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Vacated Municipal Buildings – in Search of Strategies for Reactivation

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X Munch
X Munch

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Denne (lange) oppgaven representerer slutten på fem år som student på Norges Miljø og Biovitenskapelige Universitet (NMBU) i by- og regionplanlegging. Jeg føler meg heldig som har studert sammen med en så fantastisk gruppe medstudenter. Dere har vært til glede og inspirasjon både i innspurten av travle prosjektoppgaver, men ikke minst alle gangene man bare ville glemme studiehverdagen. Takk også til dyktige forelesere og fakultetsansatte, og til arbeidsgruppen i SAMBED som har gitt meg masse gode erfaringer.

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Snakkes!

Abstract

As of May 2023 there are 197 vacated municipally owned buildings spread over 96 properties in Oslo. Buildings where the vacancy extends beyond natural phases of transition represent a waste of financial resources and they might also have negative social implications for their local neighbourhoods and surroundings. Further, a neglect of maintenance repeatedly leads vacated buildings to a state of disrepair, and to be replaced by new (and often bigger) construction. Failing to reuse existing buildings and instead rebuilding is not appropriate if the Paris Agreement's 2030 objectives are to be met. Hence, this study asks how cities can develop strategies to reactivate vacated municipal buildings. To answer this question, the potential impacts of reuse are investigated, significant barriers to reactivate vacated buildings are identified, and tools and approaches for reactivation are explored.

The former Munch Museum (Old Munch) has been selected as the case for this study, shedding light on the process of finding new use for a municipally owned purpose-built museum building. The study is designed as an instrumental case study, meaning that Old Munch is used to explore the greater phenomenon of vacancy in Oslo and processes of reactivation. A broad theoretical review has created the basis for one-to-one interviews with different stakeholders involved in the process of reactivating the closed down museum. Further, GIS-, and document analysis have been conducted to elaborate the issue.

Three main barriers for building reactivation are identified, namely a substantial maintenance backlog, inflexible legislation and the sector division of municipal real estate management. Both informants and previous research highlight that reactivating vacated buildings is considered to positively impact all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. Several promising tools and approaches to reactivating vacated buildings are mapped out, but they are considered to have little impact if they are not seen in connection to each other. Further, the complex system framing processes of reactivation calls for better cooperation between various sectors and disciplines – public as well as private. Such a cooperation could be formalized as a dedicated reception centre working operationally and strategically with reactivation, both long-term and temporary.

The particular focus on strategical approaches has previously been discussed to a little extent. However, a recently published report (the Audit Office, 2023) highlights the inadequately functioning system that exists today to clarify the future use of empty municipal buildings. This study goes further in suggesting possible and alternative approaches for reactivation. Drawing on this, strategic approaches for reactivation must be put on the agenda – both in the academic and professional field – to be further revised and refined.

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Word list

Norwegian / Original

English / In-text

Organizations

Kulturetaten	The Culture Agency
Eiendoms og byfornyelsesetaten (EBY).....	EBY
Bymiljøetaten (BYM).....	BYM
Oslobygg Oslo KF	Oslo Building KF
Boligbygg Oslo KF	Residential Building KF
Plan- og bygningsetaten (PBE).....	the Planning and Building Agency
Byantikvaren	the City Antiquary
Riksatikvaren	the National Antiquary
Kommunerevisjonen	the Audit Office
Fortidsminneforeningen	the Association of Historical Relics
Bydelsråd	City District Council
Byråd	City Council
Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet	AFI
Grønn byggallianse	Green Building Alliance

Protection

Listeført	Listed / Protection worthy
Fredet (etter kulturminneloven)	Legally protected
Vernet (etter PBL eller annen lov)	Legally conserved

Assorted

Utnyttelsesgrad.....	Degree of utilization
Bruttoareal (BRA)	Total built area
Norske kroner (NOK)	NOK
Million norske kroner	MNOK

Legal terms are accounted for in a separate word list on page 74. Words and organizations are translated and explained in-text at first occurrence.

1.1 Background and relevance

A vacated building constitutes a waste of resources. It represents a standstill in earnings for the owner, continuous expenses and no utility value for the community (Stendebakken, 2018). It appears as a paradox that vast amounts of buildings in urban areas around the world stand empty, whilst at the same time cranes characterize the cityscapes and are expressions of the simultaneous construction activity taking place.

The effects of vacated buildings are however not limited to the economic aspect. There might also be social implications for those who stay and live near them and those who used the buildings before vacancy. Not least, the existing (and vacated) building stock represents a key role in the development of the green and eco-friendly city of tomorrow. In fact, it is expected that 80 % of the buildings that exist today, will continue to exist in 2050 (World Economic Forum, 2022). Simultaneously, it is expected that the world's population will close to double by 2050 (New Urban Agenda, 2017). Despite being well aware of the above: *"if advantage or profit is to be found in it, then the old is swept away"* (Lefebvre 1991, p. 360). In Norway alone, 22.000 buildings are destructed each year (SSB, 2021), many of them in good condition. Often, the notion that new buildings are more energy sufficient and climate friendly than old buildings is used as a justification to demolish, disregarding that it may take more than 60 years before a new building has equalized the greenhouse gas emissions deriving from new construction, compared to conserving an existing one (Fufa et al, 2020). Thus, we must look closely at buildings that represent a potential for reuse and find ways to make them an integral part of the development of the increasingly populated city of tomorrow.

The phenomenon of vacated buildings has been extensively covered in the academic field in the US and Europe, following global crisis, the post-industrial shift to the creative industry, and rapid processes of depopulation (Glaeser 2012; Cherci, 2015; O'Callaghan & Lawton, 2015; Madanipour, 2018). In that context, the causes, effects and means to cope with the issue have been widely discussed. Yet, less extensive occurrences of vacated buildings in cities have not received much attention in the academic field. Cities, like Oslo, that are long past the post-industrial transition, still have buildings in the city where productive use has ceased. These are, however, not the industrial plants which scholarly debates have mainly focused on, but old residential buildings, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, kindergartens and museums. The past years, news media coverage has had an increased interest in the matter, revealing that many of these vacated buildings in Oslo are municipally owned buildings. This adds another dimension to the issue, as the waste they

represent is funded through the municipal treasury. Nonetheless, the topic is yet to be addressed more closely from an academic perspective. Further, there is a knowledge gap in the academic field related to strategic approaches to cope with vacated buildings. This applies both to large scale vacancy and the less extensive scale as described in Oslo. Whilst several studies address one measure, policy or tool to cope with vacancy, few acknowledge the complex process at stake in terms of reactivating vacated buildings. That is, the interplay of various tools and methods, the political system and legislation that frame the room for maneuver, and the various stakeholders involved in such processes. This complexity calls for a strategic approach, that rather than accounting for the exact means to reach the objective, help to “*furnish a framework for guiding thinking and action*” (Doratli, 2005, p. 763).

1.2 Purpose and research question

The news media coverage depicts a situation with inadequate endeavors to find new use for vacated buildings, or where attempts to do so are characterized by various hindrances within the municipal system. The municipal real estate management is dispersed and there are various bodies and multiple stakeholders involved. Processes to determine future use of vacated buildings are described as poorly coordinated, and the municipal agents point to factors outside of their own organization and external constraints that they do not have control over.

This calls for a study that addresses whether and how the issue of vacated buildings can be approached strategically. Better strategies to cope with vacated buildings could in turn lead to better municipal resource allocation, both financially and environmentally.

To succeed in this, the following research question is asked, and further three subordinate RQs to support and answer the main RQ:

Main RQ: How can cities develop strategies to reactivate vacated municipal buildings?

Sub RQ1: What are the potential impacts of reusing vacated buildings?

Suggesting that the municipality should actively engage in strategic work to cope with their vacated building stock, implies allocating time, manpower and economic resources to this work. To justify that strategies should be developed, it is important to understand the potential impacts of reusing vacated buildings, both economically, socially and environmentally. This also involves an understanding of the effects of vacated buildings. The aim is to uncover whether an attempt to work strategically with vacated buildings is beneficial and constitutes a more sustainable development.

Sub RQ2: What are the most significant barriers to reactivate vacated buildings?

Strategic work entails an understanding of the local context. To point out a direction for the strategic approach to reactivating vacated buildings, it is important to comprehend what forces are perceived as limiting and hindering for such work.

Sub RQ3: Which tools and approaches can be implemented to reactivate vacated buildings?

Closely connected to the latter, the study aims to address expedient tools and measures to overcome the identified barriers.

Having an overall understanding of these three aspects, it will be possible to discuss the main RQ question and point out directions for future research and future practice.

In response to these RQ's, this study draws on a particular case study, the Old Munch Museum in Oslo, to shed light on the research problem and to apply the theoretical perspectives on strategies for managing vacated buildings of this kind. The Munch Museum in Oslo has been at Tøyen since 1964. In 2013 it was politically decided that the museum should relocate to a brand-new building at a waterfront location in Bjørvika. The former Munch Museum (hereby referred to as Old Munch) closed in October 2021, as the new opened. Now, ten years after the political decision, and two years after it was closed, the future use of Old Munch remains unclear. The experiences, challenges and opportunities encountered along the way are used to learn from and to discuss the overall issue of strategic approaches to vacated municipal buildings.

The purpose of the study is twofold. First, the study aims to make a contribution to the academic field and help fill the knowledge gap on strategic approaches to vacated buildings. Second, the purpose is to initiate a debate in the professional field about current practices, the limitations, barriers and opportunities going forward. The case of Old Munch, its history and the ongoing process to determine future use, must be understood based on the local (and national) context. Consequently, the results of this study must not be understood or interpreted as a suggestion for a universal strategy suitable for any given vacated building. Rather, as stated, it is an attempt to set a direction for the thoughts and practice of both the academic and the professional field, which can be of value also outside Oslo and Norway.

1.3 Structure

The first part of the study consists of the introduction (Ch. 1) and methods (Ch. 2), to account for the background, purpose, research questions and methodology of the study. Next, the third chapter of the thesis is a literature review covering both theorization and reporting back from other research, that helps build the analytical framework for the investigation. When previously

conducted studies are reviewed, it is discussed to what extent they are relevant and transferable outside their local context. As described, the larger topic of vacated buildings is approached with a bird's eye view, with an aim to get an overall understanding of its background and implications, and how it has historically been addressed. The theory chapter also accounts for how central concepts for this study are defined through previous research and literature.

The fourth and fifth chapter of the study presents the findings. These are based on a case study of Old Munch, combining qualitative interviews and document- and GIS analysis. The following chapter 6 discusses the findings in light of the research question, applying the earlier introduced theoretical perspectives and insight from related studies. Finally, chapter 7 concludes the study and evaluates to what degree the overall research question has been answered. Further, a direction for future research and practice is outlined.

The choice of method is often affected by the problem statement of the study – what you aim to find out. First, a reminder of the research questions is necessary:

Main RQ: *How can cities develop strategies to reactivate vacated municipal buildings?*

Sub RQ1: *What are the potential impacts of reusing vacated buildings?*

Sub RQ2: *What are the most significant barriers to reactivate vacated buildings?*

Sub RQ3: *Which tools and approaches can be implemented to reactivate vacated buildings?*

The aim of the study is to explore how the issue of vacated buildings can be addressed strategically. To do so, it is explored how reusing vacated buildings can be of benefit for the various stakeholders. Further, why this is challenging within the political and legislative framework that urban developers must work within. Finally, which tools and approaches that can be implemented to effectively overcome issues of continued vacancy. It may seem like an extensive task to answer these questions. However, as this is a previously little-explored topic, it is considered necessary to see these questions in connection with each other. Rather than not addressing them at all for the sake of limitation, a wholistic view is applied. While that comes with the risk of not answering all of them in full depth, the aim is to point out some more concrete issues that can be answered in later studies. It is argued that it is not promising to go into the depth of how strategies can be developed, if one does not first understand how this is limited by external factors such as political organization and overall legislation. Similarly, it seems unreasonable to call for strategies to reactivate vacated buildings, if we are not sure about whether vacated buildings in fact constitute a problem for the stakeholders involved. As stated by Thagaard (2019), research involves becoming familiar with something unknown. That could mean that we first realize what is interesting to explore further when we are far into the project (Thagaard, 2019). With that as a basis, the topic is approached from a bird's eye view, aiming to narrow the scope for those that come ahead.

2.1 Qualitative research design

Quite simplified, quantitative research can be considered to show that something is happening, whilst qualitative research uncovers why something happens (Johannessen et al, 2016). The explorative study of strategies for reactivating vacated buildings is considered to be of a qualitative nature. Qualitative research approaches are suitable for these kinds of research questions, as they allow us to delve into and carry out intensive analysis of the social phenomena we study (Thagaard, 2018). Further, the qualitative approach is expedient when we do not know much in advance and when there is a lack of previous research on the topic. This requires methods that are open and flexible (Thagaard, 2019). Qualitative methods can be divided into five categories: 1) observation; 2) interview; 3) analysis of existing texts and visual forms of expression; 4) analysis of audio and video; and 5) internet (Thagaard, 2019). In the following section, I will describe how this study is designed.

When a larger study is to be carried out, many considerations and choices must be made. Especially in the initial phase the researcher has to consider what, and potentially who, should be explored (Johannessen et al, 2016), at what time and where (Thagaard, 2019). Research design is anything that relates to the investigation, that describes how the study is to be carried out (Johannessen et al, 2016). The above description of the research questions is therefore an important part of the design, as it describes the topic and sets limitations for further work. Thagaard (2019) emphasizes the importance of formulating a research question and creating a design with enough flexibility, so adaptations can be made based on the experiences gained from field work.

2.1.1 Case study and case selection

In qualitative design, we often distinguish between phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case design (Johannessen et al, 2016). The latter method is the basis for this study. Case studies are commonly used within social studies. They usually collect plenty of information about one or a few units or cases and are used to analyse phenomena in their given context (Thagaard, 2019). The key feature is nonetheless the limited attention to the particular case to provide as detailed a description as possible. Usually, multiple sources of information are used, mainly qualitative, but it may also be relevant to include quantitative data such as existing statistics and surveys (Johannessen et al, 2016).

In this study, the process of determining future use for Old Munch is chosen as the case. The reason is two-folded. First, it fits well thematically, as it represents an ongoing process to reactivate a building where the original productive use has ceased. Such reactivation can be carried out either temporarily or long-term (permanently). I was in advance aware of the ongoing project of temporary activities in Old Munch, as well as the municipal process to determine the

permanent future use of the building. These two simultaneous processes are of high relevance to the study and can be used to illustrate whether temporary use is a beneficial method to influence the long-term use of the building. Second, the building is of high symbolic significance as the legacy of one of the greatest artists in Norway throughout history. This has led to extensive media coverage, and the process has been widely debated. Consequently, there is a great deal of information available on the particular case of Old Munch. This justification to select Old Munch is therefore more pragmatic, as it makes data collection easier.

Creswell & Poth (2018, p. 96-97) divide case studies into three categories: instrumental-; collective-; and intrinsic case studies, as illustrated in figure 1.

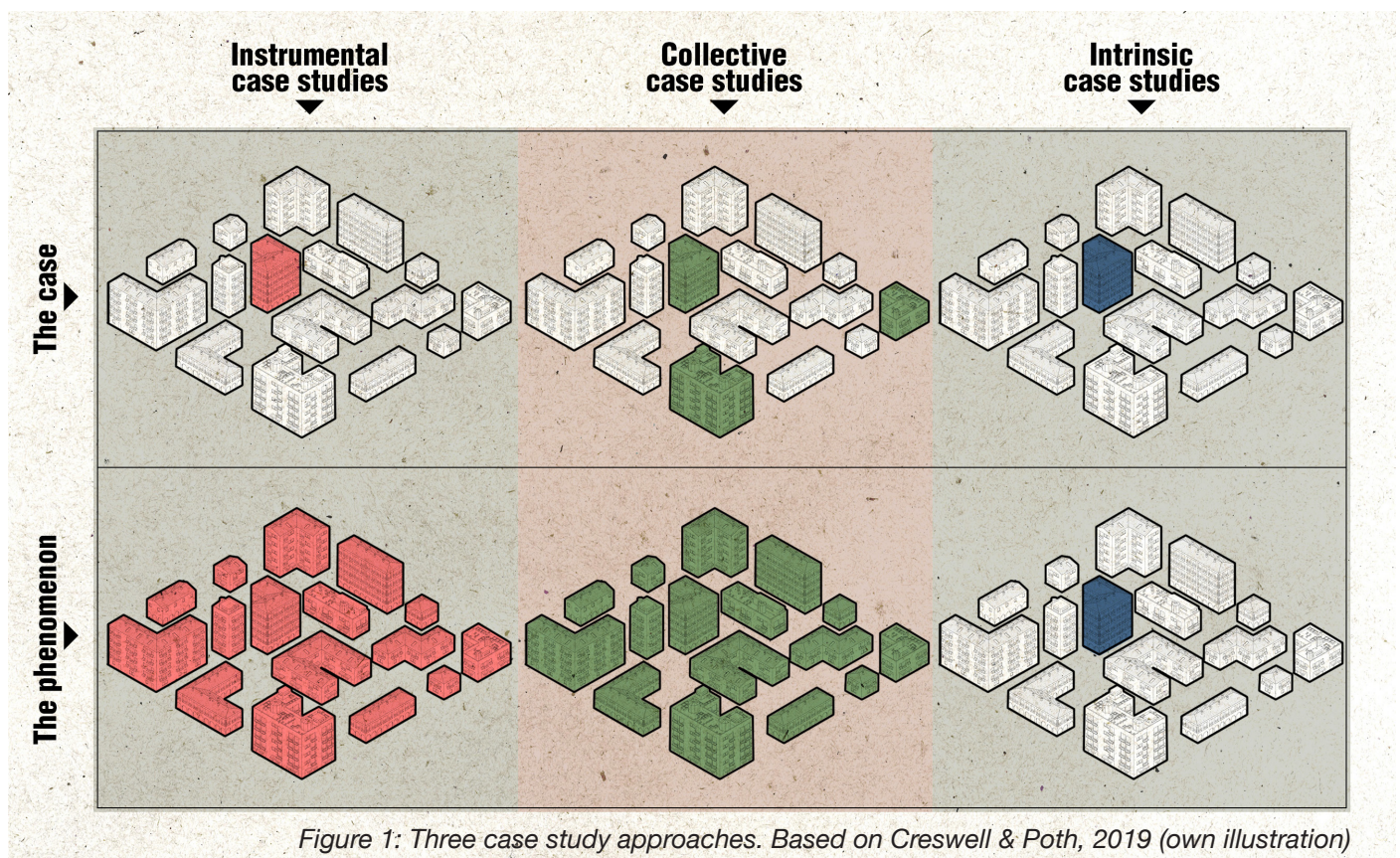


Figure 1: Three case study approaches. Based on Creswell & Poth, 2019 (own illustration)

The first variant of case studies, the instrumental, studies a phenomenon by looking into one single unit. The primary interest lays in the phenomenon, and the unit represents the empirical foundation to develop an understanding (Thagaard, 2019). In collective case studies, the greater phenomenon is still the key interest, but it is investigated by looking into several units. The last one, an intrinsic case study, is on the contrary interested in the unit itself. The case equals the phenomenon, due to its unique characteristics. Thus, the purpose of the analysis is to contribute to an understanding of the case's unique qualities (Thagaard, 2019). The basis for this study is an instrumental approach, where Old Munch is used to illustrate the greater issue of vacated municipal buildings in Oslo. Although Old Munch arguably has unique characteristics, the focus of this study is the process of reactivating vacated municipal buildings, rather than the exact outcome of the reactivation. Whilst the exact outcome for Old Munch is more dependent on the

unique characteristics of the building, such as locality, architectural qualities and composition, technical condition etc., the process of determining future use is just as much as any other municipal building framed by the political and legislative system it exists within. The aim of this thesis is exactly to discuss how and if we can enter such a process with a strategic approach, thus making the main principles transferable to many of the buildings in the municipal portfolio now and in the future. However, the data from the empirical part of the study points out many examples from the building portfolio of Oslo Municipality. Whilst the key focus remains on Old Munch, several other buildings are used as references to highlight different issues related to the overall problem statement.

2.1.2 The qualitative research interview

The qualitative research interview is one of the most common ways of gathering data. It is a flexible method which makes it possible to obtain in-depth and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon we are studying (Johannessen et al, 2016). An extensive description of the qualitative research interview is described by Kvale & Brinkmann (2019). The authors point out that the aim is to understand the world from the informant's point of view. The word interview comes from the French *entrevue*, which literally translates to between view, and depicts the interactive nature of the interview. Knowledge is constructed in an interaction between the interviewer and the informant, and there is a mutual interdependence between the two (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019). Further, it is characterized by being a conversation with a structure and a purpose, well suited for studying opinions, attitudes, and experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019). The registrations of the informant's answers are often referred to as data or empiricism* (Johannessen et al, 2016).

**Note: Thagaard and Johannessen use the term empiricism as an equivalent for empirical data, and not referring to empiricism as theory of science.*

One-to-one interviews

In this study one-to-one interviews with relevant informants are conducted. These interviews are typically used when we want detailed and in-depth descriptions of *"the informants' understanding, feelings, experiences, perceptions, meanings, attitudes and reflections in connection to a phenomenon"* (Johannessen et al, 2016, p. 144, own translation).

Semi-structured interviews and interview guide

As described by Thagaard (2019), the semi-structured interview is based on pre-defined topics, but the order of the topics can be defined during the interview. This allows us to pay attention to the informant during the interview, whilst at the same time making sure that important issues concerning the problem statement are covered. It is flexible, making it possible to adapt the questions based on the informant's answers, and include questions that were not originally a part of the interview guide. It is a conversation between the researcher and the informant, run both by the topics we want to address and the topics brought up by the informant (Thagaard, 2019).

The interview guide helps frame the interview and lists the topics and general questions for the conversation (Johannessen et al, 2016). The topics are defined based on the problem statement and are in this study determined based on the literature review. The approach to develop the interview guide is based on the *tree with branches* model of Rubin & Rubin (2012). In this model, the stem of the tree represents the main topic, and the branches branching out from the stem represent specific sub-topics. According to Thagaard (2019), it is important to find a balance between asking questions from all the topics or going in-depth into particular categories. Figure 2 shows the categorization of sub-topics that is used as a basis for the interview guide. The stem contains key questions with an aim to understand the informants' understanding of the overall issue of vacated municipal buildings, to what degree this represents an issue (and for whom) and their perceptions of how and whether this can be addressed strategically. Later, the sub-categories are used to further elaborate both the challenges and opportunities of strategically addressing the issue.

Another model presented by Rubin & Rubin (2012), and illustrated in figure 3, is to consider the interview as a riverbed with side streams. According to this model, the structure of the interview can be compared with floating on an inflatable boat, and you do not know which riverside you will end up in. However, you are at all times connected to the main river and will eventually float back. The main riverbed represents the main topic, and each side stream represents the topics

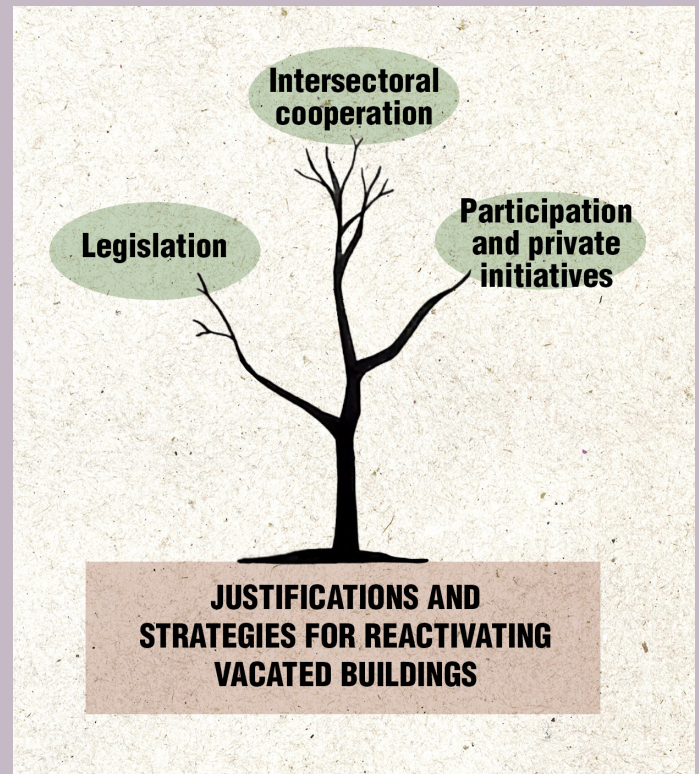


Figure 2: Interview guide topic's structure based on the tree model by Rubin & Rubin, 2012 (own illustration)

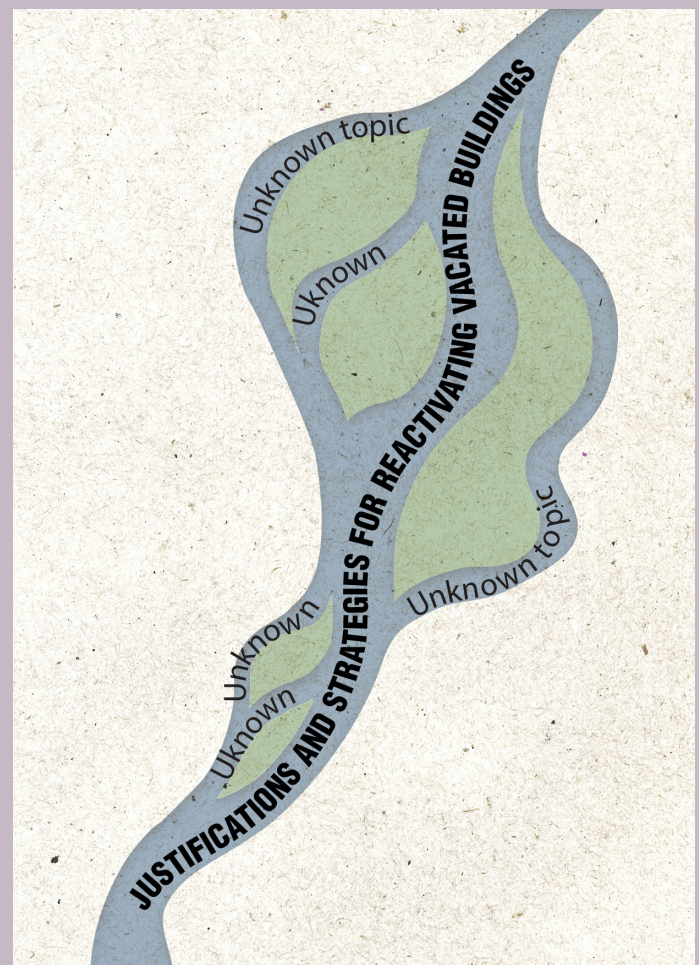


Figure 3: Interview guide topic's structure based on the river model by Rubin & Rubin, 2012 (own illustration)

that are discussed during the interview. This model is particularly relevant when exploring a main topic that we know little about in advance, and if we do not know which sub-topics are relevant (Thagaard, 2019).

Although the interview guide to this study was structured with predetermined questions and categories, it has been important to allow the informants to contribute to determining the topics. Consequently ending with somewhere in-between the tree- and the river model. In the Norwegian context, there is little to no literature or existing studies on how strategies for reusing vacated buildings can be developed or implemented. Thus, it has been important to ensure enough flexibility in the interviews, so that the informants with first-hand experience in related projects can help define the aspects that must be considered.

As previously described, the literature review created the basis for an interview guide. In this study, the topics highlighted by the informants in the initial interviews also called for adaptations of the interview guide for the following interviews. References and ideas brought up by one informant have thus been discussed with the following informants. Playing on ideas from individual informants has resulted in a more coherent discussion of ideas and challenges raised by the informants. The interview guide covered some key topics that have been discussed with all the informants, to allow for a coherent discussion. In addition, the guide contained a range of sub-categories, where the informants would receive different questions based on their experiences, background, and field of expertise. Quite often the informants would go in the direction of a sub-category themselves, and the interview guide was used to elaborate and provide follow-up questions.

Selection of informants

The purpose of the qualitative interviews is two-folded. First, to get detailed information about the experiences of the process to clarify future use and carrying out temporary activities in Old Munch. Second, to highlight the overall challenges, opportunities and justifications for conserving and reusing vacated buildings. The first aspect also contributes to a better understanding of the second one. To obtain information about the topic, it is essential to get in touch with relevant informants that have first-hand knowledge and experience, either specifically about Old Munch or about the bigger picture. As emphasized by Johannessen et al (2016), randomized selections of informants are for that reason not expedient, and it is important to identify relevant and interesting informants based on the purpose of the study. Qualitative studies are characterized by looking into a limited number of units or informants to highlight an issue (Thagaard, 2019). Keeping in mind that time is also a limited resource in research and, in particular in a 4-month master's thesis project, it is important that the selection process results in informants that are fit to shed light on the research question. It can be challenging to determine how many informants are needed for

the study. The crucial aspect is that there are enough informants to answer the research question. Thus, the number of informants depends on the quality of the interviews that are conducted (Johannessen et al, 2016).

