, 880).

Though publicly accessible areas are managed by municipal agencies and should be regulated as public, several elements of private regulatory mechanisms has been observed during fieldwork. There is a higher degree of regulation than in other public places in Oslo, especially formalized as signage and barriers, which are perceived to diminish the feeling of publicness. Though some areas were public pedestrian routes designed for shortcuts, signs made it unclear whether the space is subject to private property rules. On the map provided in the regulations, it states that the space between the buildings is public. However, at Sørenga, though there is not physical blockage, signage makes it unclear whether passing through is permitted. Though these are in line with regulatory stipulations, Sverre and Bjerkset noted that in Fjord City public space are regulated as private with controlling measures such as cameras, signs, security and barriers which will effectively (according to theory) limit the public landscape, and accessibility to the waterfront (Bjerkeset and Aspen, 2017). The findings from Bjørvika correlate with other results from the area.

Photo 12-15: Pictures taken of regulations and barriers at Sørenga (Thea Wikander, 2023).



Regulations are necessary and normal in public places (Carmona, 2021, 361). But when more prevalent in certain areas they can be identified as an exclusionary mechanism over who or what activities are permitted in a space, especially where there are undefined lines between public and private. Explicit control is more pronounced in privately owned space, the challenge is to balance necessary regulations and rights, without interfering with publicness. In Bjørvika it's primarily the rights between those who live there that are causing interference with visitors.

Accessibility to the water

An important aspect of public waterfront accessibility is the direct relation to water, reflecting a reoccurring topic in waterfront literature (Al Ansari, 2009, 53). The waterfront landscape provides a unique opportunity for people to connect with nature and enjoy the benefits of being in a natural environment. Privatized and heavily regulated waterfronts can create a sense of detachment from nature, as people may feel constrained and unable to fully immerse themselves in the natural elements and beauty of the waterfront (Vistad *et al.*, 2013). Blue-green infrastructure has been a major investment area in Oslo's urban policies. It is consistently brought up in relation to climate adaptation and a more resilient city to rapid weather changes, and social and health benefits. Several studies show that exposure to natural elements such as water makes dense cities more livable creates better communities, and has major social benefits (Doi, Kii and Nakanishi, 2008; Næss, 2014; Boland, Bronte and Muir, 2017). Commitment to blue-green space and sustainable solutions is also one of the points that won Oslo the title of Sustainable Capital in 2019. Likewise, connectivity to water is highlighted in Bjørvika regulations (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2008, 6). The municipality and developers are particularly concerned with boosting Oslo's distinctive character as a fjord city by making the waterfront accessible (Whist and Christensen, 2012, 42).

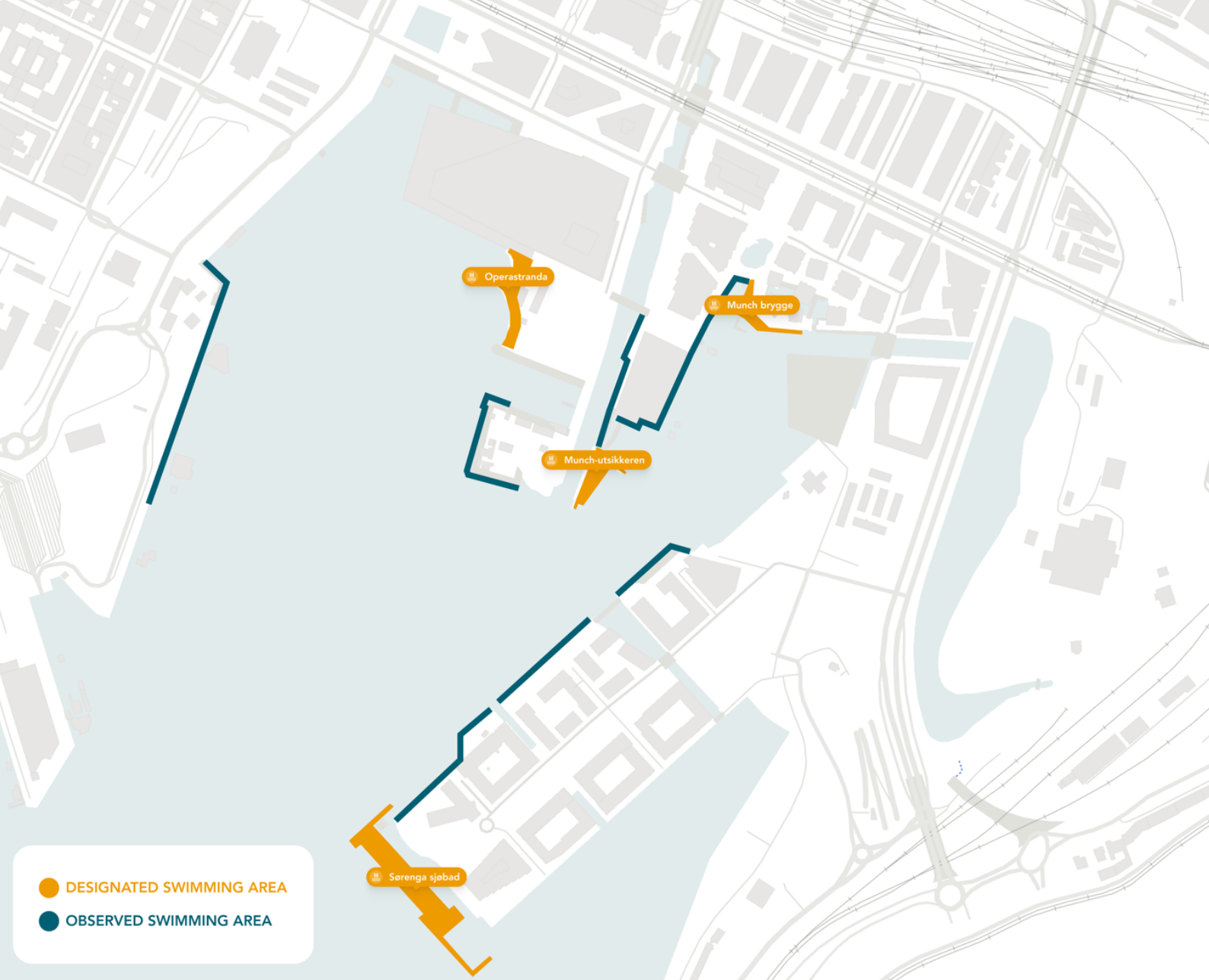


Figure 12: Swimming areas along the waterfront.

