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# The Planner's Role and Challenges in Implementing Shared Space in Norway

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# PROLOGUE

The conclusion of this master thesis marks the end of my studies of Urban-and regional planning at NMBU. The thesis is 30 points for one semester. It has been a very inspiring and eye-opening time for me, and has helped me grow both personally and spiritually.

I would like to thank my supervisor Sebastian Peters at ILP for his great patience, inspiration, support and for letting me think outside the box.

I want to thank my interviewees for providing me with very reflective and eye-opening conversations and responses.

I also want to direct a special thanks to my girlfriend Marina for her great love, encouragement and confidence in me, and my family and friends for staying supportive and hilariously funny in times of great stress.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my cat Missy, for always occupying my pillow when I really needed the sleep.

Ås, 15.12.2015

Zen Mushtaq

# ABSTRACT

Planning as a profession is the link between vision and implementation. Planners, with their knowledge and expertise, are at the forefront of introducing and implementing innovative sustainable design solutions to local and national urban challenges.

This might be particularly true for innovative planning designs that have yet to be properly utilized in an urban city context.

Shared space is an example of such an innovative planning design where the idea is to promote social activity, attractive spaces and sustainable integration of all traffic groups in a safe unregulated space.

In Norway, with increased urbanization and population growth, shared space has been considered by planners as an option for safe space-effective development, but the design has previously been scarcely used in a larger urban context compared to other Scandinavian countries.

The study argues how planners in Norway face a struggle with implementing shared space as a design because it challenges both their professional roles as well as conventional mindsets about traffic regulations.

One of the latest examples of a shared space project in Norway, Universitetsgata, is used as an example to reflect this challenge through linking the planner's role as a rational expert to his implementation of an innovative design into a society accustomed to conventional spaces.

# TERMINOLOGY

**Innovative design:** A planning design with little or no previous recognition, implementation and/or support on a national and/or local level in Norway.

**Planner:** The professionals working within the planning profession i.e urban planners, architects, geologists, sociologists, engineers.

**Planner's role:** A collective understanding of the professional duty and personal values framing the identity of the planner

**Developer:** contractor or estate tasking the planner with their objective, both public and private

**Stakeholders:** developers, estates, organizations and locals involved in a planning process.

**Shared Space;** space that is shared by all traffic groups.

**Pure shared space;** shared space with no physical segregation between traffic groups. Everyone is free to use the whole shared space.

**Safe space;** safe zone within a larger shared space. The safe space zone is separated from the rest of the shared space through slight physical segregation, such as markings or tiles. The safe space is usually a pedestrian and cyclist exclusive zone, whereas the rest of the shared space area can be used by all traffic groups.

**Conventional space;** used to describe spaces with typical segregation of transport modes through markings, signs and physical separation

**Transport modes:** The different means of transport in an urban society. In this thesis the term will primarily encompass vehicular traffic, public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.

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# **CHAPTER 1:**

# **INTRODUCTION**

## CHOICE OF SUBJECT

In today's world urbanization in cities is rapid; increased urban density, population growth and a surge in vehicular traffic and the need to accommodate it. This calls for renewed thinking about how we use the urban space available to us. Planners are at a forefront for exploring and introducing new solutions for efficient and sustainable utilization of our spaces.

Shared Space, a design which incorporates all transport modes into one space poked my interest during the third year of my studies. I chose to go in-depth in major courses within street planning and local development. Many times we were encouraged to consider shared space as a design to implement fully or partially in local streets where traffic barriers were a major issue.

As my studies progressed I read more about shared space abroad; the opportunities and the limitations in terms of planning and function. From its humble beginnings in the Netherlands, the planning design has spread to other countries with varying degrees of success. There are successful examples of shared space in Scandinavian countries as well. Similar spaces exist in Norway, though the design is scarcely used in urban cities. It made me curious as to why, compared to other Scandinavian countries, it was more difficult for planners to implement the shared space design in an urban city context Norway. After all I knew there had been attempts in the past. My natural assumption was political skepticism towards shared space.

Going into the early phases of my thesis I was introduced by my supervisor Sebastian Peters to the thought that there might be more to it than that. Perhaps the challenge had more to do with the early phases of a planning process; the ideas of the developer and the role of the planner. On what grounds did planners advocate for shared space in Norway? How did their expertise support this advocating and what examples of shared space did they have to show for it?

This, in connection with the subject of planning roles and theory I had in another course had me review my naive viewpoint not only on shared space but also on my education as a whole. I had not considered the question of what it really meant to use your expertise as a planner when it comes to implementing ideas that are seen as controversial or innovative. When proposing solutions like shared space, who am I proposing it for? And is it a solution

regardless of the case? This intrigued me to further explore the professional role of the planner when it comes to introducing and implementing innovative solutions, like shared space, to urban cases. Furthermore I want to discover what makes shared space so controversial in terms of the planner's ability to implement it.

## BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE

Planning students in Norway enter their studies with great enthusiasm, imagining their future profession to be one of creative freedom and potential to explore efficient and innovative solutions. We learn that knowledge is power, however we're never asked to question how the professional role we play may be challenged by the very knowledge we attempt to bring into a planning process. What gets to count as relevant knowledge in practice, who gets to make that decision and why? The planner's challenge of implementing shared space in Norway is an example of how planner's knowledge and understanding of shared space by itself is not sufficient.

With this study I hope to bring renewed attention and respect to the planning profession as a broad spectrum of competence and expertise for implementing innovative solutions like shared space as a way to accommodate societal needs.

I further hope this thesis will stimulate to a future discussion about the need of greater dialogue, debate and consensus between different disciplinary backgrounds within the planning profession, and how this might also help to develop a new form of collaborative planning theory in the future to help strengthen the competence and relevance of planners.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

***How does implementation of shared space in Norway challenge the planner's professional role, and to what extent does Universitetsgata as a former shared space project reflect this challenge?***

With **implementation** I refer to the introduction into planning process, as well as physical realization of a design into a space.

With **challenge** I refer to how the planner faces obstacles or struggles in terms of his professional competence, duty or personal ideals.

With **planner's role** I refer to how the planner understands his profession, both as a personal ideal and in-practice.

### **Purpose of the thesis**

Identify and discuss what challenges the planner faces as a professional when implementing shared space design

### **To achieve this aim**

- Go in-depth in the planner's role in terms of professional duty, values and power
- Give a general introduction into shared space in light of its international history
- Get empirical data on the planning profession and shared space through interviews with planners and politicians
- Form a conclusion in light of the preceding theory

## REFINEMENTS AND PRIORITATION

As much as I would like to further study how the public opinion and local contribution might help in the process of implementing planning designs, I feel the need to keep my primary focus on identifying the role of the planner in these power relations.

The role of the planner in implementing an urban design can be explored on many different platforms within urban planning. My own interest is to link the planner's role to implementing designs less used in Norway.

With basis in my own interest of a specific design, I will thus connect the study to the planning principle of **shared space**. I will not be focusing on why there is so little shared space in Norway today, though this would also have been an interesting specter of my study. I chose shared space because as an innovative solution in Norway, it is not only rarely used in an urban city context, but it is also a challenge to Norwegian conventional space design.

As I am attempting to relate the difference in planner's role to the understanding and implementation of an idea, I will focus on a **single project case** to better understand if there is a connection. This case will be Universitetsgata.

**Universitetsgata** is a street with many variables and factors that need to be evaluated when considering if this street was eligible for shared space. Since my study does not aim to determine if Universitetsgata was an ideal candidate for shared space, I will not go into too much detail about the traffic situation and physical properties of Universitetsgata in terms of implementing shared space. However, I do wish to see whether or not the rejected proposal of Universitetsgata as a recent shared space project is connected to my study.

# GUIDANCE

## SUBJECT

**CHAPTER 1:** Introducing the thesis subject, the background for my subject and the intent of my study. The buildup of my thesis, the problem statement and my goals are reflected as well.

## METHODS

**CHAPTER 2:** I explain the various methods and approaches that have been used to enlighten my progress, and further what refinements I've applied to my study.

## THEORY

**CHAPTER 3:** In this chapter I enter the theoretical basis of my study. I will introduce a brief historical overview of the planning profession history, the professional tasks of the modern planner and his role and challenges in implementing innovative ideas in general.

**CHAPTER 4:** The concept of shared space is introduced, the innovative design I've chosen to focus on in this thesis. It gives insight into shared space abroad and in Norway, along with a few examples of the implemented design.

**CHAPTER 5:** Gives insight into Universitetsgata, historically and today, and an introduction into the shared space project proposal. In light of the previous chapters, this chapter intends to give an overlook of the street regulation history from the beginning until the final phase of the project proposal.

## DISCUSSION

**CHAPTER 6:** Presents my empirical data and a generalization of the results.

**CHAPTER 7:** Discusses the generalization up against the theoretical framework and forms a conclusion.

## REFLECTION

**CHAPTER 8:** Reflecting on my experience with working on this thesis and my findings.

# CHAPTER 2: METHODS

## THEORY

I collected relevant literature, articles and writings about planning theory, values and ethics, power relations and planning practice to give a collective theoretical impression of the planner's professional role. The aim of this was to introduce previous and existing debates about planning theories, fragmentations within the planning profession and differing interpretations of roles within planning. I collected relevant theory by recommendation of my supervisor as well as my own research and theoretical connections to my existing framework.

By collecting relevant articles, writings, reports and documents about the concept of shared space, I aimed to give theoretical insight into what the original intent of shared space was when first introduced into mainstream planning versus how the idea has been perceived by planners in Norway. It was also to showcase the potential challenges that planners might face when combining their professional role with the values and physical assumptions of implementing this design.