In this study, the approach to selecting informants is partly based on a strategic selection and partly a snowball selection. A strategic selection is simply based on systematically selecting informants that have qualities or qualifications that make them relevant to address the research question (Thagaard, 2019). It involves first determining which target groups should be represented to discuss the problem statement, and secondly identifying individuals within that target group (Johannessen et al, 2016). The snowball method means to recruit informants by asking your personal and professional network if they know someone who has knowledge or qualifications relevant for the study. As these are identified and potentially interviewed, they are also likely to know about other relevant informants for the study (Johannessen et al, 2016). Consequently, the ball, which represents the informants' knowledge, is growing by itself as we go on with the investigation.

The target groups are divided into four categories as showed in the brown boxes in figure 4, namely 1) political bodies; 2) municipal real estate managers; 3) agencies for municipal urban development; and 4) neighbourhood actors.

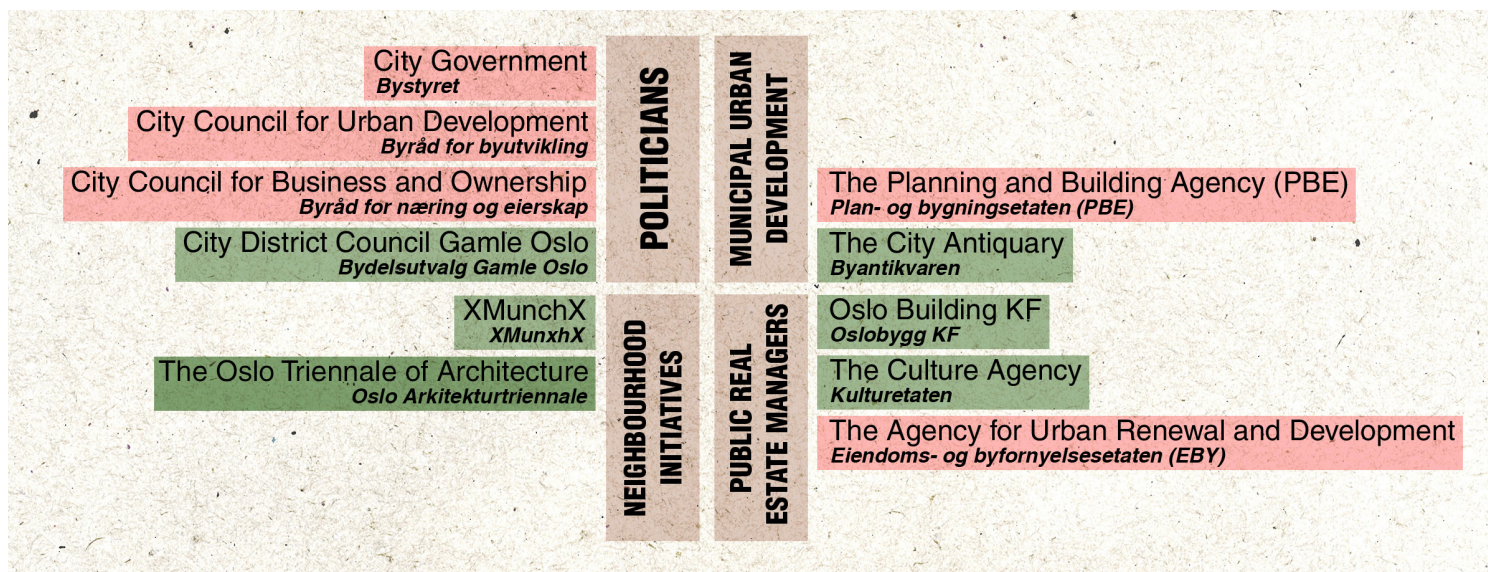


Figure 4: Target groups and interviewed actors (own illustration)

The different target groups and their relevance for the study will become clearer in later chapters of the study, in which describes how the municipal real estate management is organized and the many stakeholders involved in processes of clarifying future use. The different organisations, in red and green boxes, symbolize units that represent the target group. The actors marked in green are those that were successfully recruited for an interview, whilst the red boxes illustrate actors that are not represented. The main goal for the selection process has been to have each main category represented to understand the different perspectives of the various target groups identified.

In total, 6 interviews have been carried out, with a duration of 45-90 minutes. Some of the informants have double roles, and some are interviewed based on their former experiences and not based on their current employer. A presentation of the informants is provided in chapter 5. Although all the target groups are covered, some of the organizations that have not been interviewed make out important informants for the research question. Again, time constitutes a limited resource, and had I (or the informants!) had more of it I would have gone further in the attempts to schedule more interviews. In particular, it would have been interesting with the perspectives from the political bodies at a higher level, from The Planning and Building Agency (PBE) and from the The Agency for Urban Renewal and Development (EBY). Even though not all actors are interviewed, an attempt is made to capture the overall picture by complementing the survey with other methods. The methods supplementing the qualitative interviews are document analysis and GIS visualizations.

2.1.3 Document analysis

In addition to the qualitative interviews, document analysis is used. This could be described as a qualitative content analysis, where the researcher gathers data that is analysed to show to important contexts, connections and relevant information about the phenomena we are investigating (Johannessen et al, 2016). In other words, these are documents that are not produced by the researcher, and may vary from public documents such as parliamentary notices, reports, documents of a private character etc. (Thagaard, 2019). In this study, document analysis is conducted in two stages. First, they are used to review the current issue and debate of vacated buildings in Oslo and its legislative framework. For this purpose, a report about vacated municipal buildings carried out by Kommunerevisjonen (Eng: the City Audit Office); news media articles about the topic; and official documents in connection to a recent amendment of the Planning and Building Act are reviewed. Secondly, it is used to further understand the process of clarifying future use of Old Munch. Here, the main sources are political letters and notes retrieved from elinnsyn (a Norwegian search service for public documents and journals), news articles, reports etc. In addition, document analysis is used to look further into and elaborate the references, examples and suggestions that come from the qualitative interviews.

2.1.4 GIS analysis and visualizations

To visualize georeferenced data and gather information about the registered vacated buildings in Oslo, GIS analysis is performed using ArcGis Pro. The GIS-data is visualized in Adobe. The building overview is based on the already gathered overviews of municipal vacated buildings, in connection to news media articles in 2022 (Borg et al, 2022). Using API (Application Programming Interface) the addresses from Aftenposten's mapping are converted to coordinates, marking the building point for vacated buildings in the GIS-server. Further, by using a spatial joint feature, additional building information from the cadastral register can be connected to each

bullet point, making it possible to quickly retrieve information about each vacated building, rather than gathering this information manually for each registered building. This information can then be expressed visually to illustrate important characteristics of the vacated buildings.

The analyses that are considered relevant are building size in total built area (BRA); building code/ type of use; status for further use; and degree of protection. As the cadastral register does not provide accurate data on total built area for all buildings, this will be controlled manually for large purpose-buildings such as education buildings, health facilities, museums etc. As for building code/type of use, data is generalized for increased readability. In the cadastral register, housing includes various housing typologies, vacation homes, garages and other types of residential buildings, which in this study is represented as one single value. Business / industry includes industrial buildings, offices, warehouses and fishery and agricultural buildings.

2.2 The theory – data relationship

It is described how the theoretical framework in the literature review creates the basis for the interviews and thus the empirical part of the study. Simultaneously, it is stated that due to the explorative nature of the study, the empirical data has contributed to establish the scope of the study. As stated by Johannessen et al (2016), the theoretical reference frame and empirical data go hand in hand. Theories without an empirical basis are easily speculative, whilst empirical studies without basis in a theoretical framework are easily isolated descriptions of single phenomena unfit to provide an understanding of social situation (Johannessen et al, 2016). A study going from theory to empiricism is based on a deductive strategy, which implies a deduction from the general to the concrete. That is, the analysis of the empirical data is based on the previously established theoretical framework (Thagaard, 2019). On the contrary, an inductive strategy involves starting the study by gathering data, without a theoretical basis, and identifying general patterns which can be made into theories. That is, you draw conclusions from the specific to the general (Johannessen et al, 2016). A third strategy lays somewhere in-between the deductive and the inductive. According to Thagaard (2019), the abductive strategy highlights the dialectic relationship between theory and data. With such an approach, the analysis of data contributes to our ability to develop theoretical perspectives, and our understanding of the theoretical framework supports us in understanding the data, Thus, we develop theory based on systematic analysis, and we interpret data in light of existing theory (Thagaard, 2019). This study is based on an abductive approach. Although the interview guide is based on the theoretical framework, it is not an aim to test pre-established hypotheses deriving from this theoretical framework. Rather, knowledge derived from the theorization is used as a basis for interpreting the empirical data, and with an aim to point out a new hypothesis of whether vacancy can be approached strategically.

2.3 Quality of the research

Guba & Lincoln (1989) operate with four terms to assess qualitative research: 1) reliability; 2) credibility; 3) generality; and 4) verifiability.

Reliability is connected to the data, how it is gathered and used, and how it is processed (Johannessen et al, 2016). It is widely used within quantitative research and can be evaluated by asking whether another researcher would come to the same results if using the same data and methods (Thagaard, 2019). However, within qualitative research, it is more challenging to test reliability, as the way the interview is conducted affects the data collection. Further, it is impossible for one researcher to carry out a replica of another researcher's study, as they have different backgrounds, experiences and values. Reliability in qualitative research is consequently more focused on describing the context and methods of the study (Johannessen et al, 2016). Similarly, Thagaard (2019) states that the reliability of the study can be strengthened by providing transparency throughout the research process and provide detailed descriptions of strategies and methods (Thagaard, 2019). This entire section is consequently an aim to strengthen the reliability of the study, by providing a descriptive explanation of how the study was carried out. Further, the reliability can be strengthened by using appropriate criteria for assessing the results (Johannessen et al, 2016), which is also a question of credibility.

Credibility is described by Johannessen et al (2016) as the internal validity of the study, namely if there is a connection between the phenomena that is investigated and the data we gather. An important question is whether the methods used in fact uncovers what we aim to investigate (Johannessen et al, 2016). I take to measures to increase the credibility of the study. First, I use method and data triangulation, meaning I use a variety of methods and data to study the phenomenon of vacated buildings. Weaknesses and omissions from one data-source, are elaborated or controlled using other data. Secondly, the informants that participate in the study have received a draft of the findings and the opportunity to address misinterpretations or misquotations. That has been important to control that my interpretations of the data material have been in accordance with what they intended to communicate.

The generality is described as the external validity of the results. That is, are the results and the knowledge that have emerged from the study transferable, and does it represent a contribution for other areas than the particular case that has been studied? (Johannessen et al, 2016). According to Thagaard (2019), the generality can be strengthened by describing the theoretical basis for our interpretations. In this study, I attempt to thoroughly connect my claims with existing studies, but I similarly address the lack of relevant research that make it challenging to draw conclusions. Further, I attempt to clearly describe how the analysis supports and create a basis for the conclusions and interpretations.

The last one of Guba & Lincoln's (1989) assessment terms is verifiability. This is connected to whether the findings are a result of the research or rather of the subjective attitudes of the researcher. As mentioned, the informants have received a draft of the findings, which has also been important to make sure that I did not interpret the data based on my own narrative and potential preconceived attitudes.

The researcher's objectivity will always be coloured by the attachment to the environment we study, or if we on the contrary represent an outsider (Thagaard, 2019). In the context of this study, I most likely belong in the latter category. Through my (soon finished) educational course in Urban and Regional Planning, I have barely dipped my toe in the big ocean that the topic of this thesis constitutes. Both vacancy, temporary urbanism, adaptive reuse and (especially) the municipal management system of Oslo, each represent fields that for me are relatively unexplored in advance and throughout my study. Although reaching some of the informants through my own network, I had not met them previously, and I had limited knowledge about and no affiliation to the organizations that they represent. According to Thagaard (2019) being an outsider may have both positive and negative implications for the study. On the positive side, it might have provided me an openness to nuances and alternative approaches in an otherwise rigid system. People with a close attachment to the field, may to a larger extent overlook aspects that are on the side of their own experiences and opinions. Having little experience with the topic before, my true experience is that I had no predetermined opinion about what constitutes an effective strategic approach to reactivate vacated buildings, and that it has rather been an explorative "journey". This does of course not stand in the way of the possibility to be affected by certain approaches and opinions along the way, which can nevertheless contribute to colouring my conclusions and claims. Being an outsider does however deprive me of the possibility to draw on my own experiences from similar work; it deprives me of a network of relevant informants and knowledge; and I use time and resources on obtaining information that other with more knowledge might have easily available. Thagaard (2019) emphasize that researchers who know the field in advance are more capable of understanding the participants based on their personal experiences, and that these experiences can contribute to the understanding we develop.

There are three main sections in this chapter. The first chapter addresses the concept of vacated buildings. In the second chapter, the issue of and justifications for conservation is addressed. Finally, the third section introduced theorization and research about ways of managing vacated buildings, both in terms of temporary and permanent reuse.

3.1 Vacated buildings

The aim of the thesis is to investigate how strategies can be developed to reactivate vacated buildings. In this first section, the concept of vacated buildings is presented. It is important to better understand the term vacated and the mechanisms in play resulting in empty and unused buildings. Moreover, it is important to comprehend the social and economic effects of vacated buildings.

3.1.1 The term vacated

In the Oxford dictionary, to vacate means “*to leave a place that one previously occupied*”. This implies that what is vacated is simply empty – or not in use. The Cambridge dictionary goes further and defines to vacate as leaving a “*(...) building so that it is available for other people*” (Cambridge Dictionary). This definition implies an opportunity of future use.

In the context of urban planning and management, there are several terms used to describe the phenomenon of empty buildings and land. Myers & Wyatt (2004) mention brownfield sites, contaminated land, derelict land and buildings, vacant land and buildings and previously developed land. O’Callaghan & Lawton (2015) emphasize that a universal understanding of what is understood by the term vacated does not exist, partly because of the challenges connected to fully account for all land use. Further, they argue that to determine what is actually in use, a value judgement is required to make up what constitutes appropriate use (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015). A universal understanding of the term may also be challenging due to contextual differences. Terms are interpreted and understood based on the context wherein they are used and can also differ based on legislation (Alker et al, 2000). As an example, the Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development defined vacant areas as “*areas currently not used or cared for, on which variegated stand of vegetation can develop*” (Colomb, 2012, p. 134). The particular focus on vacated land may have a link to the modernist urban planning principles practiced in Berlin in the 1950s and 1960s, that advocated for large open spaces in between buildings. This has resulted in more vacant sites than in other big cities, like London and Paris (Colomb, 2012).

In an article in the *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, Alker et al (2000) discuss the need for a clear definition of the term brownfield. The article illustrates an inconsistent use and interpretation of the term in planning practice, partly due to the conflicting understandings of the term in British and American practice. The UK derivation of the term brownfield is used as an opposite to greenfield. Whilst also the term greenfield lacks an official definition, the term is generally used to signify land that has not been developed in the past. Thus, the term brownfield is used to describe land that has been the subject of development earlier. The US understanding of the term brownfield is linked to *“abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination”* (Alker et al, 2000, p. 51).

Through the authors’ (Alker et al, 2000) review of the current understandings of the term, they point out three main definitions that are well established in practice: 1) contaminated land; 2) derelict land; and 3) vacant land. Contaminated land is, quite self-explanatory, land where previous use has resulted in substances in, on or under land or water, that does or can potentially do significant harm. While derelict land is described as land so injured by industry or similar development that it cannot be useful without intervention, vacant land is defined as *“land on which some previous productive use has ceased for a significant period of time”* (Handley, 1996). All the three key terms are incorporated in their final suggestion for a definition of brownfield: *“A brownfield site is any land or premises which has previously been used or developed and is not currently fully in use, although it may be partially occupied or utilized. It may also be vacant, derelict or contaminated. Therefore a brownfield site is not necessarily available for immediate use without intervention”*. (Alker et al, 2000, p. 49). In that sense, the authors suggest that vacated buildings may be considered as brownfields, but that the term brownfield itself can be utilized broader, also including derelict and contaminated land, as well as under-utilized and partly occupied buildings (Alker et al, 2000). Although this thesis focuses specifically on vacated buildings, literature on brownfields may similarly be used to shed light on the topic, as the two terms are often used interchangeably when discussing both under-utilized land and buildings.

Handley’s (1996) definition of vacated land draws attention to the time perspective in the discussion of vacancy. The *“(…) productive use has ceased for a significant period of time”*. This perspective is also emphasized by Myers and Wyatt (2004), who compare vacant building stock to the labour market unemployment. They argue that any dynamic European economy will experience resources in transitional phases, as a business relocates or some close, while others open. Short-term unemployment is not regarded a problem in OECD-countries, but become a great issue when the labour unemployment exceeds six months. Just like this, a building that is under-utilized or vacant for more than six or twelve months constitute an unemployed resource (Myers & Wyatt, 2004).

As opposed to the many terms used to describe vacated buildings and land in English literature, this does not appear to be the case within Norwegian literature or practice. Although there exist several studies and articles looking into disused industrial buildings, and reuse of valued heritage buildings, there is little literature devoted to the subject of vacated land and buildings in general. DOGA (Design and Architecture Norway), a state funded foundation working with innovation and sustainability within design and architecture, published a report on the topic of vacated premises and buildings. The report addresses the issue using the terms *tomme lokaler* (Eng: empty premises) and *tomme bygninger* (Eng: empty buildings). While empty premises mainly is used to describe commercial space at street level, empty buildings is used to describe entire buildings that are left empty for various reasons, such as industrial buildings, institutions like schools and hospitals, museums, or residential villas (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). In a master thesis, focusing on vacated protected buildings, the author (Nilsen, 2012) addresses the issue using the term *ikke i bruk* (Eng: not in use / disused), however, the term empty is also frequently used in the thesis. Although there are limited studies and literature about empty buildings in Norway, the topic has frequently been discussed in media articles during the last years, almost consequently using the term empty buildings (see Velo, 2018; Pettrém et al., 2021; Høibo, 2018; Lillevold, 2022). Considering the literature review done by Alker et al. (2000), and their emphasis on the need of a common understanding of the brownfield term, it appears that there has been a lack of this discussion in the Norwegian context. The term empty is arguably less precise than vacated, as it is by definition only referring to something without content or people (Cambridge dictionary, 2023). Following that logic, a building could be – and often is – empty at night, during weekends, or even during entire seasons.

Building on the definitions from Handley (1996), Alker et al (2000) and Myers and Wyatt (2004), a vacated building is in this thesis understood as: A building in which some previous productive use has ceased for a significant period of time thus representing a form of unemployment, although not necessarily available for immediate use without intervention.

3.1.2 Causes for vacated buildings

Roger Trancik (1986) argues that changing land use has been one of the major causes for what he calls lost space in American cities. Lost space, according to Trancik, are the unwanted areas of the city – *antispace*s – that serve no meaningful function for the city's people. Although this thesis is not suitable for a further discussion on whether the term *antispace*s is an appropriate description for vacated buildings, it is interesting to see what mechanisms Trancik indicates as triggers:

“The relocation of industry, obsolete transportation facilities, abandoned military properties, and vacated commercial or residential buildings have created vast areas of waster or underused space within the downtown core of many cities.” (Trancik, 1986, p. 17).

In general, there are several factors that may affect vacancy levels in cities. Hentilä & Lindborg (2003) mention low demands in the real estate market, delayed political decisions, uncertain ownership or extraordinarily high construction costs due to land contamination. Eriksen & Skajaa (2016) point to the relocation of public services as another reason, arguing that an increasing vacancy leads to dying city centres. Public and semi-public services such as libraries, bank offices, post offices, city halls, welfare offices etc., may be reduced (and shut down) or moved out of the traditional city centre. The authors (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016) also highlight outskirt shopping malls and the following commercial flight, which may lead to vacant commercial facilities within city centres. On that note, they add that a reduced amount of parking spaces within the city centre may exacerbate the commercial flight. Further, increased online shopping and digitalization is considered to reduce the need for physical stores, or other services such as bank offices, welfare offices etc. (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016).

However, the causes for vacated buildings vary greatly based on their context. Thus, the following section will first describe the way in which geopolitical factors have affected vacancy in Europe and the US, leading to a vast amount of literature deriving from rust-belt region cities and Germany. Then, major global trends, economic transitions and global crisis will be discussed as a driving force for vacancy in our contemporary cities.

Geopolitical factors

The causes for vacated buildings are highly dependent on contextual factors of each country and city, such as political history, labour market and industrial development, building typology etc. The economic and industrial practices in a particular area are influenced by past stakeholders' decisions. Therefore, the building-vacancy levels of a city reflects the area's distinctive history (Vecchio & Arku, 2020). Cherci (2015) attempts to identify some key differences between European and North American cities, but it is important to emphasize that there are geopolitical differences affecting vacated space also within Europe and within the US. Besides, European and American cities have a profoundly different historical development that have been expressed in differing spatial and demographic patterns (see Le Galès, 2009). In the United States, after World War II, the emergence of the middle class caused the eventual abandonment of blighted areas in proximity to factories and industrial areas. Consequently, there was a rapid growth of suburb areas, and a neglect of the inner-city areas. As the manufacturing industries declined and the economy shifted towards service, research, and technology, there was a significant population decline and entire cities were left deserted, particularly in the Rust Belt region (Cherci, 2015). The vast population decreases peaked in the 1970s, as cities such as New York, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Atlanta lost more than a tenth of their population. An important factor was the decline of employment within heavy manufacturing industries, like steel and automobiles (Rappaport, 2003). These forces of deindustrialization are the origin of the term Rust Belt regions, describing areas that have experienced a shrinking population as a result of declining industry (Oxford dictionary; Glaeser, 2012). Detroit alone lost more than one million people between

1950 and 2008, amounting to 58 percent of their total population (Glaeser, 2012). As for Europe, Cherci (2015) argues that the phenomenon of vacated buildings has appeared slower, more gradually and silent, and that it has mainly affected the interstices of the city. Processes of urban sprawl and polycentric development has resulted in underutilized and vacated areas, as public buildings of various sizes have been “*deprived of their original functions*” (p. 254) in processes of decentralization (Cherki, 2015).

Much of the literature on the topic originates from the US and Germany – as a natural response to their experiences of rapid urban decline, as briefly accounted for in the US context above. In Germany, the vast number of vacated buildings can be linked to the reunification of the country (Mahoney, 2019). From 1970 up until the fall of East Germany in 1994, close to two million prefabricated structures were built, giving shelter to roughly 30% of the East German population. Following the reunification, a significant share of the population moved to western Germany chasing a better economy, leaving the prefabricated structures vacated. More than four million people migrated from east to west between 1989 and 2010, resulting in more than one million apartments left empty in eastern Germany (Mahoney, 2019). Berlin, in which several of the following articles in this study refers to, has a vast number of vacated buildings, yet also highly related to site-specific factors. The fact that Berlin was for many years a divided city surrounded by a *no man’s land*; the destruction caused by bombing during WW2; the abandonment following the unification of Germany, resulting in comprehensive deindustrialization of industrial and infrastructural sites; and the slow resolution of disputes regarding the return of land and property in the 1990s (Colomb, 2012). Although neither the US or Germany are the subjects of this thesis, this illustrates how geopolitical factors serve an important role in the matter of vacated buildings and may help contextualize further references to German and American studies throughout the thesis. The more subtle appearance of vacated buildings in many European cities, may also explain why there is less literature on the topic in various countries and cities, including Norway and Oslo.

Shifting economies, crisis and the post-industrial shift

As stated by Madanipour (2018, p. 1095): “*Empty spaces [...] are an inherent feature of capitalism with its cyclical nature and its recurring crisis*”. Cycles of booms and busts – of investment and disinvestment – in times of crisis such as major globalization and rapid technological and economic change, are “*spatial and temporal fluctuations [that] may leave large amounts of empty space behind*”. One relatively recent crisis, and an obvious bust, was the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). It was indeed a major cause for increased vacancy rates around the world, leading to stalled development, stagnation of real estate markets and the emergence of new ruins (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015). In a ten-year period following the GFC, almost 8 million American households lost their homes to foreclosure. Many of these homes were bought, rehabilitated or transitioned to rental units, but in more distressed areas investors had no choice but to

leave significant amounts of the properties vacant (Jakabovics & Sanchez, 2021). According to Madanipour (2018), the spatial fluctuations have increased due to globalization and a new global division of labour has emerged. As stated by Madanipour (2018), the map of manufacturing has been redrawn, relocating from old industrial based regions to emerging ones, and ultimately transforming the way in which these deindustrialising and industrialising areas are arranged (Madanipour, 2018). The industrial shift, from heavy manufacturing industries and assembly lines, towards service, research and technology, is a reality for many cities, although not necessarily to the same extent as seen in the US and Rust belt region previously. This phase-out and closure of certain types of industry, is highlighted as a key reason for vacated buildings. Vecchio & Arku (2020) stress how the mass departure of manufacturing jobs leaves behind "*derelict and costly structures (...) as an eyesore in many communities which experience symptoms of post-industrialism*" (p. 338). According to Glaeser (2012), the same forces of declining industry created rust belts also in Europe. Liverpool lost half of its population after textile and sugar production declined, and in Bilbao the population was reduced by 14 percent in the 80s and 90s as a result of spiking oil prices and following recession in the 70s (Glaeser, 2012). Also in Norway, the traditional industrial activity has been the subject of great changes. As a result, many large buildings and facilities are left empty, due to restructurings and closures (Swensen et al, 2012). Industrial plants have historically, in many cities, been concentrated in central areas of the city. Reduced transportation costs of both materials and finished products, and easy access to workforce are some key factors for their central location. As a result, abandoned industrial buildings tend to occupy prime locations of the city, close to the city centre and important transportation intersections (Vecchio & Arku, 2020).

While these issues can be seen as urban planning questions, they are also highly related to questions of local economy development practice. The transition from manufacturing to new economies within creative industries, depicts how official planning is utilized to respond to economic change, and is thus related to the theories considering human capital (Vecchio & Arku, 2020). The urban studies theorist Richard Florida (2003) once argued that "*creative people power regional economic growth*" (p. 8), and his studies suggest that the creative class moves away from the traditional corporate communities and working-class centres. They seek creative centres – not those of high agglomerations of high-tech industries – but places of high diversity, innovation and tolerance. He further argues that this shift accelerates a migratory trend of high power and give rise to a new economic geography (Florida, 2003).

In sum, the increasing globalization, shifting economies and GFC – all expressions of an increasingly capitalistic development – have resulted in vast amounts of empty offices, houses and commercial units (Madanipour, 2018).

3.1.3 Effects of vacated buildings

Vacated buildings have undesirable effects for cities, local communities and neighbourhoods. Whilst large economic fluctuations can lead to significant parts of cities being left empty, and consequently to huge economic and social effects, less drastic instances of vacancy may also affect urban areas. As mentioned in the latter section, commercial flight and relocation of public services and businesses may lead to dying city centres (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016) and consequently, residents of a community no longer, or decreasingly, use their local centres and instead travel to surrounding cities. The following section reviews some of the conducted studies on socioeconomic and economic effects of vacated buildings.

Socioeconomic effects

Most of our time is spent in our homes and neighbourhoods, and the condition of these environments significantly influences our personal well-being. In fact, studies have found that the conditions of our homes and neighbourhoods affect our personal health (de Leon & Schilling, 2017). Vacated buildings are hardly ever alone, but rather parts of urban environments and neighbourhoods. Although this does not apply to all vacated buildings, they often show visible signs of neglect and have some common features: doors and windows are closed and may also be covered and blocked; the lights are constantly off; they may be tagged down and littered and not rarely; they may look decayed and dilapidated. This raises the question of what effects vacated buildings have in a public health and socio-economic perspective.

A US research report by the Urban Institute highlights how vacated buildings and lots are closely linked to public health issues and safety. They refer to the broken window theory, which states that vacated buildings and areas with continuing blight lead to “a *climate of social and psychological disorder*” (de Leon & Schilling, 2017, p. 11). Andersen and Skrede (2019) explain that the theory suggests that one broken window will consequently lead to more windows being broken. The first destruction becomes a signal that no-one cares, and contributes to the collapse of a well-functioning society. The idea about what a place is can thus change from something pleasant to something distressing (Andersen & Skrede, 2019). Like a broken window, the prevalence of vacated buildings represents “a *most noticeable symptom of inner city decay*”, and may lead to residents feeling less safe and confident in their respective neighbourhood (Yakabu et al. 2017, p. 5). Andersen & Skrede (2019) do however emphasize that place identity should not be reduced to being solely determined by physical structures, even though physical form affects how we conceive a space (Andersen & Skrede, 2019).