In terms of creating a well-designed public space, it's important to align the function of the space with its actual use (Carr *et al.*, 1992; Carmona, 2021). In Bjørvikas waterfront, Operastranden, Sørenga and Munch Brygge allow for water interaction, creating access to water and positive experiences with the natural landscape. However, regarding water accessibility, there is a notable discrepancy between the intended function and its actual utilization. Although swimming and interacting with the water are among the most apparent activities in an urban waterfront area, it is surprising to find that there is relatively little space explicitly allocated for these activities. This inconsistency has been highlighted several times at Tjuvholmen, where that water activities have been impaired by regulation, privatization, and lack of space (Bjerkeset and Aspen, 2017; Røed-Johansen, 2019). In Bjørvika, most designated swimming areas have steps, beaches, and universally accessible features, mainly

catering to children and individuals with impaired mobility. Yet, the designated swimming areas are small compared to the available space. It has been reported that Sørenga has been uncomfortably cramped on warm summer days (Juven, 2019). Furthermore, users used all space directly in the water for swimming purposes. Although no explicit signs or regulations prohibit swimming, the design discourages it. From land to water, it's between 1-3 meter difference from land to water. The only way to climb up is through loose ladders- only suitable for strong, non-disabled people, and can lead to a potentially dangerous situation if not. Results suggest that Fjord City cannot accommodate the city's swimming needs- on a good summer day, there are up to 30 000 visitors to Sørenga (Martinsen, 2018).

Photo 16 (left): Accessibility to water at the designated swimming area.

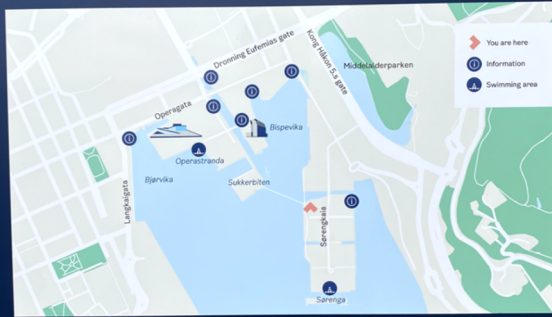
Photo 17 (right): Accessibility to water in a popular swimming spot along the promenade, but not facilitated.



promenade, swim, paddle, visit museums and the library – and lots of other things.

Thank you for treating the area and other visitors kindly.

Have a good one!



- ▶ You are welcome to swim at designated spots in the area
- ▶ We encourage everyone to familiarize themselves with seabed conditions and general surroundings. Look for signage on the river- and seafront
- ▶ Beware diving could be hazardous in some parts of Bjørsvika
- ▶ Lifebuoys and other life-saving equipment can be found



Photo 18: Sign encouraging swimming at designated spots. Photo 19: No ladders.



Photo 20: June 16th 2019, 03:43

Went swimming after dancing, and around 15 other people had the same idea. We had to jump a small chain posing as a fence to access the pier. Shortly after coming out of the water, a security guard threatened us with a 20,000 NOK fine for being there, as it was closed off for the public between 9PM and 6AM. We ran away.

6.8. Visual accessibility

Visual factors are aesthetic and perceptual qualities of how a landscape is experienced. According to Carr et al, visibility is an important measure of access as it indicates whether people feel safe and welcome (1992, 138). The literature says that rights to the landscape question can be contested if they are not perceived or experienced to contribute to well-being or connection to the landscape (Olwig, 2006; Wartmann *et al.*, 2021). Visual factors limit the right when the landscape is fragmented, degraded, or dominated by monotonous features in a way that diminishes connection to the space. Attention to visibility is common in urban waterfront development (Gabr, 2004; Olwig, 2006; Wartmann *et al.*, 2021). One of the approaches to integrate waterfronts with the city is to have varied depths of the wharf so that the water is not visualized as a separating line between the natural and built landscape (Al Ansari, 2009, 44).

Similarly, visual connection between the city and water has been laid out as an important aspect of fjord city on several occasions. When addressing how the Fjord City should add to Oslo's urban character in the plan, it stated that the waterfront should be functionally and visually connected to adjacent urban areas (Oslo kommune, 2008, 8). In the introduction of the design appendix, it is stated that the aim of the book is "...to specify the desired quality

and to ensure that the many the individual elements together will form a good visual environment in Bjørvika (...)" (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2003a). Yet, the dense urban structure, and tall, monotonous buildings create visual challenges.

Commons

Fisher has highlighted the importance of creating viable public space that connects the city and water the city and water to create openings while adding activities at the edge to engage the public (2004, 56). In this context, Bjørvika's commons form an important part of the public open space and the visual accessibility of the area, aligning with recommendations for waterfront regeneration. BU describes the commons as one of the central elements of the landscape plan². Upon observation, most commons had positive visibility through axes from city to water, as they had a direct adjacency to the water. The commons located between the Barcode and the beginning of Sørenga had a lack of visibility obstructed by architecture and traffic, making it feel like a contrast to the adjacent urban space. The visibility of commons were to a large degree linked to the barrier described below. The map of commons is shown above.

Photo 21: Stasjonsallmenningen common, stretching between barcode and the Opera.



² There are 8 commons planned in Bjørvika, and they are completed in accordance with the adjacent space. Full description om commons can be read here: <https://www.bjorvikautvikling.no/portfolio-item/bakgrunn-for-allmenningene-i-bjorvika/>

The Barcode barrier

In urban waterfront redevelopment, it is commonly recommended that the height of buildings should decrease as they approach the water. The idea behind this recommendation is to enhance the visual accessibility of the waterfront for a larger public audience, thus benefiting the overall experience (Mak et al., 2005; Sayan & Ortacesme, 2002). However, in Bjørvika the approach have been different. Before the development of the Barcode area, the central part of Oslo was characterized by low-lying areas sounded by a rising landscape. Despite Oslo's strict regulations on high-rise buildings, the Barcode area now features some of the tallest buildings in the city. The architectural styles in the central area of Oslo predominantly reflect romantic architecture, resulting in variations in density and height (Gehl Architects, 2014). Oslo has a somewhat disputed strategy regarding high-rise buildings, with a height limit of 42 meters. However, taller buildings are often considered a more sustainable choice and closely aligned with densification strategies, reflecting Oslo's urban development plan. As a result, certain areas deviate significantly from the height regulations. For instance, around the central station, the average building height ranges from 4 to 6 floors, while in the Barcode area buildings are considerably taller, ranging from 6-25 floors. The Barcode area buildings employ approximately 10 000 people in various high-knowledge and innovation-based sectors, with ground levels made accessible by the public through commercial and cultural amenities (Andersen and Røe, 2017, 307). Despite attempts to be accessible, the buildings create a barrier against the Grønland area, limiting visibility for neighboring areas. The tall constructions create shadows and give a feeling of being looked at. Furthermore, height and density hinder inputs of sunlight, especially in the wintertime when the sun is low. Although the architecture employ heights, depths, materials, and colors as means of increasing visual tension, the area appears dense and monotonous.