I obtained relevant writings, reports and documents on Universitetsgata, both as a historical background to the street and to get insight into the shared space project, as well as further relate it to my problem statement as my case area.

## EMPIRICAL DATA

### Interviews and correspondences

Interviews, mail and phone correspondences with planners from official estates were to give me more insight into case documents and their opinions on shared space. The prime focus of my interviews with them was to uncover their own personal motivation for becoming planners and to what extent they feel their profession allows them their own ambitions and expertise. Some of the planners and politicians were selected due to their previous involvement with the case area, others were recommended to me from the initial interviews for their practical experience and insight. The live interviews with planners were semi-structured and aimed at being held as free conversations rather than structured interviews with sequenced questions. The interviews by mail were structured. The candidates were;



**Einar Lillebye**, Public Road Administration  
**Ola Bettum**, Norwegian University of Life Sciences  
**Harald Dalen**, Urban Environment Agency  
**Tom Dyring**, Landskapsarkitektene Berg&Dyring AS  
**Grethe Myrberg**, Rambøll  
**Rubina Mushtaq**, Conservative Party (H)  
**Jan Ove Rikheim**, Conservative Party (H)  
**Marianne Borgan**, Sosialist Left Party (SV)  
**Geir Egilsson**, Asplan Viak

Unfortunately I was not able to get more than nine interviews in total, six with planners and three with politicians, in part due to lack of positive responses and lack of time to set aside in their profession. I feel more interviews would give me a much better overview of how the planning profession is viewed both from the inside and outside. However, the responses I have, gives me a general idea I can relate my theoretical framework to.

From the interview transcripts I began a process of coding in terms of words, phrases and values reflected in answers to the questions that were most relevant to my problem statement, as well as the questions that reflected the candidate's personal values and opinions. The words and phrases were selected based on repetition, the value the candidate put on these specific words or phrases and my own reaction to them in terms of my subject (some phrases surprised me because they challenged my preconceived theory of planning, others reinforced my belief and what I had read in my theoretical sources). The grouping and categorization of these codes provided my empirical data. This data was placed in a hierarchy of categories in relation to my problem statement. I ultimately attempted to draw a subjective connection between different categories to see how they were relevant to each other, and thus form a new "result category" from each connection. These results were later interpreted up against my theoretical background and reflected on.

## Observations

To get a better understanding of the experience of a shared space, I did observations in some areas in Oslo that are considered as shared spaces, though not labeled as such. The intent of these observations were simply to get a better understanding of the social behavior and dynamics between different traffic groups in a shared space. I didn't do the observations with the intent of registering if these shared spaces are effective or not in terms of traffic flow and safety. These shared spaces were also not specifically selected for any other reason than to show variants of shared space in Norway.

# **CHAPTER 3:**

# **THE PLANNING**

# **PROFESSION**

*An insight into the historical, professional and personal factors that make up the planner of today, and his role in implementing innovative ideas for the future*

## WHAT IS PLANNING?

Before we can know what the role of the planner is, it is important to look at what planning actually is.

The American Planning Association defines urban planning as this;

*“Planning, also called urban planning or city and regional planning, is a dynamic profession that works to improve the welfare of people and their communities by creating more convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive places for present and future generations”.* – American Planning Association (planning.org)

Another definition by the governmental website of Norway says this about planning;

*“Planning is to contribute to development of a society that **preserves common values** and **basic living standards** for different groups within the boundaries of sustainability. The planning process should emphasize transparency and contribution.”* (regjeringen.no)

It is a broad profession concerned with many different aspects of society, and that is also why it is difficult to pin urban planning down to any specific societal purpose. However, going roughly by these three definitions they are all concerned with addressing societal needs and issues through development. And obviously, development to accommodate needs is initiated by finding **solutions** to facilitate development. In urban planning this entails appropriate urban designs.

This chapter will thus focus on the planner’s understanding of his professional role and the challenges faced in this role, particularly in terms of introducing, facilitating and implementing designs as solutions to societal challenges, with emphasis on innovative designs.

## BRIEF HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF MODERN PLANNING

The modern planning profession emerged as a reaction to the increasingly deteriorating social and economic conditions of rapidly-growing industrial societies. Architects and civil engineers, joined by public health specialists, sociologists, economists, lawyers and geographers to better understand the complexity of managing large cities. Urban planning developed from an interdisciplinary synthesis of these different fields. (mcgill.ca)

Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, planning theory and practice have evolved with the societal situation of each passing decade. (Schön 1982, p. 353). Changing societal conditions have yielded varying roles and positions for the planning profession as will be shown in this overview. In addition, it shows how ‘innovative theories’ of urban design are brought into discussion as counters to societal challenges.

Although there are examples of ‘planning’ dating far back to even ancient times, this timeline will focus on the history of urban planning from the era it became professionalized.

Ebenezer Howard as an initial planning theorist argued for ‘garden cities’ in 1899, as a reaction to the miserable conditions of post-industrial cities in England. (Hall & Jones 2010) He published the book *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1898) as a utopian model for community development, arguing for planned, self-contained healthy communities for workers surrounded by parks. LeCorbusier envisioned a different utopian approach in the 1920s, as that of a modernistic contemporary city, with grouped skyscrapers and heavy dependence on vehicular traffic (LeGates & Stout 1998)

Both of these planning schemes were advocating the idea of abandoning existing city models and adopting new ones (Taylor 1998, chpt. 2, p. 24)

After the Second World War, planning got mixed with what Taylor (1998) calls a ‘political ingredient’. The post-war depression left a wide sentiment and discussion about the state playing a much more active role as an interventionist in society. This sentiment also extended to planning as a societal function (Taylor 1998, chpt. 1, p. 3). Positive planning, influenced by the utopianism of Howard and Le Corbusier, was emphasized as being effective use of land, something the state could only do by nationalizing land to ease implementation of state policies. Planning was to bring societal function and purpose in its physical form and design (Taylor 1998, chpt. 2 pp. 21-24).

By the 1960s the idea of planning with a purpose culminated in the rational ideal of planning. This form of planning was to give an indication of the actual economic and societal conditions. The previous practice of fantasizing about an utopian future was to be replaced by scientific research based in quantitative data. What couldn't be quantified would be implemented and shaped according to state policy. (Taylor 1998, chpt. 4, p. 70)

Any qualitative question thus became a state matter without much objection from the general population. Any vision became a political vision based on the state had to be seen as facts and for community best, both in social and economic sphere. The rational planning was therefore accused of being socially blind. Taylor also argues that the rational model generally does not say anything about the final outcome. The rational model is a method-based model where only said how the process from target to result be performed. It says nothing about what the goal is and what is to be achieved. These factors are again decided by the situation and state policy. (Taylor 1998, chpt. 4, p. 71)

In the 1970s, with the culmination of state interference through neoliberal policy, sentiments of less state-interference and free-market policies increase. Planning failures of the neoliberal state leads to public distrust in state policies and in planning as a profession to ensure public interest. Planners themselves experience their own knowledge and advice being rejected in favor of knowledge relevant to state policy and aspiration. (Taylor 1998). The lack of transparency in planning and policies also makes it hard for the public to hold the planners and state accountable. This leads to an upsurge in the interest of ethics in professions like planning (Howe, 1990)

From the 1980s however, communicative planning emerged as an alternative to the instrumental rationale. Fashioned as an interpersonal process of dialogue and negotiation, the process focused more on Habermas' ideal of knowledge through communication than to refer to existing planning literature and knowledge. As such, knowledge came from the process itself. The stakeholders involved in communicative planning were concerned with the process of planning and action, in other words, how planning could be more effective in achieving. But this was to be done through a process of inclusion, discussion and arguing. (Taylor 1998, pp. 122-123). This communicative tradition would continue through the 1990s and is still widely used today as a democratic form of planning.

## THE PLANNER'S ROLE

A general conclusion that can be drawn from this historic overview is that planning post the Second World War has largely been a profession enforcing the political will of the government. Even with conflicting values and disciplinary background advocating for the public interest among architects and urban designers, the political need to plan with an efficient purpose has led to serious legitimacy problems for the planning profession in particular. This leads to serious struggles in how the planner defines and understands his role in terms of his professional duties and values, as well as his ability to win the hearts and minds of the public by suggestion innovative designs.

The increased urbanization of cities, urban density, rapid population growth and heavy vehicular traffic are all challenges that call for a need to rethink the way planning implements effective sustainable solutions to counter these challenges.

The public skepticism towards state sponsored solutions, in actuality seeking to optimize the state's economic and societal ambitions during the 1970s, not to mention the 'social blindness' of rational planning to consider public interest (Taylor 1998 chpt. 4, p. 71) has led to the planners utilizing communicative planning as a way to secure public interest and at the same time participation by all stakeholders.

### Professional duty and challenges

In his publication from 2009 about the planner's role, Sager argues that attitudes of Nordic planners are closer to a communicative planning role today than to planning theories promoting public and private market efficiency (Sager 2009)

I do realize that explaining the planner's role is a wide and difficult task. To define the role of the planner you need to know what sort of planner you are talking about. Planners within their profession work within all sorts of theories and paradigms, such as project planning, market planning and process planning in practice, as well as collaborative planning, corporate planning and interaction planning in theory. (Sehested, 2006, p.2)

Since I believe a certain variant of collaborative planning to be essential for future societal development on national and local levels, and this study is particularly occupied with identifying the planner's role and challenges of innovative design implementation in Norway,



my further interpretation and discussion of the planner's role will be viewed from a theoretical background about the communicative planner.