In a study (Garvin et al, 2012) from the School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, researchers conducted 50 interviews with residents of Philadelphia. The aim of the study was to better understand how high vacancy levels impact health and safety in a community. The perception was that vacancy had a significant effect on the well-being of the residents. They

experienced a decreased control over neighbourhood life, harmed social relationships amongst neighbours, and increased agitation for safety and crime (Garvin et al., 2012). According to Branas et al (2012), vacated buildings and land may serve as meeting places for criminal activity “*and very visibly symbolize that a neighborhood has deteriorated, that no one is in control, and that violent or criminal behavior is welcome to proceed with little if any supervision*” (p. 1). The authors investigated the connection between vacancy and aggravated assault in Philadelphia and found a significant overlap. The results support previous studies indicating that the risk of assaults correlates to vacancy levels (Branas et al, 2012).

It is however important to emphasize that these US studies are in the context of urban areas where vacancy levels differ a lot from many European cities. The studies focus on areas that experience extensive urban decay; it is not a question of a stand-alone abandoned building in an otherwise populated neighbourhood. Philadelphia alone contained more than 40,000 vacated land parcels, in which many of them are in disadvantaged areas (Garvin et al., 2012). There are few or no studies detected through the literature review that focuses on the effects of vacated buildings on a micro or meta-level. That is, we do not know the socioeconomic effects of one or a few isolated vacated buildings in an otherwise stable neighbourhood, in which is not suffering from overall blight or decay.

Economic effects

Madanipour (2018) refers to empty spaces as spatial expressions of economic issues. They represent a situation in which supply exceeds demand. In cases with severe vacancy rates, the spatial expression can indicate economic decline and political crisis (Madanipour, 2018).

An empty building provides no utility value, and no income, but the costs are still very much present. For the owners, vacated buildings remain a continuous expense due to the persistent need of maintenance, rehabilitation, security etc., (Stendebakken, 2018) and they represent a “*standstill in investments*” due to the high costs and low earnings connected to them (Yakubu et al. 2017, p. 6). As previously referred to, Myers & Wyatt (2004) argue that vacated buildings “*represent a form of unemployment – a potential resource for reuse and development*” (p. 286). When considering vacated buildings as unemployed resources it is obvious, as with any other unemployed resources, that this is an inefficient, wasteful form of resource management.

Through this review, few studies that point out actual quantitative data to illustrate the cost of vacant properties have been identified. Although several years old, a compilation of American studies written by the National Vacant Properties Campaign (NVPC) does serve to illustrate some societal costs caused by vacancy (NVCP, 2005). In Austin, Texas, researchers found that in blocks containing vacated buildings, the police received 3.2 times as many calls concerning drugs, 1.8 as many concerning thefts, and twice as many concerning violence compared to other blocks. Another study found that more than 12.000 fires occurred annually in vacant buildings, which corresponds to 73 million USD worth of damage. A St.Louis study found that the demolishing

cost alone for vacated buildings amounted to 15.5 million USD, and that cleaning programmes for vacant lots in Philadelphia cost more than 1.8 million USD yearly. Lastly, another Philadelphia study concluded that residential units within 50 meters from a vacated buildings had the property value reduced by net 7.624 USD (NVPC, 2005).

The claim that property value is reduced when a vacated building is in near presence is confirmed in a more recent study. Han (2014) has confirmed the findings of previous research, which have indicated a distance decay impact, meaning that the negative impact on property value declines at greater distance. Further, Han (2014) has found that the time perspective of vacancy also has a significant effect to what degree vacancy affects property values. Short-term vacancy affects property prices only when the vacant property is visible. Contrary, vacant properties that have remained vacant for a longer time period, have an increased impact that also goes further in distance. In other words, property values of entire neighbourhoods and areas can decline if the area contains vacated buildings over an extended period of time, as it may affect the way potential buyers' perceive the neighbourhood (Han, 2014). Yakubu et al. (2017) also point to another aspect of externalities, in that residents of communities with high vacancy rates bear a larger share of the tax burden in the area. Further, if a substantial degree of vacancy and decay occurs, it can increase insurance premium for the remaining residents and make mortgages more difficult to obtain (Yakubu et al, 2017).

“Vacated buildings pose daunting challenges to urban areas by hindering population growth, dragging down urban economies, reducing property values and imposing weighty cost burdens on local authorities. By taking no action, these issues will become worse”

(Yakubu et al 2017, p. 6)

3.2 Conservation

Reuse of vacated buildings cannot be discussed without addressing the overall reasons and arguments for the conservation of buildings. As the aim of this thesis is to point out how strategies can be developed to reactivate vacated buildings, this first calls for a need to justify why buildings should or should not be conserved. The scope of this thesis is not limited to formally protected or cultural heritage buildings, yet these buildings make up a significant proportion of the building mass that are left vacated. Conservation, however, should not be understood only as the act of conserving historical buildings – but all buildings. As stated by Cantacuzino in 1990:

“Conservation means the act or process of preserving something, which already exists, of keeping something alive. In keeping something alive—that something being, in this case, anything from a single building to a whole city quarter—it may be necessary to infuse new life. Conservation does not exclude change. . . . Without the ability to change a city would die” (Referred to in Doratli, 2005, p. 750)

3.2.1 The waves of conservation

Fawcett (1976) shows that the principles and strategies of conservation emerged in three waves. The first wave included conservation of individual buildings and historical monuments and can be traced to the 19th century. These thoughts turned into a more consistent policy and practice in the period following 1945. The second wave emerged in the 60s and 70s, as a consequence of the recognition that also the surroundings needed protection. This wave can be seen as a reaction to the physical and cultural destruction, caused by the extensive urban development and infrastructure construction, giving rise to an increased focus on the protection of building environments, the urban landscape, and the space between the buildings (Carmona, 2021). This wave also constitutes an increased emphasis on planning and economic development, differing from a mere focus on architecture and history of arts. This turn increasingly opened up to considering an urban area by its function in the city. This involved an acknowledgment of the city as a variety of functions, that constitute the foundation of the city, and that are necessary for its continued life (Omland et al, 2007). The third wave, which is more fragmentary, was the emergence of the revitalization policy. Acknowledging that once a building has been safeguarded, it should also be taken into active use. While the previous principles of conservation *“had largely been concerned with the ‘pastness-of-the-past’, later conservation and revitalisation policies were increasingly about a ‘future-for-the-past’”* (Fawcett, 1975).

In a similar manner, the policy of conservation through revitalization has become apparent in Norwegian cultural heritage management through the practice of protecting by using. This is an important principle in the cultural heritage management, but it also represents a challenge regarding the criteria for protecting buildings that have come into being for a specific purpose that may change over time. (Omland et al, 2007). This illustrates a key conflict within the conservation discourse. Architecture is created to cover needs – needs in which change based on societal, economic and political development. Buildings and urban structures that are considered to be of cultural heritage value, may not necessarily cover the needs of tomorrow (Omland et al, 2007). Lynch (1984, p. 451) associates change with progress, and argues that failing to respond to change constitutes a lack of improvement. Secondly, he insists that old buildings are generally outdated, and that old habits are limiting. Consequently, buildings should be assembled with light, temporally structures, so that they can easily be changed in step with their life changes (Lynch, 1984, p. 451). Unlike Lynch’ ideas of light shell structures, and rapid adaption rather than physical continuity, there are many authors arguing for the conservation and protection of buildings and urban structures.

3.2.2 Arguments for conservation

There are several justifications for the act of conservation and protection. Yet, the value judgement of any cultural monument and building should be considered based on its contextuality, and not merely based on the inherent artistic or architectural qualities of the building (Omland et al, 2007).

Tiesdell et al (1996, pp. 11-17) list some of the common arguments, in which some of the arguments will be elaborated by the perspectives of other authors and studies:

Esthetical value

Historical buildings are valued because they are “*intrinsically beautiful*” and have scarcity value (Tiesdel et al, 1996). This aspect specifically has likely been the most discussed aspect in the public discourse within the Norwegian context in recent year, with Arkitekturopprøer, an emerging uprising against modernist architecture, highblocks, uncharacteristic facades, inappropriate scales and lack of traditional aesthetics (Thorsen, 2021).

Value for architectural diversity

Architectural diversity and contrast is appreciated and can contribute to exiting environments. This can appear as a result of the combination and juxtaposition of buildings from varying eras (Tiesdell et al, 1996). Jacobs (1961) argues that we need diversity in architectural expressions, as homogeneity constitute an aesthetical problem. That “*sameness*” creates a sense of monotony that displays disorder and lack of direction (Jacobs, 1961).

Value for environmental diversity

In many cities, the human scale and architectural qualities of the historic city districts, is experienced as a stimulating contrast to the modern touch and monumental scale of the new central business districts (Tiesdel et al, 1996).

Economic and commercial value

Historical areas give a unique sense of place that offers opportunities for economic development and tourism. Tiesdell et al (1996) argue that it is crucial to understand historic urban quarters as part of an economic dynamism. They are hardly ever autonomous entities, rather, they have a close relationship to – and must be understood within the context of – the entire city (Tiesdell et al, 1996).

Value for continuity and cultural heritage

The appreciation of the past can enhance the significance of the present and may thus contribute to the cultural identity for a place (Tiesdell et al, 1996). This is further emphasized by Carmona, who argues that “*in a world that is rapidly changing, visual and tangible signs from the past are important for the sense of place and continuity they convey*” (Carmona, 2021, p. 136). The city can be experienced as a result of history and be understood as the sum of different artifacts who each express their history and logic. Therefore, the architecture of the city are signs of the city's history and an expression of its collective memory (Omland et al, 2007). As phrased by Cherci (2015), buildings carry meaning and values, that create a sense of affiliation and local identity (Cherci, 2015). It connects to what Norberg-Schulz (1932) describes as the genius loco – the

spirit of the place. He argues that what we experience in a place is dependent on the design of our physical surroundings, that *“the identity of people presupposes the identity of the place”* (Norberg-Schulz, 1992, p. 21, own translation), and that *“the uniqueness of a place is determined by the things it consists of”* (p. 32). Carmona (2021) emphasizes how the concern for the past has been a contributor to the development of modern urban design. Many of the existing approaches to placemaking try to build on, rather than break from, the existing qualities of a place (Carmona, 2021).

Value for functional diversity

A variation of rooms in buildings, of different age, will facilitate for mixed use areas. Older buildings can provide affordable prices, making it possible for economically marginal but socially crucial activities to exist in the city (Tiesdell et al, 1996). This very argument is also the topic of the tenth chapter of Jane Jacobs' famous book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). The urban activist and journalist goes as far as saying that *“cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them”* (Jacobs, 1961, p. 244). Homogeneous areas, with only new buildings, allows only a limited group of actors to rent, due to the high prices that comes with new building stock. These are generally high-profit businesses, or well-subsidized public functions like museums and libraries. *“Supermarkets and shoe stores often go into new buildings; good bookstores and antique dealers seldom do”*, Jacobs states (1961, p. 245). Looking back to Lynch's alternative approach to physical continuity, arguing that what is old is generally outdated, Jacobs offers a quite different approach. She argues that old building stock represents space that is well suited for the economically marginal activities: *“Time makes the high building costs of one generation the bargains of a following generation. (...) Time makes certain structures obsolete for some enterprises, and they become available to others. Time can make the space efficiencies of one generation the space luxuries of another generation. One century's building commonplace is another century's useful aberration”* (Jacobs, 1961, p. 247). Yet, her views are opposed by Glaeser (2012). He suggests that imposing restrictions on building heights and proposing conservation of old neighbourhoods will not provide affordability, as it goes against the fundamental principles of supply and demand. Instead, he claims that as demand rises, more homes must be built, and consequently that *“when cities restrict new construction, they become more expensive”* (Glaeser, 2012, p. 11).

Resource value

Construction is expensive. Reuse of buildings constitutes conserving limited resources, a reduction in energy- and material consumption, as well as good resource management (Tiesdell et al, 1996). Innlandet fylkeskommune (county municipality in Norway) has conducted two research projects looking into the effects of building conservation as a climate measure. The first case-study investigated climate gas emissions from 24 older buildings. The case-objects were upgraded with gentle measures to improve energy efficiency – that is, improved without

impairing architectural and cultural qualities (Asplan Viak, 2021a). The main findings in the study were that: 1) gentle and cost-efficient measures reduced both energy consumption and climate gas emissions; 2) such upgrades have a great short-term and medium-term effect, which is important in order to reach the climate goals for 2030; 3) for a majority of the buildings, upgrades were a better alternative (i.e., results in lower greenhouse gas emissions) than demolition and new construction, even with very gentle measures; 4) for 20 out of 24 buildings, upgrade was a cheaper alternative than demolition and new construction, whereas it was considerably cheaper for 15 of the buildings; and 5) there were considerable variations in terms of calculated emissions for the case-objects, which shows the necessity of considering specific conditions for individual buildings (Asplan Viak, 2021a).

The second study calculated how much climate gas emissions can be reduced by upgrading individual buildings. In addition, the report investigated what municipalities and counties can save by upgrading rather than building new stock (Asplan Viak, 2021b). Four scenarios, as illustrated in figure 5, have been studied, respectively A) upgrading with equivalent total area; B) upgrading with increased total area; C) demolition and new construction, equivalent area; and D) C) demolition and new construction, increased total area.

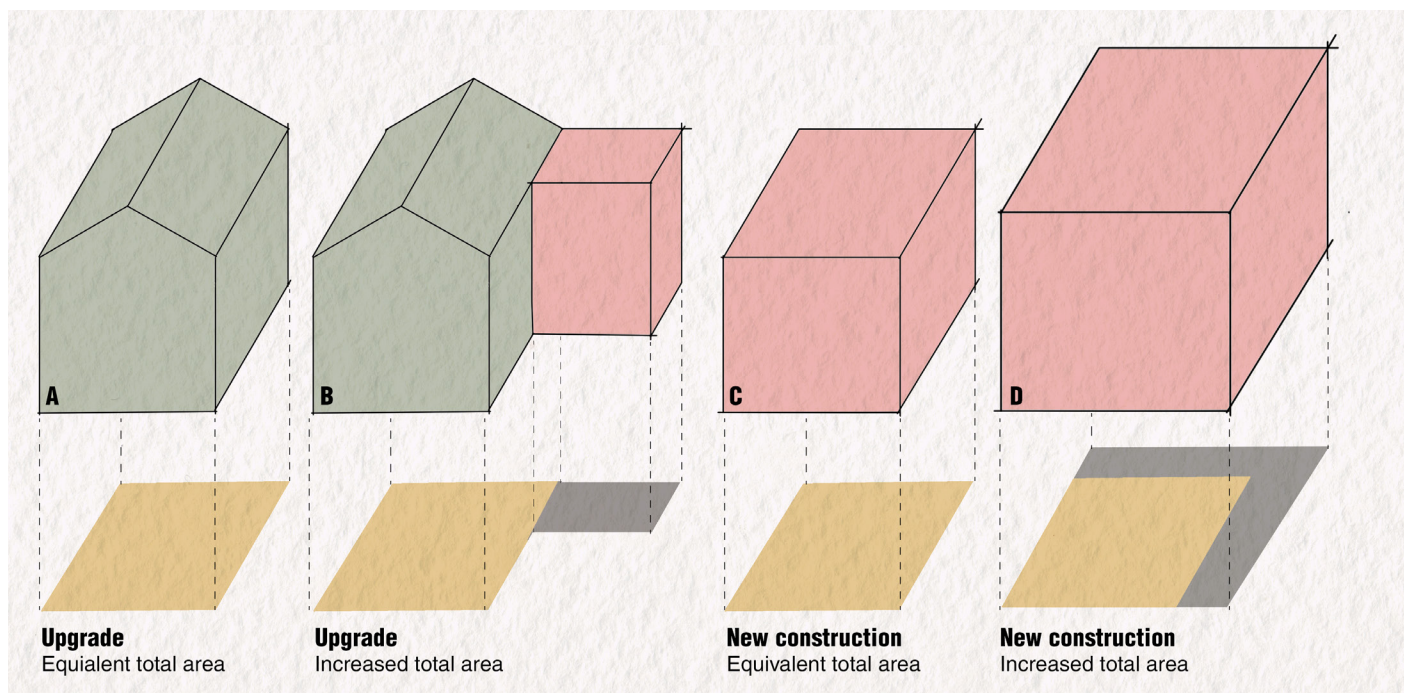


Figure 5: Scenarios for climate gas emission calculation, based on Asplan Viak, 2021 (own illustration)

The results showed that upgrading gives significantly lower climate gas emissions for houses and vacation homes, and somewhat lower for commercial- and service buildings. For office buildings and culture buildings, new construction has somewhat lower emissions, but the differences are not considered to be significant. For educational and sports buildings, new construction has significantly lower emissions than upgrading the existing facilities. (Asplan Viak, 2021b). The statistics reviewed in the study showed that newly constructed buildings are, in general, larger

than the buildings that are demolished. This is an aspect to which too little attention is paid in the discussions about the climate challenges. *“Increasing [energy] sufficiency will not solve the climate challenges if we simultaneously increase consumption”* (Asplan Viak, 2021b, p. 6, own translation).

A common example is that the construction of new building, built with a passive house standard or with ambitious energy consumption measures, is highlighted as substantially more climate friendly than the continued use of an existing building. According to Stendebakken (2018), this is a highly contradicting claim. The most climate friendly action, is to use the buildings that already exist. The construction of a new building will always entail a considerable climate impact, much more than the material use of rehabilitation. Stendebakken argues that the de facto crucial aspects are instead user behaviour and sources of energy. According to the Riksantikvaren (the National Antiquary), the actual energy consumption is often underestimated for new buildings, and overestimated when rehabilitating new buildings (Stendebakken, 2018). The further significance of reuse in a climate perspective will be highlighted in the following chapter on adaptive reuse (ch. 3.3.1).

3.3 Coping with vacated space

Returning to Trancik (1986) on the topic of lost space. He argues that such antispaces represent an immense opportunity for urban development, and that vacated premises offer a great potential as mixed-use areas. A deserted rail yard may be located on a desirable water-front site. An old factory may have a central location and architectural value, and thus be an opportunity for affordable housing. Temporary urban gardening or children’s playgrounds may take place on vacant land and brownfields (Trancik, 1986). This section will focus on two approaches for handling vacated space – first, permanent conversion of old buildings referred to as adaptive reuse, and secondly temporary urbanism.

3.3.1 Adaptive reuse

Cherchi (2015, p. 260) defines adaptive reuse as the process of *“converting old buildings to new uses that are compatible with existing needs and realities”*. Similarly, it is considered the process of *“working with existing buildings, repairing and restoring them for continued use”* (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2011, p. 155). The most apparent change is the use itself – the building will *“undertake a change of use required by new or existing owners”* (Bullen & Love, 2011, p. 412). Fufa et al (2021, p. 3) alike refer to adaptive reuse as the process of prolonging the life of *“old, obsolete, and abandoned buildings”* through the reuse of an existing building for new use. Although, the authors also incorporate the reuse of *“building materials and structures for a different use”* (p. 3) in the definition. Thus, they point to two aspects – that of conversion and that of material reuse. In this thesis it is mainly the former aspect that will be considered when referring to adaptive reuse, namely the act of reusing complete buildings.

Although focusing on working with the original building, adaptations to the physical structure may also be necessary – such as adding extensions, the demolition of certain parts, changes to the circulation route or the connection between spaces (Nawkaw, 2021). The extent of these changes will vary widely from each building and may involve comprehensive renovation or minor changes to allow for new use (Bullen & Love, 2011). Anyhow, these changes represent the main distinction between adaptive reuse and preserving/restoring. Preservation is simply put a method of using original materials and replicative techniques to recreate the structure’s original form. Restoration can be explained as the method of utilizing new materials and techniques to allow the building to operate close to the original, but in more efficient means (Nawkaw, 2021). This differs from the adaptive reuse methodology, which, although it may utilize some of these aspects, aims to change the original function of the structure, so it is better suited for the current needs of the population (Nawkaw, 2021.) Despite not mainly focusing on conservation, adaptive reuse has become an important strategy for conserving cultural heritage, in contemporary conservation theory and practice (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2011). Bullen & Love (2011) argue that an increased emphasis within building conservation is put on urban regeneration and sustainability, rather than preservation, and that adaptive reuse is an important strategy to handle this change.

While the practice of altering buildings to meet changing needs dates to ancient times, the more analytical reflection on different approaches to adaptive reuse is a more recent development (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2011). The previous interventions on buildings, such as the transformation of classical monuments during the Renaissance period, and religious buildings transformed into industrial or military sites during the French Revolution, were done in quite pragmatic ways. Their reasons were neither heritage preservation, nor reduced climate gas emission – but rather functional and financial (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2011). A more modern approach to adaptive reuse has roots in a post-industrial mindset, and in two opposing views. On one hand, English writer, and philosopher John Ruskin (1819–1900) argued that buildings should keep their original design and adhere to the intentions and visions of the architect. These thoughts formed the foundation for the conservation movement. On the other hand, the French architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879) was opposed to perceiving buildings based on their original intent, and argued that they should be considered based on modern sensibility (Nawkaw, 2021). He stated that *“the best way to preserve a building is to find a use for it, and then to satisfy so well the needs dictated by that use that there will never be any further need to make any further change in the buildings”* (in Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2011, p. 156).

Today, the main rationale underpinning adaptive reuse strategies, involves the simultaneous safeguarding of material and cultural resources (Fufa et al, 2021; Bullen & Love, 2011; Cherci, 2015). The construction industry accounts for a significant part of global greenhouse gas emissions, and likewise, significant emission cuts are required to reach the objectives set by the Paris Agreement. Figure 6 on the following page illustrates this challenge.

250.000.000

buildings were built before 2001 in the EU

85-95%

of our existing building stock will still be standing in 2050

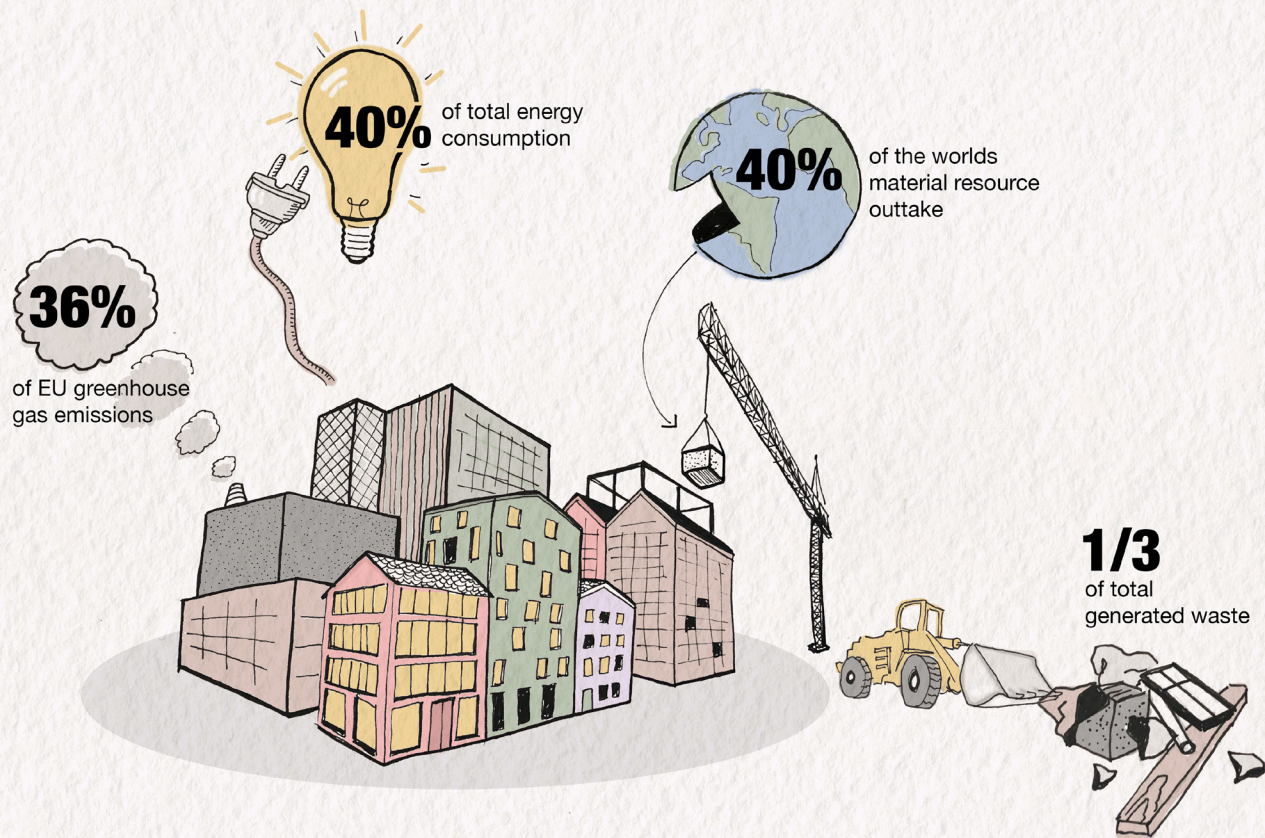
75%

of our existing building stock will still be standing in 2050

<1%

annual energy renovation rate

BUILDINGS are responsible for:



to achieve the 2030 climate

TARGET

EU greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by

-60%

energy consumption must be reduced by

-14%

energy consumption for heating/cooling must be reduced by

-18%

Figure 6: Climate impacts from EU-buildings. Based on text by Fufa et al, 2021 (own illustration).

It is clearly illustrated that the built environment constitutes a large part of our material resources, but the building stock also embodies an important cultural resource. The Paris Agreement and the UNs' Sustainable Development Goals explicitly acknowledge "the role of cultural heritage in promoting climate change mitigation and adaption measures" (Fufa et al, p. 4).

The previous chapter highlighted old buildings' role in conveying history, continuity, and visible traces of the past, important to our sense of place in the present. Whilst adaptive reuse is established as a method with great environmental benefits, it is at the same time a tool to preserve *"the aspects of constructed history that are most cherished by local communities"* (Nawkaw, 2021, p. 2).

Fufa et al (2021) conclude their study by stating that refurbishment and adaptive reuse of existing buildings is *"the way towards a sustainable future"* (p. 16). Their case study, looking into four buildings in Norway with (not necessarily formal) heritage values, showed that existing buildings' GHG emissions could be reduced to 50% by refurbishing. New buildings' reduced yearly GHG emissions do not make up for the negative impacts produced by the rise in emissions related to their construction. It may take decades to benefit from these reduced emissions, ranging from 10–80 years to compensate for the constructions' embodied emissions (Fufa et al, 2021). Thus, the authors argue that adaptive reuse constitute a central role in reaching short-term and medium-term environmental goals as set in the Paris Agreement.

One of the best-known examples of adaptive reuse in Oslo is Vulkan (figure 7 and 8). It can be found in an old industrial hall, in the former industrial area alongside Akerselva, the main river in the capital. The former industrial hall and iron foundry is now a food court with more than 30 shops, bars, restaurants and other businesses (Røsjø, 2016). In an article in the National Antiquary's magazine, one of the initiators emphasize how the new use have made a cultural heritage building accessible for the public. *"What is now a food court was previously the workplaces of approximately 200 people. Now 30,000 people visit every week (...). If you consider it important that cultural heritage should be experienced by many people, this kind of reuse is a fantastic strategy"* (Røsjø, 2016, p. 25). The former industrial hall, built in 1908, was formally protected, and during planning it was debated whether one should allow to cut through the building to create a pedestrian connection through the property, opposed to the City Antiquary's



Figure 7: Vulkan exterior. CC: Ronald Woan



Figure 8: Vulkan interior. CC: Hege Høifødt

suggestion to conserve the entire building. It was however permitted by the City Council, who argued that the cut and the suggested pedestrian path would be a good contribution to the local environment. The wound from the opening is now covered with a new façade in glass (Helgason, 2020).

The former industrial area was during the development period taken strategically into use with various temporary activities. According to (Helgason, 2020), the industrial hall was amongst other things used as venues for an Architectural Festival hosted by NAL (The National Association of Norwegian Architects), to attract partners and generate attention to the future concept on the area. This brings us to the following section, namely temporary urbanism.

3.3.2 Temporary urbanism

Temporary urbanism consists of activities that are restricted to a limited time period (Jørgensen, 2011), and are often related to areas such as vacated land, wasteland, brownfields, sloaps (space left open after planning), interstices, interim spaces and gap sites (Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014). However, temporally activities may also take place within buildings, whereas the most common temporal use of buildings is often referred to as pop-up urbanism (Horne, 2014; Harris, 2015; Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). As emphasized in Colomb (2012), temporary uses are intentionally planned to be impermanent, from the outset, and aims to extract unique qualities on the basis of its temporality. Although temporality in urbanism is not a new concept, it has received increased attention and praise the last decades as a dynamic urban policy with a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. Yet, critics argue that that such policies focus merely on financial exploitation of land, whilst also being a driving force for neighbourhood gentrification (Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014; Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021).