Photo 22: View of Bjørvika from the water, dense structures create a wall.

The context of these high-rise buildings is relevant to how the area is perceived. After a poll in *Aftenposten* (Norwegian newspaper) from 2006 it appeared that 71% of respondents opposed the barcode development, which rested heavily on arguments that the tall buildings created a barrier between the Fjord and the City (Slettholm, 2012). In an interview with the developer, the latter highlighted that the proposal was approved anyway, and critics have been less visible recently because they have been positively surprised by what the area has become. Critics, however, state that the projects' opposition have subsided because people have given up (Slettholm, 2012). Concerning the visual objective of connecting the fjord and the city, extravagant buildings appear to have replaced the previous barriers posed by traffic and industry. The presence of the high-rise buildings in the Barcode area creates a physical barrier, obstructing clear views from the city to the water. In addition to the height being an obstruction, the architectural style itself can be seen as a visual impairment. The architectural components have been used as tools to highlight a modern cultural culture and attractive capital. But it is unreflective of Oslo's urban history, with little reference to the water or history of the waterfront. It's a symbolic reflection of entrepreneurial strategies used to compete with other contemporary cities.

Lambada

The newly opened Munch Museum, Lambada, has sparked considerable controversy. As the previous museum in Tøyen, eastern Oslo proved too small to accommodate the art of one of Norway's most influential artists, the decision was made to relocate it to the waterfront in Bjørvika. HAV Properties held a competition, and a Spanish architectural studio won the assignment in 2009 (Bern, 2022, 67). After a lengthy development process, the building was finally opened in 2021. However, it quickly faced significant criticism as a cultural feature on the waterfront due to its negative impact on the visual aesthetics of the area. Situated at the far end of a pier, the tall structure with a bend at the top dominates the view, overlooking the swimming and recreation spaces near Opera beach. The building has garnered both praise and criticism, with some finding it spectacular while others consider it monstrous in terms of its architectural design (Elton, 2021). Despite the controversy, it has become a popular destination with an overwhelming visual presence.

Green space

Green space serves as a crucial visual tool in the Bjørvika development, playing a significant role in enhancing the overall accessibility and aesthetic appeal of the area. The challenging weather conditions, including strong winds, along the Norwegian coastline have been carefully considered in the design process to prioritize comfort and address the demands posed by nature. The landscape architect firm SLA has taken the lead in realizing landscape-based projects, working alongside BU to select sustainable trees and bushes that act as protective barriers against wind and storms, contributing to its sustainability and enhancing the overall visual experience. SLA created a masterplan for the landscape to promote a synergy between the physical and visual environment, highlighting the commons as a prevailing element for introducing green space between buildings and creating a welcoming atmosphere in the public spaces (2005). The green elements lighten up the otherwise grey landscape, created by combining modern architecture and asphalt surfaces.

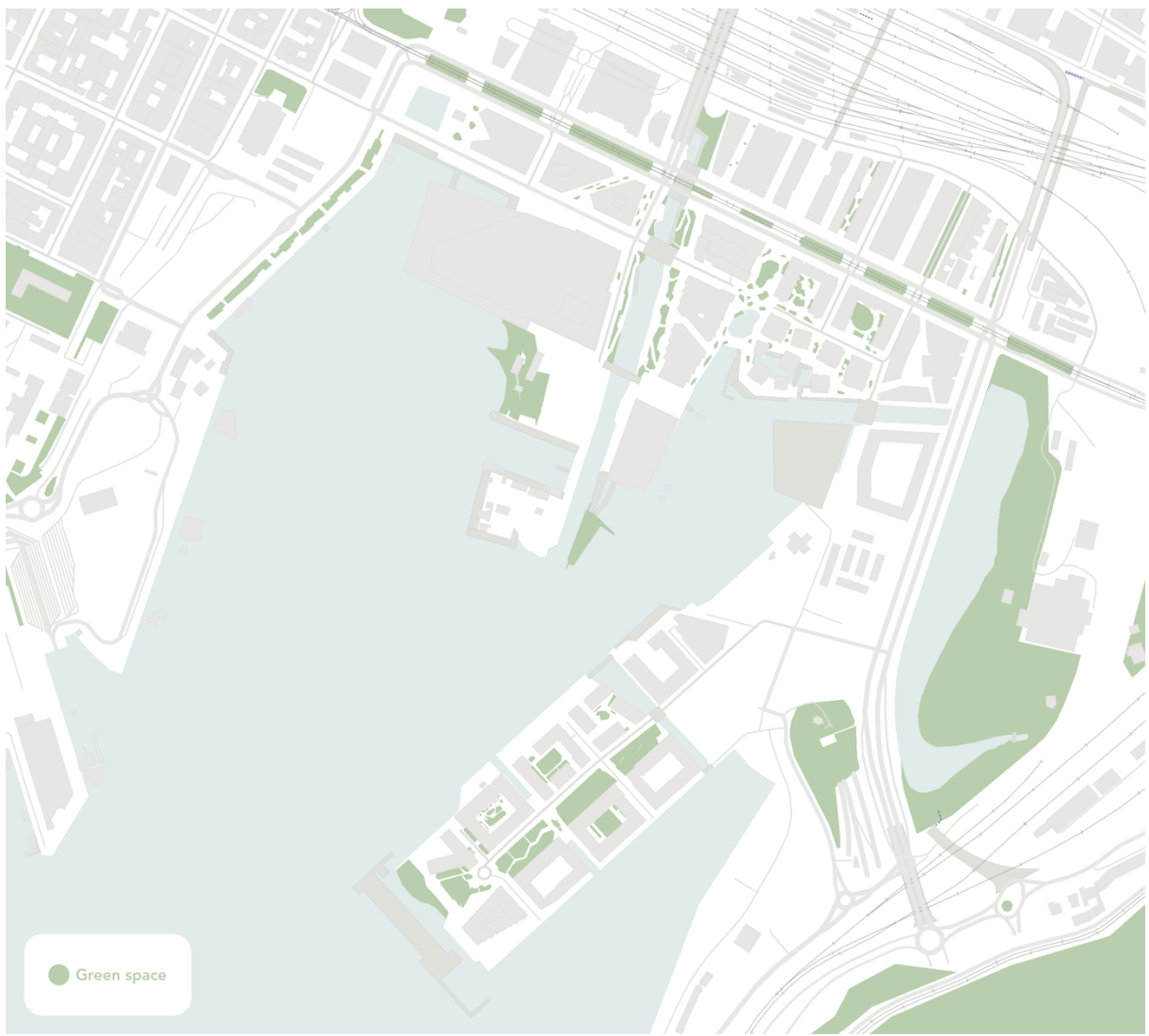


Figure 13: Distribution of green space around Bjørvika, mostly placed in commons and along streets.