The Nordic planner's attitude towards democratic collaborative planning is not the only reason for my theoretical framework.

Fragmentation puts planners in a weak position professionally, making it hard to argue for their own interests. Richardson (2002) points out the discourse theory as central to bridging the gap between theory and practice. Discourse theory leads planners astray in their professional role with producing and reproducing different values of a relevant societal problem. Planners adopting different theories based on this discourse become fragmented in their purpose for planning and seeking validation. (Richardson 2002)

In other words, by employing communicative planning as a tool to use discourse to discard constructed 'truths and ideas' within planning will help facilitate the role of the planner as an including, rather than excluding professional practitioner.

For the same reason, New Public Management, introducing neoliberalistic values of competitiveness, market efficiency and private corporate growth, should also be discouraged. It is focused on local private development and job growth through depoliticization of decision making and less democratic practice. The sentiment is that private market efficiency can secure the public interest better than public solutions, challenging the role of central planners as public servants (Sager 2009, pp.69-70). While public sectors offers the planner higher working security but stricter rules of conduct, the private market offers greater freedom but less security, judging on merits of performance (Sager 2009, p. 70).

Like communicative planning, NPM emphasize the public needs (Sager 2009, p. 71). Going by my definitions earlier it is the societal needs that are the basis for the planner to facilitate any planning process. But the difference is, NPM only takes into account the part of the public that contributes to the efficiency of the market through paying for service. In other words, in contrast to communicative planning, NPM facilitates social exclusion of those that do not use market service (Sager 2009, p. 72) and like neoliberalism, it increases the gap in inequality among different societal groups (Purcell 2009, p. 143).

It is essential to have equal representation for the planner to carry out his role of planning to address societal needs.

According to Sager, the role of the communicative planner is to make all stakeholders in a planning process collaborate in a creative process that creates more opportunities for each stakeholder than they would be able to achieve in alternative processes. The planner's role is that of facilitating the process, mediating in conflict and exposing hidden power dynamics to avoid distortion of knowledge. Through this process the planner facilitates a dialogue that allows for equal opportunity, free expression and fairness in representation. (Sager 2009, p. 68).

Rationality and ideals are separate in planning, from a political standpoint. The competence of the planner is based almost exclusively on rationality. Even though the planner could get personally invested, such as in cases pertaining to local issues or even hometown issues, the planner's role is to maintain objectivity. The competence of the planner gives an opportunity to give objective knowledge in a planning process. This is essential in countering ideological stakeholder influence attempting to make the planner irrelevant. Flyvbjerg argues that the best way to counter such problematics is to make the facts of a planning process publicly available as knowledge. (Flyvbjerg, 2002 p.361)

There should be a transparent planning process, especially in situations involving a local planner, to make locals familiar with all sides of the process. These kinds of facts can't be hidden away by faulty explanations or alternative ways to frame the planning process.

Flyvbjerg argues that two criteria are essential for accomplishing this;

The first is to work with problem generally perceived as problems, be it by different disciplinary backgrounds within the planning process or by society in general. The second is to showcase these results and feed them to the relevant social and political spheres.

This ensures that the competence of the planner is maintained as well as refusing ideals and ideology to cloud rational results. (Flyvbjerg, 2002 p.362)

In their studies planners learn that “knowledge is power”, and thus knowledge is important. But planners never learn to question if it’s true that knowledge is always important, or what instances get to decide what knowledge that will count as knowledge. (Flyvbjerg 2002, p. 3) This argument is followed up by Richardson (2002) by using the example of sustainable development, a state policy with current relevance as stated earlier. He draws argument from the fact that the meaning or purpose of policies like ‘sustainable development’ seems to constantly change or become redefined time and time again, with no indication as to why or how. All the while planners, seemingly utilizing the current ‘definition’ of such a policy is failing as being seen as a profession that makes a difference in favor of such policies. As a new definition of a policy holds ground, the previous convictions of planners are challenged, and often if not mostly, planners accept it in silence, moving with the tide. (Richardson, 2002, p.353).

So what happens to knowledge? As new meanings and values are attributed to policies like ‘sustainable development’, how will the planner’s professional expertise, and also his personal values in terms of the public interest in sustainable development be able to voice a loud enough concern towards this problematic enforcement of fluxuating definitions? Richardson elaborates on this problematic aspect by explaining how it happens through discourse theory grounded in the work of Michael Foucault. In his discourse theory, multiple ideas and concepts compete in a process of production, reproduction and transformation. It creates a process of exclusion, where professionals previously might be excluded in the reproduction of a concept by creating prohibitions or taboos. This circumstance of creating topics that are ‘hard to talk about’ generates exclusion of professionals and public participants. Local stakeholders attending hearing might hear that a certain aspect of a plan is ‘outside the scope of the hearing’, thus hiding certain aspects from the public. As a result, when this leads to objections the state or its institution pours technical arguments by bringing in their professionals to attempt to explain away problems. (Richardson, 2002, pp. 354-355). In the public eye, this lack of insight may discredit the planner as just such a professional.

Further discredit to the planner may occur when the process of exclusion attempts to differentiate between experts and non-experts. The planner, being a professional, is given

rational authority through 'canon' texts that are constructed as being unquestionable in their truth, while locals are seen as non-experts and thus have nothing to argue with. This form of exclusion facilitates the planner's pursuit for respect and validation. Richardson also argues that these planners help facilitate a discourse framing of the planning discipline. Planning is given limits of practice within this framework, where new things are allowed to be proposed, but only within these limits of professional framework. (Richardson 2002, p. 355). The inability to act on personal value and ambition within this discourse, without compromising your 'professional competence', given merit in 'canon text' in the public eye is a difficult struggle for the planner in being vocal about his professional and personal concerns.

Richardson concludes by arguing to use the knowledge of discourse theory to be aware of these micro-level power games and to challenge the academics enforcing state policy by asking hard reflective questions about planning practice, which is taken for granted by these academics. By using awareness of discourse, this reproduction of ideas and concepts can be challenged. (Richardson 2002, pp. 358-359). This train of thought can also be carried over to other practitioners of the planning practice. For instance, traffic engineers and urban designers, which are respectively regarded as either too technical or too into visionary thinking when it comes to implementing their professional expertise. Discourse can be a communicative way of bringing awareness to these different disciplinary backgrounds through informative and learning-based challenges of professional thoughts on role and value.

The planning profession places demands for the planner's role and behavior in terms of his knowledge. However, within these demands planners will often attempt to frame their roles in accordance with their own personal motivation or how they view the challenge in terms of relevant facts and solutions. (Schön 1983, p. 210)

Schön argues that planners will often attempt to frame their role and theory of action in accordance with the challenge they attempt to solve, or vice versa. (Schön 1983, p. 228)

You could say that the planner is attempting to take a course of action with "least resistance", and at the same time not lose professional credibility.

For instance, planners can play an intermediary role with stakeholders. Schön particularly emphasizes the "review game" planners play with developers as a way of framing their role.

By this he means that planners look through the developer's proposal with all stakeholders, and advices in a way where he attempts to "win" by appeasing the developer's proposal without endorsing a bad proposal, and avoid "losing" by bringing too much rational argumentation into the advice. The planner will "win" support through potential compromise of his knowledge or "lose" credibility if the edited proposal of the developer is rejected or disapproved of. This is what Schön refers to as a Model 1 approach. (Schön 1982, p.357-360)

In other words, the planner is put in a risky position. With both developing and public stakeholders keeping the planning profession under a watchful eye in terms of societal relevance, especially in today's society with constant emerging challenges, the planner's role in suggesting innovative designs that may carry little or no knowledge and support diminishes his legitimacy even further.

Schön argues instead for an alternative approach he calls Model 2. By bringing valid and observable information, creating awareness of options and free choices, and encouraging a like-minded commitment to decisions you create an environment of learning rather than defending your own stance. This in turn makes all stakeholders more open to revealing their interests and intentions, thus minimizing the planner's need to take on an intermediary role of bargaining with the developer for a win/lose outcome. (Schön 1982, p. 362)

Essentially you could say that Schön is arguing for communicative planning with consensus building as a learning process, as per Innes & Booher (1999) regarding communicative planning as a stage for building consensus through role-play.

I've emphasized communicative planning quite a bit until this point as an arena of respect and inclusion, but it's important to point out that equal democratic participation naturally lays grounds for conflict. And even in this conflict it is possible for certain interest to claim their stance as the most legitimate.

Pløger defines the problem with conflict in today's planning as a disagreement between "enemies" involved in a planning process (Pløger 2004, p. 72).

This disagreement, according to Pløger, can't be solved through democratic discussion and mutual respect for the different perspectives of each party. It is enforced, a solution through political or legal means, which Pløger argues is a deliberate measure to expedite a process that would be far more time consuming and resource consuming through achieving consensus on the matter. In other words, to circumvent the need for a consensus,

agreement between developer and planner is in some cases an attempted enforcement by the developer to make the planning process more efficient, disregarding procedure or the planner's professional advice if need be. (Pløger 2004, p. 72).

Pløger concludes that the solution to this is to challenge the 'status quo' directly through counter-hegemonic movement. This might seem extreme, but it is also the reason I bring up Pløger's argument in particular in this context. Both as a way to institute agenda through democratic means, as with neoliberalistic tendencies, or by certain stakeholders attempting to undermine the planner's role by discrediting the communicative process, it is important that the planner, in line with Schön argument of a Model 2 approach, facilitates a process where he has the relevant information to back up his stance. The planner is tasked with researching certain conditions relevant to a planning process. At the same time, the conflict offers a valuable opportunity for the planner to mediate on basis of rational knowledge, further strengthening legitimacy of his profession.