Origin

Although the history of temporary urbanism will not be accounted for in-depth in this thesis, it can briefly be illustrated that it is not a new concept. Traces of the temporal approach to urbanism can be found in the rebellious situationist movement (Jørgensen, 2011). The cultural practice developed by the situationist international originated in the 1950s and was aiming for social and political changes in Europe. The French Marxist philosopher and theorist Guy Debord stated that the basic task for the situationist was "*the construction of situations, that is, the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher, passionate nature*" (Elliott, 2009, p. 17). The situationists were opposed to the functionalist characteristics of the cities, and to the rigid discipline of how urban space was used. In their view, metro stations should be open all night, roofs should be designed flat so that locals could stroll on top of them, graveyards should be transformed to playgrounds, and the artworks of museums should be distributed to the bars and cafés around the city (Jørgensen, 2011).

Looking once again to Germany, underutilized buildings are filled with temporal activities in the 70s and 80s, primarily by radical social movements (Colomb, 2012). This is an expression of the traditional notion of temporary urbanism, one which is associated with activism, self-organization, and alternative experiences, which occur outside of established urban policies (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). As pointed out by Colomb (2012) when describing the urban voids following the fall of the Berlin Wall, these voids are not dead. Rather, *“they are spaces of urban wildlife, spaces of ‘micro-political activity’, spaces of ‘alternative cultures’, or ‘spaces of transgression’ for marginalized social groups youth, or artists”* (Colomb, 2012, p. 135). The occupants of the disused buildings are radical social movements of various kinds, from punk groups, gay movements, antimilitary etc. In the 90s, lights in many vacated buildings are once again turned on – although more colourful and flashing than ever – as the underground techno scene becomes highly dependent on disused buildings for their clubs and parties. The 90s approach to temporality is characterized by activism and guerrilla attitudes. Creative groups, opposed to current urban development practice, occupy buildings with a desire to do things differently (Rasmussen, 2021). The vacant sites are most often repurposed, not redeveloped, for alternative uses, often hosting events that reflect on the areas’ troubled history (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015). The temporality, however, derives from being unauthorized, and thus also a precarious use. It depicts a situation in which marginalized groups, minorities and anti-capitalistic advocates claim their rights to the city (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021).

The contemporary, and conflicting, views on temporary urbanism

Moving from a rebellious response to the functionalistic development, to an activist and systemized occupation strategy; temporary urbanism has over the last two decades taken a shift. These interim uses are now increasingly integrated within cities’ and municipalities’ own urban planning policies, to facilitate for urban development and growth (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). Although temporality have a long history, for example in Berlin as illustrated previously, *“their deployment as an explicit urban policy mechanism has become more formalised and widespread in recent years”* (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015, p. 70). This is partly connected to the fact that in many European cities, temporary use has been a tool to deal with growing vacancy rates in a cheap and quick manner, especially following the financial crisis in 2007-2008 (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015; Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). This has led to the emergence of a critical review of these methods, and the field is partly divided in those promoting such policies as appropriate and efficient urban regeneration tools, and those who argue they mainly serve as catalysts for gentrification processes and the creative city agenda.

The critical approach

To understand the critics towards temporary urbanism, it is essential to understand the term gentrification, as it is an important concept in much of the critique. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to reproduce the extensive debates on gentrification (see instead López-

Morales, 2019; Maloutas, 2012), the term will be briefly presented to contextualise the criticism towards temporary urbanism. Gentrification often refers to the process of transforming middle-class or vacant areas in the inner and peripheral areas of a city, for higher income residential and commercial use. Although the definition is much debated within the field of social urbanism, a key mechanism is how reinvestments and development in the built environment give rise to a changed population of a higher socio-economic status (López-Morales, 2019). Claire Colomb (2012) refers to processes of physical gentrification as “*i.e., an upgrade of the building stock followed by changes in tenure patterns, increases in rent and the gradual displacement of existing residents by higher income groups*” (p. 144); such processes often start with a symbolic form of gentrification. She argues that temporary urbanism may set the precondition for further commercial development, as they – despite being temporary – redefine the program of former industrial sites to cultural, service, and leisure-oriented services (Colomb, 2012).

“Expensive efforts to renew cities often do more for well-connected businesses than for the poor people living in those declining areas. Even if building a museum in a depressed neighborhood raises property values and brings in a stream of artsy visitors, that won’t help the renter who doesn’t care for art and now has to pay more for her apartment”

(Glaser, 2012, p. 65)

As we have seen, temporary urbanism is traditionally connected to self-organized activities for marginalized groups, in search of cheap venues, alternative experiences, and often opposed to the traditional urban development practice (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 20219). Critics, however, argue that temporary urbanism is increasingly adopted by policy-makers themselves, as a tool for urban production and in line with the creative city agenda. The Berlin Senate, in which the 2000s were struggling with economic decline and bankruptcy, experienced a strengthened significance for the cultural sector after years of interim cultural initiatives as described in the latter sections. Increasingly, they realized that the vacant sites had become a significant part of the city’s identity, central in attracting creativity, innovation and culture (Colomb, 2012). Thus, the Berlin Senate developed a variety of policy measures to facilitate for further growth of the creative class. This was regarded to have ripple effects in the form of attracting actors both within the cultural sector – and without – for economic growth and development. The city was in 2005 designated as City of Design by UNESCO and had become a cluster for creativity and culture. Colomb (2012) illustrates how large commercial actors, like MTV and Universal Music, eventually relocated to the clusters of creative actors in the Berlin. The sudden appearance of these great commercial actors is an expression of gentrification, as their presence led to an increased hype, more commercialization, more tourism, and eventually swiftly increasing rents (Colomb, 2012). O’Callaghan and Lawton (2015), argue that these policies support the creative city agenda, focusing on attracting the creative class by fostering “*liveability through urban design and events*” (p. 76). The authors stress that, although small-scale interventions can effectively address immediate issues, they can also

have a broader impact on the large urban context. These interventions are in line with objectives of the Creative city agenda, in that they serve as fuel for urban branding campaigns (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015).

According to Colomb (2012), the co-option of temporary urbanism in urban development policies, have affected artists and other marginalized groups – the original users of temporary space – negatively. It has led to more land speculation, and the traditional and viable sense of temporary use have been diminished. Further, she argues that whilst temporary urbanism originally was a kind of activism opposing to traditional urban development, it is now used by the local state to hide business-as-usual development in a trendy, edgy and alternative format (Colomb, 2012). Not only policymakers have co-opted temporary measures in their own policies; commercial actors are also increasingly adopting interim activities in market strategies (Madanipour, 2018). Although temporary use initially served as an opportunity for users in need of access to low-rent space, the users of temporary activities are now extended to actors that are not in distress about the lack of opportunity. Commercial actors instead use temporality as a measure for attention and image, as a competitive trade, adapting to social trends (Madanipour, 2018). Even if it can be considered positive that commercial actors help fill the void and contribute to dealing with vacancy, this also represent a problem for the actors with real demands for low-rent facilities. Their ability to suggest genuine alternatives is reduces as temporary urbanism becomes increasingly integrated in a wider entrepreneurial agenda (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015). Further, the continuous growth of commercial actors as temporary users, make activities that do not generate financial value more challenging to undertake, regardless of other values they might contribute with to its urban environment (social, cultural, public health etc.). Madinapour (2015) refers to this as *“the shift from necessity to choice”* (p. 1001) and argues that this represents a displacement of culture. Just like Colomb (2012) exemplified with MTV and Universal Music relocating to a once deprived area in Berlin, Madanipour (2015) illustrates how artists may find themselves facilitating for these courses of events in a constant cycle of gentrification:

“Their arrival in an area that may be endowed with spatial capacities but suffering from economic decline is powerful enough to change its image, paving the way for the real estate industry and higher income residents to move in. In time, artists are priced out and the cycle of gentrification is complete. One displacement leads to another: while artists displace the image of decline, they are displaced by the image of prosperity, a process in which opportunity and precarity are entwined.” (Madanipour, 2015, p. 1101)

O’Callaghan and Lawton (2015) also stress this aspect as one of the key challenges of temporary urbanism. They argue that temporary uses that are culturally-oriented may unintentionally or deliberately pave the way for commercially-driven development. Such culture-led urban development is proved to facilitate for the real estate sector – and once the landowners identify

potential profits, the interim activities are promptly terminated. (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015). Additionally, the authors are critical towards the viability of temporary urbanism as arenas for democratically inclusive projects. A precondition for such projects is that the outcomes are noticeable for a certain amount of time. Temporary urbanism can thus result in a fatigue, in cases where citizens efforts for neighbourhood development are rapidly erased by broader market forces.

The supportive approach

The critique of temporary urbanism raises important concerns about potential effects of temporary urbanism, in particular when it is co-opted by policymakers and commercial actors for urban development strategies and marketing. However, these criticisms do not necessarily negate the value of temporary urbanism, as a tool for addressing immediate urban challenges and creating alternative spaces for marginalized groups. Bishop and Williams (2012, p. 4) say that:

“temporary uses might be part of a solution to the challenges that are facing cities as they struggle to adapt to the conditions of the twenty-first century”.

Indeed, temporary urbanism has been deployed in various cities as a strategy to fill the gap (Madanipour, 2018), when coping with vacant areas after the GFC and post-industrial shift (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021; O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015). Madanipour (2018) refers to temporary urbanism as a pragmatic approach to vacancy, and a tool for coping with discrepancies between supply and demand. This mismatch is addressed *“through encouraging flexibility in supply, in the hope of an increase in demand”* (Madanipour, 2018, p. 1099). This flexibility in supply, presents itself as an opportunity for the users, as space is made available at a lower price. As stated by Madanipour:

“[Temporary use] offers access at lower costs, ensures that landlords can see some return on their investment and helps public authorities to maintain a degree of vibrancy and avoid the dark appearance of decline” (Madanipour, 2018, p. 1099)

These rationales are also apparent in the Berlin Senate. The local state made three primary justifications for temporary use of disused space (Colomb, 2012): 1) it ensures that public property is maintained (for free), thus preventing deterioration and vandalism; 2) it promotes economic development and; 3) it contributes to achieving social goals, by the emergence of new public, accessible spaces, without incurring significant costs for the local state (SenStadt, 2007) Temporary urbanism’s ability to combine different actors’ interests in a win-win solution, is undoubtedly one of the key elements for its success (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021).

Bragaglia & Rossignolo (2021) highlight how different stakeholders may simultaneously benefit from temporary urbanism, summarized in figure 9.

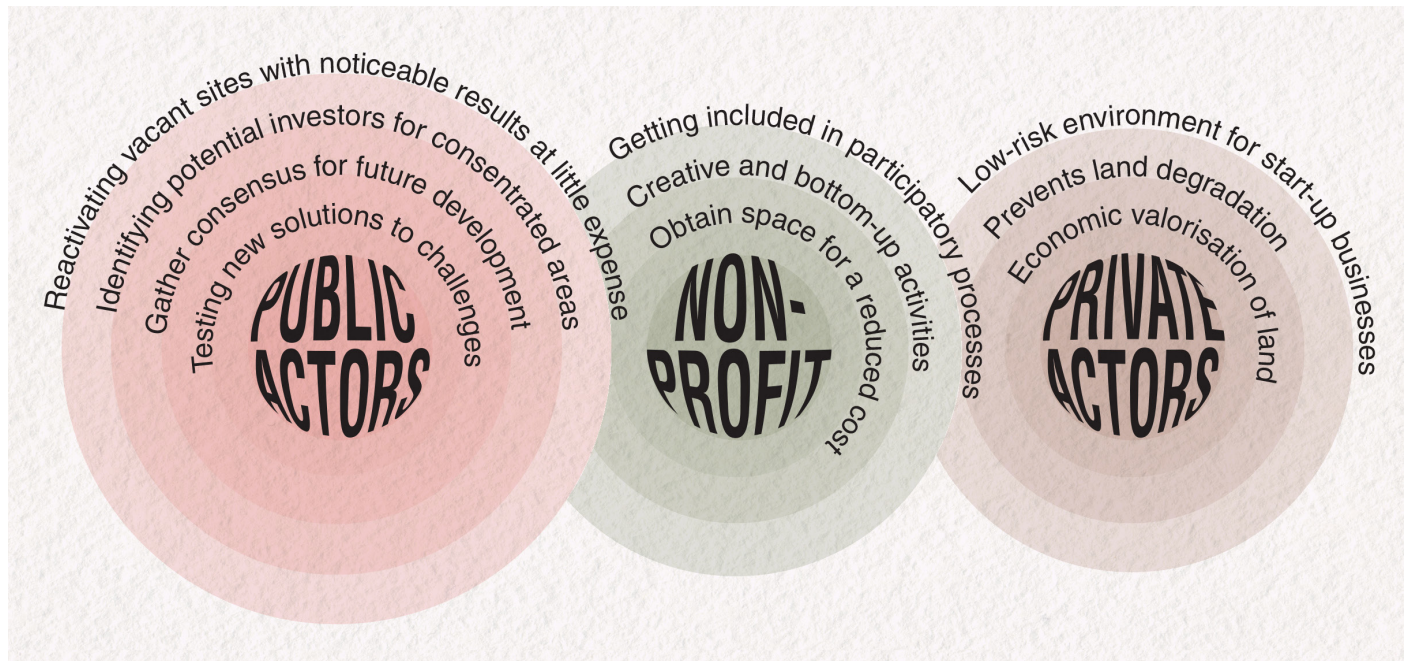


Figure 9: Stakeholders' benefits from temporary urbanism. Based on Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021 (own illustration)

Bishop and Williams (2012) argue that temporary urbanism can contribute to altering our perception of urban areas, and that they represent a robust tool for preparing us for what comes next. It has been applauded for its capacity to challenge standard planning processes, influence authorities and facilitate for democratically anchored processes (Bishop and Williams, 2012). As stated in Madanipour (2018), temporary urbanism has been considered “a critique of the status quo and a catalyst for change” (p. 1094), allowing activists and local residents to partake in urban development. Bishop and Williams (2012) similarly argue that government-led processes of temporary urbanism allow for a more inclusive and participatory process, that can be more dynamic, flexible and adaptive than ordinary processes of urban development.

Tardiveau and Mallo (2014) investigate whether temporary urbanism can “*reveal and engage with socio-spatial struggles*” (p. 1). Based on socio-relational views of urban planning, they focus on the benefits and constraints of temporary urbanism, instead of the widely publicized culture and arts schemes that have surfaced in numerous European cities during the past years. Their investigation is a case study of a 1950s housing area in north-east England, looking into whether temporary activities can be used as a socially engaged practice to alter “*the symbolic and social dimension [of] a space*” (p. 457). The study further investigates whether temporary interventions can “*generate new interactions, different encounters and produce alternative urban imaginaries*” (p. 457). During a period of two years, different temporary activities were carried out in the case area, in disused areas between the modernist housing blocks. In conclusion, the authors argue that the socially engaged approach fundamentally differs from the previously described intended policy to facilitate for the commodification of urban areas, and that it reveals opportunities for neighbourhood development. As habitus (structures of perception, conception and action)

plays a significant role in shaping urban spaces, the authors emphasize that when working with underused urban sites, it is inadequate to merely focus on transforming the physical environment. First, the focus should be on engaging in relational dynamics, so that the overlooked and unheard actors can come together and partake in the process (Healey, 1997). The study demonstrates that temporary urbanism can contribute to a sense of community ownership, which can challenge the existing habitus of the area and arrange for new social relations and increased dialogue amongst the different stakeholders involved. Based on the findings, the authors argue that this shows the need for urban practitioners to engage in an activist role, facilitating for increased citizen control in neighbourhood development and “*a call for stimulating imagination and innovation*” (Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014, p. 470).

The ‘somewhere in between’ approach

Bragaglia and Rossignolo (2021) acknowledge the criticism, and question whether temporary urbanism as a policy strategy is a “*contemporary panacea or a trojan horse*” (p. 370). Considering both sides, they investigate whether temporality can “*constitute an effective and inclusive urban strategy*” (p. 371) for cities struggling with unused sites and social challenges. The authors emphasize that whilst temporary urbanism has in fact become a new urban policy trend to stimulate growth, it does simultaneously exist as a grassroots practice (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). O’Callaghan and Lawton’s (2015) critique emphasized that it is important to distinguish between the various practices that are carried out under the umbrella term temporary urbanism, and the urban policies benefiting from interim activities to facilitate for urban production and economic growth. The latter often focus “*on a narrower sub-set of these practices and employs a selective narrative about their objectives*” (O’Callaghan & Lawton, 2015, p. 75). Similarly, Mould (2014) calls for a distinction between “*bottom-up practices*” and “*the new policy strategy on temporariness*”.

In the article (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021), the contemporary panacea or trojan horse dilemma is discussed through two French case studies. One of them, Les Grands Voisins (Eng: Big neighbours), is a temporary project that took place in the decommissioned hospital Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. The project was a response to significant social issues, as Paris was experiencing an increase in the amount of homeless people, poverty, and asylum seekers, combined with rising real estate and office prices (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). The temporary use, lasting from 2015 – 2020, was also a means to avoid vacancy during the planning period leading to the construction of a future eco-district. As a collaboration between several non-profit associations, the former hospital area was utilized as a mixed used area combining emergency shelters for refugees and homeless, with low-rent office spaces for start-ups (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). In addition to the rent income from offices; restaurants, bars, street food stalls, grocery stores and bakeries helped support the social care services (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021; Shaw, 2020).

Although the Aurore association received state subsidies for their work with temporary shelters, the whole project was otherwise completely financed by the commercial activities on site, which were open and reliant on the public as customers (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). The old Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, renamed the Grand Voisins, thus became a meeting place for all kinds of people in the neighbourhood (figure 10).



Figure 10: Free hand sketch of Les Grands Voisins (own illustration)

The first and most important is the provision of care for the most vulnerable in Paris, often those living on the edges of society, including the homeless, refugees and asylum seekers. Every morning, food parcels are distributed from the Oratoire courtyard, and in one corner, those living on the streets can take a shower, as well as repair, wash and supplement their clothing. Les Grands Voisins also provides accommodation for several hundred of those most in need. In the offices upstairs, Aurore employees help asylum seekers and refugees with their respective paperwork, and others give French lessons for those who require them.

- Tom Shaw, Aug. 2020 Ensemble magazine, 2020

The number of visitors is estimated to roughly 600.000 people each year, and the project has been pointed out as a hip and cool travel destination in popular tourist guides (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). On that note, it has unquestionably contributed to land valorisation, to the great joy for future developers and landowners. Although the project in that sense fits within the creative city

agenda, attracting the creatives and the hipsters, accelerating urban production and economic boost, the project has undoubtedly contributed to pressing social issues. 600 people in need were housed during the first phase of the project. During a 2-year-period, 47.000 asylum seekers visited the on-site day centre, and 150 unemployed people were hired for the management of social services initiated by the project (Lanzoni, 2021). In addition, and due to its flexible program, the project was able to rapidly respond the COVID-19 pandemic. They delivered 2500 meals per day during the lockdown period, as well as producing and distributing face masks (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). However, The Grands Voisins project was indeed temporary, and the number of homeless shelters decreased from 600 to 100 from the initial phase to the second one, due to the gradual demolition of the old hospital buildings. In 2020 the project was finalized, and the area was turned into a construction site (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021).

This, as stated by Madanipour (2018, p. 1106) in his conclusive remarks, depicts how the flexibility that is often so cheerfully described, is only temporary. He emphasizes that the general conditions of space may entirely change as the temporary use ceases. Although temporary urbanism is efficient in –temporarily – combining different stakeholders’ interests (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021), the outcome often appears unbalanced, not in favour of those in precarious situations, with limited access to resources (Madanipour, 2018). Thus, temporary urbanism should not only be analysed and understood as a short-term and isolated process, but rather within the context of the entire urban development process (Madanipour, 2018, p. 1105). The key is “*to understand how far the temporary can affect the ‘long-term city’*” (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021, p. 14). Despite its temporary nature, the Grands Voisins’ experimental activities did result in the implementation of an emergency reception centre, in the future – and permanent – use on the site (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). In addition, several of the startups that were given the opportunity to test their business ideas at lower risk and with reduced rents, had managed to develop an economic foundation. As a result, some were able to find permanent accommodations through the traditional real estate market after the temporary activities ceased (Lanzoni, 2021). Although this was not the case for every business, others remained in business in other temporary locations, or in shared office spaces (Lanzoni, 2021). Hence, temporary urbanism ought to serve as a testing platform for responses to current spatial and societal challenges (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). The project illustrates the potential of temporary urbanism as a socially inclusive method, benefiting from the efficient and hands-on involvement of various stakeholders. Concluding their study, the authors argue that temporary urbanism is neither a panacea nor a Trojan horse – rather, such institutional use may lean towards “*two different horizons [simultaneously], that of the just city and that of the creative (and often neoliberal) city*” (p. 14). The central aspect then, is a conscious attitude towards how these contradictory tendencies can be intertwined in our visions for the city of tomorrow (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021).

3.3.3 In search of the strategic approach to vacancy

There are several political and administrative tools that can be – and have been – used in order to facilitate for adaptive reuse and temporary urbanism. This section will illustrate the way in which administrative, legislative and mapping tools can be, have been, and are suggested to be used to reactivate vacated buildings. Lastly, strategic approaches to the issue, or the lack thereof, will be pointed to as an approach for coordinating the various instruments that exist to deal with the problem of vacancy.

Administrative, legislative and financial instruments

In Berlin, early 2000s, various policy measures were carried out to facilitate for temporary use (Colomb, 2012). Despite of limited financial restrictions, the local authorities contributed through “*mediation, assistance in locating sites or the relaxation of licensing and planning procedures*” (p. 139). Colomb (2012, p. 140) describes several concrete examples of such measures carried out in Berlin, e.g:

- ◆ The Berlin district Marzahn-Hellersford established its own task force to connect owners of vacated sites with potential users of temporary activities, as well as developing ideas for temporary use. The notion was duplicated in other parts of the city, as local authorities provided subsidies to small organizations, acting as intermediaries between owners of vacated sites and potential users.
- ◆ The formal statues of Liegenschaftsfonds, a state-owned real estate provider in Berlin responsible for state-owned properties, were changed. The modification made temporary use contracts possible for non-profit, community-focused initiatives on the state-owned properties, when the real estate office failed to sell or lease the properties due to a lack of interest or demand.
- ◆ Berlin’s building code was modified in 2005. A less complicated licence system made it easier to carry out temporary initiatives.

Berlin is not a unique case. Madanipour (2018) describes how the UK government worked actively to enable use of vacated premises following the GFC. By introducing a new lease model for temporary use, the administration allowed non-profit organisations to rent vacated premises cheap, in used-to-be vivid town centre areas. The government supported the process by offering guidance, as well as providing standardized legal forms for the application-process, with the intention to decrease administrative costs for both the landowner and temporary users. Other approaches aim to lower the economic threshold and the perceived financial risk of redeveloping the existing building stock. According to Langston et al (2008), the social and

environmental benefits achieved by reusing existing buildings are overlooked, and “a focus on economic factors alone has contributed to destruction of buildings well short of their physical lives” (Langston et al, 2008, p. 1710). Also prior to the GFC, government tools to encourage brownfield development was a debated topic in the UK (Alker et al 2000). To support the Government’s objective of promoting development on brownfield land, it was suggested to impose a fiscal tax on construction, a tax that would not occur in the redevelopment of brownfields. Furthermore, subsidies and grants were suggested offered to organizations that engage in redeveloping brownfields (Alker et al, 2000).

An Australian study (Bullen & Love, 2011) examining practitioners’ attitudes and views on adaptive reuse, showed that the method was decisively supported by the respondents as a more sustainable practice. However, economic considerations were widespread and a concerning factor for the respondents, and there was a belief amongst the respondents that it is more cost-efficient to demolish and rebuild, than to redevelop an existing building. 53% of the interviewees considered the “*inability to estimate economic viability of adaptive reuse*” to be a barrier for this kind of development (Bullen & Love, 2011, p. 416). For that same reason, other authors call for earmarked financial support aimed at mitigating the risk associated with reuse development (Vecchio & Arku, 2020). As written in the project portfolio of Entra, a significant real estate company in Norway, when piloting their first full scale reuse building: “*Our pilot for reuse with KA13 has neither been simple nor cheap to carry out. We need a clearer system to get started with the green shift in the [real estate] sector, making this both easier and cheaper to execute*” (Entra, n.d, own translation)

Vecchio and Arku (2020) reviewed how Ontario’s provinces addressed adaptive reuse in Official Plans, and their proposed policy directives. Official Plans in Canada is the formal municipal level of land use control and describes the municipal board’s policies in a legally binding plan. It describes central issues like location of housing and industry, infrastructure and other key planning objectives (Vecchio & Arku, 2020; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2019). The study (Vecchio & Arku, 2020) found different approaches to, and a varying extent of, incentivizing reuse. Norfolk County used a “*bonusing approach*” (p. 344), allowing higher density development on brownfield sites, while Belleville allowed developers to bypass time-consuming and expensive amendments to the Official Plan when working with reuse. The most common planning tool in Ontario, however, is implementing Community Improvement Plans – plans that aims to rehabilitate targeted areas. To facilitate for reuse, the municipalities can make grants, loans and tax-reliefs to support the costs of maintenance and rehabilitation (Vecchio & Arku, 2020). Nevertheless, the authors point out that reuse policies appear to be locally driven, and that there was a surprisingly absence of congruence between the districts’ policies on promoting reuse.

Mapping and assessment tools

Other authors call for better information on the existing building stock, and advocates for focusing on the continued use of existing buildings, rather than the construction of new ones (Kohler & Hassler, 2002). If the goal is that real estate investors and developers should engage with and redevelop existing, and vacated, buildings – precise information about these must be made available. Although the article by Myers & Wyatt (2004) was written almost two decades ago, their arguments remain relevant. The authors argue that we know too little about the stock of vacated buildings, and that this knowledge gap prevents us from identifying the potential and opportunities they represent. One thing is acknowledging that vacated buildings represent “*wasted capacity*” (p. 2), however, they must be identified to be further developed (Myers & Wyatt, 2004).

“If policies of sustainability are to be realized, then the sporadic and diverse nature of property information needs to be greatly improved and confidentiality issues need to be addressed. Developers need to know what property is available, what the previous use involved, the size of the vacant property, and the level and accessibility of service provisions”
(Myers and Wyatt, 2004, p. 2)

According to Eriksen and Skaaja (2016), the methods to map vacated premises vary greatly, and they separate between three distinctive methods: 1) open websites, public initiatives and activist mapping; 2) mappings on behalf of the local state; and 3) mappings carried out from actors that communicate empty premises on behalf of private landowners (Eriksen & Skaaja, 2016), acting as agents between landowners and tenants (Arnold, 2015).

The German website Leerstandmelder is an example of the first, where anyone can register empty premises and relevant information about these (Eriksen & Skaaja, 2016). Leerstandmelder was initiated by an urban movement activist group, with the intention to create “*an instrument of collective critical mapping*”, to create awareness to wasted resources in German cities (Arnold, 2015, p. 156). Arnold (2015) argues that such maps should not be underestimated as mere visualizations. Rather, they should be viewed as a crucial recourse, that can be used strategically to put their issues and requests on the agenda. The mapping has an activist dimension, pointing to the paradox of increasing real estate prices and spatial pressure on the one hand, and vacated and derelict buildings and premises on the other. Thus, the initiative has roots in a right-to-the-city movement, arguing that non-profits, creative actors and marginalized could and would be willing to use these spaces (Arnold, 2015). Looking again to Germany, the ZZZ project is an example of a service that map empty premises on behalf of the local state. ZZZ is an agency working on identifying and suggesting new use for vacated areas that have failed to redevelop through standard planning procedures (Eriksen & Skaaja, 2016). The agency is mainly working as a bridge between temporary tenants and owners of vacated buildings, and the projects vary

from “*economic to social and cultural projects and from short-term events to long term uses with a perspective to endure in a regular use*” (URBACT, n.d.) Although the municipality has outsourced the service to a private company, the three ministries that finance the project each have a representative in the steering group, who follow up the project through regular meetings (URBACT, n.d.) Another project is Longford NUA in Ireland, managed by the municipality, who launched an app and web platform where residents can add information about places in their community, whether it is stories about the past or visions and ideas for the future (Lanzoni, 2021). The app and web solution has simplified citizen involvement, been a communicative platform for workshops and physical events, and helped the local government to bring forward ideas for development of underutilized areas. As an example, the platform brought about the idea of reusing a vacated military barrack as a hotel, as input identified this as a need in town (Lanzoni, 2021) A third example of state-initiated mappings is the work of Brussels, who created a model for identifying and mapping out possible vacated buildings in a GIS system. To identify vacated properties, the city of Brussels combined information from field surveys (visual assessment of buildings), water and electricity management data (verify low consumption) and population registers (check addresses for registered domiciliation). Buildings that are identified as possibly vacated are added to the web-based GIS system, creating a knowledge base available for all relevant stakeholders within the administration to facilitate for further action (Lanzoni, 2021).