BU highlights the inclusion of planted rooftops as a feature of the green contribution in Bjørvika (2023). However, since these rooftops are not accessible to the public, their contribution to visually greening the space raises questions about the availability for most people. While private gardens and beautification efforts introduce some vegetation, it remains uncertain how these elements contribute to the overall visuality of the area, indicating that green elements are considered from a visual standpoint rather than as livable or usable spaces. Furthermore, considering the regulations and opaque divisions between public and private space described under physical accessibility, it is uncertain whether this space is open to the public or not. The current vegetation in Bjørvika seems lacking significant aesthetic appeal, and neither contributes to comfortable qualities such as protection from weather. However, it's important to consider that the observations were limited to pictures taken in March and April, potentially missing the vegetation at its peak. It's possible that during other seasons or under different circumstances, the vegetation could offer a more visually appealing environment.



Photo 23-26: Green space in Barcode, Bispevika and Sørenga.

6.9. Symbolic accessibility

Symbolic access to a space is connected to cultural, historical, and social meanings associated with the landscape (Egoz, Makhzoumi and Pungetti, 2011). Measuring symbolic access is essential because physical accessibility alone does not ensure equal and inclusive participation in public spaces (Miller, 2007). Even when a space is physically accessible, barriers can exist that hinder meaningful engagement for specific user groups. Exclusionary narratives, power dynamics, and visual cues in the space can limit the right to landscape and create exclusion (Carr *et al.*, 1992; Olwig, 2006). By understanding and measuring symbolic access, planners, designers, and policymakers can address these barriers and create inclusive public spaces that cater to diverse needs and preferences. Symbolic access recognizes the importance of welcoming and accommodating public spaces that extend beyond physical infrastructure to encompass sociocultural aspects. In the context of the waterfront in Oslo, considering aspects of symbolic accessibility in Bjørvika is important because the image of the area and its importance for Oslo as a whole has been prominent in plan descriptions. As pointed out in previous research, the same symbolism that is aimed at promoting Fjord City, has also been a cause for exclusion (Skrede, 2013; Bergsli, 2015; Andersen and Røe, 2017). The presence of factors such as building, architectural design, demographic composition, user groups, and regulations can reflect symbolic obstacles regarding what groups are welcome at the Bjørvika waterfront (Jian, Luo and Chan, 2020). It is crucial to critically examine who genuinely benefits from this symbolism and consider whether it may impede individuals' rights to access and enjoy the waterfront.

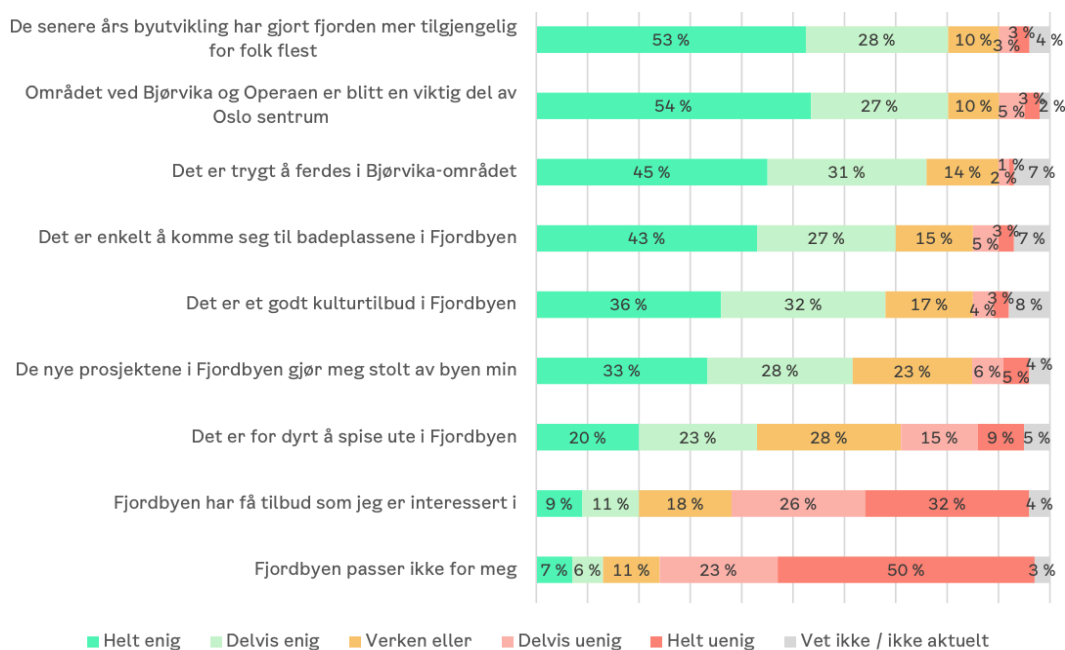
Here it is appropriate to point out that the regulatory mechanisms that were described as an obstacle to physical accessibility previously, are also of great symbolic importance. Excessive use of mechanisms such as barriers, cameras, and signage implies that only a certain group of people are welcome. In Bjørvika, the signage suggests that those who live there, who are also the higher earners, is the preferred group to use amenities and be in that space. Furthermore, cameras in the area were pointed to public areas more than private ones, suggesting a need to govern public users' behavior.

Demography

The visions for the Fjord City have been clear from the beginning of the project; the Fjord City Plan of 2008 states: 'Fjord City shall be an arena for everyone and contribute to diversity'. Compared to a report on the demographical profile of Fjord City from 2017, the 2022 report has found that the demographic and socioeconomic composition have generally become a lot more diverse the last five years (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2017, 2022). Visitation to the Fjord has a clear relation to income, where higher earners visit the area more frequently (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2022, 46). These results have somewhat leveled off in the most recent report. Reasons can be attributed to an increase in diversity, but the report also relates the findings to a higher amount of home office the last years (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2022). Overall, the main reason for visitation among demographical groups is recreation.

As mentioned previously, visitation to Bjørvika has improved significantly the last five years, but there are demographical variations to the motivation for visiting. Residents in the outer west of Oslo have the lowest share of recreation but have the largest share of cultural experiences, work, and restaurants. This may reflect that it is those from the west end of Oslo who go most to performances in the Opera and cultural institutions, while also being the highest earners (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2022, 64). Residents of eastern burrows visit the space primarily for recreational purposes, and less frequently for work or culture.