## Implementing innovative urban designs

When talking about innovative designs, I refer to urban designs that are either recent in planning history or have had little or no implementation in urban city areas. These types of designs may be a proposal or a solution to a societal or traffical challenge, such as pollution from heavy vehicular traffic or restricted access for pedestrians and cyclists.

Because sustainability in planning is still a new and controversial aspect in terms of implementing solutions adhering to this principle, these forms of designs need societal support before they can be implemented into society itself. This process of obtaining approval and support can thus be long and complex. This is even more true for innovative ideas like shared space, that have yet to be used in a larger urban city space in countries like Norway.

Planning is not just about managing traffic, issuing permits and holding hearings, but also about considering the future we face and what kind of places we wish to live in. Planners need to give people a positive vision and the tools to achieve it. (Grant 2006, p. 73)

However, as Grant also points out, the question of who is deciding what vision is positive is of just as much importance. Is it the planner's role to decide what a positive vision is for society as with centrist and rationalist theory? Does the developer decide? State policies? Or the public that inhabits the space to be? Perhaps the synthesis of these opinions through collaborative consensus is what the planner can facilitate to reach this conclusion?

Things that are particularly challenging to the planner when it comes to implementing innovative ideas is, among others, the discourse theory of Foucault mentioned earlier. Richardson points to how the reproduction and transformation of ideas and concept don't limit our minds, but in planning it may limit our practice. So while we can be theoretically limitless in mental thought, we will to some extent be limited in planning practice through discourse theory in our profession. In short, we can think what we want and imagine that we can say what we want, but the restrictive nature of planning policies leaves us unable to do and say what we want. (Richardson 2002, p. 355). In other words, when it comes to being vocal about certain innovative designs or concepts that may challenge certain preconceived values or notions within 'sustainable development' or 'attractive public spaces', planners may not find political favor due to these constructed values, as well as public support due to the framing of these values to the public. However, Richardson also argued, discourse theory

works both ways. The planner can use his competence and expertise as the rational weight to counter discourse through a process of awareness, and by bringing public interest to light on this discourse theory (Flyvbjerg, 2002) the planner's advocating of solutions or innovative design, in light of discourse theory awareness and his own rational expertise, can come across as a solution with basis in rational fact, helping the planner gain legitimacy as an introducer of new solutions.

The notion of planning for the betterment of public space may also be seen as irrelevant. Campbell (2010) states how planning as a profession seems largely irrelevant in the public eye. Planners are viewed as 'daydreamers', tasked with societal betterment and development, yet in the backdrop of increased political and economical stability in many European countries, planners seem more keen on enforcing state policy rather than plan for the public interest. Campbell argues for a known phenomenon in society where planners are perceived as enforcing planning of spaces and functions into standardized sites (Beauregard, 2005) as per a national standard. Planning is largely seen as an ineffective profession in a society of increasing pessimism and intolerance towards state and planner. (Campbell 2010, pp. 471-473).

Naturally, this not only affects the planner's role as a professional but also his ability to implement new solutions for societal betterment. For where will the planner implement solutions in society without the societal support? Every new solution might be regarded as another state policy to implement a new national standard. The difficulty of legitimacy problems, as shown in this thesis, reflects poorly on the planner's role of facilitating objective and rational research for societal development.

Campbell draws a conclusion based on Schön's reflective practition (Schön 1982) in order to use existing practice, or reflective practice, to strive for betterment within the planning profession. (Campbell 2010, p. 473). Though the author doesn't give any particular solution or positive revelation, she does emphasize the need of practitioners and academics to collaborate more.

Through closer collaboration with local government, practitioners and academics can foster closer links between theory and practice (Campbell 2010, p. 474) minimizing the negative effects of implementing national standardized policy on local spaces.



My theoretical conclusion to this chapter, as a synthesis of the planning profession's historical development, as well as the communicative planning theory's ability in some variant to counter various challenges to the planner's professional role, is that these authors present the planner as that of an intermediary in communicative consensus building between stakeholders, with competence and knowledge based on rational facts surrounding the societal aspects he researches, not just his own values or state policy. This objective rationality not only strengthens the position of the communicative planner in a planning process, but also helps legitimize his stance on introducing innovative solutions as his rational argument for societal development.

# **CHAPTER 4: THE CONCEPT OF SHARED SPACE**

*A general introduction to the concept of the specific  
innovative design I've chosen to explore*

## WHAT IS SHARED SPACE?

According to the UK Department of Transport's definition;

***“Shared space is a design approach that seeks to change the way streets operate by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles, primarily through lower speeds and encouraging drivers to behave more accommodatingly towards pedestrians.”*** (UK Dep. Transport 2011)

A more recent definition here in Norway by Grethe Myrberg (2009) puts it like this;

***“Shared space is a method for traffic planning where all transport modes are integrated and considered for within the same area, one “consecutive floor” where every group must adapt to each other.”*** (Myrberg et al. 2009)

Both definitions make clear indications to an alternative to today's conventional space design of segregating transport modes and making all users of space accountable to each other. The actual term of **'shared space'** was coined by Tim Pharoah in the Traffic Calming Guidelines (1991) of Devon City Council, although the term **'shared surface'** is used almost as frequently throughout the document. However, shared space is not one specific form of design. Each space is different, shared space is more about the spatial experience achieved when applying the principles of shared space in accordance with space characteristics. (UK Dep. Transport 2011). The design form and implementation the planner uses also depends on the traffic situation, government policy and on local opinion and needs.

Instead it can be said that;

**The purpose of shared space** is to plan spaces without regulation (signs, traffic lights, markings) and segregation of transport modes (physical separation in design), thus leaving it up to the various transport modes to attain a safe interaction through eye-contact and awareness. To achieve this form of interaction, vehicular traffic speed needs to be low.

**The objective of shared space** is to add new spatial qualities and experiences, while maintaining aspects of safety and navigability for all transport modes. The design places people in the center, with the objective of designing spaces that are aesthetically well-designed, with opportunities for staying, shopping and as a transport route for pedestrians (Myrberg et al. 2009)

## HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT

Before and during the industrialization of major cities like London and Paris, people, carriages and the emerging car would share the main roads with little or no boundaries. (Bailie 2008).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a bigger focus on regulation of traffic groups to ensure traffic safety in growing cities like Paris, where the concept of roundabouts was also introduced as such a measure. However, as traffic growth began to surge from the 1960s, there was a greater emphasis on traffic safety in major cities like London. (Bailie 2008, p. 165).

More specifically, planners sought to distinctly separate cars and pedestrians. There is already a visible evidence here of the car taking up a dominant spot in the traffic image. A report written by Colin Buchanan in the 1960s, *Traffic in Towns*, emphasized the need to plan for a dramatic increase in vehicular traffic. To safely ensure this, vehicular traffic and pedestrians would need to be strictly segregated, as he felt they would not be compatible in the same traffic space. The UK Ministry of Transport agreed, and concluded in the following report named *Roads in Urban Areas (1966)*; *“Traffic segregation should be the keynote of modern road design”*. This was done by means of road segregations, bridges, traffic signals and signs. However, not only did this worsen pedestrian access and environment, but the intended traffic safety was not achieved. (Bailie 2008, p. 165)

Another major critique was directed towards the erosion and deterioration of the spatial experience of segregated spaces. The segregated environment was formed by engineers through zoning, strictly separating transport modes and functions by their purpose and societal behavior. This technical approach by engineers with little regards to social behavior and cultural aspects lead to roads becoming barriers of vehicular traffic for pedestrians. Public space was increasingly seen as unattractive, leading to reduced well-being and health among locals. Economic decline is also linked to this strict segregation due to lack of public use of spaces outside market facilities. The need to evaluate the behavioral and environmental psychology of locals using their spaces is challenging to traffic engineers and urban designers attempting to solve these challenges. (Bailie 2008, pp. 163-164)

This concern was shared by Dutch traffic engineer Hans Monderman. He had a growing concern that many of the engineering ‘improvements’ that the government was making in

the interest of 'safety' actually made some road segments more dangerous. He observed that this was particularly true in urbanized areas where a lot of pedestrians and cyclists came into conflict with vehicular traffic. In urban areas, the allocation of space is heavily regulated by signs, traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, all of which create the sense for each transport mode that 'their space is their right'. Responsibility for behavior was being eroded; users simply had to stay within the limits prescribed by speed, crossings and traffic lights. (pps.org;shared space)

***"We're losing our capacity for socially responsible behavior. The greater the number of prescriptions, the more people's sense of personal responsibility dwindles."*** -Hans Monderman (Spiegel.de)

In 1982, Monderman developed a simple approach, which seemed contradictory in terms of safety. By removing signs, traffic lights and regulation, particularly with respect to vehicular traffic, they would be forced to be aware of pedestrians, cyclists and other drivers (pps.org) In his publication Shared Space: Reconciling People, Places and Traffic (2008), Ben Hamilton Baillie, shares a thought on how shared space might've been perceived when first introduced into mainstream planning;

***"Imagine if you had never seen a skating rink. Someone is explaining the concept to you for the first time, hoping for your support in setting one up. He explains that the floor consists of smooth, slippery ice, surrounded by a steel handrail. Customers pay to put on boots with steel blades on the soles, and then glide at will around the limited space. There are no rules. What would be your reaction? You would almost certainly have concerns about safety and the risk to skaters. How would you prevent skaters colliding with each other? How would you separate beginners from experts? How would you control and regulate so many unpredictable movements and prevent chaos? It would***

***sound a crazy and irresponsible idea! Yet skating rinks work with few rules and no overseeing regulator.”*** (Baillie 2008)

The reason a skating rink works so well, according to Baillie, is because humans are naturally complex and adaptable. Where a situation of chaos and danger might potentially arise, they develop unwritten informal protocols for conduct. Baillie further argues that our ability to naturally take precautions, communicate and develop a collective mental consensus is strengthened when the circumstances call for it. (Baillie 2008, p. 161)

The design has since spread to other countries. Variants such as *Woonerfs* in the Netherlands, *Home zones* in the UK, *Sivegader* in Denmark, the Swedish *Gårdsgater* and the Norwegian *Gatetun* all borrow from the concept of shared space. These are all approach designs of pedestrian priority areas that have been formed in residential areas. (Myrberg et al. 2010). Most of these countries also have examples from urban city centres, though Norway is still new to the idea of shared space design in a similar urban city context.