Other authors argue that we need better models and systems to identify and assess the potential for reuse of any given building. In a Hong Kong study (Langston et al, 2008) an adaptive reuse potential (ARP) model is developed, with the intention of being an assistive tool in the decision-making process and to facilitate more sustainable choices in the field of real estate development. The model is based on an estimation of expected physical life and current building age, measured in years. Using a discount method, the useful life of a building is determined by discounting obsolescence factors of physical, economic, functional, technological, social and legal obsolescence, each receiving a reduction between 0–20%. Thus, the useful life of a building that receives the highest reduction for every obsolescence factor, will be 1/3 of its physical life. The ARP is expressed as a percentage, where a high index indicates a high potential and vice versa (Langston et al, 2008). Note that this is a much-reduced explanation of the model. See the original study provides for a comprehensive description of the algorithm and the description of each obsolescence factor and how they should be assessed.

From tools to strategies

As seen, several tools exist and are suggested to facilitate for reactivating vacated buildings in both temporary and permanent means. Yet, few authors discuss the interplay between tools and relevant stakeholders, and strategic approaches to instigate processes of reuse. Doratli (2005) does however aim to determine strategic approaches to revitalize obsolescent historic urban quarters. As with any urban area, the built environment has emerged in accordance with the

socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of the time. When these needs change, the area can become obsolete and deteriorate. Obsolescence is defined as the process of an increasing mismatch between an area's features and its needs. It is often linked to decay, changed social compositions, incompatible uses, increasing vacancy etc. (Doratli, 2005, p. 755) Revitalization on the other hand, is the process of reconciling that mismatch. Although vacancy is not the direct topic of Doratli's study, and the focus is directed specifically towards historic urban quarters, there are some aspects of value when considering the issue of reactivating vacated buildings, in which many of them have heritage value. As stated by Doratli (2005, p. 762), a sole focus on physical revitalization "*may not be sustainable and it would only be a 'cosmetic' intervention, unless the buildings are occupied and utilized for economic uses*". Therefore, to revitalize a historic urban quarter, a similar focus must be directed towards the economic competitiveness of the area within the context of the entire city. Revitalization is thus a challenging process, as it concerns the multiplex connection between physical, functional, social, cultural and economic factors. This complexity requires planners to approach the issue strategically (Doratli, 2005). However, before a further review of strategic approaches, a framework must be laid for what constitutes a strategy.

The title of this thesis is undoubtedly inspired by Healey's (2009) article *In Search of the "Strategic" in Spatial Strategy Making*. The author claims that the word strategy is vaguely defined within spatial planning. Although all urban planning interventions have a strategic dimension, as various factors must be considered in the process of reaching a decision, they are not consequently strategic. An urban strategy is inherently aimed towards a changed direction, "*to open up new possibilities and potentials, and to move away from previous positions*" (Healey, 2009, p. 440). Often, the strategic approach to urban development is a response to the experience of reducing the understanding of urbanism to legal and administrative processes, rather than focusing on urban form and transformation of the physical environment (Folde, 2021).

It is not within the scope of this thesis to include an in-depth review of the strategy-discourse within the urban planning field. Nevertheless, the key element in this understanding of strategies, is the intent to challenge the status quo power dynamics, and mobilise "*energy to move in different directions*", although these strategies might just as well be "*grounded in formal political jurisdiction*" (p. 442). The author argues that to succeed with spatial strategy making, the actors involved must comprehend the spatial and social context they are acting within. For transformative effects to take place, the strategy must resonate with local stakeholders, giving it momentum to "*travel across significant institutional sites of urban and regional governance, to enrol others with the power to invent, invest and regulate subsequent development*" (p. 441). The role of strategies is not to account for the exact means to reach a certain objective, but rather to "*furnish a framework for guiding thinking and action*" (p. 763). Doratli (2005) stresses that the unique features of any historic urban quarter must be considered carefully when working with strategic approaches for revitalization. As each area exists within its own context, has unique

values, and different levels of decay, “*there can (...) be no uniformly strategic approach in terms of revitalization*” (Doratli, 2005, p. 762). Similarly, Healey (2009) insists that “*pattern books*” and “*best practice manuals*” in fact diminish the room for judgements and may lead to the local context being overlooked in strategic planning processes (Healey, 2009, p. 444).

Healey’s (2009) emphasis on involving local stakeholders and considering the social context is also emphasized by other scholars looking specifically on vacancy. A US study (Rupp et al, 2021) on greening of vacant lots, stress that processes of reactivating vacant lots must be collaborative, and that the absence of righteous management processes have several negative effects, both socially, ecologically and economically (Rupp et al, 2021). Participatory processes may help in generating “*strategies that are locally relevant and more acceptable to communities*” (p. 164), help strengthen the citizenship of local communities’ and enhance responsiveness by building on local knowledge and the established social relationship in the community. Further, and relevant to the previously described critics of temporary urbanism, they highlight that local participation is essential to avoid practices and policies that lead to the displacement of marginalized groups and lower-income residents (Rupp et al, 2021).

The debate on strategic planning continues to live after Healey’s article. The cooperation perspective is highlighted in the New Urban Agenda (NUA), raised during the UN Habitat III conference, where 167 countries participated (Habitat III, n.d.). It was later endorsed by the UNs General Assembly in 2016 (The United Nations, 2017). Amongst many visions, it is stated that cities should be “*participatory [and] promote civic engagement*” (p. 5) and that all inhabitants “*are able to inhabit and produce*” the just city (The United Nations, 2017, p. 5). The interplay between various stakeholders is emphasized as important to identify opportunities and address challenges of the city (The United Nations, 2017). At the same time as the conference was taking place, an alternative conference was organized, criticizing NUA for being neo-liberalistic (Grut, 2016). Whether NUA has a neo-liberalistic dimension will not be discussed further on in this study. The point is to illustrate that the discussion of what constitutes strategic planning continues way after Healey’s search of the “strategic” in spatial strategy making. This will be further demonstrated in the beginning of chapter 4.

An *Urban Agenda for the EU* study, signed by the European Commission have investigated collaborative management as an approach to adapt and reuse vacated buildings and urban spaces (Lanzoni, 2021). The study questions how public administrations can identify needs in an urban territory through involving relevant stakeholders and local actors, and how processes of reactivating vacated space can be organized in a righteous and inclusive manner. Two of the reference projects in the report have already been mentioned through previous sections of this thesis, namely Les Grands Voisins and the Longford NUA project. Another reference project is

highlighted due to its collaborative approach, starting at a strategic level in the municipal plan and resulting in the implementation of locally initiated projects:

QUA Quartiere bene comune & Villa Levi

The urban policy QUA quartiere bene comune (eng: common goods neighbourhood), is a project developed in Italy in 2015, to improve participation in planning. Their model is based on four phases, as demonstrated in figure 11:

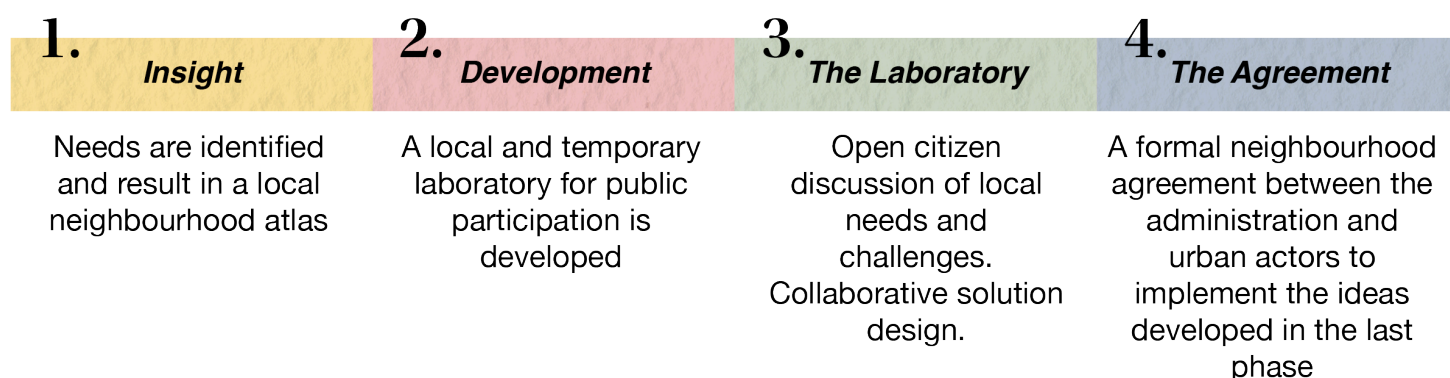


Figure 11: Quartiere Bene Commune – Four steps. Based on Lanzoni, 2021, p. 17 (own illustration)

Since its implementation, 27 collaboration agreements (explanation follows) have been signed, 730 subjects have been involved, 160 projects have been carried out, and 14.000+ citizens have been reached. Villa Levi is one of the projects carried out using the model of QUA. The old university building in Reggio Emilia had experienced long-lasting decay and vandalism, after the university gradually relocated its services to Bologna from 2011–2018. During public participation activities in connection to the General Urban Plan (masterplan), Villa Levi was identified as an important common goods that should be reused and restored. As a result of the findings in the participatory work with the masterplan, a citizen workshop was hosted, and the initiative was continued as a QUA-project. In 2021, after carrying out a collaborative co-design phase (phase 3 above), the involved stakeholders signed a collaborative agreement with the Municipality to carry out the suggested initiatives on the Villa. The project illustrates how public actors and stakeholders have been involved and mobilized through the entire process, starting at a masterplan-level and ending with an ad-hoc solutions and initiatives carried out in collaboration with both municipal and citizen actors. (Lanzoni, 2021)

As stated in the introduction, the toolkit presented in the study can be useful to “lay the foundations for an overall strategy that looks at a new model of re-use management of the urban commons for socio-cultural purposes through active participation” (Lanzoni, 2021, p. 4). The suggested roadmap for reuse is summarized in figure 12 on the following page.

Identify and analyze urban components to be enhanced by gathering different perspectives, analysis and databases



1. MAPPING

Activate and engage stakeholders by initiating, promoting, and developing an action plan for reuse objectives



2. ENGAGING

Collaboratively design one or more scenarios for temporary or permanent uses of underused sites or buildings



3. ENVISIONING

Develop solutions to test ideas for reactivation through practices that simulate new approaches and methods



4. EXPERIMENTING

Identify and choose alternatives based on analyses, needs and opportunities



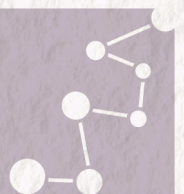
5. DECISION-MAKING

Prepare a financing model for the intervention considering cost/benefit, subsidies and different sources of finances



6. FINANCING

Establish structures, regulations, and integrated management for the reactivation and revitalization of underused spaces



7. MAINSTREAMING

Identify indicators and evaluate the impacts of the reuse-project. Receive feedback to modify the original intervention



8. EVALUATING

Figure 12: Roadmap for reuse. Based on text by Lanzoni, 2021, pp. 52–57 (own illustration)

3.4 Research gap

Little research had previously been conducted on vacated buildings in Norway. Thus, the topic has been approached from a bird's eye view, attempting to navigate the landscape of causes and effects of vacancy, in addition to the justifications and means to reactivate such buildings. Although it is the latter that is the main focus of this study, it has been necessary to understand the mechanism in place contributing to vacant buildings, and to understand the effects of this in order to justify attempts to reuse rather than demolish. It has also been important to demonstrate that whilst many countries struggle with vacated buildings, the causes may vary greatly based on contextual factors. Through the review of previously conducted studies and the theoretical framework, there are several sub-fields within the topic of vacancy that are identified as unexplored and appear as knowledge gaps. In this section, reflections on further research are presented, based on the problem statement of this study and within the Norwegian context.

Vacated buildings – the term and the phenomenon

The review revealed that there is little research on vacated buildings as a concept in Norway. Consequently, we lack an established definition of the concept within the academic and professional field of urban planning and real estate management. This conceptualization of the term is important, as it has implications for how strategies are developed. Properly framing the problem will influence the approach used to address it. As discussed previously, a term like vacated building is understood based on contextual factors, such as legislation and historic events. Although the term vacated is explained as a basis for this study, it would be useful with a more comprehensive examination of the term based on the Norwegian context specifically. That is however not an aim of this study. A study that would attempt to define a term in Norwegian, would consequently involve a discussion of a linguistic nature, which is more appropriate to conduct in Norwegian.

Vacated buildings as a phenomenon has not been researched in Norway, rather it is fractured into smaller fields addressing e.g., transformation of former industrial buildings, cultural heritage values, military facilities etc. Although in recent years an increased focus has appeared on the issue, it appears like there is little knowledge about the extent of vacated buildings, except from limited overviews or studies accounting for the vacated building stock of a particular area or within a selected sector (e.g., vacant military buildings).

There are several studies pointing to both economic and environmental effects of vacated buildings, which typically originate from areas that have been, or still are, struggling with severe vacancy rates and population decline. In cases like these, it is no surprise that there are grave consequences, such as persistent decay and urban blight, and that this brings with it further negative impacts both economically and socially for the local community, the individual resident

of a neighbourhood, and for the authorities. On the other side, and what remains more unclear, are the effects of vacated buildings in areas that does not fit that description. That is, what are the effects of a vacated building, in an otherwise populated and well-functioning urban area or neighbourhood? Are they, despite being isolated, also serving as meeting points for criminal activity, contributing to reduced property values, and causing harm to the local sense of place and identity? Whilst I will not speculate on the matter, my hypothesis is that there are significant negative effects also connected to these stand-alone vacated buildings. A personal anecdote may serve to illustrate my suspicion: when I was doing an internship in a small town, we carried out a public participation workshop for local children and youth. In the town, a vacated, old and dilapidated house not far from the city centre was specifically pointed out by the children, referred to as a haunted house where the older youth would go to smoke weed and spray tag. Likewise, where I grew up, a similar haunted house close to the local secondary school was a common meeting point for vandalism and other illegal activities. Whether it reduced the property values of the neighbourhood I am more uncertain of, but it certainly didn't raise it.

Strategies to reactivate vacated buildings

The research on how vacancy has and can be dealt with is similarly characterized by originating from areas with severe levels of abandonment, following major global crisis, historical events (such as the unification of Germany) and shifts in the economy. The most obvious and widely used method of filling the gap, temporary urbanism, is criticised for being a policy that entails land valorisation. This must however be understood within the context of its origin, where temporary urbanism has been used in comprehensive urban interventions to help repopulate areas suffering from substantial population decline. Temporary urbanism has been extensively debated in that context, as referred to earlier with the panacea or trojan horse dilemma. Again though, studies on smaller-scale interventions and their possible impacts for local neighbourhoods would be a good contribution to the academic debate, in Norway as well as in the internationally. It would be valuable with studies reviewing cases of temporary urbanism in Norway, and shed light on whether the argued outcomes of gentrification also are identified in e.g., Oslo, where interim versions of urbanism are increasingly taking place. The latter aspect will partly be discussed through the case of Old Munch in Oslo.

There are various tools and approaches suggested to gain a better understanding of our existing building stock, to identify and map vacated buildings, and to assess their potential for reuse. Few of these studies derive from a Norwegian context, and I wish to explore which methods that would be suitable in a Norwegian context and what the barriers are to take such methods into use. These measures to reactivate vacated buildings are commonly addressed individually, either focusing on a specific method, a digital tool, a version of temporary urbanism, or advocating for facilitation through legislative amendments, tax reliefs or subsidy-programmes. On the contrary,

few studies approach the issue from a process-point of view. The authors, correctly so, point in different directions in attempts to identify issues and suggest solutions to facilitate reuse of vacated buildings, which also illustrates the complexity of the matter. Yet, few studies discuss the relation between these various instruments in place, the stakeholders involved, and the relation to strategic planning processes (within its political system). Perhaps it is because of the complexity of the matter, and a clear sign for me to stay away as well? Nevertheless, my angle is that in order to facilitate reuse and reactivation of vacated buildings, we must look at the issue strategically, and consider the whole spectrum of stakeholders involved and their relation to each other. My hypothesis is that the tools, as partly demonstrated in this study, already exist, but that we are lacking strategic approaches to determine which stakeholders and tools should be used in any given case.

Thus, the following thesis aims to discuss how vacated buildings may be approached strategically, and what the greatest barriers are to reuse such space.

The findings section is divided into two parts. In the first part, chapter 4, the issue of vacated municipal buildings will be illustrated by reviewing reports, statistical data and by presenting GIS-analysis and visual representations. The aim is to capture and present the extent of the issue, the consequences, and challenges connected to attempts to improve the problem. In addition, the legal framework will be highlighted, that defines the operational room for interventions related to existing buildings. Finally, the chapter will describe the case, Old Munch, and illustrate the process of determining future use for the former museum.

In the second part of the findings-section, chapter 5, it is attempted to identify strategic approaches for reactivating vacant buildings, and barriers in attempts to do so. This is done by reviewing gathered data-material from six interviews and elaborating their point of views and examples with other sources of information.

4.1 Strategic planning in Oslo

Old Munch exists within a bigger context, namely that of the municipality it is located within. To understand the room for manoeuvre, we must first understand this context. Besides, Old Munch is used as a case in this study precisely to make use of the experiences – both positive and negative – as a contribution to understand how we can go about tackling the greater issue of vacancy in Oslo strategically. Thus, it is important to understand two aspects: how is municipality's real estate management organized, and how does this affect our ability to work strategically?

Even if it is a bit premature to jump to the interviews, one statement from Apall-Olsen is an appropriate characterization to highlight the challenge of strategic work in Oslo municipality:

"Oslo municipality is a hopeless one – it has become too big. So, to work strategically in the municipality is extremely complicated"

(Apall-Olsen, interview 2023)

And it is big – at least in a Norwegian context. With its 709.037 inhabitants it is the largest Norwegian city (Oslo Municipality, 2023). The urban area Oslo, extending outside the administrative borders, exceeded one million inhabitants in 2018 (Thorsnæs, 2023). It is located at the end of the Oslofjord, and is an administrative municipality, a county, and the capital city of Norway. The quote above and the notion that some particular challenges arise only in the big cities is supported by the report *Storbyfaktoren* (Eng: The big-city factor) by

Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet (AFI, Eng: Work Research Institute). The report investigates the social and economic challenges of the Norwegian metropolis (Brattbakk et al, 2016), and highlights how big cities have particular challenges that have been pointed out over many years. For instance, in a whitepaper to the parliament (Meld. St. 31 2006-2007) the management challenges of Oslo Metropolis were highlighted, and a clear capital city policy was requested. Further, The Research Council of Norway (NFR) have initiated several research projects aiming to obtain increased knowledge on knowledge-based planning and management. In one of the projects, *BYFORSK* (Eng: City Research), it is emphasized that challenges of the city demand interdisciplinary cooperation, across disciplines, actors and sectors (Brattbakk et al, 2016).

The capital is run with a parliamentary governance model, which means it has a City Council (Nor: byråd) and a City Government (Nor: bystyre) (Thorsnæs, 2023). This has implications for how the real estate management is organized within the municipality. The City Council is selected by the City Government, and it is the latter who controls how many departments the organization should be divided into (Thorsnæs, 2023). As seen in figure 13, the municipality is currently organized with 9 City Council departments, in addition to the various municipal agencies subordinate to the departments. In addition, there are 15 administrative city districts, each with their own City District Council. The Municipal Audit Office in Oslo is the municipality's elected auditor. The Audit Office carries out accounting audits, administrative audits, company controls and fraud-oriented investigations (Oslo municipality, n.d. a)

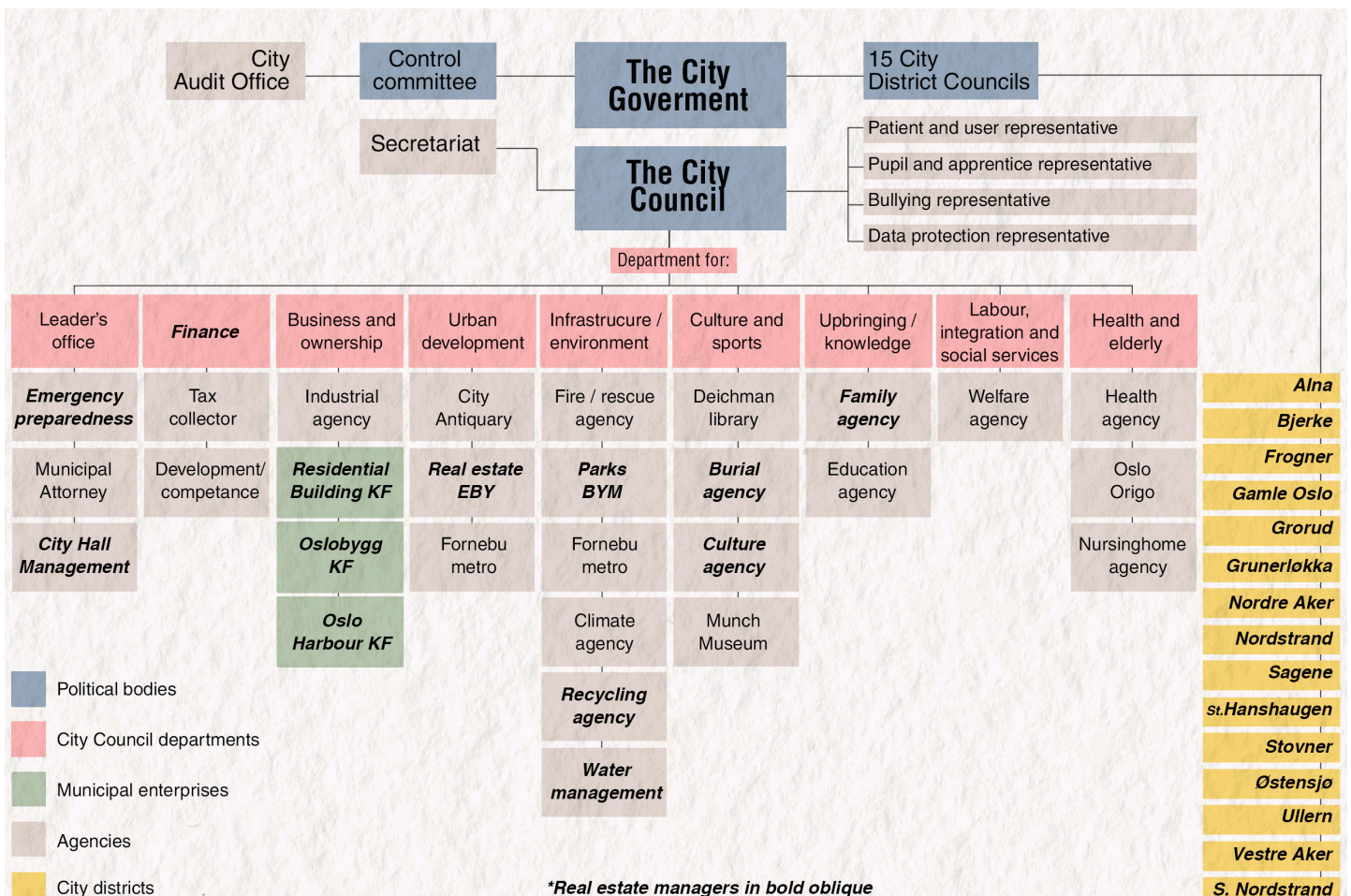


Figure 13: Oslo Municipality organization chart. Based on Oslo municipality, n.d. (own processing)

By looking into the overview of municipally owned properties (Oslo municipality, 2017) and comparing it to the organizational chart, the sectoral division of municipal real estate management becomes evident. The different real estate managers are highlighted in figure 13 with bold oblique. As seen, the properties are dispersed amongst 7 out of 9 City Council departments, however most often managed by one or several sub-ordinate agencies or municipal enterprises. In total, 13 different bodies manage the municipally owned properties of Oslo. In addition, all 15 city districts manage some real estate themselves. This illustrates that Oslo's building stock is managed by a variety of different organisations and agencies, all with different objectives. This is also reflected in the characteristics of the physical building structures.

Oslo Municipality is the largest employer in the municipality and one of the largest nationally, having more than 54.000 employees as of September 2022 (Oslo municipality, n.d. f). Hence, the need for sectoral organization should come as no surprise. Nevertheless, in terms of urban and strategical planning, the sectoral division can become an expression of silo-thinking. Folde (2021) argues that it can potentially constitute a challenge in excessive specialization. When the opposites are not gathered in a common platform the professional disciplines and sectors may not be sufficiently coordinated. This quickly results in inefficient and long processes (Folde, 2021).

According to Folde (2021), Norway is only in the start-up phase of implementing strategical planning tools. She looks to Ellefsen (2003), who argued that Norwegian planning has not yet been adjusted to a new responsible role that responds to the planning institutions' gradual dismantling, as the market economy has replaced the planning economy (Ellefsen, 2003). Folde (2021) describes how Norwegian cities are transforming inside themselves, rather than sprawling. Consequently, Norwegian urban planning tends to focus on re-planning and restructuring: *"transformation of the already constructed city in a complex reality consisting of various actors and stakeholders, land- tenure and processes"* (Folde, 2021, p. 36, own translation). The author argues that whilst much of the urban development is carried out as project-based development by private actors, strategical tools like ATP (Eng: coordinated Area and Transport Plan) and VPOR (Eng: guiding plan for public spaces) have appeared. Further, the author argues that several medium sized cities are working project-based where public actors are taking an active part in urban development projects in cooperation with other stakeholders (Folde, 2021).

Norway commits to The New Urban Agenda as a member's nation. Also here, the need for national city policies with integrated and coordinated processes across the traditional sectors are emphasized (Grut, 2016). Strategic planning can be particularly useful in demanding cases with strong conflicting sectoral interests. In turn, it could contribute to better exploitation of opportunities and to facilitate collaboration towards a common goal, within manageable timeframes for citizens, politicians, administration and the real estate developers (Folde, 2021). Central tools to succeed are capacity building, cooperation and to mobilize human as well as

financial resources (Grut, 2016). According to Busquets (2009), there are several examples of European cities that have succeeded with strategical plans despite strong sectoral interests. He states that what they have in common is that they tend to work within a scale that is not too extensive, and they use an open design process that plays out over time (Busquets, 2009).

4.2 Navigating vacancy in Oslo

To discuss whether the vacated buildings of Oslo Municipality constitute a management problem, it is helpful to first understand the way the municipal real estate management is organized. The following diagram (figure 14) illustrates the share of buildings in total built area (BRA) distributed amongst the municipal managers. The official and Norwegian names of the administrations and agencies are shown with bold text, whilst an English translation and acronym is showed in italics, which is also the way the agencies will be referred to from now on. The data – an overview of municipally owned buildings as of June 2017 – is collected from Oslo Municipality’s website and represented as a pie chart. This was the most recent, complete overview identified. The chart does not include buildings smaller than 50 square metres, which are mainly smaller structures such as sheds, outbuildings and garages. The real estate portfolios of the administrations are not static, and have consequently changed due to sales, acquisitions, demolition and new construction. Nonetheless, it is adequate to illustrate the order of magnitude.