Figure 14: "How much do you agree with statements regarding Fjord City?" Please note that the two latter questions regarding price and diversity of amenities score poorly (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2022).



Based on these results, it appears that an overwhelming majority of respondents have perceived an improvement in accessibility within Fjord City over the past few years. However, the report highlights that there are differences among various groups within the questionnaire. Specifically, the population residing in the eastern region expressed to a greater extent that they did not perceive the waterfront as being more accessible. This finding suggests that while the overall perception of improved accessibility is prevalent, there may still be disparities in the experiences of different population groups. Despite these differences, it is noteworthy that the waterfront has continued to grow in popularity as a destination within Oslo. This indicates that the efforts to enhance accessibility in Fjord City have resonated with many visitors and residents, contributing to its increasing appeal.

Regardless of positive figures in terms of visitation, the actual residents of Fjord City are among the wealthiest in Oslo with double the average (Linstad, 2022). In Sørenga, the area in Bjørvika with the highest number of residential units, the average income is 240,000 NOK higher than the average resident of Oslo. In other areas of Fjord City, the difference increases to half a million NOK (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2022). There is also a higher proportion of men than women, and a significant percentage of the population consists of older adults.

Price and housing

In 2022, Oslo S Utvikling (OSU), the company responsible for housing development and 1/3 ownership of Bjørvika, could boast a price record for their apartments with the most expensive corresponding to a price per square meter of NOK 250,000- more than twice the average in Oslo (Finansavisen, 2022). Bjørvika was meant to be a diverse, balanced, and socially sustainable area, representing a vibrant urban scene (Bergsli, 2015, 109). With a read thread in Fjord City is directly linked to public space. Yet, the demographic profile in Bjørvika has become a symbol of stark class differences, with residents ranking among the wealthiest- displaying a challenge for access in terms of price and housing. The housing market symbolizes a massive class difference and is one of the largest makers of social differences (Andersen and Røe, 2017, 309). After deregulation in the 1980s, housing fell out of the otherwise extensive welfare offer in Norway (Stamsø, 2009). The clearest target of how Fjord City should contribute to social diversity, apart from opaque visions on accessibility, is that

10% of the housing must be reasonably priced apartments. The 2008 plan states “Fjord City shall have varied land use with housing composition including different price categories, ownership forms, and sizes adapted to various family sizes and user groups” (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2008, 8-9). The initial requirement for 10% affordable rental housing has not been realized. However, the municipality seems content with the current situation. The report emphasizes that rental housing constitutes 30% of the residential units in Tjuvholmen, while plans indicate that one-tenth of the housing in Bjørvika will be designated as a student housing (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2017). In the report from 2017 Oslo municipality justifies it by stating their commitment to accessibility:

“The Fjordbyplan has targets for variation in housing sizes, price categories and forms of ownership, adapted to different family sizes and user groups. The requirement that 10 percent of the homes must be affordable rental homes has been followed up with 30 percent of the homes on Tjuvholmen are rental homes, and around a tenth of the 5,000 homes that are under entry in Bjørvika must be student housing.” (Oslo kommune, 2017, 7).

In an interview with one of the residential developers in Bjørvika, Røe and Andersen asked about the potential to develop environmentally friendly housing in the eastern burrow. They replied: “(...) The demands formulated by the city make it too expensive to sell as the prospective (east end) home seeker does not have the ability to pay for it. Even though we have property there, we won't develop it.” (Andersen and Røe, 2017, 309). Despite the original visions for Fjord City and Bjørvika, research indicates that it has already become an area for affluent residents, tourists, and investors (Andersen and Røe 2016, Bergsli 2015). This evidence reinforces the notion that without a decisive stance from the municipality, including stricter requirements for pricing and development, private players will assume control, leading to market-driven development. In this scenario, projects that are not deemed profitable may be disregarded and left unrealized.

This is problematic for achieving the right to the waterfront because it contributes to the perception that social goals are often reduced to mere rhetoric in marketing if they are not legally mandated. Secondly, giving private actors excessive leeway is a direct negative consequence. Although regulatory documents may include recommendations and even legally binding goals, there are no restrictions on pricing. In addition to the architectural

barriers themselves, the high pricing of housing and associated services has created a similar barrier, rendering the area inaccessible for many in terms of affordability. As mentioned earlier, the primary goals of the owners of Bjørvika were to ensure comprehensive and favorable urban development in the area while maximizing property (Oslo Municipality, 2001). This apparent discrepancy between the municipal visions for the area and the interests of private developers may have resulted in an infringement of the rights to the urban waterfront in Oslo. Andersen and Skrede (2016) have explained this situation by highlighting the municipality's lack of sufficient regulatory tools, allowing private interests to prevail. As discussed in texts by Olwig and others, the theory of the right to the landscape and the city provides further insight into the underlying factors contributing to this issue.

Culture

Prominent buildings and cultural institutions in Bjørvika embody the ambitions to establish the area as an international cultural hub, aligning with the goals outlined in the cultural regulations. These architectural endeavors also reflect entrepreneurial strategies, as Røe and Andersen note that architecture plays a role in competing with other contemporary cities for investments and popularity. However, the goals and regulations for Bjørvika and the fjord city seem to overlook the reflective nature of Oslo's cultural identity, creating a disparity. Notably, there is a significant absence of cultural-historical remnants from the former port activities in Bispveika, which once served as the foundation for trade and production but have been entirely erased, leaving no imprint in the new historical narrative crafted for the area.

From a symbolic accessibility standpoint, placing cultural institutions on the waterfront can be inherently limiting. The connection between these institutions and the price point in the area suggests a potential correlation. If the waterfront remains inaccessible to certain groups, the consequences may be significant, with culture becoming exclusive to the elite rather than a shared public good. While cultural visits are predominantly undertaken by wealthier residents from the west side of Oslo, they do represent a high-quality intervention and are still utilized by a diverse range of tourists and residents, albeit with varying frequency.

Comfort



Figure 15: Differences in seating between public and private facilities.