Although I refer to shared space as an innovative design in light of today's conventional space principle, particularly in Norway, Baillie argues that shared space has always been the norm in historical use of space. It is segregation that is a recent implementation in history. Examples of this fact is how many Mediterranean hill towns and market squares still operate on shared surfaces of different transport modes. (Baillie 2008, p. 166)

Though countries like Denmark and Sweden are both well-represented with examples of shared space, the reception to the planning design has been lukewarm at best in Norway. There are also no particular individuals as iconic advocates of shared space in Norway, the closest being Baillie as a general advocate for shared space in Europe.

Spaces like *gatetun* is a Norwegian form of shared space, though these spaces are formed almost exclusively on pedestrian priority in residential areas rather than equal integration for all transport modes (Myrberg et al. 2010).

Perhaps there is a general skepticism towards the design in terms of insecurity over lack of regulation (Myrberg et al. 2010), or even the label shared space itself? Norway has general

knowledge about shared space on a political and professional level, but there is lack of practical experience and knowledge in a city context to relate to in planning.

Though shared space has been used previously to some degree in Norway, most of the projects do not carry the official label of shared space, or are usually not pure shared spaces, but rather a compromise to some degree.

While Norwegian politics are not particularly engaged in the thought of implementing shared space as a potential solutions to improve spatial quality and experience, it is very much oriented towards sustainable and environmental friendly development. Through the SATP (collaborative strategy for area-and transport planning), the Norwegian government emphasizes future sustainability of spatial planning by focusing on increasing public transport, cycling and pedestrian activity to promote urban health and well-being (vegvesen.no). At the very least it can indicate that grounds for implementing shared space in the future do exist.



## Criticism of Shared Space

Shared space is not without its share of criticism as well. Without attempting to cover all aspects of criticism I will present some general ones that are commonly mentioned when addressing the principle of shared space;

**Removing the basic guidance in segregated space** could lead to a lack of orientation for different transport modes accustomed to being in their 'right zone' of the space. This may create a sense of insecurity, especially if there is no solution in place to tackle high volumes of vehicular traffic (Myrberg et al. 2009).

**Exaggeration of claims** that shared space leads to pedestrian priority and that vehicular traffic slows down speed, herein that vehicular traffic particularly in streets have a tendency not to reduce speed considerably enough for pedestrians to feel safe, particularly in streets with existing heavy through-traffic.

**Less accommodation in design** towards certain transport modes, particularly cyclists and lack of consideration for variants of pedestrians, such as the hearing-and sight impaired. Cyclists argue that shared spaces have; poor ground material and low awareness and consideration for them. The hearing-and sight impaired argue that guiding lines are insufficient or poorly designed.

**The design challenges the conventional segregation.** Drivers in particular have become accustomed to not paying more attention than necessary within their 'right' space. (UK Dep. Transport 2011)

It must also be stated that these critiques do not apply to the concept of shared space at large, but have rather been the results of experiences in individual spaces formed as different variants of shared space. These are problems that may be addressed through proper planning and design, but for this to happen there needs to be a critique to improve by to start with.

## Examples of Shared Space

In this chapter I will present a selection of shared space designs from different countries.

### Exhibition Road; London, UK



*1: Exhibition Road, London*

### Drachten, Netherlands



*2: Drachten, Netherlands. Demonstration of the safety of shared space*

**Elliott Street, Auckland, NZ**



*3: Auckland, New Zealand*

**Skvallertorget, Norrköping, Sweden**



*4: Norrköping, Sweden*

## Examples in Norway

While there are few examples of shared space planned and implemented by national or local authority, certain areas in Norway today are identified as or carry the characteristics of shared spaces.

### St. Olavs Plass



5: St Olavs Plass

### Christiania Torg



6: Christiania Torg

## Strømsø Torg



*7: Strømsø Torg, Drammen*

## Strøket, Asker

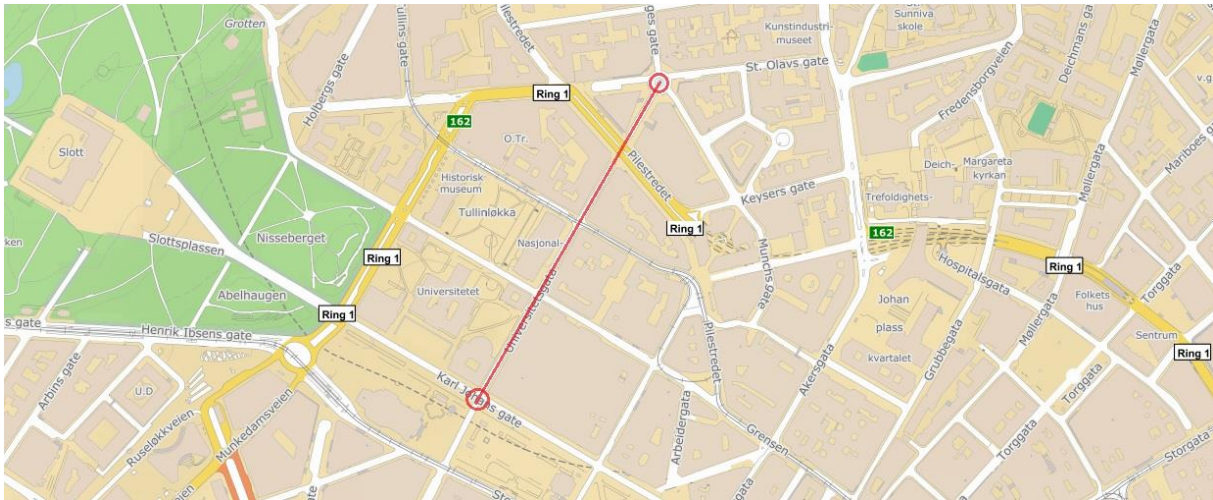


*8: Strøket, Asker*

# **CHAPTER 5: The Shared Space Street**

*A general introduction into my case area,  
Universitetsgata, and the project proposal to  
implement shared space in the street*

# UNIVERSITETSGATA



9: Red line shows Universitetsgata in Oslo

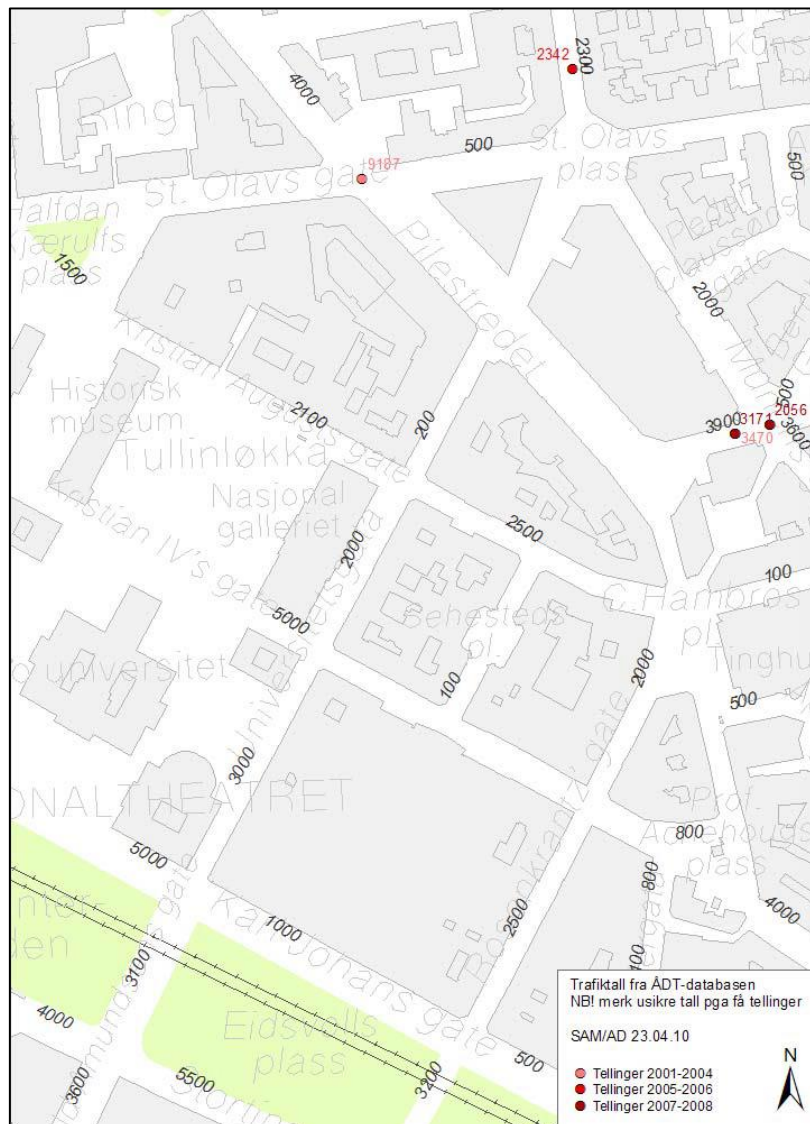
Universitetsgata today stretches from Karl Johan's street in the southwest to St Olavs plass in the northeast, with access for vehicular traffic stopping at Pilestredet. The street has a very central location in Oslo, and with close proximity to public transport, restaurants, nightlife and various educational, cultural and business facilities, it has a lot of spatial variety. There is a large volume of pedestrians in the street on a daily basis when compared to vehicular traffic. This has led to speed in Universitetsgata to be regulated low at 30 km/h, and the street has, by figures from the proposal, an average annual daily traffic (ADT) of 1000. The street crosses Kristian IV's street, Kristian August's street and Pilestredet. The current traffical situation allows for vehicular traffic in both directions, and there is street parking in parts of the line. Pedestrians mostly use the pavements, and cross the street at signalized pedestrian crossings. Universitetsgata is not part of the primary cycle route of Oslo, but is still used by many cyclists between St. Olavs plass and Karl Johan's street. Rosenkrantzgate is the main cycling route. Thus, there is no parking spot for bicycles in the street. Time-limited street parking for vehicular traffic is allowed in parts of the street and two parking spaces for the disabled and parking space for buses have been allocated outside the National Gallery. There are parking houses beneath the ground in both quarters by Pilestredet, with access from Universitetsgata. There are no stops for public transport in Universitetsgata, but there is a tram stop in Kristian August's street (Tullinløkka) and bus stops in Karl Johan's street and Pilestredet. (Oslo, 2010, p.5)