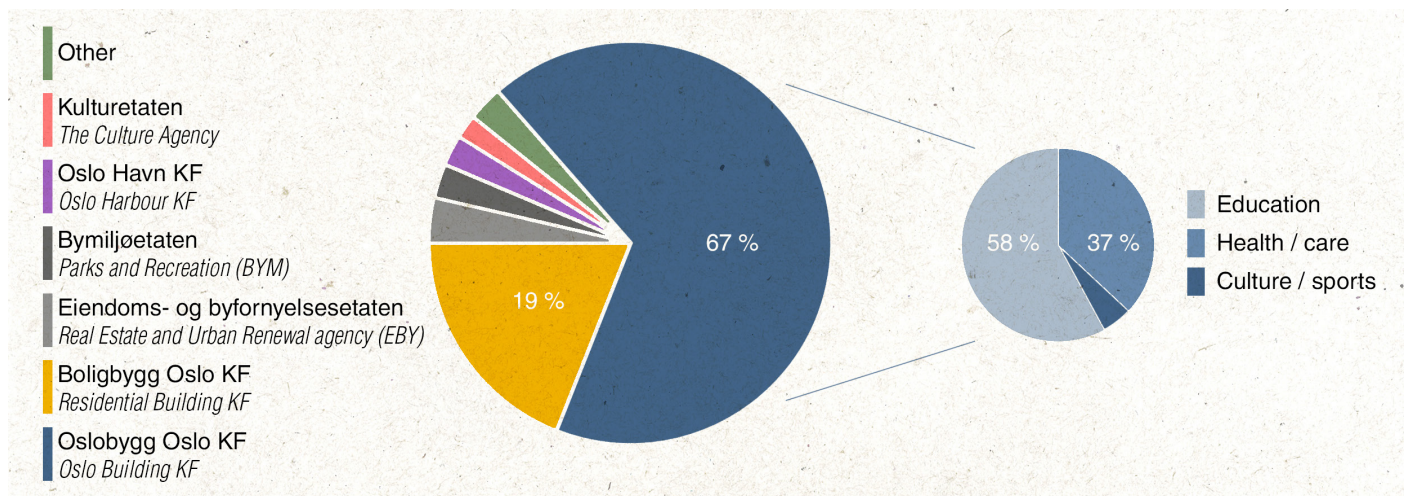


Figure 14: The distribution of property management of municipal property. Based on overview of municipal property, Oslo Municipality, 2017 (own illustration)

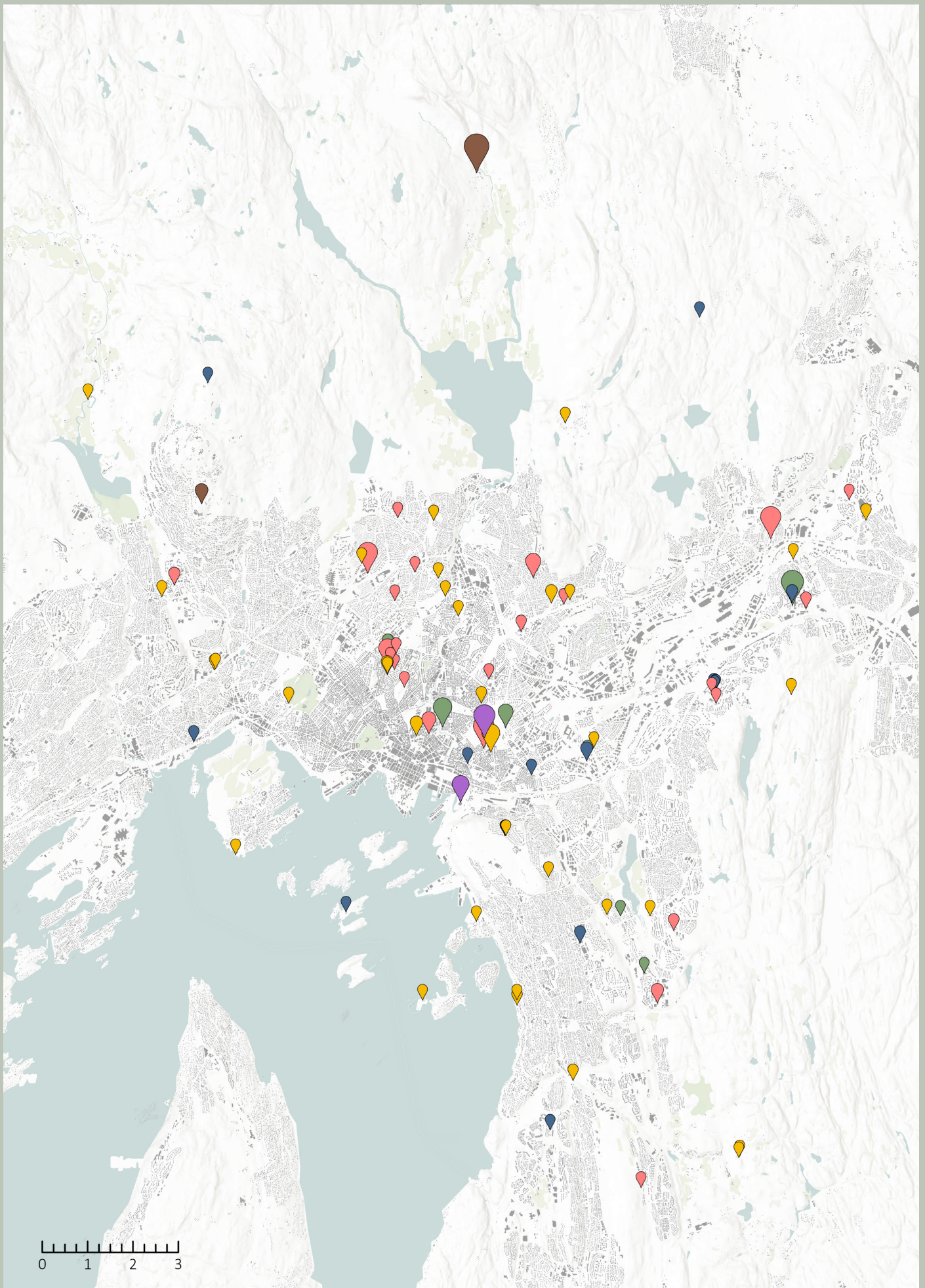
Whilst the organizational chart revealed that the property is managed by 13 different municipal bodies and 15 city districts, the properties are far from evenly distributed. Oslo Building KF (67%) and Residential Building KF (19%) are the two by far largest managers of municipal buildings in Oslo. Oslo building KF is a municipal real estate agency, consisting of three formerly individual enterprises within education, healthcare, and culture and sports. The agency manages more than 2,7 million square meters real estate and is thus one of the largest real estate actors nationally. They own, manage, build and develop municipal buildings, such as kindergartens, schools, care homes, nurse homes, culture buildings, sports facilities, etc. Additionally, they are responsible for

the construction activities for The residential building KF. (Oslo Municipality, n.d. b) The residential building KF has the same mandate, but for municipal houses. In total, their portfolio consists of 11.000 houses with more than 25.000 residents. The houses vary from protected villas to new and modern buildings (Oslo Municipality, n.d.). Whilst EBY manage only 4% of the building stock, they constitute the municipal landowner, aiming to develop areas for residential, commercial and public purposes (Oslo Municipality, n.d. c). In the diagram, others refer to city districts, other agencies (i.e., water management; energy; renovation; family services; burial), the city council's secretariat and the city hall's administrative service.

4.2.1 The map of vacancy

The GIS analysis on the following side (figure 15) shows municipally owned, vacated buildings in Oslo. Keeping in mind that much of the literature on vacated buildings, as seen in chapter 2, focus on shut down industrial plants, it is noteworthy that this is not the case in Oslo now. However, it is worth mentioning that also Oslo has been part of the industrial shift and a development based increasingly on creative industries. The heart of industrial production has since 1200 C.E. been located along the riverbank of Akerselva, and has since 1840 created the foundation of a profound urban growth (Swensen et al, 2015). There was extensive industrial activity in the area until 1960, but the era was about to end, and in the 1980s the municipality started the work to transform the post-industrial areas that was left as an eyesore in the city. The project Akerselva Environmental Park was started in 1990, and it was simultaneously developed a municipal sub-plan for the area, that defined the area as an important industrial historical environment of national value. The authors (Swensen et al, 2015) depicts how the development alongside Akerselva has been based *“on the forward-looking formula of competitive development: Competency, creativity, culture and communication, or what Richard Florida later turned into the three T-s, technology, talent and tolerance”* (p. 57, own translation). The area has over the later years been extensively developed, with thousands of jobs, universities and new residents. And according to the authors, the creative class are clearly visible, with clusters of businesses within culture, research and education, tech, art, design and architecture (Swensen et al, 2012).

The following map clearly depicts that shut-down industry is not the pressing issue in terms of vacancy in Oslo, and that the composition of vacated buildings is more diverse. The classification of building use, using the cadastral register, shows that 46 out of the 101 buildings are under the housing category; 24 belong to the childcare and school category, whereas the clear majority are kindergartens; and only 15 belong to the business and industry category, which also includes offices. Whilst there are few buildings in the remaining categories, these are nevertheless mainly large, purpose-built buildings, such as military camps, nursing homes, high schools, university buildings, museums etc.



● Housing ● Business / industry ● Childcare / schools ● Health ● Culture ● Military

Figure 15: GIS analysis based on overview by Aftenposten / EBY and cadastral register (own illustration)

Amid the work with this study, *Kommunerevisjonen* (Eng: the Municipal Audit Office/ the Audit Office) published the report the Real Estate management of Oslo Municipality's vacated buildings, providing more updated information on the vacated building portfolio. According to EBY, 88 properties with 170 municipal buildings were completely or partly empty as of June 2022. Considering the complete building stock of 3,8 million m², the share of 135.000 m² is equal to 3,6 percent of the municipal building portfolio (The Municipal Audit Office, 2023). In an NRK article it is informed that as of may 2023 there are 197 vacated buildings spread over 96 properties. 125 MNOK is set aside for the empty buildings over the next 4 years (Einarsdóttir, 2023).

Social consequences

It has previously been shown that vacated buildings may have social and socioeconomic consequences, and that the studies looking into such issues derive from areas with high vacancy rates and often a considerable population decline. Yet, as mentioned earlier, there is little research pointing to the social implications of vacated buildings in cities with a more dispersed and less comprehensive vacated building portfolio, such as Oslo. That is neither the focus nor the aim of the Audit Office report, and to this day we know little about how it affects local neighbourhoods in Oslo in terms of social implications. Hence, further studies about this is encouraged going forward. This thesis, however, focuses on measures and strategies, rather than causes and implications. It will be attempted to shed light on the possible social implications of reactivating vacated buildings, more than the impacts of their presence.

Economic consequences

There are no reports or calculations addressing the annual cost of Oslo's current and continuing vacated building stock, and neither will this thesis present one. However, by addressing some examples, it is evident that the vacated building stock constitute a waste of resources. The GIS mapping shows that 19 out of the 102 buildings were categorized as kindergartens. Whilst most of them are longstanding kindergartens of moderate size, the newly opened Skullerudbakken is also present in the list. It is however not an old building. On the contrary, it was completed in 2019, and with a total built area of 2300 square meters, it had a total construction price of 140 million NOK (Kirkeberkeland, 2023). On the same list are Skar and Holmenkollen, two former military camps acquired in 2007, with an aim to expand the kindergarten offer. *"14 years later they have spent 59 million NOK on the two camps. The number of children staying there daily? Two."* (Drabløs et al, 2021, own translation). Although a debate on the municipality's kindergarten offer is far outside the scope of this thesis, curiosity arouses to whether reuse of existing and closed kindergartens could have been a part of the solution to improve the provision. Whilst Skullerudbakken is an example of an investment that perhaps could have been reduced, by reusing instead of building new, the latter military camps are examples of continuous expenses in connection to maintenance.

For Skar camp alone, expenses for snow ploughing, electricity, maintenance, and security are estimated to roughly 40.000 NOK per month, compared to 32.000 NOK in Holmenkollen camp (Drabløs et al, 2021). EBY now recommends selling Skar camp, which will require extensive investments in technical infrastructure such as water and drainage lines. The restoration will cost 33,7 million NOK, making the total price from acquisition to sale 75,3 million NOK (Borg et al, 2022:2). Yet, there are not only military camps that come with high maintenance prices. Sjøstrandveien 24 A-D consists of four vacated villas, previously used as a care centre for alcoholics, and has had an annual cost of around 200.000 NOK since the centre was closed in 2018 (Pettrem et al, 2021). 50 apartments in the 3500 square meters block Hagegata 13 have been empty since 2014, and the annual cost is estimated to 500.000 NOK. In addition, rehabilitation had to be carried out on the building's balconies, which entailed an additional cost of NOK 650.000 in 2019-2020. Half a kilometre away, the old nursery home at Tøyen has an annual cost of around 50.000, and has been empty since 2010 (Pettrem et al, 2021).

Although maintenance is pointed to as a cost for the municipal property managers, the lack of performing maintenance could similarly represent wasteful resource management. The lack of maintenance and rehabilitation of vacated buildings *“leads to decay, deteriorated real estate values and increased maintenance expenses in a long-term perspective. To not prepare suited buildings for municipal purposes can involve extra costs as alternative buildings must be acquired or leased”* (the Audit Office, 2023, p. 9).

According to Kirkebirkeland (2023), 5,9% of Residential building KFs housing units were empty in 2019. This rate is twice as high as in the private rental market. 68% of the units were empty and awaiting new tenants, whilst the remaining 32% were empty due to planned rehabilitation and updates. The market value of the empty units is estimated to 3 billion NOK (Kirkebirkeland, 2023).

Relocation

Relocation of public services often leads to vacated buildings, and in some instances also to less (economic) activity in city centres. This includes public and semi-public services such as libraries, bank offices, post offices, welfare offices, etc. In some Norwegian cities, these functions tend to move out of the traditional city centre, partly with the authorities and municipalities at fault (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). Many of these buildings may however quite easily be converted to new use. A post-office may turn into a café, a small library could easily turn into an office, and an old bank may be filled with shelves and registers and function as a grocery store without major interventions. However, when political resolutions to relocate large public institutions are made; a particular challenge and phenomenon presents itself. The buildings of institutions like capital libraries, universities, schools, hospitals, museums etc., are often characterized by being large, purpose-built buildings, that are challenging to trade in the ordinary lease-market (St.prp. 84, 1998-99). Thus, when alternative locations are investigated for such an institution – of substantial

size and with highly specific needs – alternative locations are almost always synonymous with new buildings (St.prp. 84, 1998-99). The result is often that the purpose-built and vacated building remains a significant cost for the owner.

When decisions to relocate are made, it is reasonable to question whether they are based on, amongst other factors, an accurate consideration of the cost from vacating the old premises. This is reviewed in the report *“The forgotten cost of new state-owned buildings - Costs for vacated, listed or protected buildings, when new buildings are chosen in major government investment measures”* (Stendebakken, 2018, own translation). The study has reviewed concept evaluations in connection to state-owned buildings, by conducting a document review of *KVU* and *KS1* documents (Eng: strategical alternative assessment and quality assurance review). These are early phases in the process, in which it is decided whether the current use should continue in the old premises, or if the service in question should be moved to other premises. It is investigated whether the costs of vacated, listed and protected buildings are accounted for and considered in the concept evaluations. Costs that may occur when vacating the buildings in question, if the state remains the owner, are amongst other maintenance, rehabilitation and adaptations in order to facilitate for new use. If the building is legally protected, it is required by law to safeguard it and to carry out maintenance (The Cultural Heritage Act, 1978; The Planning and Building Act, 2008). Such high costs of vacated buildings can be illustrated by the note to the City Government (Note 90/2018), accounting for operational costs of Old Munch and the former main library Deichman. The calculation is based on the buildings standing empty and without productive use. It is emphasized in the note that these calculations include a low level of maintenance, as the future use of the buildings at the time were unclear. It should also be noted that this calculation is based the costs of electricity on the price level at the time, and that this has increased significantly in recent years. Table 1 shows the costs in NOK of the two buildings without productive use:

Table 1: Operational costs of former Munch Museum and the former Main Library Deichman without productive use. (Note 90/2018)

Estimated cost	Old Munch	Deichman
MOM*	1.000.000	1.000.000
Capital	5.459.246	5.628.260
Ground rent	-	312.936
Energy	2.000.000	1.500.000
Insurance	150.000	200.000
SUM	8.609.246	8.641.196

* MOM = Management, operations, maintenance

Returning to the study by Stenbekken (2018), the major finding is that such costs are in many cases not considered in the first phases of the alternative assessment KVV and KS1. According to Stenbekken (2018, p. 3) *“it is not necessarily a methodological error not to include such costs, but it can provide cost-driving blind spots in the underlying documentation for the final ranking of alternatives and decision on concept selection”* (own translation). Further, Stenbekken argues that a central aspect to the cost of vacated, protected, purpose-built buildings, is that the institution (e.g., a museum) often rents the buildings from *Statsbygg* (Eng. The Norwegian Directorate of Public Construction and Property). The institution itself can then disregard from the cost of the vacated building, a building that the institution has contributed to maintaining through rent costs, by simply terminating the lease agreement. *Statsbygg*, however, are left with yet another protected, purpose-built building, without a user (Stenbekken, 2018).

4.2.2 A management problem?

As seen in the literature review, vacated buildings represent unemployed resources. There is no lease income for the building owners, and there are continuous costs related to maintenance, repairs, security etc. Thus, the question becomes whether the vacancy represents natural fluctuations in the market, or if on the contrary, there are cases of long-lasting vacancy due to inadequate systems to clarify future of the vacated buildings.

The various municipal real estate bodies make it challenging to take a holistic view on vacancy. Although the Culture Agency, as an example, have the network and tools to initiate temporary and permanent activities in vacated premises, representatives from the organisation described this as complex when the buildings are managed by other municipal bodies (Eriksen og Skajaa, 2016). According to the representatives in the interview, the biggest challenges are economic considerations and costs connected to maintenance and operations. As opposed to the Culture Agency, where premises can be rented out to a subsidized rental price, the other municipal real estate bodies are required to profit from their building stock. According to the representatives, this political demand to price municipal premises at market price level, creates a barrier to rent out. In cases where the empty buildings require restoration to prepare for lease, lack of funds to prepare the buildings for market level standard can be an important background for vacancy (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016).

The Audit Office's report has investigated the municipality's ability to clarify further use of vacated buildings and whether maintenance has been carried out. The conclusion is clear: Oslo Municipality have a system to clarify further use of vacated, municipal properties, but it is not satisfactory (the Audit Office, 2023). The following highlighted section is in its entirety based on the report, to highlight some of the key findings.

Oslo Municipality have established a system for systematic interaction between the municipality's property managers. EBY has been responsible for coordinating the meetings, and Residential Building KF, Oslo building KF, BYM and the Culture Agency have participated in the meetings. The purpose was to review the vacated buildings and look for alternative use, and to look for possible transfers of property between the managers with existing municipal needs. The property managers have reported on their vacated buildings since 2011, in quarterly overviews on vacated properties developed by EBY. The review showed that some buildings were missing from the overview, and some were added long after the vacancy occurred. More than 50 % of the buildings have been vacated for more than five years. For around 20 buildings, the managers' notes were identical throughout the entire investigation period, indicating that there has been a lack of new assessments of these buildings. An informant in Residential Building KF argued that there was rarely any interest for their available properties amongst the other property managers, and that a challenge with an attempted collaborative forum was that each body have their own budget.

According to informants in EBY, it was especially challenging to clarify further use of buildings where it wasn't obvious what municipal needs they could cover. In 2021 the agency initiated the project *Strategy and recommendation of measures for the municipality's vacated buildings*. The result of the report is summarized in the map on the following page (figure 16).

Besides looking into the challenges connected to clarifying future use of vacated buildings, the Audit Office also investigated to what extent maintenance plans are made and whether maintenance is in fact carried out for the vacated buildings. This was explored by looking into 15 of the municipally owned buildings, that has been vacated for a long period of time. The findings were that out the need for maintenance was only assessed for 6 out of the 15 buildings. "*Mapping out the maintenance need is important knowledge to ensure a good real estate management. That was not done adequately for EBYs and Oslo Building KFs vacated buildings*" (City audit, 2023, p. 41). In only 1 out of the 15 investigated cases had it been developed a maintenance plan. The City Audit argues that this was justified for a few of the buildings, but that the overall assessment is that there were insufficient efforts to map out and plan maintenance needs. The City Audit argues that value-preserving maintenance has not been carried out for most properties, and that the consequence of this is decay, reduced property values and in the worst case no alternative but demolition. They do note, however, that a common perception among the real managers is that the budgets are too tight, which ultimately result in not prioritizing maintenance and vacated buildings over other pressing matters.

(Key findings, Audit Office report 2023)

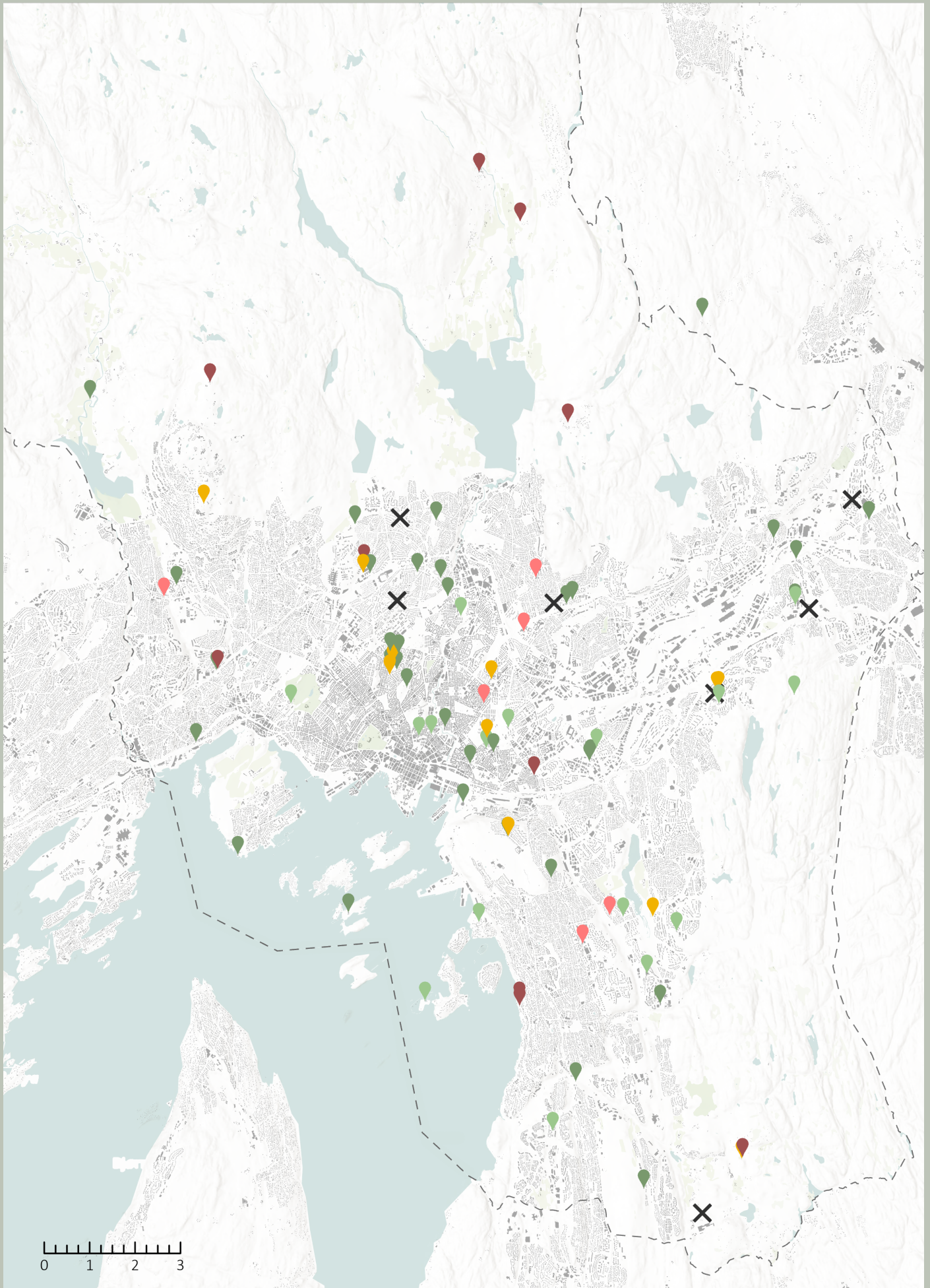


Figure 16: GIS analysis showing the result of EBY's recommendation of measures for vacated buildings (own illustration)

4.3 The legislative framework

Any suggested project for reusing an existing building must comply with laws and regulation. This section will provide a description of the legal framework to reuse vacated buildings.

4.3.1 Term list

The term list shows legal terms used in the Planning and Building Act (PBL), as translated by The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (KDD).

Norwegian / original	In-text use / English translation
Plan- og bygningsloven	the Planning and Building Act / the Act / PBL
Kommuneplan	municipal masterplan
Kommuneplanens arealdel	the land-use part of the municipal master plan
Kommuneplanens samfunnsdel	the social element
Reguleringsplan	zoning plan
Områderegulering	area zoning plan
Bestemmelser	provisions
Endring av reguleringsplan	alteration of a zoning plan
Arealformål	land-use objective
Byggesak	building matter, building application
Byggetillatelse	building permit
Byggetiltak	building projects
Byggeteknisk forskrift (TEK17)	Regulations on technical requirements for construction works / TEK17
Behandling av søknader	processing (of applications)
Ansvarlig foretak	responsible enterprise
Midlertidig forbud	temporary prohibition
Bruksendring	change in use
Dispensasjon	dispensation
Arbeidsmiljøloven	the Working Environment Act

4.3.2 Land-use planning following the Planning and Building Act

The Norwegian planning system is based on three planning levels (governmental; regional; and municipal), but the relationship between these levels will not be accounted for here. The focus will remain on the municipal level. According to PBL, the municipalities have *“the right to initiate, process, approve and implement spatial plans”* (Holth & Winge, 2019, p. 56, own translation). Thus, the municipalities have a key role as planning authorities, in control of the overall land-use. The land-use is controlled by legally binding land use plans, respectively the municipal masterplan and zoning plans. The municipal masterplan should contain two parts, one social element with an implementation plan, and one land-use part, cf. PBL § 11-1 first section. According to § 11-5 second section, the land-use part of the municipal master plan *“shall state the main aspects of the allocation of land and frameworks and conditions governing which new projects and new land use may be implemented, as well as which important considerations must be taken into account when allocating land”*. Whilst the land-use plan is a less detailed overview plan that establishes and shows the main features of land use (Holth & Winge, 2019), the zoning plan applies to a limited area *“specifying use, conservation and design of land and physical surroundings”* (Planning and Building Act, 2008). However, the responsibility to prepare a zoning plan does not apply to all building projects. It shall be prepared when it is required from the Act or the land-use part of the municipal plan; for major building and construction projects and for projects that may have a substantial effect on the environment and society; when it is required in an area zoning plan; or when the municipality finds it necessary to ensure a proper clarification and implementation of building and construction projects (KDD, 2022). Both plans establish a clear framework for what land-use objectives are allowed within a delimited area for future building projects.

If a building project does not contravene regulations issued in accordance with the law, a building permit must be granted, cf. § 21-4 first section. Yet, spatial plans could change, or a temporary prohibition to build can be issued. It is however the applicable plan at the time of processing that should be considered. It is a strong principle in planning law that plans only have effect in the future. This follows from § 11-6 first section and § 12-4 first section for respectively the municipal masterplan and zoning plans. This means that even if a plan places restrictions on new development and changed use of an area, the plan will not have any effect on existing development or ongoing use. This applies as long as existing use is established in a legal way (the Planning and Building Act, 2008; Holt & Winge, 2019).

4.3.3 Reusing vacated buildings – Navigating in The Planning and Building Act

Keeping in mind that there are legally binding plans that control future land-use within the municipality, as well as granted permits that establish legal use of existing buildings; how do you approach a vacated building if you want to reuse it?

The process, simplified and illustrated in figure 17, must start with clarifying what kind of use the existing permits allow for (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). If the new use corresponds to the already approved use, the building can be put into use provided that the relevant requirements in the Working Environment Act are met.

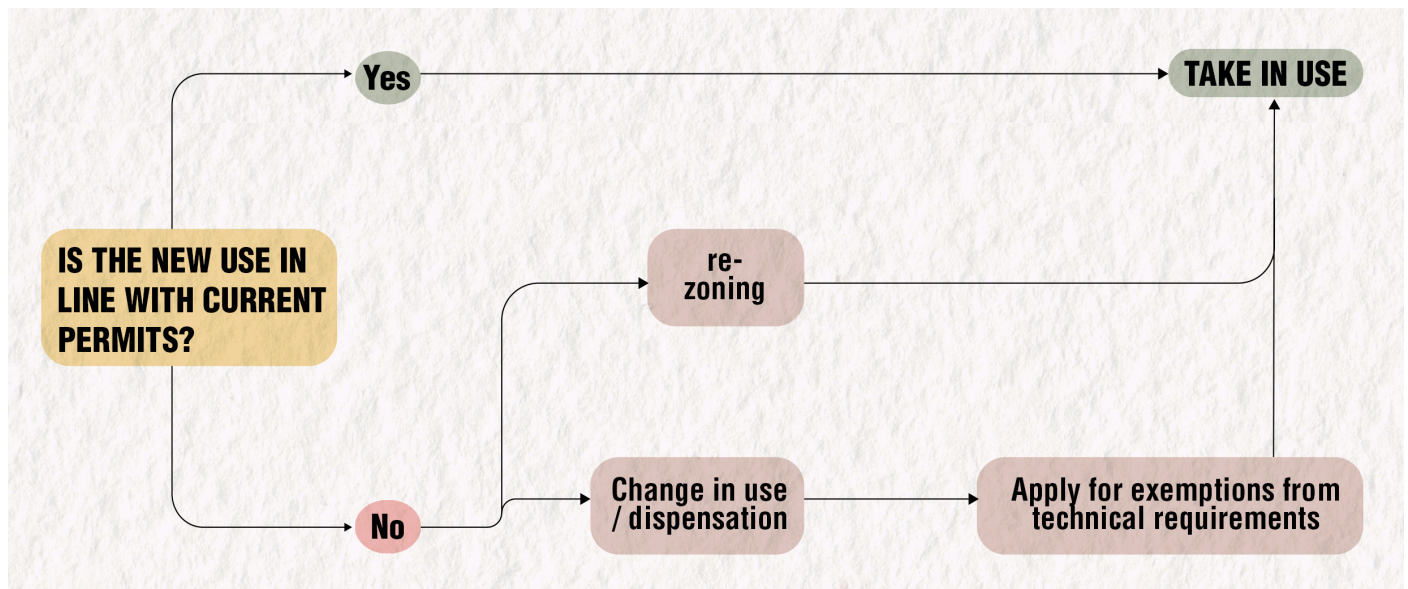


Figure 17: The route for reuse in PBL, based on text by Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016 (own illustration)

If the new use is not in line with current permits, nor in line with current zoning plan, the alternative is either to redo the planning process and suggest a re-zoning, or to apply for change in use and dispensation from the land-use objective (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). Svein Bjørberg, professor in real estate development and management at NTNU and research leader at Multiconsult, argues that re-zoning is a resource-demanding process. This creates a high threshold to act and may lead to a continuing vacancy of certain buildings (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). The Planning and Building Act does however open up for privately initiated zoning plans, cf. §§ 12-8 and 12-11. Yet, it is required that the suggestion is discussed with planning authorities in a commencement-meeting (Holth & Winge, 2019). The current fee for the commencement meeting is 70.520 NOK for simple zonings, and 142.270 NOK for complex zonings (Regulation on fees for zoning plans and processing, 2021). That is merely one example of the many fees and costs that must be included when going through a privately initiated zoning process. Bjørberg argues that the fact that this is an economically resource-intensive process means that fewer actors have the opportunity to suggest private initiated zonings, such as sole proprietorships, smaller businesses or voluntary associations (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016).