Comfort is a measurement of the quality of a landscape, reflecting the overall experience and accessibility of space. It signifies creating a pleasant and soothing environment, which is important in placemaking, and holds symbolic importance of who is welcome (Olwig, 2006). Enhancing comfort involves focusing on micro-features like benches, lighting, and transportation, contributing to making people feel welcome (Talen, 2000; Carmona, 2021). Adequate seating allows individuals to rest, relax, and fully enjoy their surroundings. Well-designed and comfortable seating options can greatly enhance the overall experience of the space, encouraging people to stay longer. On the other hand, lack thereof can discourage people from spending time in the area. The comfort in Bjørvika is related to the price point of amenities. In a survey conducted by Gehl Architects on urban life in Oslo centrum, it was concluded that the access to free seating in Oslo is in need of improvement, with significant

differences in the qualities of amenities in public versus private maintenance (Gehl Architects, 2014) Similar findings were observed in Bjørvika, particularly in Sørenga and the surrounding commons with significant disparities between public and private seating. Public benches at Sørenga were often placed back-to-back with a restaurant and positioned near garbage cans and cameras, which made the seating arrangement unpleasant. However, the promenade is for large part of the stretch designed with built-in benches along the waterfront, allowing for comfortable seating options in warmer months. However, as mentioned, space issues might arise.

Photo 27: Public bench back to back with a restaurant located at Sørenga.



Another indicator of comfort- in 2020, an urban development company revealed that there are only 15 public toilets in Oslo- corresponding to 1 per 54,000 inhabitants (Nomad ByMad, 2020). Lack of which is present in Bjørvika.

"I notice the vast use of the public space in the library, especially the toilets. The queue is constant, and occupied by far more people than those who are visitors of Deichman. I see several people whose appearance is reminiscent of homelessness, and other vulnerable groups. I see parents with their hands full and children running around. A few with disabilities waiting for their own designated bathrooms. Many seem stressed and as if they've been agitatedly looking for a bathroom. Furthermore, probably hundreds of people going in to use the restroom, have a sit, some shade, then leave." (excerpt from field notes, March 2023).

Although this analysis is based on the use and experience of the space between the buildings, the large use of toilets in the library shows that there is a lack of this in the surrounding areas. To put it roughly, peeing is a universal need- presence, or lack thereof, free public toilets is therefore indicative of the freedom to move. Urination in the area is reserved with purchasing power, such as with coffee, or a museum ticket for a symbolic access ticket to do what one must. Nomad emphasizes that this is a feminist problem in urban development since it disproportionately affects women's right to the city (Nomad ByMad, 2020). This is further commented on in a report from Fjord City 2022, where lack of restrooms is highlighted as a nuisance (Oslo kommune, 2022, 173).

6.10. Summary part 2

Part 2 has applied Carr et al. (1992) understanding of determining accessibility to public spaces, as a measurement for how right to the landscape is experienced in Bjørvika. Using categories of physical-, visual-, and symbolic accessibility this chapter has seen how Oslo's urban history and elements of the Fjord City planning and Goals for the development have manifested at the waterfront. Physically, the space is equipped with qualities to make it a good space to be, particularly the promenade, benches and an offer of activities. However, neoliberal governance in terms of privatization and steep pricing has manifested itself in a way that was experienced as somewhat limited to being in the area, and with restrictions giving opaque signs as to where it was allowed to be. Visually there is an overwhelming presence of contemporary architecture, and high buildings at the waterfront, contrasting the

current recommendations for waterfront redevelopment. Some areas had good visibility to the water through the commons. Green inputs have been used as a means to make the spaces more attractive and serve as a nice contrast to grey facades and asphalt, but the greenery was somewhat underwhelming. Symbolically, it is primarily important to highlight the neon of the points from the other categories. In particular, regulations on residence are perceived as excessive compared to other open urban spaces, and therefore exclusionary for the experience of someone who does not live there but chooses to stay there for other reasons. Furthermore, the price level of both services and houses and the lack of social goals indicate that the area is for a user group that tolerates a higher price level.

CHAPTER 7

Concluding reflections-
contestations of waterfront
landscape in Bjørvika

7. Concluding reflections- contestations of waterfront landscape in Bjørvika

This thesis explored how concepts of landscape rights and democracy were planned and experienced in one of the most notable parts of the Fjord City redevelopment: Bjørvika. The following chapter summarizes the goals and findings, while reflecting on them critically and providing recommendations for further research. The central aim of the research was to shed light on the conflicts and tensions surrounding the waterfront landscape in Bjørvika. Specifically, the study sought to understand how elements of landscape rights were considered in the planning process, how this played out, and how it affected the experience of the landscape, particularly in relation to neoliberal influences as a source of contestation. The study utilized dimensions of accessibility to public space as a measurement of rights. It argued that access to public spaces was diminishing in cities, with private interests gaining dominance. It emphasized the need to address these issues and promote more inclusive and democratic approaches to urban planning and development.

7.1. Summary of findings

Over the past 50 years, the redevelopment of abandoned ports has become a common practice. Waterfront redevelopment projects have emerged as prominent features in urban landscapes, aiming to revitalize neglected areas and create vibrant cityscapes. However, these projects have significant implications for the urban fabric, influencing the dynamics of both public and private spaces. The theoretical framework provides an understanding of landscapes and public spaces that goes beyond their physical aspects. They hold significant importance in societies, reflecting culture, history, and context. Landscape democracy and the right to landscape state that a landscape is truly equitable only when people who use it can shape and experience it. According to Harvey (2003), this is particularly crucial in public spaces where capitalization and densification can lead to disputes over the fair distribution of landscape resources, potentially infringing upon the public nature of such spaces. Furthermore, the theoretical framework identifies neoliberal urban governance and entrepreneurial policies as prevalent in contemporary urban planning (Harvey, 1989; Hall and Hubbard, 1996). These have been acknowledged as challenges to achieving the right to access, and are often materialized concepts in waterfront development projects (Hall, 1993; Avni and Teschner, 2019).

Bjørvika has for centuries served as a hub for commerce and social interaction among the citizens of Oslo for centuries. Since the Middle Ages, it has been a central area gaining popularity and recognition beyond the capital city. However, with the advent of industrialization, significant changes occurred in Oslo's waterfront landscape. The increasing size of boats, ports, and machinery posed challenges to its previous everyday public use. This divide between the water and the people became evident in Bjørvika with constructing a main highway directly over the area, making the water inaccessible. While the regulations for Bjørvika repeatedly emphasize accessibility and publicness as crucial aspects of the development, it becomes apparent that Bjørvika was always intended to align municipal goals with entrepreneurial policies in Oslo's urban governance. The organization of Bjørvika reflects common practices in waterfront development, where public-private cooperation is necessary to facilitate the project due to limited public resources. As a result, ownership of the waterfront was restructured, with three primary landowners involved. Although these are public-private constellations, democratic participation is limited.