A general summary of the traffical situation of the street;

- Pedestrian domination; 15 times as many pedestrians as cars occupying the street's traffic image.
- Though not part of the main cycling route as mentioned, the number of cyclists in the street is also higher when compared to cars.
- Low volume of vehicular traffic, but some traffic in form of delivery of goods to facilities.
- Small pavements for pedestrians.
- Cluttering of signs and furniture from restaurants and nightlife facilities, and lack of guiding lines, makes the pavements a difficult ground for people with disabilities.

(Myrberg et al. 2009, p.13)



10: Traffical situation of Universitetsgata

## History

As a consequence of Norway's independence and nation-building initiative after 1814, it was decided that a royal residence would be built in Christiania. Plans for construction of Castle Bellevue height started in the 1820s, and Universitetsgata was regulated as part of Linstow's plan for the Royal Palace and Karl Johan's street in the 1830s. Shortly after planning of the castle was started, they began planning a University and a building for Parliament. During the 1860s Karl Johan's street was established as the country's new parade street. Design of Universitetsgata was begun in the 1850s in connection with the construction of the University, and the street was incorporated into Christiania in connection with the expansion of urban areas in 1859. (Oslo, 2010, p.8)

The street was completed in 1875. Originally the length of this street ran from St. Olavs plass in the north to Fridtjof Nansens plass in the south. In 1992, the southern end from Karl Johan's street to Fridtjof Nansens plass was renamed as Roald Amundsen's street, giving the street its current length. Universitetsgata became the site of construction for some important buildings, such as 'Det Norske Studentersamfund' in 1860, 'Gyldendal Norsk Forlag' in 1870 and the National Gallery in 1882. The street underwent a lot of physical changes in the 20th century. Much of the original architecture has been lost, especially in and around Pilestredet, where the development of Ring 1 led to destruction or modernization of much of the architecture. From Pilestredet down south to Karl Johan more of the original architecture from the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been preserved. (Tvedt, 2010)

## THE SHARED SPACE PROJECT



*11: Design sketch from project plan of Universitetsgata*

In a report from 2008, Samferdselsetaten published a pre-project report on the most desirable solutions to a development of Universitetsgata. This need to develop the street was rooted in both the large amount of pedestrian and cyclist traffic moving through this area and to the various recreational, cultural, economic and educational facilities existing in this area. Different types of street designs were considered, among them a pedestrian street and a one-way street, but the former was in this case considered ineffective due to problematic access for both taxis and goods delivery, given the streets location around many local nightlife facilities and restaurants. There was also already a strong desire to consider Universitetsgata as a developmental potential for a cycling street. The two designs that were considered the most viable were;

- A one-way street with broader pavements and clear separations between traffic and pedestrians
- A two-way street with the same definitions. (Oslo, 2010, p.5)

## Introducing safe space

In 2009, Grethe Myrberg from Rambøll also conducted the study report "Feasibility of shared space in Universitetsgata in Oslo".

The report dealt with past experiences of introducing shared space as a design into traffic intersections, particularly in foreign countries, as Norway has few examples of pure shared spaces. (Myrberg et al. 2009)

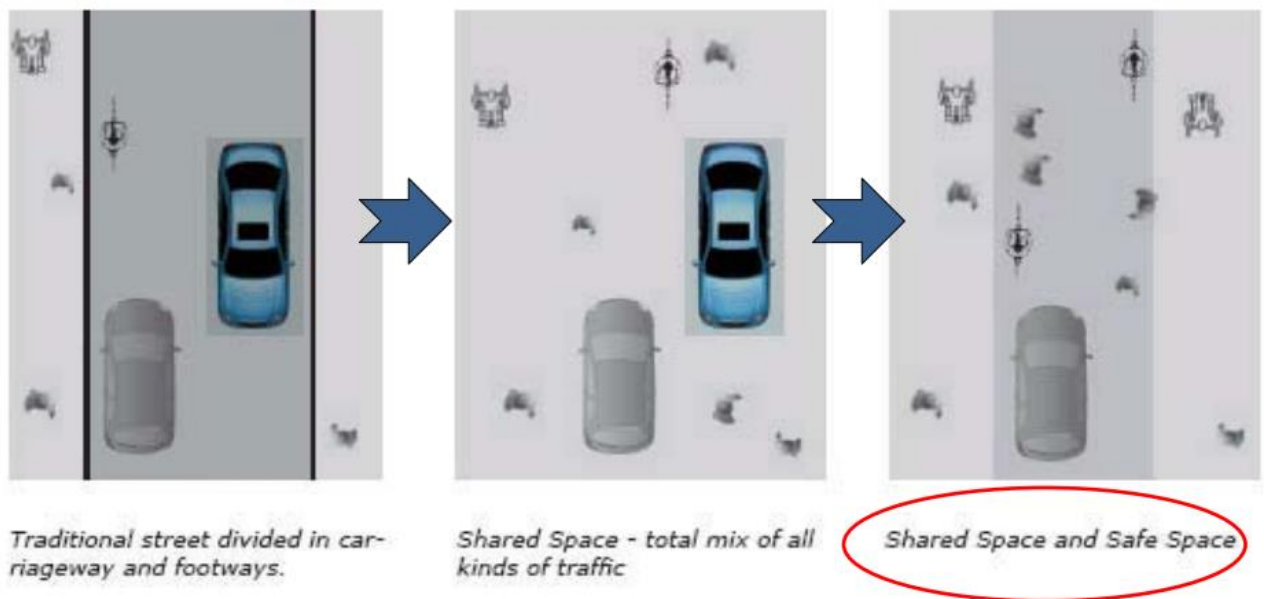
The recommendation in the feasibility study was that Universitetsgata, already being a shared street with a clear majority of pedestrians and cyclists, would be an ideal candidate for an innovative form of shared space area. The report emphasized qualities such as the two lower quarters of the street, with dining, shopping and tourist destinations being ideal for pedestrians. The street had large potential for more social life, without this compromising the existing routes of traffic to both taxis and delivery. Shared space would be able to facilitate pedestrian stays, movement across the street from various facilities and flexible use of the street area both for pedestrians and vehicular traffic. The two upper quarters of the street were characterized by high-rise offices, parking and narrow street profile. This was concluded to be less of an area of stay for pedestrians, and rather a thoroughfare for cyclists and pedestrians.

Needless to say there was a heavy emphasis in the report on giving pedestrians and cyclists the priority both of thoroughfare and occupation. The street was intended to be a city area of stay, rather than general thoroughfare for vehicular traffic, with the clear exception of public transport and delivery. (Myrberg et al. 2009, p.28)

The report took the shared space idea further and introduced a concept variant of shared space called 'safe space'. This would essentially be shared space but with separate 'safe zones' for pedestrians and cyclists, where vehicular traffic was not allowed. (Myrberg et al. 2009, p. 5)

Essentially it is a degree of segregation within the integrated space.

The purpose is to create zones of universal design to diminish the sense of insecurity, which ironically should be, in theory, the contributing factor to increased awareness and thus also increased security, as well as accommodating people with disabilities in a safe space of the street. (Myrberg et al. 2010, p. 16)



**12: Rambøll: Concept of safe space to the right**

The proposal was adopted by Oslo municipality, and the project plan of 2010 for Universitetsgata, by Samferdselsetaten was being formed.