Dispensation and exemption from technical regulations

The Planning and Building Act allows the municipalities to dispense from regulations, plans and provisions in any building matter (Holth & Winge, 2019). The conditions to dispense are found in § 19-2, that states explicitly that “*the provision from which dispensation is granted*” and the Act’s objective clause, cannot be “*significantly disregarded*”. Further, “*the advantages of granting dispensation must clearly outweigh the disadvantages*” (the Planning and Building Act, 2008).

If the dispensation for change in use is granted, one is still obliged to adhere to all technical regulations in the Regulations on technical requirements for construction works (TEK17). TEK17 is a regulation connected to PBL, which draws the limit for the minimum characteristics a construction must have in order to be legally set up in Norway (DIKB, 2017). Yet, it is possible to apply for exemptions regarding the technical regulations, when the project concerns an existing building. Since 2008, the legal basis for deviating from the technical requirements was found in § 31-2 fourth section. It said: *“The municipality can grant permission for a change in use and the necessary reconstruction and rehabilitation of an existing building, even when it is not possible to adapt the building to technical requirements without disproportionate costs, if the change in use or conversion is justifiable and necessary to ensure appropriate use”* (Own translation and underlines. Planning and building Act, 2008. Repealed by amendment of the law January 2023).

The purpose behind the regulation was that municipalities *“should have the opportunity to facilitate for using buildings, rather than letting them fall into disrepair”* (Prop. 64 L 2020-2021 own translation). According to Bjørberg (in Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016), the regulations on dispensation and exemptions from technical demands are too vague, and applications are treated and assessed very differently depending on the individual municipality and the individual case processor. For the technical exemptions, the documentation requirements have been substantial. It has been required to document the price of carrying out the building projects and assess whether these costs are proportionate with the effects of the measures. In addition, it has been required to document that the change in use is justifiable and necessary to ensure the use of the building. Bjørberg, in the 2016 report, requested a clearer legal formulation in the Act, for a more consistent and predictable processing of change in use- and dispensation applications (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). This was also the conclusion of a report carried out by Norsk Kommunalteknisk Forening (Eng: the Norwegian Municipal Technical Association), in which investigated how case proceedings were carried out in questions relating to the §§ 19-2 and 31-2. When presented the claim *“we need better guidance on how to assess the conditions in PBL § 31-2”*: 87,4 % out of 373 respondents agreed to some degree – slightly (22,5%), fairly (39,7%) or completely (25,2%) (NKF, 2012, p. 25).

Bjørberg was involved in the project Rehab-TEK, a separate regulation for building projects in relation to building projects on existing buildings. However, the proposal for a new regulation was not adopted (interview Bjørberg 11.04.23). Later, Bjørberg was involved in a workshop hosted by DOGA in the project Levende lokaler (Eng: Living premises). The workshop was carried out with researchers, professional actors and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (KDD) and put the legislative barriers to reactivate vacant premises on the agenda (interview Bjørberg 11.04; and Lucie-Arentz 28.03.23) Now, almost 10 years after the suggested Rehab-TEK, and 7 years after the report on living premises, a new amendment of the Planning and Building Act has aimed to address the issue. In the proposition for an amendment of the Act, it is said that:

“It has been considered to draw up a separate regulation for existing buildings, a ‘rehab-TEK’. As the building stock is very complex, and technical solutions must be adapted to the concrete the use, the state and other conditions of the building, the ministry believes that a separate regulation would be too complicated and comprehensive. Better guidance and information are alternatives or supplements to regulation. (...) The ministry therefore sees a need to clarify the framework conditions in the law, so that the regulations are easier to understand and practice” (Prop. 64 L 2020-2021)

The § 31-2 regulation has now undergone substantial changes, after the law amendment entered into force the 1st of January 2023. The right to deviate from technical requirements has been separated as its own paragraph, respectively § 31-4. Further, the conditions (see underlines above) stating that changes must be justifiable and necessary to ensure appropriate use, and not entail a disproportionate cost are removed. According to the proposition (Prop. 64 L 2020-2021), the three conditions led to difficult discretionary assessment, as was also previously pointed out by Bjørberg (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016).

In the amended version of the law, § 31-4, it is stated that when it comes to building projects on existing buildings *“the municipality can grant full or partial exemptions from technical requirements, if it is considered justifiable from the point of view of safety, health and the environment”*. Further, several assessment criteria are listed, i.e., a) the building’s age, conservation status, type, purpose, location, duration of the measure and current technical condition; b) conditions that can reduce negative consequences by granting exemption; and c) benefits that can be achieved with the measure.

In the proposition, it is emphasized that if building projects on existing buildings result in an overall improved technical standard, it can be reasonable to allow it despite not fulfilling all technical demands following the current standard in TEK17 (Prop. 64 L 2020-2021). 41 consultation bodies have made statements on the amendment and have different points of view on the effect. Norconsult, Norway’s largest engineering consultant company, argues that the issue is not in connected to the exemption applications, but that the case proceedings are *“radiating in all directions, and usually end up at rejecting the applications”*. They do not think the amendment will lead to any change. Helsedirektoratet (Eng: The Norwegian Directorate of Health) express concern, arguing that the amendment could lead to reduced requirements for e.g., the installation of lifts and daylight demands, which they believe are of great importance for health and quality of life. One municipality on the other side, Rælingen, argues that the amendment *“will ensure more freedom to grant exemptions from technical demands, and provide opportunities to solve challenges such as empty premises”*, and further that the amendment facilitates for a reduced risk of losing cultural heritage values. Similarly, the National Antiquary argues that the amendment can contribute to more flexibility, and thus that a higher number of old buildings can be upgraded

to a better standard and that cultural heritage values can be safeguarded. NKF, the author of the previous report addressing unclear guidelines for assessing the conditions in relation to dispensation, argue that the amendment “*is a considerable improvement that give grounds to more predictability in the municipalities’ processing*” (Prop. 64 L 2020-2021).

Temporary urbanism in PBL

PBL § 20-4 c) states that you can apply for temporary permission to place “*buildings, constructions or facilities*” if the project is to be placed for a period shorter than two years. The regulation is an exemption from § 20-3, in which says that building projects shall have a responsible enterprise with the formal right of liability. In practice, this means that the owner of the project is obliged to be assisted by a specialist company, and this applies to the whole process, from the application phase, engineering and construction (PBL, note 607, rettsdata.no). An exemption can however be made, when the project is temporary, i.e., less than two years. Further, such temporary constructions cannot be placed so that they hinder general accessibility or outdoor activities, or in other ways lead to disadvantages for the surroundings, cf. § 30-5. When applying for temporary measures, it is required that the duration of the project is disclosed, and that it is accounted for how the regulations in PBL §30-5 are safeguarded, cf. § 5-1 in the Building Acts Regulation (SAK10).

The regulation significantly reduces the requirement for documentation, when the project is temporary, and the initiators do not need to use an external enterprise throughout the application process. In addition, it is not required that the use is in accordance with the current zoning plan, so a dispensation is thus not necessary (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). Although this applies for temporary measures, it only applies when it comes to new constructions. For temporary measures in existing and vacated buildings, the “route” to reactivate is through applying for dispensation and change in use as previously described. Eriksen and Skajaa (2016) suggest introducing a similar legal basis for existing buildings, that allows for deviations from existing zoning plans when the use is of a temporary nature, e.g., during planning and zoning processes. Through TEK17, it could be specified which technical demands would still apply, for instance those related to fire-safety and security. Bjørberg argues that this could lower the threshold to temporarily reactivate vacated buildings (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016).

4.3.4 Building protection

Another legal tool used to safeguard buildings is formal and informal protection. The terms used to describe different degrees of protection are connected to the legislation and the different legal basis for the protection. In Norway, buildings can be protected through the Kulturminnelov (Eng: the Cultural Heritage Act), but there is also a basis for protection in other laws, such as the Planning and Building Act, Kirkeloven (Eng: the Act of the Norwegian Church) and

Naturmangfoldloven (Eng: the Nature Diversity Act). (Riksantikvaren, 2019) This brief overview will be limited to the Cultural Heritage Act and the Planning and Building Act. They do not directly translate to English, and for that reason I will describe how the different terms are understood.

In Norwegian, three main terms are used in connection to building protection:

Verneverdig – vernet – fredet.

Verneverdig – Protection worthy / Listed

Protection worthy signifies that the building has been through a cultural historic assessment and is considered to have cultural heritage values. However, buildings that are considered as protection worthy are not formally protected. There are different registers accounting for protection worthy buildings, and in Oslo these are registered in the yellow list (the National Antiquary, 2019). When a building is referred to as listed in this study, it should therefore be understood as a protection worthy building. Buildings that are listed in Oslo are not formally legally protected, but to do changes to the façade one is obliged to apply to PBE (the City Antiquary, 2020)

Vernet – Legally conserved

A legally conserved building has its protective basis in the Planning and Building Act (or others and previously mentioned acts). This is often considered a municipal protection, where protection worthy buildings are conserved through municipal land use plans.

Fredet – Legally protected

Protection through the Cultural Heritage Act is the strictest form of legally safeguarding a building. If a building is protected, interventions in the physical structure that exceeds regular maintenance, must be permitted by antiquarian authorities. A building may be decided legally protected through a resolution (Nor: vedtaksfredet), or it may occur automatically (Nor: automatisk fredet), e.g., if it was constructed prior to 1537 (the National Antiquary, 2019).

NB: When buildings that have any given degree of protection as referred to above, are discussed in general, and it is not of importance whether it belongs to a particular level of protection, it may be referred to as protected buildings. In this thesis, that is used as an umbrella term covering all of the different degrees of the protection. On the contrary, if it is referred to as protection worthy, listed, legally conserved or legally protected, it is precisely done to highlight its exact degree of protection.

Vacancy and protected buildings – a connected matter?

A study by Nesbakken et al (2015) looks into the effects of different degrees of building protection. The study investigates whether protected buildings are taken better care of, and whether they are more or less likely to fall into disrepair and eventually get lost. The study has analysed data

material from 18 municipalities, that has been part of a control-registration of SEFRAK-buildings (Eng: The Secretariat for the Registration of Permanent Cultural Heritage in Norway). The control registrations have accounted for the buildings' condition, eventual extensions to the buildings and whether they are still intact. Oslo was not one of the control areas, but the study nonetheless contributes with valuable findings. The simplified table illustrate some key findings (table 2).

Table 2: Change and condition based on degree of protection. Extract of table (Nesbakken et al, 2015, p. 345)

Change and condition based on degree of protection	Legally protected Fredet	Legally conserved Vernet PBL	Protection worthy Bevaringsverdig	No protection Intet vern
Appear as unchanged	82 %	47,5 %	50,2 %	53,4 %
Lost	1 %	3 %	5 %	4 %
Treath of decay	10 %	5 %	14 %	14 %

The authors (Nesbakken et al, 2015) argue that the most surprising finding is the tendency of legally protected buildings having almost the same risk of decay as buildings with no degree of protection. Although not apparent in the simplified table, the analysis showed that buildings where alterations had been made, the condition was better than in buildings where that were unaltered. Yet, the conditions were best in cases with smaller alterations, rather than big ones. The study found that legally protected buildings more rarely were altered, but simultaneously that many of them were in poor condition. The authors argue that there is a connection between the conditions of the buildings and alterations made, and that the low share of alterations of legally protected buildings suggests a lack of necessary maintenance. Further, the authors argue that a legal protection can entail challenges in upgrading a building in line with changed needs, and that this could lead to vacancy of protected buildings. The formally conserved buildings are on the other side more often altered, and at less risk of decay. Yet, more formally conserved buildings are lost than the legally protected ones, as demolition of the latter would be illegal. Lastly, the protection worthy buildings are more rarely lost, are more often maintained, and have fewer alterations than the formally conserved buildings. The authors thus claim that protection is not always the best measure to safeguard older buildings. Their conclusive remarks are:

“No matter the degree of protection, local engagement and support is important to safeguard our old building stock” - Nesbakken et al, 2015, p. 352

Stendebakken (2018) underpins the suggestion of Nesbakken et al (2015) and argues that many will experience it as more challenging to find solutions for buildings that are legally protected than those who are formally conserved though PBL (Stendebakken, 2018). The previously referred-to study of Stendebakken (2018), in which investigates the economic costs of relocating public institutions, also looks into the costs of rehabilitation as a part of this work. To investigate this, the author compares costs of several rehabilitation projects of Statsbygg, who has a substantial portfolio of purpose-built buildings. As the topic of Stendebakken's study is the costs of vacated purpose-built institutions, such as museums, libraries, theatres etc., the buildings used as a basis for comparison are all profiled projects with a high level of ambition, as is often the case with such significant public institutions.

24 buildings are analysed, and the author provides a detailed description of the method and how different costs are used as a basis for the investigation (see Stendebakken, 2018, pp. 81-87). The review shows that the costs of rehabilitating formally conserved buildings ranged between 9.352 –129.042 NOK / square meter. For legally protected buildings the costs ranged between 23.332 –131.141 NOK/ sq m. Hence, whilst the costs overlap, the latter is somewhat higher. Nevertheless, the cost range itself might be considered the most sensational (Stendebakken, 2018).

Whilst this may seem redundant to this study, it is quite the contrary. Figure 18 on the following page illustrates how 44 out of the 101 buildings from the GIS analysis conducted are protected, whereas 30 are listed, 12 are formally conserved and two are legally protected.

One of these yellow pins on the map, is the former Munch Museum, which makes for a good transition to the next chapter. In a letter from the City Antiquary to EBY, dated 11th of May 2022, sent as a part of the process to clarify future use, the overall conservation considerations for the former Museum are explained. The building was drawn by the architects Einar Myklebust and Gunnar Fougner and was finished in 1963. It was included on the yellow list in 1996. In 2006 a new conservation assessment was done, where the antiquary noted several changes, such as building extensions on the east and west side, removal of original wooden windows and changes of the original façade panels. *“These changes have reduced much of the building’s authenticity in relation to its original expression”* (City Antiquary, Letter of May 11th 2022). However, the building is still regarded to have protection-worthy architectural qualities that justify the listing of the building. The entrance of Old Munch can be seen in figure 19, and two pictures from the interior in figure 20 and 21. In the letter, the City Antiquary argues that the cultural heritage values are connected to the architectural qualities, its adapted expression in relation to the surrounding landscape and the parks, and due to the legacy of Munch and Oslo’s history as a manager of this legacy. The City Antiquary emphasize that the building is not regarded to have a cultural value that would justify a legal protection, and that adaptations for new use can be done without representing a conflict for architectural historical values (City Antiquary, Letter of May 11th 2022).

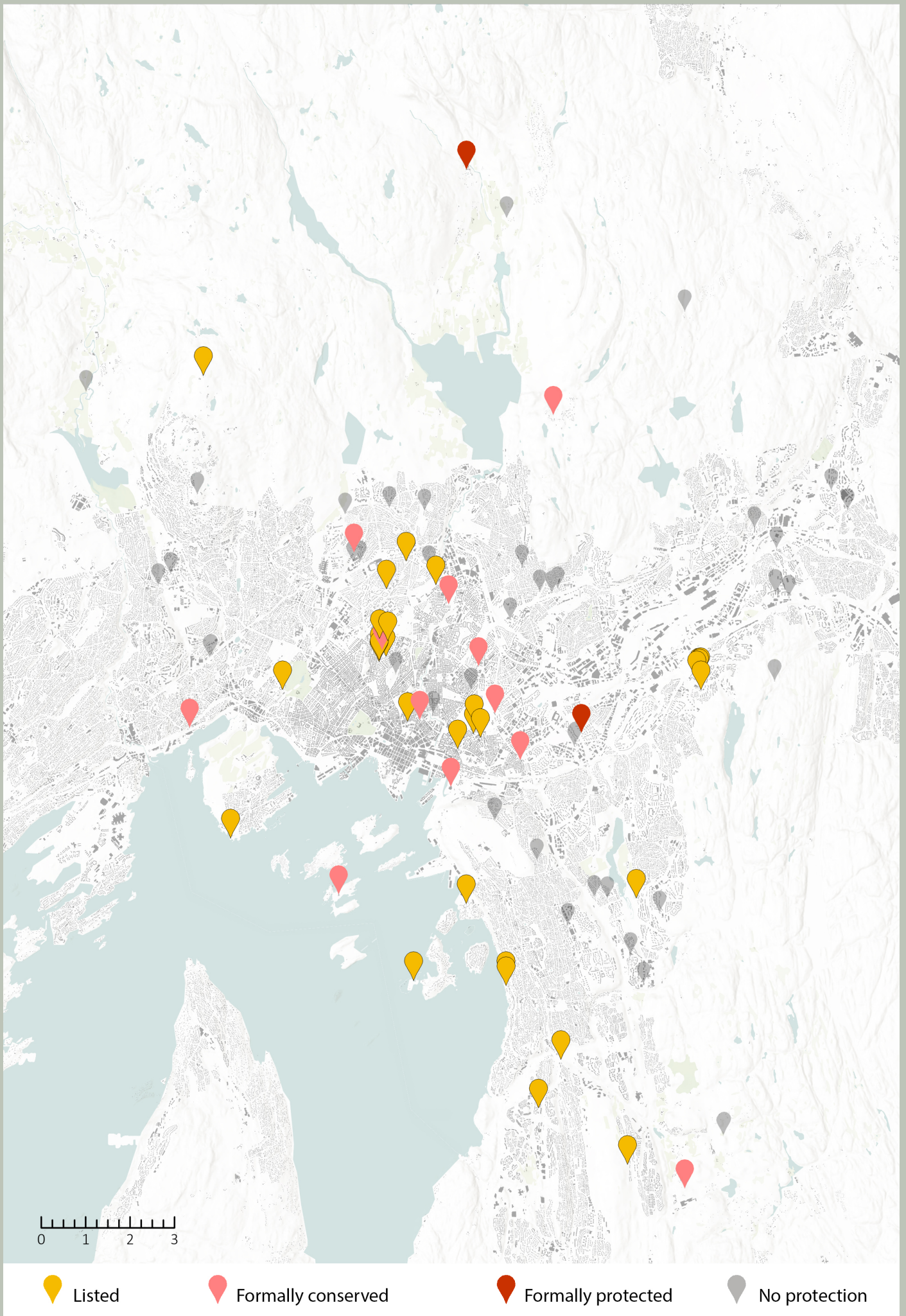


Figure 18: GIS analysis. Protection of vacated municipal buildings. Cadastral register and Askeladden (own illustration)



Figur 19: Main entrance of Old Munch (private photography)



Figure 20: An Old Munch hallway (private photography)



Figure 21: Wintergarden in Old Munch (private photography)

4.4 The case of Old Munch

To discuss strategies for reactivating vacated buildings, the old Munch Museum at Tøyen in Oslo is used as a concrete case. However, the aim of this thesis is not to suggest the future use of the former museum. Instead, the case of Old Munch is used to illustrate challenges and opportunities in attempts to reactivate and clarify permanent use of a municipal purpose-built public building.

Before going into the case of Munch however, the “*Museum Puzzle*” article by Skrede (2011) serves as a good backdrop to the topic of relocating significant public institutions, by highlighting some issues connected to the process of determining the location of the new National Museum. Whilst being somewhat on the side of the topic of Old Munch, it perfectly illustrates the complexity of what he refers to as the museum puzzle, and the underlying considerations that ultimately end up with a decision to relocate a national and significant museum, much like Old Munch. The new National Museum was a merger of four previously autonomous museums. Such mergers have been a much-used tool to attain the advantages of larger concerns. The article depicts the decision to relocate several free-standing museums with strong symbolic value for Oslo and their representative neighbourhoods. The process was characterized by strong, opposing views. One side, arguing for the relocation, stated that the old museum facilities were simply not fit to preserve and exhibit art, considering the technical state of the buildings. The other side, opposed to the relocation, were mainly arguing that the relocation plans had failed to take into consideration the factors that were not technical or mathematical, but rather represented the value of the gallery as a national symbol (Skrede, 2011). These kinds of debates, which often involve value considerations that can be considered incommensurable, represent one of the key conflicts within conservation practice and theory.

I will not go in-depth in reproducing the case of the National Museum, and the long, conflict-ridden process of the relocation plans. But, a key factor in the context of vacated buildings, as pointed out by Skrede (2011), is that an economic mindset is infiltrating the cultural field. The “*relocation of museums has become a tool for providing a spectacular waterfront in order to attract tourists to the city and the country*” (p. 58). To clarify, the National Museum was not the only museum suggested located to the harbour area. Also, the former Munch Museum, and The Stenersen Museum at Vika, were decided relocated to the same seafront location. Later, during and after the construction of the new Munch Museum Lambda, a new conflict-ridden discussion was raised on whether the last undeveloped plot at Bjørvika, Sukkerbiten, should be developed as a public park and swimming area, or yet another culture institution with a new photography museum. Skrede argues that museums are used as a puzzle piece in urban development processes, “*enabling them to serve as engines of growth and synergies of various kinds*” (p. 62). Such processes of relocation result in more vacated buildings, as decisions are made without planning for new use of the old facilities. The lack of plans for new use intensifies the process’ conflicts, as it creates a further uncertainty of whether the symbolic value of the building will be safeguarded and whether the building will continue to have a public function.

4.4.1 A brief look to the local context of Tøyen

Old Munch, marked on the map in figure 22, is located in City District Gamle Oslo, on the very border to Grünerløkka. The exact street address is Tøyengata 53, placing it in-between The Botanical Garden and Tøyenparken. Figure 23 shows the main entrance of the building.



Figure 22: Oslo 1:15.000 (A4). Data source: Geodata (own illustration)



Figure 23: Free hand sketch of Old Munch (own illustration)

A socio-cultural analysis of Tøyen (Brattbakk et al, 2015) has been developed by AFI. Tøyen is described as centrally located in the city, and characterized by its diverse population, its various private and public service offers, a rich cultural life and a mixed residential and building typology (Brattbakk et al, 2015). The report states that Tøyen is experiencing gentrification processes, and that surrounding areas, such as Grünerløkka and Kampen, have already undergone such processes to a large extent. Many residents have a minority background, and the share of younger, higher educated and native Norwegians is increasing. Many local residents, however, have a below average income, and are dependent on social welfare aid. According to the authors, the socio-economic development is moving towards a more divided population, where marginalized groups live side-by-side with younger and higher educated residents with higher income. Previous research has demonstrated unfavourable living conditions, due to the agglomeration of communal housing and the residential composition (Brattbakk et al, 2015).

4.4.2 From Tøyen to Bjørvika

It is not within the scope of this study to investigate why Old Munch was relocated, or to account for the extensive, divided and heated debate linked to this decision. However, a brief look to the history may contribute to a better understanding of the case. An entire master's thesis (Hae Yu, 2015) is devoted to describing the heated and extensive debate on whether the Museum should be relocated, or stay at Tøyen in the form of a refurbished and expanded version. The timeline in figure 24 demonstrates some key events.

Two years after Munch's death, the City council decides to build a museum for Munch's art

1946

1949-1950

Two plots are debated, at Frogner and Tøyen. 22th of February 1950, the Tøyen property is officially chosen.

1954

Gunnar Fougner and Einar Myklebust win the architectural competition for the museum with their suggestion *Rondo Amoroso*

1963

The Munch museum opens the 29th of May. 174.000 people visit the museum the first year

1968

Reinar Renvold is incarcerated, convicted of stealing Munch's lithographs

1988

The painting *Vampyre* is stolen

1994

Increased security measures are made after the thefts. A building addition is added, drawn by Einar Myklebust

2004

The paintings *The Scream and Madonna* are stolen in an armed robbery

2008

City Council leader announces the construction of a new Munch-Museum at Bjørvika

2005

New security measures are made, this results in decreased exhibition areas. The museum is suggested relocated in City Council, but the proposal is voted down. The political party Venstre suggests to build a new museum at Bjørvika

2009

Herreros Arquitectos wins the architectural competition for the new Museum with their suggestion *Lambda*

2009-2013

The debate continues and escalates. National Antiquary asks to postpone the Lambda project. The political party FrP opposes the Lambda plan and resign from City Council. The political parties Ap, SV, Rødt, Frp and MdG form an allianse to stop the Lambda plans

28.05.2013

The City Council, with the political parties Høyre, Venstre, KrF and SV agree to realize the new Munch Museum

Figure 24: Timeline of Old Munch. Based on Hae Yu, 2015 (own illustration)

The author compares this more recent debate to the discussion in the late 1940s; at that time, it was the location of the Museum that was the subject of discussion. The idea to relocate the Munch museum to Bjørvika is first introduced in 2005, as a reaction to the new robbery the year before. This is the start of a heated political and public debate, that will go on for several years (Hau Yu, 2015). Those in favour of relocating the museum to Bjørvika argue that it will contribute to a vitalization of Oslo as a cultural city; that Lambda would offer a better and more dignified framework to display the Munch collection; that the collection constitutes a national and cultural treasure, which must be reflected in the location of the museum; and that it will make Munch's art accessible for larger part of the population and to tourists (Braaten, 2011). On the other side, it is argued that the eastern part of Oslo would be robbed of their great cultural pride if the museum is moved away from Tøyen; that Tøyen is the cheaper option; that a museum at Tøyen will contribute to the urban development of the city district; that the suggested Lambda-building is far too high; and that Munch is a part of the Tøyen identity (Braaten, 2011). In 2012, a condition control is carried out, concluding that the building would need substantial investments to maintain the building at a reasonable level of maintenance, and to a standard that is expected of an art museum. The total cost for maintenance and modernization in a ten-year period is estimated to roughly 100 MNOK (the Audit Office, 2023).

After several rounds of assessing various alternatives and criticism of the politicians' inability to land a political decision, the decision to relocate the Munch Museum to Bjørvika is finally made in May 2013 (Hau Yu, 2015). In negotiations with the political parties Høyre, Venstre and KrF, the socialist left party SV gain approval for urban development processes in Tøyen (Brattbakk et al, 2015). The Munch Agreement allows the City District Gamle Oslo to lead an områdeløft (Eng: Urban Area Regeneration Program. Hereby UAR-project). A UAR-project is a method and a development program for carrying out comprehensive efforts in areas exposed to living condition challenges. It was developed by Husbanken (Eng: The Norwegian State Housing Bank) in collaboration with Oslo municipality. The UAR-program is thus a compensation for the loss of an important national and international art institution (Brattbakk et al, 2015). The main goal is to *"contribute to lasting improvements in services and neighbourhood qualities, so that more residents in these areas become financially independent and active participants in the local and larger communities"* (City District Gamle Oslo, 2021, p. 2, own translation).

4.4.3 Munch is moving – what now?

After the decision to relocate the Munch Museum to a new building at the waterfront of Bjørvika, a new debate begins: What should the former museum building be used for? There are some news media articles discussing this already in 2013, such as the political party SVs suggestion to move Teknisk Museum (Eng: Technical Museum) into the former arts museum (Seehusen, 2013). Construction of the new Munch Museum started in 2015 and it was scheduled to be opened in

2019, which was eventually postponed several times (Kirkebirkeland, 2023). Nonetheless, as it got closer to opening the debate was fuelled, and the headlines below highlight only some of the newspaper articles on the matter (figure 25).