Furthermore, while the goal of making the waterfront accessible unifies developers and designers, they also have objectives of maximizing profits. There is a clear tendency to use redevelopment projects to compete tourists and international investments, as frequently stated motivation for the Fjord City development. Similarly, the area is adorned with numerous cultural venues, restaurants, and swimming areas, making it a popular destination for both tourists and residents. However, upon examining the area's current use, it appears evident that market-oriented objectives have resulted in housing and cultural attractions primarily utilized by higher-income individuals, leaving lower earners and accessibility concerns. Private influences have also manifested in a way that creates an opaque division between public and private spaces. The tall buildings somewhat obstruct the view of the waterfront and the city, effectively forming a barrier against the water. Symbolically, the pricing and architectural choices seem to imply that certain groups are more welcome to utilize and access the waterfront, with varying quality standards and stricter regulations imposed on public users and portions of the space. All in all, the lack of attention to various aspects of right and accessibility have not met the right to landscape.

7.2. Challenges of achieving right at the waterfront landscape

The findings will be critically reviewed in relation to the aims and research questions before reaching a conclusion. By examining the findings through a critical lens, we can better understand the challenges and opportunities inherent in balancing private interests, public representation, and preserving cultural and historical connections to the waterfront.

Relationship between public and private

The Fjord City redevelopment in Bjørvika, Oslo, exemplifies the complex interplay between public and private interests in waterfront development. Private developers, public authorities, and corporate actors have played a significant role in shaping the physical structures and influencing the city's social, economic, and cultural aspects. The ownership structure also raises concerns about landscape democracy and the role of civil society in spatial planning. Emphasizing individual property and territorial rights may undermine the public or communal understanding of the landscape, potentially infringing upon the right to the landscape, as described by relevant conceptualizations. The power held by companies driven by economic goals may hinder democratic participation, as private entities gain influence in decision-making. Although efforts have been made to reduce fragmentation and improve accessibility through dedicated development subsidiaries, the public link in the ownership structure remains unclear. The public-private nature of these companies makes it challenging to discern the boundaries between private and public ownership, further complicating the understanding of true public influence. Moreover, the role of public authorities in setting the vision, goals, and regulations for the area significantly influences the outcomes and experiences of the redevelopment initiatives. It is important to recognize that the Fjord City plan follows a familiar pattern observed in waterfront redevelopment projects worldwide, where former industrial areas are transformed to cater to financial, residential, and cultural elites (Bern, 2017, 5). While these developments bring economic growth and revitalization, it is crucial to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits and preserve the right to the landscape for all community members.

Public influence in planning

Public participation is vital for successful urban planning, ensuring that redevelopment projects align with community needs. However, the involvement of major private landowners like HAV and OSU in the Bjørvika/Fjord City project complicates public influence. Despite Norway's commitment to democratic participation, the ownership structure reflects a neoliberal tendency, with private developers wielding significant control and prioritizing their own interests. This poses a challenge in creating a truly public space. While there may be some traces of democratic welfare input, the overall public-private relationships align with a neoliberal governance approach.

In socio-spatial science, the built and natural landscapes are essential for social life, serving as arenas for social interaction. Participation from diverse citizens or users is necessary to ensure that physical development meets their needs. Over time, participation has been valuable in gathering knowledge about how people use urban spaces and their preferences. In Norway, participation forms the foundation of a robust democratic governance framework.

The ownership structure raises concerns about landscape democracy and the role of civil society in spatial planning. The emphasis on individual property and territorial rights can undermine the communal understanding of the landscape and infringe upon the right to the landscape as described by Olwig (2011). Companies driven by economic goals may hinder democratic participation, as private entities gain influence in decision-making processes. Efforts have been made to reduce fragmentation and enhance accessibility through the creation of dedicated subsidiaries for development. However, the public link in the ownership structure remains unclear, complicating the understanding of public influence.

Waterfront redevelopment often faces fragmentation due to multiple entities controlling different land segments. While public-private cooperation is common in large-scale developments under neoliberal governance, it can neglect participatory democratic influence. The local planning system is challenged, with elites often prioritized over meaningful public engagement. In Bjørvika, legislative changes were implemented to consolidate ownership within public subsidiaries, empowering them to act as property developers and address these concerns.

Branding the waterfront

The Fjord City plan in Bjørvika is positioned as a sustainable and inclusive district, emphasizing environmental responsibility, connectivity, and recreational opportunities. However, it is important to scrutinize the use of "publicness" as a rhetorical tool for promoting redevelopment and enhancing a city's international reputation. The Fjord City plan and Oslo municipal plans strongly favor competitive strategies, where cities are marketed as socially, culturally, and environmentally sustainable to elevate their status in the global market. Bjørvika's development has been influenced by this branding agenda, positioning it as an attractive and lucrative landowner marketing scheme (Ljunggren, 2018). Yet, it is crucial to critically assess the impact of this approach on the area's authenticity and its relationship with the broader urban context. While Bjørvika has undoubtedly become a notable area and a competitive asset for Oslo, questions arise regarding its cultural representation and integration within the city's overall fabric. The focus on business and culture as driving forces may have inadvertently overshadowed the need for a more balanced and inclusive urban environment that reflects the city's diverse cultural identity, raising concerns about its representativeness and its ability to foster a sense of place that resonates with the local community.

The case of Bjørvika underscores the delicate balance between economic goals and social sustainability in waterfront redevelopment. Economic competitiveness is crucial for attracting investments and generating revenue, but it is equally important to ensure that the development aligns with the city's cultural values and enhances the overall urban experience. Striking the right equilibrium between economic interests and cultural representation presents a significant challenge, necessitating careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and a long-term vision for the area's development. Branding waterfront areas like Bjørvika as sustainable and culturally vibrant districts can yield economic benefits and enhance a city's global image. However, it is imperative to critically evaluate the impact of branding strategies on cultural representation and integration within the urban fabric. Balancing economic competitiveness with cultural sustainability is essential for creating inclusive and authentic urban environments that genuinely reflect the identity and aspirations of the local community. As waterfront redevelopment continues to evolve, a thoughtful and nuanced approach is necessary to effectively address public interests, cultural values, and the city's overall well-being.

Who has the right to the waterfront?

The values that underpin any system shape what is considered acceptable within a given context (Carmona, 2021, 479). Norway is often seen as a bastion of democracy and rights, with a government trusted to make the best decisions. However, the market, driven by efficiency and economic gain, holds considerable power. While governmental and municipal agencies strive for positive outcomes, the influence of the market remains largely unknown to most citizens, leading to a passive acceptance of large-scale interventions.