In the project plan, Samferdselsetaten argued that experience of shared space-like projects both in Norway and in other countries had proven to create not only a simple and understandable system, but one that is safe and self-regulating. (Oslo, 2010, p.23)

The idea of shared space being self-regulated is a clear reference to Bailie's idea of human adaptation. We learn to adapt and behave according to our ability to show consideration for others. (Bailie, 2008 p.161)

An example used by Samferdselsetaten is the already existing consideration of the city tram for the large amount of pedestrians in Universitetsgata. When the tram crosses the street, both the tram and people are more aware. This sort of interaction over time becomes routine, and by proxy it becomes natural. (Oslo, 2010 p. 26)

## Proposed regulation of Universitetsgata

As is evident from the next schematic, Universitetsgata would roughly be split down in two different “zones”. The zone on the left in white would be the “safe zone”, for pedestrians and cyclists only, whereas the zone on the right in grey would be a shared space zone. Vehicular traffic is allowed to move only up to a certain part of the street, before the rest of the street is converted to a pedestrian street, both due to parking and the street’s narrowed profile. The size of the safe zone varies from Karl Johan’s street up to St. Olavs plass, accordingly with the presence of delivery, facilities and public transport. (Oslo 2010, p. 4) Even though there is no clear cut physical separation between the two zones defined in the regulation of the street, the plan states that the traffic in both zones will be strictly separated to ensure safety and flow of traffic. (Oslo 2010, p. 23)

The next pages will show the current situation in the street, as per the project plan, as well as the plan’s proposed regulation of the street



13: Universitetsgata- Present situation



14: Universitetsgata-Proposed situation according to regulation



## Proposal scrapped

In early 2011 the city council of Oslo discussed the idea of developing Oslo to be the best city for cyclists in Norway with various political parties. Among the top advocates for this development were the members of the Socialist Left Party (SV), known for advocating a strong environmental-friendly agenda. The idea of Universitetsgata as a shared street would impede the ability of cyclists to roam freely not only according to SV, but according to the opinions of the National Foundation for Cyclists during the hearings of the project plan. Early in March of the same year the city council brought up the plan for development of principal use of Oslo central, which also included the proposal to develop Universitetsgata as a street for cyclists and pedestrians only.

In March of 2011 the city council of Oslo issued a letter to Samferdselsetaten where they were implored to halt regulation of Universitetsgata as a shared space project, and rather draw up a new regulation of the street as a cyclist street (Oslo, 2011).

# **CHAPTER 6:**

# **EMPIRICAL STUDY**

*Evaluating the empirical data of my interviews and  
giving an overview of the results*

## THE INTERVIEWS

The interviews held with the candidates listed in my introduction yielded some very interesting and diverse answers, and were a well-balanced mix of professionalized responses and personal responses. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for free-floating conversation to better yield the subjective responses I was seeking. In the cases of interviews done by mail however I was compelled to give it a more structural written approach. The core questions of my interviews were nonetheless similar, as it was essential to obtain relevant data to my problem statement of the planner's role and the challenges of implementing shared space.

The most important questions asked during my interviews with planners were;

- What associations does the word planner give you?
- What role and responsibility do you feel a planner should have in a planning process?
- What expectations do you place on yourself as a planner? What motivates and drives you to practice your profession?
- To what extent do you experience professional and/or political restrictions and challenges as a planner in terms of introducing innovative design solutions to a planning process?

Going more specifically into my objective of uncovering the challenges around implementing shared space, the second part of my interview would focus on shared space, and contain these core questions;

- What is your opinion of shared space as an urban design?
- Is this design implementable in Norway? Alternatively, is it not ideal or necessary?
- To what extent do you feel implementation of shared space in Norway is a challenge to the planner's professional role?
- How ideal do you see shared space to be as a design alternative for Universitetsgata?

With the three politicians I interviewed the gist was generally the same, except I did not include the questions intended for planners specifically. With regards to shared space, two of the candidates had less knowledge about the label of shared space. I thus took the opportunity to share with them the general information about the design which I presented

in Chapter 4, before asking how they viewed the design principle of integrated traffic. Although I only had the opportunity to interview three politicians, in one of the interviews I was informed that in previous cases involving shared space, such as Universitetsgata, many politicians she had previously worked with shared her sentiment regarding the planning design, which I will return to later in this chapter. So even though these interviews can hardly be said to be representative of the political opinion on the planner's role in introducing innovative designs, it did give me an indication.

Instead of listing individual core responses I will use my methodology described in Chapter 2 to present a collective synthesized response of the planners' interviews in terms of the planner's role and implementing shared space.

Following this I will also present the collective response of the two politicians I interviewed as to how they view the role of the planner in society and shared space as an innovative urban design.

The results of the collective values attained and categorized from these different instances of interviews will, in light of the theoretical framework, be interpreted and discussed in the next chapter.

## CODING VALUES AND CATEGORIES

As can be imagined, the initial phase of my empirical study contained a lot of raw data in the form of words and phrases that described different values, with similar words and phrases appearing across the interviews. By values I mean that the various words bore suggestions to different duties, opinions or beliefs that the candidates exhibited or believed that a planner should exhibit. I used the process of coding, or indexing, to group these values together by category. Examples of values were **mutual respect**, **research societal and physical needs**, **improve public quality of life**, and **maintain bigger picture**.

The initial categories which these types of values were grouped under were **Expertise**, **Values**, **Design** and **Process**.

Under these categories I placed the relevant values. Naturally, some values counted for more than one category. However, seeing as these categories were going to be merged at a later point either way, I left them in their appropriate category for the time being.

I had to focus specifically on the values that were specifically stated as being important or essential by the candidates, as well as being relevant to my study. The values stated for my interviews here were not only the most important and relevant, but also the ones repeated in several questions and across interviews.

Going by this mindset I eliminated values that were considered “too obvious”, such as **urban and traffical planning**, or too wide, such as **analyzing**. Instead, I grouped some of these together into phrased values and placed them under relevant categories to make up a collective sentiment. In the end the values that were most central to the candidates were left in these merged categories;

### **PLANNER and DESIGN**

The most central values to my study were grouped under these two merged categories. To further add to the analysis I decided to label the positive values in **green**, whereas the negative or challenging values were labeled in **red**.

# RESULTS

## PLANNER

- Research societal and physical needs
- Make all sides of a planning process visible
- Ensure efficiency through expertise
- Consider societal, environmental and functional factors
- Ensure the quality of the process through knowledge and expertise
- Develop new knowledge
- Physical design with a functional purpose
- Improve quality of public life
- Authority in knowledge and expertise
- Ability to implement new solutions
- Mutual respect and understanding with stakeholders
- Respect and openness in negotiations
- Exchange of professional knowledge and political knowledge.
- Ensure decision making estate to have enough relevant knowledge
- Maintaining a bigger picture with different interest
- Problematic profession in terms of lack of specialized expertise
- Knowledge is sometimes ignored
- Tension among different professions
- Unwillingness to accept new knowledge
- Need for closer relations between planners and politicians

## DESIGN

- Implement a solution that may be realized technically
- Finding solutions that optimize societal and environmental needs
- More shared space in Norway
- Universitetsgata is an ideal candidate for shared space
- Sufficient space, proper physical design and by solving and maintaining the needs of the functions of the street.
- Opens for interaction between all transport modes on equal ground.
- Retain space characteristics
- If users of the space are open for it
- Only in specific places
- Need for good examples and able and willing road planning authorities
- Segregation better than integration
- Skepticism towards existing shared space
- Need better examples of safe shared space for pedestrians
- Finding new solutions that don't challenge safety
- Uncertainty with shared space
- More knowledge about shared space
- Shared space is outruled politically
- Traffic planners believe speed is regulated by signs or design naturally regulates speed
- Social control, respect, trust, care and negotiation can't be measured
- Road planning guidelines say little to nothing about shared space in Norway
- Laws, protocol and special interest a hinder, extra process required



These categories are connected by the different values presented in answers to questions regarding the planner's role as well as implementation of shared space. The first category, **PLANNER**, is meant to show the values and phrases that came from responses regarding questions about the planning profession and the role of the planner. **DESIGN** showcases the responses I obtained from questions about shared space as an innovative design, as well as its role in the project proposal of Universitetsgata.

Of course these responses don't say much by themselves. In the next chapter I will be applying my responses to my theoretical framework to see if my empirical data can help answer my problem statement.

**CHAPTER 7:**  
**DISCUSSION; The**  
**Challenges of Urban**  
**Innovation**

*Interpretation of the empirical results in light of the theoretical background to determine the planner's challenges of implementing Shared Space in Norway*

## THE EMPIRICAL RESULTS

This chapter will focus on interpretation of the results attained in the previous chapter, in light of the theoretical framework presented in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

As can be seen, while there is some professional and political concern for the planner, the general view of the planner's professional role and duties were overwhelmingly positive. However, when it comes to shared space, even with the planners and politicians voicing optimism for the design in the right societal and physical circumstances, there is an even balance of positives and negatives. While this obviously doesn't mean that half the candidates were either for or against the design, nor that negative responses are against shared space as an innovative design, it does indicate that there are challenges attached to implementing it in Norway. And just what kind of challenges the planner will face will be explored in this chapter.

I will begin with presenting the conclusion of two major factors for deciding whether or not shared space, as an innovative design principle, challenges the role of the Norwegian planner;

- the planner's role
- his role in implementing innovative designs

**Chapter 3**

**Chapter 4**

I will further combine this with;

- the concept of shared space
- the criticism of shared space.
- The case of Universitetsgata

**Chapter 5**

Lastly, I will use the combined theoretical framework to explore the empirical data obtained from my interviews, with particular weight on the responses regarding shared space to determine how the design challenges the planner's role.

**Chapter 6**

## **The planner's role**

*My theoretical conclusion to this chapter, as a synthesis of the planning profession's historical development, as well as the communicative planning theory's ability in some variant to counter various challenges to the planner's professional role, is that these authors present the planner as that of an **intermediary in communicative consensus building between stakeholders**, with **competence and knowledge based on rational facts** surrounding the societal aspects he researches, not just his own values or state policy. This objective rationality not only strengthens the position of the communicative planner in a planning process, but also **helps legitimize his stance on introducing innovative solutions** as his **rational argument for societal development**.*

## **Shared Space**

***The purpose of shared space** is to plan spaces without regulation (signs, traffic lights, markings) and segregation of transport modes (physical separation in design), thus leaving it up to the various transport modes to attain a safe interaction through eye-contact and awareness. To achieve this form of interaction, vehicular traffic speed needs to be low.*

***The objective of shared space** is to add new spatial qualities and experiences, while maintaining aspects of safety and navigability for all transport modes. The design places people in the center, with the objective of designing spaces that are aesthetically well-designed, with opportunities for staying, shopping and as a transport route for pedestrians (Myrberg et al. 2009)*

***Removing the basic guidance in segregated space** could lead to a lack of orientation for different transport modes accustomed to being in their 'right zone' of the space. This may create a sense of insecurity, especially if there is no solution in place to tackle high volumes of vehicular traffic (Myrberg et al. 2009).*

***Exaggeration of claims** that shared space leads to pedestrian priority and that vehicular traffic slows down speed, herein that vehicular traffic particularly in streets have a tendency not to reduce speed considerably enough for pedestrians to feel safe, particularly in streets with existing heavy through-traffic.*

*Less accommodation in design towards certain transport modes, particularly cyclists and lack of consideration for variants of pedestrians, such as the hearing-and sight impaired. Cyclists argue that shared spaces have; poor ground material and low awareness and consideration for them. The hearing-and sight impaired argue that guiding lines are insufficient or poorly designed.*

*The design challenges the conventional segregation. Drivers in particular have become accustomed to not paying more attention than necessary within their 'right' space. (UK Dep. Transport 2011)*

## **Empirical responses**

Now as the empirical data is applied I will first use the values that tell what the role of the planner is in his profession.

- Research societal and physical needs
- Make all sides of a planning process visible
- Ensure efficiency through expertise
- Consider societal, environmental and functional factors
- Ensure the quality of the process through knowledge and expertise
- Develop new knowledge
- Physical design with a functional purpose
- Improve quality of public life
- Authority in knowledge and expertise
- Ability to implement new solutions
- Mutual respect and understanding with stakeholders
- Respect and openness in negotiations
- Exchange of professional knowledge and political knowledge.
- Ensure decision making estate to have enough relevant knowledge

The green values largely deal with the planner utilizing his knowledge to research societal aspects and needs, and to facilitate a good communication in planning process, which is very much in line with the theoretically perceived role of a rational consensus builder.

- Maintaining a bigger picture with different interest
- Problematic profession in terms of lack of specialized expertise
- Knowledge is sometimes ignored
- Tension among different professions
- Unwillingness to accept new knowledge
- Need for closer relations between planners and politicians

The red values mainly deal with problematics in terms of the planner's power relations and failure to make interests heard in terms of presenting knowledge. A form of communicative planning is meant to minimize this effect of the planner losing credibility as an expert, particularly when emphasizing the last value about the need for closer relations between planners and politicians.

- Implement a solution that may be realized technically
- Finding solutions that optimize societal and environmental needs
- More shared space in Norway
- Universitetsgata is an ideal candidate for shared space
- Sufficient space, proper physical design and by solving and maintaining the needs of the functions of the street.
- Opens for interaction between all transport modes on equal ground.
- Retain space characteristics
- If users of the space are open for it
- Only in specific places
- Need for good examples and able and willing road planning authorities

For shared space, the green values indicate once again that, as a rational planning approach, shared space is perceived as being fully implementable as long as the right physical and societal preconditions for space and users exists.

- Segregation better than integration
- Skepticism towards existing shared space
- Need better examples of safe shared space for pedestrians
- Finding new solutions that don't challenge safety
- Uncertainty with shared space
- More knowledge about shared space
- Shared space is outruled politically
- Traffic planners believe speed is regulated by signs or design naturally regulates speed
- Social control, respect, trust, care and negotiation can't be measured
- Road planning guidelines say little to nothing about shared space in Norway
- Laws, protocol and special interest hinder, extra process required

The red values for shared space very much confirm the theoretical background, at least when it comes to shared space in Norway. The challenge lies mostly in shaping a shared space design that takes into consideration the need of the public users as well as not being perceived as too controversial in terms of challenging conventional space design. Some of these comments particularly point to other examples of shared space in Norway, which can be said to either not be pure shared space or formed with some degree of compromise. In these cases the compromise has either not facilitated a proper reduction of vehicular speed, or a proper universal design for people with disabilities.



## CONCLUSION

In light of this and my empirical study, I argue that;

1. Shared space as an innovative design in Norway challenges the conventional traffic mindsets of developers and the public. The planner, being tasked with the betterment of the urban environment for its users, when arguing for shared space as a sustainable innovative solution for the betterment of the environment is thus left with challenging this conventional mindset. When the planner attempts to implement innovative designs like pure shared spaces, the imagery of conventional space users can be that of insecurity and chaos. There is also very scarce examples to showcase any opposite proof of this in Norway, leaving the planner with little legitimacy to argue for shared space from a Norwegian perspective.
2. The planner's role is to be critical when it comes to introducing and utilizing designs, innovative or not. A developer will always have an idea suiting a certain idea or vision, and will seek planners to legitimize this viewpoint. The public interest of the development will always have a need or an opinion, and will look to planning as the tool for suiting the immediate individual need. The planner can choose to argue for either side depending on their understanding of their role in a planning process, but one thing remains certain; the side taken is irrelevant as long as the design being implemented isn't viewed in critical light of its strength, weakness, function and ability of implementation. The planner needs to plant the feet in rational knowledge, practice and past examples to see a sufficient long-term solution to the problems on both sides. simply becomes an empty attempt to introduce shared space for the sake of innovation alone.
3. **Finally, in the case of Universitetsgata**, it reflects how a lack of will to obtain new knowledge of an innovative proposal can make knowledge introduced by planners be ignored. This, combined with a lacking follow-up to the public inquiry of how Universitetsgata was to be regulated as a shared space reflects the problematic of the planner in implementing shared space in Norway; There is a need for more knowledge to be circulated about the design, as it is poorly described in traffic planning guidelines. More public involvement as well as bigger emphasis from the planner in mapping all the

societal and functional conditions that makes up the spatial quality of a space. The theoretical framework provides some suggestions as to how communicative planning can facilitate this through improved collaboration of politicians, academics and the public.

4. When planners propose suggestions like the shared space project in Universitetsgata, without properly addressing the concerns in user inquiries and not designing for inclusion of ALL transport modes (cyclists in particular), as the empirical responses suggests they should, then introducing concepts like safe space become a moot point. Some of these vocal contributions were retained, some were dismissed. But ultimately, **planning with a purpose** and for **the public benefit** are factors that come to mind. After all, the purpose of implementing shared space should be a planner's ambition of societal improvement. So if there's really nothing to improve, shared space in Universitetsgata
5. Universitetsgata was shown to have little to no vehicular traffic, whereas shared space is generally advocated as an innovative solution to counter traffical challenge. In other words, a regulation of Universitetsgata would perhaps have little impact on the characteristic qualities of the street, given that the project proposal would also promote some degree of vehicular traffic.
6. From the negative aspects of the planner's role, it is also clear that often a decision regarding development of a space is already done before the planner even has a chance of presenting his proposal. In the case of Universitetsgata for instance, this happened in the form of a pre-existing discussion regarding implementation of a bicycle street in Oslo. This thread was later picked up when the proposal plan of Oslo municipality was introduced.

***«There is no such thing as a definitive shared space design. Each site is different and the way a street performs will depend on its individual characteristics, the features included and how these features work in combination»*** (UK Dep. Transport 2011)

This final quotation from the UK Dep. Of Transports charter emphasizes the need to see and develop each space according to its characteristics, not to apply a general understanding of the concept to any given area.

# CHAPTER 8: REFLECTION

*A reflection on my experience with working on this  
thesis*

The problem statement of my thesis has been this;

**How does the implementation of shared space in Norway challenge the planner's role, and to what extent is this challenge reflected in the case of Universitetsgata?**

The conclusion that the planner's lack or difficulty in applying a rational ideal approach to a much more complex idealistic design like shared space in Norway is not the final answer to the problem. Shared space is a design with a wide array of variants and approaches, as is planning. I've approached from a communicative perspective, emphasizing the need to involve stakeholders in the introduction and implementation of innovative designs. When several of these interests voice concerns, the planner faces a struggle. This struggle is not only one of legitimacy, but one of reflexivity. The planner questions his own motive and expertise for bringing up these innovative ideas, much like with discourse theory's enforcement of reproductive values. Perhaps the further study lies in combining the communicative ideals with the legitimizing sentiments of Flyvbjerg, where feeding relevant knowledge to the right spheres is combined with knowledge obtained from these communicative practices themselves. Perhaps this is the stage where the planner may openly propose shared space for discussion, and hence feed a professionally restricted discussion to a larger social and political circle. I hope with more interest and more time invested, this problematic will lead to more planners asking similar questions.

Although this thesis is in no way a complete and final answer to this problematic, I feel my interview and my time with the planners I've talked to and that have helped illuminate the way both for my study and my education has helped me see a personal interest field within my future profession. The communicative approach I've worked with as a framework in this thesis is, if anything, an indication towards the right direction in solving interdisciplinary differences in ways of thinking about future societal development.

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