In the case of Bjørvika/Fjord City, the city's role in fostering social cohesion is not adequately considered. The primary focus has been on attracting external investors and high-income residents, resulting in exclusive neighborhoods and cultural institutions. This approach marginalizes individuals who do not possess the desired social and economic status. Moreover, private institutions' management of public spaces raises concerns about their authenticity as truly public spaces. The mere creation of luxury residences and cultural attractions does not effectively foster a genuine connection between the city and the waterfront. Genuine connectivity requires diverse housing options, inclusive public spaces, and respect for the process of people interacting with and influencing their landscape. The exclusion of certain social classes and ethnicities, who may not be economically exploitable, further reinforces the exclusionary nature of the development.

The findings uncover a paradox within the Bjørvika redevelopment plans. While the plans establish goals, details, and regulations, private developers have been granted excessive leeway, prioritizing profit over social objectives. This raises questions about the municipality's authority, as Røe suggested, that the municipality's passive role in the planning process allows market interests to dominate urban governance. On the other hand, the plans have been meticulously crafted, leaving little room for experiential aspects. The swift transformation of Bjørvika from a brownfield site to an urban hub has not provided people with sufficient time to connect with the newly developed waterfront landscape. Ideally, participation should have filled this gap, but incorporating it into an already lengthy process can be challenging. The absence of experiential elements in the development hampers people's ability to fully grasp and relate to the true essence of the construction.

The theory highlights the interactive and dynamic relationship between people and their surroundings, including the landscape. However, the lack of historical connection and narrow representation of the population in Bjørvika/Fjord City can be attributed to the absence of prior experiences with the landscape. While the waterfront was extensively used in Oslo for a long time, the current generation has only witnessed it as either an industrial area or the cultural hub it is today. This lack of a historical or traditional connection makes it difficult for people to establish a deep-rooted relationship with the landscape and neglects the population's needs to accurately reflect local characteristics and requirements. Findings underscore the need to uphold public representation while also allowing space for engagement. To genuinely achieve the right to the landscape, considerations of both material and immaterial accessibility must be considered.

7.3. Limitations and contributions

This thesis has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The research relied on a combination of secondary empirical evidence, document analysis, and observations, applying recommendations from scholars such as Talen (2000) and Carr et al (1992). While the thesis provides an overview of the experiences in Bjørvika, it is important to note that this project is the largest urban development in Norway to date, and there may be aspects that the methodology did not capture. Although gentrification is a term commonly associated with urban redevelopment projects, it was not specifically examined in this case. Given that the area was previously used for trade and industry, rather than residential purposes, the thesis did not attribute gentrification as a primary reason. The sporadic nature of the observations conducted during the research has implications for the results. The utilization of Bjørvika and the waterfront area varies significantly depending on factors such as time of day, weather, and season. Future research could incorporate direct interviews with various stakeholders involved in the Bjørvika/Fjord City project to enhance the depth of understanding. Without in-depth interviews, it is challenging to differentiate between practical use and genuine preference for the area. To address these limitations, future research should consider conducting direct interviews to gain deeper insights, explore the relationship between sustainability and entrepreneurial policies, and conduct comprehensive observations across different seasons and weather conditions.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

8. Conclusion to the research question

How are concepts of the right to landscape reflected in the planning and development of Fjord City, specifically Bjørvika, and how has this impacted users' accessibility of the waterfront?

Access to the landscape in Norway should be accessible to all- following principles in Norway secured through history, tradition, and legislation (Vistad *et al.*, 2013). But despite several commitments to righteousness, the economic opportunities along the water have spiked the demand for building along the waterfront. Using Fjord City, Bjørvika as a case study, this thesis examined the impact of waterfront development on the right to landscape and the public's role in shaping it. It attempted to unravel discrepancies between planning objectives and actual outcomes by applying theories of landscape rights, underscored by the urban waterfront landscape as a potential arena for contestations between the lived and built environment, while also being a scene for experiencing contestations and infringement. Neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism, which became prevalent urban governance tools in the 1980s, emerged as factors contributing to conflict and infringement of waterfront landscape rights. Drawing from theories of landscape righteousness, it sought to expose gaps between planning ambitions and actual results. The analysis revealed neoliberal and entrepreneurial policies as primary sources of modern waterfront landscape contestation. These policies fueled an international trend of commodifying urban waterfronts, often leading to a conflict of interest between public and private stakeholders. The main lines of conflict discussed are spatial justice and how it relates to urban regeneration.

Bjørvika is a public and accessible area without any significant restrictions on its usage. In reality, it is frequented by people from both the east and west. However, according to the conceptualization of landscape employed in this thesis, democratic influence, a comprehensive understanding of accessibility, and the power to shape and influence one's surroundings are essential for understanding the right to the landscape. Although there is public regulation and influence through the municipality, market-oriented goals have been identified as a source of excessive commodification that does not adequately prioritize accessibility. In the case of Bjørvika, this has resulted in a neglect of democratic influence in the planning process. Instead of creating connections between the urban and waterfront areas

while eliminating barriers created by railroads and traffic lanes, the outcome has been creating an even larger barrier composed of monotonous architecture. When planning becomes integrated into public shared spaces, it introduces a social dimension that necessitates the consideration of culture and local context, thus familiarizing the concept of the right to the landscape (Olwig, 2006). However, Bjørvika stands in contrast to the rest of Oslo regarding demography, architecture, and its limited reflection of the city's urban fabric. Despite designating a significant portion of the master plan as common areas, amounting to 40% according to Bjørvika city development, these spaces do not effectively cater to the users' needs or provide ample room for the dynamic development of the place.

The issue at hand is not the presence of privatization in planning, as it is necessary for redevelopment, but rather the importance of critically reviewing the influence and motives of private entities. The planning hierarchy in Norway reveals that private developers have considerable leeway, raising concerns about the equitable distribution of benefits in Fjord City among the city's population. Scholars have observed that the remarkable architectural interventions in Fjord City have led to spatial segregation, prioritizing private development over public access to the shoreline and disregarding Oslo's urban fabric and the goal of creating an equitable landscape.

Undoubtedly, the transformation of Bjørvika from an industrial landscape to a bustling metropolis has significantly improved the area, providing a space for relaxation for a large portion of the population. However, it falls short of being a true representation of Oslo's history, people, and experiences. This thesis aims to shed light on the potential limitations to the universal right in the physical environment, urging a comprehensive consideration of diverse uses that foster inclusive urban experiences and connections. As cities become denser and waterfront areas undergo extensive redevelopment, it is crucial to prioritize the needs and perspectives of landscape users over grand schemes of internationalization. Only by ensuring that everyone is included and represented in the development process can we create an urban landscape that benefits all members of society.

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