Figure 25: Translated news headings about future use of Old Munch (own illustration)

Whilst I will not go far in elaborating on each individual proposal for the building, there are some discussions worth pointing to. In 2018, an article in *Aftenposten* (Mellingsæter et al, 2018) describes that EBY is currently working on clarifying whether there are municipal or state actors with an interest for Old Munch, in addition to the former main library Deichman. The article depicts a high interest for the former museum building. Actors such as the National Theatre, Statsbygg, City District Gamle Oslo, BYM, Residential Building KF, the Culture Agency etc., were all present during a site visit in the building, but only the two latter have formally expressed that they have concrete area needs that the building could cover. Residential building KF have considered parts of the building as suitable for 25 housing units in connection to a centre for people with cognitive disorders, whilst the Culture Agency depicts a centre for local art and culture, primarily for children and adolescents (Mellingsæter et al, 2018), in addition to using the old art magazines to store Oslo Municipality's art collection (Boger, 2018a). According to Boger (2018a), the City District wants to establish an activity-centre for local youth, and also the local associations of the community are pointing in the direction of "*low threshold activities for children and youth*" and argue that the youth in the local community of Tøyen are lacking arenas to meet in an informal setting (Boger, 2018b).

Nasjonalteatret (Eng: The National Theatre) is one of three state-funded national theatre institutions in Norway, organized under the Ministry of Culture and Equality (Larsen, 2021). The institution formally expresses their interest in Old Munch in a letter to EBY, as the National Theatre's permanent stage is closing due to renovation (The National Theatre, Letter of May 25th, 2018). The letter states that they are searching for temporary premises during the construction period of four years, and further that they are interested in rebuilding "*the Munch Museum to a house of theatre, that covers the theatre's future needs for additional venues; the National Theatre at Tøyen*". In an interview (Martinsen, 2018) with NRK (national broadcaster), the board leader of the theatre argued that establishing a permanent stage at Tøyen would be of great value to the local community. According to the board leader, cooperations between professional actors, amateurs and youth theatre classes could help create a link between the local community and the theatre scene (Martinsen, 2018).

In a letter from the City Council of Business and Ownership (Letter of January 9th, 2019) to the Minister of Culture at the time, Trine Skei Grande, the City Council expresses a political desire to land an agreement with the National Theatre, and argues that this "*will cover the future needs of the National Theatre, and contribute to a positive development of the Tøyen area*" (Letter of January 9th, 2019). The media later announces that an agreement between the municipality and the ministry has been made, and that the Theatre is in fact moving into Old Munch. Construction is planned to begin in 2022 (NTB, 2019). The following year, in a political note to the City Government, it is nevertheless informed that the Ministry of Culture and Equality has decided that they will not go forward with the plans to establish temporary and permanent stages at Tøyen,

due to too high costs connected to construction and adaption of the building (Note 579/20). It is further described that *“the City Council will continue its work to find other solutions to the continued use of the property at Tøyen”* (Note 579/20). Whilst the theatre’s area need would fit well within the former museum building, it is however challenging to find other users for such a building. Figure 26 shows the main exhibition room after Munch moved out.



Figure 26: Exhibition space in Old Munch stripped of art (private photography)

One day after this announcement, another well-known organization is identified as a potential inheritor of Old Munch. The head of the national broadcaster NRK refers to Old Munch as their “dream property” out of more than 50 suggestions, as they are in the process of moving from their current location at Marienlyst (Henriksen, 2020a). He states that NRK could benefit from the existing small and medium-sized tech and media businesses at Tøyen – and vice versa – and that this could create *“a brand-new city district”* (Henriksen, 2020a). Others, i.e., urban researcher Bengt Andersen, suggests that this could lead to gentrification and *“a gradual social change of Tøyen”* (Kiffle, 2020). The city mayor is also critical, arguing that there is a discrepancy in the NRK’s area-need and the physical building stock of Old Munch, and that this could lead to downsizing and construction of recreational areas (Henriksen, 2020b). After much debate, both publicly and politically, the location of NRK was decided to be in Ensjø (Mjaaland & Svelstad, 2021).

Whilst the process and debate to clarify future use continues, the newspaper can finally announce that the Munch Museum at Tøyen is closing the doors 1st of October 2021, after operating as a museum for 58 years (NRK, 2021). The 22nd of October, a formal ceremony with the King and Queen of Norway marks the opening of the new Munch Museum at Bjørvika (NTB, 2021).

The museum opens two years after the planned opening date, which entails 65 MNOK in additional costs (Kirkebirkeland, 2023). The total construction price ends up being 2.9 billion NOK, 1.3 billion more than the initial estimate. This is mainly due to not including the land costs in the price estimates, and further because costs connected to inventory, ICT-solutions, interest rates, price increase during construction period and moving costs are ignored (Kirkebirkeland, 2023). While the debate has gone on vigorously, it seems as if the political process to clarify further use has been slower. After the decision to relocate was a fact, Oslo building KF carried out a survey in 2017, which concluded that there were no concrete municipal needs for the building (the Audit Office, 2023). In a letter dated 28th of May 2021, the City Council Department for Business and Ownership informed that EBY, by June 2022, were responsible for the assessment of whether there are municipal needs for the building (City Council for Business and Ownership, Letter of May 28th 2021). In the letter, the City Council department further states that:

“The assessment of whether there are municipal needs for the municipality, or alternatively selling the building, will take time. It is therefore relevant to find temporary tenants for the former Munch Museum, before permanent use can find place. The City Council has decided that Culture and Sports buildings KF are responsible for facilitating temporary lease, and they should further assess whether the building can be rented out to municipal actors. If there are no municipal needs, one should consider temporary tenants within the fields of arts and culture, sports, and other volunteer activities. The assessment of temporary lease should be considered together with EBY, the Culture Agency, BYM and the City District”* (Letter of May 28th, 2021, own translation).

Even though the political resolution to relocate Munch came in May 2013, it would take almost 8 years before the political order to determine a new use for the museum building came. The letter above illustrates two separate processes:

1. Assessing whether there are municipal or state needs for Old Munch for future and permanent use, or whether it should be sold to a private actor. A feasibility study should show how the building can be used
2. To initiate temporary letting of the building, so that the building does not remain empty while future use is clarified

Comparing the newsflash-timeline with the letter from the City Council, it is evident that “the political order” of determining future use of Old Munch came late; less than five months before the Museum closed permanently.

*Note: Culture and Sports Building KF is after the merger a part of Oslo Building KF.

Clarifying the long-term use of Old Munch

EBY, who is responsible for the assessment of the future, permanent use of Old Munch, have engaged the architecture company PIR II to prepare a feasibility study (Interview, Apall-Olsen). In a letter from EBY to the Culture Agency, it is stated that *“it shall be assumed that future use benefits the local society, especially children and adolescents”* (EBY, Letter of June 16th 2022). Further, they specify the prerequisite that new use should entail as low financial and administrative costs as possible, and that the tenant must have the budget to pay rent that covers operative costs. According to EBY, the feasibility study is based on how registered input on municipal needs fit into the building, the extent of reconstruction and adaptations necessary, and how the functions and services relate to the overall objectives of an outward-oriented business and financial management (EBY, Letter of June 16th, 2021).

The assessment about permanent use of Old Munch is sent to the City Council for Urban Development in September 2022. EBY recommends the third alternative of the assessment, which involves a library as the main function, and culture and city district services as supportive functions. The agency further recommends that the intermediate phase before permanent use should be established as a three-year pilot, to have time to further clarify the needs for investments and to test the area-distribution and organization across the suggested users of the building (the Audit Office, 2023). Oslo Building KF made a P50-estimate (estimates that are not expected to be exceeded in 50 percent of the cases) for the alternative, indicating the management framework to be 314 MNOK. It is highlighted that the condition of the building is poor, and that several technical facilities must be changed. A note from an inspection in 2022 have pointed to a lack of maintenance pending relocation of the museum, and that no larger measures have been carried out since 2012 (the Audit Office, 2023).

The review of the process to determine long-term use is limited. In this study, efforts to interview representatives from EBY were not successful. Requests for access to relevant case documents exempt from public access (pursuant to offentlighetsloven – Eng: Public Information Act) were declined on the basis of ongoing processing of the reports.

Temporary use of Old Munch

In a note (The Culture Agency, 20/1502 - 9) exempt from public, it is described that a cross-sectoral workgroup is established the spring of 2022. The aim of the workgroup is to contribute to the process of temporally activating Old Munch, “pending the investigation and political decision on permanent after-use” of the building. The workgroup’s task is to establish the framework for announcing temporary letting, the application system and a temporary management model. Culture and Sports Building KF (now Oslo Building KF) is in charge of the process. The workgroup is organized cross-sectoral to “ensure a good resource management and exchange of expertise across municipal businesses in the work to ensure activity in temporary vacated municipal

buildings. It is described that the Culture Agency have previous experience with temporary activation of buildings in their own portfolio; that the City District have competence in the UAR-project and developing local meeting places; and that Oslo Building KF have competence in building management, building adaptations and fire-safety routines. (note 20-1502 – 9).

The result of the project is that Oslo Building KF make a lease agreement with the City District Gamle Oslo, The Culture Agency and The Oslo Architecture Triennale for the time period 08.06 - 31.12.2022. The contract lays down that the three actors are to collaborate about the distribution of areas for the different time periods. Oslo Architectural Triennale is an architectural festival and is eventually hosted in Old Munch from midst of September to the end of October 2022. They collaborate with various actors on creating events and activities related to the topic of the year neighbourhoods (The Culture Agency, Letter of August 23rd 2022). The City Council argues that it is challenging and time consuming to clarify temporary use for such a large building, so it is expedient to find some larger tenants (Note 679/22). The municipal work for temporary letting of Old Munch starts as The Culture Agency initiates a process and announces that one can apply to temporary rent premises in Old Munch. The application deadline is set 12th of June 2022 (Note 979/22). In the announcement it is described that the temporary operation of Old Munch *“is to ensure that the building is continued to be filled with activity to the joy of the local community and the city. At the same time, there is a need to gather more knowledge and experiences of what purposes the building is suited for and what it can handle”* (Oslo Municipality, n.d d, own translation). 44 different actors apply, and 16 applications are granted by the allocation committee the 1st of July 2022 (The Culture Agency, note 20/1502-9). Some of the tenants that are included in the first period are AKKS, a music organisation working for gender balance within the field of music; XMunchX, a collection of various offers for children and young people; Hyperion, an association for leisure interests; as well as a variety of performances by artist, musicians and other performers. The Oslo School of Architecture hosts a book launch in August, and a local Lego-club runs a Lego-corner during the entire period (The Culture Agency, Letter of August 23rd 2022).

It is eventually decided to prolong the period of temporary use, and the Culture Agency has announced that they will review new applications for temporary use in 2023 (Oslo Municipality, n.d. d). The deadline for applying is 1st of March 2023. There is no rent for the tenants, but they are responsible for covering their share of shared operation costs. This amounts to 3000 NOK per week for the arts- and culture spaces, and 1000 NOK per month per office. In the announcement, it is stated that the overall priorities are services for children and adolescents; arts and culture for professional actors; activity with local roots; activities that focus on social sustainability and collaboration between local actors; activities that are free or inexpensive for the audience; and activities that contribute to making the building accessible for a wide audience (Oslo municipality, n.d. d).

As described, six different informants have been interviewed to help shed light on the research question. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Norwegian, and the quotes in this chapter are thus my own translations. A draft of this chapter has been sent to each informant, giving the informants the opportunity to address potential misinterpretations made in transcription and translation, and to add further input to the discussion. Note that the informants were given limited time to review the chapter, due to the progress schedule of the study. In total, the transcripts from the interviews amount to more than 38,000 words. In other words, the following chapter is only an extract of relevant perspectives and approaches to the overall issue. Perspectives or examples from the informants are at times elaborated with other sources. Everything in the following chapter without source references is based on the transcripts from the interviews.

In this chapter, the informants are first presented briefly, to provide a better understanding of the background, experiences, and role of each contributor. An inductive approach to code the dataset has been applied, meaning that the following categories are developed as a result of the analysed dataset. First, the summary of the interviews will begin with looking into the systematic challenges that are described. That is, challenges connected to the political system, the way in which the municipal real estate management is organized, legislation, international conventions etc. Secondly, as an attempt to identify measures to strategically work with vacated municipal buildings, the informants' views on cooperative methods, temporary urbanism and mapping and assessment tools will be highlighted.

5.1 Informants

Ingeborg Apall-Olsen

Role: Former employee in The Culture Agency – Responsible for reactivating Old Munch

Current employer: DOGA / Design and Architecture Norway

Apall-Olsen is currently working for Design and Architecture (DOGA). Her background is from Fortidsminneforeningen (Eng: The Association of Historical Relics), where she was working with cultural heritage conservation, and according to herself "*acting as an activist to save buildings from demolition*". In her work with building heritage conservation, she has had a particular interest in buildings with potential for reuse and alternative use. Later, Apall-Olsen was an employee in the Cultural Agency, where she was working with cultural infrastructure, focusing on making suitable premises available for cultural purposes. In the Cultural Agency, she was responsible with the work of reactivating Old Munch for short-term use after the museum was relocated to Bjørvika.

Ole Pedersen

Role: Initiative-taker XMunchX

Current employer: Nedenfra – Resource center for local community

Pedersen is a social entrepreneur. He started the organization Nedenfra, which in English translates to from below. The name of the organization, to do it from below, emphasize their approach as a bottom-up organization, focusing on democratic participation in urban development. The organization is funded by and linked to Tøyen Unlimited, an independent organization aiming to support innovative initiatives which can improve social challenges in the neighbourhood (toyenunlimited.no, n.d.). The objective of Nedenfra is to contribute to more democratic participation in urban development (nedenfra.org, n.d.). Together with Arentz, he initiated the XMunchX project, gathering different local actors to temporary use Old Munch.

Ole has previously started Tøyen boligkonferanse, an annual conference for innovation related to social housing, where various professions and sectors come together with the local community and decisionmakers (toyenunlimited.no, n.d.). Pedersen has a master's degree ESST from The University of Oslo and from Maastricht University.

Matti Lucie Arentz

Role: Initiative-taker XMunchX / Former City District Council Member Gamle Oslo

Current employer: DOGA / Design and Architecture Norway

Arentz is the co-initiator of XMunchX. She has a master's degree in fine arts from KHIO, Oslo National Academy of the Arts, and started her work-life experience as a project leader for Oslo Open, an annual arts festival. Arentz was a city district council for eight years in the city district Gamle Oslo, for the social-liberal party Venstre. After her political career, she moved on to work as a chief curator for DOGA. Simultaneously, she worked with urban development projects, mainly in the city district Gamle Oslo.

Using her experience from the arts field, she has been working with social sustainability, public participation, co-creation and public-private cooperation. She was involved in establishing Tøyenkontoret (Eng: The Tøyen Office), a project for arts and urbanism and Byverkstedet (Eng: The City Workshop), a wood based workshop and project room for the local community. Further, she has been involved in the Danish-Norwegian collaboration The Bureau of Detours, a collective for arts, architecture and design, working amongst other things with public spaces in different municipalities.

Jonas Vesterhus

Role: Management coordinator Old Munch

Current employer: Oslo Building KF

Vesterhus is hired as a project leader for Old Munch on behalf of Oslo Building KF. He is responsible for working with setting a structure for temporary lease of the premises. He describes his responsibility as a combination of assuring the cultural use of the building, whilst also opening up for commercial activities to provide a holistic and justifiable use of the building, also in an economic perspective. When I received a tip about contacting Vesterhus, he was referred to as The King of vacated buildings. Vesterhus himself, with a more humble tone, explains that he wrote his bachelor thesis in 2015 about vacated premises, and he has since been engaged in the topic through various projects. Vesterhus was one of the initiators of the website Enterspace, aiming to make empty premises available for new ideas. He has also been a business developer of the concept Greenhouse Oslo, a coworking and event space located in Landbrukskvartalet, an upcoming agricultural district in central Oslo. More recently, he was the project leader for Oslo Arkitekturtriennale 2022 (Eng: The Oslo Triennale of Architecture), an architectural festival that this year focused on neighbourhoods. In 2022, he was the management coordinator of Old Munch for the Cultural Agency, before he was recently hired by Oslo Building KF to his current position.

Janne Wilberg

Role: Former City Antiquary

Current employer: Retired

"I am the red woman with the yellow list", Wilberg says in a portrait interview (Strømstad, 2019, p. 17). The red referring to her characteristic red outfit, and the yellow list referring to the list of protection-worthy buildings in the capital. Wilberg is a trained art historian, with extensive experience. Her background is from the National Antiquary, Forsvarsbygg (Eng: The Norwegian Defense Estates Agency) and Miljøverndepartementet (Eng: Ministry of Climate and Environment). For the last twelve years, ending in March 2023, she has been the City Antiquary of Oslo for two periods.

Svein Bjørberg

Current employer: NTNU and Multiconsult ASA

Bjørberg is the research responsible (FoU) at Multiconsult, and have since 1976 been responsible for activities related to "the existing building stock", such as restoration, management and maintenance. He has been part of several research projects at NTNU, from 1992 as professor II in Reconstruction technique and management, and since 2010 at Center for Real estate management. Since 2001, he has participated in developing CEN (Facility Management)

standards, given input to ISO-Standard Service Life Planning and EU-guideline about LCC (Life Cycle Cost) and sustainable refurbishment. Further, he has been involved in developing an own regulation for rehabilitation, the so-called Rehab-TEK.

Other informants

In addition to the one-to-one interview, the topic was raised in a focus-group discussion with employees in the land-use planning division at Multiconsult. There are several actors that would be highly relevant to interview to shed light on the issue of vacated municipal buildings. Several have been contacted, that either have been unable to participate in an interview, have not responded or have responded too late in the process. Particularly relevant were EBY and the Planning and Building Agency (PBE).

5.2 Systemic challenges

Three main aspects are pointed out as systemic challenges and as barriers to reactivate vacated buildings: 1) the sector division of municipal real estate management and planning; 2) the maintenance backlog; and 3) legal restrictions.

5.2.1 The sector division

Many of the informants point to political management and the sector division as a barrier to approach vacated municipal buildings holistically. It is pointed to both in terms of the different real estate managers, but also the way in which the political municipal system in general is organized.

Vesterhus is frustrated about how the political processes have slowed down the attempt to reactivate Old Munch. *“Because of that the building has now been empty for three months, when it easily could have been used. (...) There is a lack of decision-making for continued use, and it creates a horrible framework to make anything happen here. What has been done is very much despite of politicians and the municipality, not thanks to”.* Vesterhus argues that you become extremely reliant on single individuals and instigators to achieve any progress in projects like Old Munch. Arentz has a similar reasoning and argues that *“Oslo Municipality is a bit like a multi-headed troll, who aren’t aware of what the other is doing, which should be of importance in city development and placemaking. It is extremely sector divided.”* She, just like Vesterhus, emphasizes that you need to identify a *“municipal hero”*, someone to be a driving force. In her opinion, that individual often exists at the middle management level. *“Those at the bottom have lots of ideas, and are highly skilled, but they are often too scared to say yes to anything. Those at the top, on the other side, are too close to political management, and far too concerned with achieving a ton of political objectives.”*

Vesterhus, as a coordinating manager at Old Munch, has been *“in the middle of Oslo Building KF, a private organization and the Cultural Agency”*. He argues the different agencies and organizations all are very concerned about delivering on their objectives. *“It is the most annoying word – ‘the objective’. Because ultimately, they should all have the same objective, and that is to succeed with Old Munch”*. He argues that the *“famous silos”* prevent a holistic project management. Apall-Olsen shares the same frustration and illustrates the issue by pointing out how in general *“the biggest adversary of Oslo Building KF is PBE, which just isn’t right! Someone will always constitute the formal authority, but at the same time you ought to have a responsibility to achieve good processes when the end-goal should be the same”*. She further argues that we need better processes for the different agencies to come together. *“If we are to succeed with good urban development, the City Antiquary, PBE, BYM and all the municipal real estate managers need to cooperate better. The way we are doing it now, with underhand processes in order to succeed – it is hopeless”*. Yet, as pointed out by Wilberg, not all the agencies are primarily concerned with safeguarding and reactivating old building stock. *“This is probably one of the challenges on a structural level, that these sectors are managed according to their own objectives. In particular what concerns the healthcare or the education sector, there is nothing in their target-structure that says they have to take care of cultural-historical buildings (...). But at the same time – looking at Oslo Building KF and how big they are – they have a responsibility for cultural heritage whether they want it or not.”*

But Apall-Olsen is most concerned with the lack of a functioning *“reception system”* for vacated buildings. She emphasizes that although a group was established 8 years ago, referring to the systematic interaction between the municipal real estate agencies as described in the Audit Office report (2023), the cross-agency group has failed to work operationally with the vacated building portfolio. She argues that the municipality does not have a reception system that is able to mobilize for alternative use, and neither do they have enough insight. Further, Apall-Olsen is requesting a better assessment of cultural needs in Oslo. She argues that whilst this exists for sports and outdoor activities, it is absent within the field of culture. Apall-Olsen is referring to *Behovsplan for idrett og friluftsliv* (Eng: Requirements plan for sports and outdoor activities), a political plan that *“highlights and maps the need for new facilities, areas, hiking trails and outdoor recreation areas related to sports, outdoor recreation and physical activity in Oslo over the next ten years. The requirements plan also assesses the need for rehabilitation of existing facilities”* (Oslo Municipality, 2020, own translation). Apall-Olsen argues that such a plan would provide leverage towards the municipality in getting access to vacated premises for cultural needs, and that it would contribute to setting aside sufficient funds in the budgets to prepare the premises for new and in-demand use for cultural actors.

Both Apall-Olsen and Vesterhus do however point out that they in the case of Old Munch, have succeeded with establishing a cross-disciplinary cooperation between the Cultural Agency,

Oslo building KF, the city district Gamle Oslo and the private organization the Oslo Triennale of Architecture. However, according to Apall-Olsen, this is something they have succeeded with because Old Munch has turned into *“a prestigious political project”*, and that it isn't prioritized with other municipal buildings that have not caught the attention of the media to the same extent. Vesterhus similarly argue that leaving Old Munch empty is expensive for the politicians in a PR-perspective, and that they have been able to mobilize to not further damage the reputation of the political management. Nevertheless, Apall-Olsen argues that the case of Old Munch illustrates how prioritizing a *“reception system”* for vacated buildings give results. When describing the cooperation with Old Munch, she argues that *“we became a reception system for Old Munch, exactly what I think is lacking in general – a cross-disciplinary, or interagency group. That is the key to get results! But we were able to turn around because we are speaking about an extremely prestigious political project, with a lot of pressure to succeed. It is way more challenging with a huge building stock than with this individual building”*.

Several of the informants point to the merger of the previously separate real estate bodies, now united as the new company Oslo building KF, as a step in the right direction to look more holistically at the building portfolio. Wilberg emphasizes that we need to have some patience to allow the previously separate organizations to set. *“Keep in mind that Oslo Building KF has only existed for two years in its merged format. And we should respect that it is demanding to get the health-, education- and culture and sports sectors to talk to each other. And then we have BYM as well, who still haven't completely landed as a new agency after they merged 7 different branches. These are huge organizations with many tasks, and where a lot of politicians have ambitions on behalf of the individual sector. So, it is crucial to take some overall action that the sectors cannot turn away from.”*

Both Apall-Olsen and Wilberg do however argue that Oslo Building KF, as the largest manager of properties in Oslo, do not possess an adequate level of cultural heritage competence. This constitutes a barrier to reuse vacated buildings, which are often subject to some degree of protection. Villa Sorgenfri was discussed with both Wilberg and Apall-Olsen as an example. The villa was bought by Omsorgsbygg KF (the previous municipal healthcare real estate manager, now part of Oslo building KF) in 2007, intended to be used as a kindergarten. It was formally protected in 2008 and has since then the building has decayed (Keur, 2022). Wilberg says that *“there has been a lack of will to find use for the building. They regulated it for conservation, and then it was left falling into disrepair. It shouldn't be possible”*. Further, Wilberg argues that enterprises such as Oslo building KF should incorporate the considerations of taking care of cultural and historical property into their business model. Alternatively, such property should be gathered in an individual unit in the municipality, rather than having in dispersed across various real estate managers. Wilberg explains that the Antiquary office expressed several times that the building should be put into use or sold to a private actor.

“There has been no will selling to a private party, as they have considered the overall potential of the property”. In the formal application to demolish the building it was described to be in such a state that *“it can no longer be rehabilitated, and there is a danger of uncontrolled collapse”* (The Planning and Building Agency, 2022). Now, Oslo Building KF has received a start-up permit to demolish the old villa, but with a condition of rebuilding a historically correct reconstruction. Apall-Olsen argues that Oslo Building KF need improved competence on historical properties, and that *“they cannot depend on the city antiquary to act as a consultant”*.

The case of Villa Sorgenfri brings us to the next issue, concerning a systemic failure to carry out necessary maintenance of the municipal building stock. As stated by the Association for Historical Relics to the demolition application, Villa Sorgenfri *“has for a long time been on the red list of endangered buildings. (...) we want to emphasize the owner’s responsibility to maintain their own buildings.”* (The Planning and Building Agency, 2022).

5.2.2 The maintenance backlog – an ever-increasing municipal investment

Most of the informants consider the maintenance backlog to be the greatest current challenge connected to reactivating the vacated municipal buildings. The maintenance backlog is referring to a lack of regular maintenance over time, which leads to significant restoration costs to ensure the condition of a given building. It is discussed by the informants in two different – but connected – perspectives, namely the decay of heritage value buildings, and the financial challenge that has arisen through persistent lack of maintenance.

Apall-Olsen points out how moving current use out of a building without a plan for future use is the starting point for escalating problems and a snowball effect: *“because you do not have a plan, the buildings are left empty and maintenance is not carried out, the buildings decay, and you end up with extreme costs connected to rehabilitation and new use.”* In the end *“the lifts are too heavy for an already torn municipal economy”*. However, she argues that not prioritizing maintenance and restoration may have an even higher cost in a long-term perspective. If the last and only solution is to sell the buildings to a private actor, the municipality later has to *“buy new property – at an extreme price – as they lack buildings to provide vital infrastructure and services.”* Vesterhus says that the main challenge to reactivate vacated buildings *“is that the maintenance backlog becomes too big, which makes it difficult to get the buildings to a level that fulfil the current technical demands”* and points out that the use of buildings is stricter regulated now than before.

Both Apall-Olsen and Wilberg show to Kirkeristen as an example, the former referring to it as a *“crucial building for Oslo, that has been neglected for more than 50 years”*. The protected building is owned and managed by Apall-Olsen’s previous employer, the Culture Agency, and the rehabilitation costs are now estimated to nearly 500 MNOK. According to Wilberg, the case illustrates how the lack of regular maintenance turns a building into an investment-object.

However, in this case, *“the time to act is now. We cannot sit around and wait for yet another condition report or investigation”*. The former City Antiquary argues that *“everyone in power for the last 50 years, must bear their share of the responsibility for this”*. The decisionmakers have, according to Wilberg, *“been playing ping-pong back and forth to kill time”*, and *“the issue should now be raised together”*.

Bjørberg is critical of how the municipality goes about calculating the investment to restore these buildings. He argues that *“a principle when looking into these issues financially should be the actual cost of getting the buildings to a level of survival”*. He thinks it is completely inexpedient to base oneself on a market rent level and standard. When it comes to Kirkeristen and the 500 MNOK restoration estimate, Bjørberg points to how the estimate is based on renovating the building to high-standard premises. According to Bjørberg, the plans include ready-made restaurant premises with state-of-the-art kitchens and ventilation systems. *“At this stage, that is going too far. First, they should find out what the building is suited for (...) We don’t need restaurants in all these buildings. And if someone wants to rent premises there and establish a restaurant – so be it – but they should cover that investment cost themselves. And forget about market price level! They should rent out to cover the level they have raised it to. Then if someone wants to establish a restaurant, they can consider that investment as a part of the lease”*. Vesterhus likewise states that *“someone needs to be more creative about a business model that is not based on market rent level”*. On that note, Wilberg similarly argues that not all buildings have to be raised to a state-of-the-art standard. She says that whilst some old buildings, e.g., an old industrial plant, might be well suited for transformation and housing, it might as well perfectly serve an important role without comprehensive interventions. *“It is important that there exists premises that are available for a variety of user groups, I wouldn’t call them low-standard but... We also need spaces that are suitable for those who do not need or cannot afford state-of-the-art standard”*. Wilberg’s reasoning, and perhaps also her being, resembles that of Jane Jacobs, arguing that a city needs a diversity of building ages and conditions to allow for functional diversity (Jacobs, 1961).



Figure 27: Jane / Janne. Photos: Trond Isaksen and Frank Lennon (own illustration)

Back to the maintenance backlog and large restoration investments; another example that was discussed with the informants was Plakathuset at Grønland (Eng: The Poster House). The 180 square meters, red clapboarded house (illustrated in figure 28) at Grønland also illustrates a need for a substantial economic investment because of lacking maintenance. According to case documents, fundings for the rehabilitation was granted by the City Council in 2019, that included rehabilitation of the current structure and an extension to the current building (Archus arkitekter AS, 2019). The City Council's funding was 25 MNOK (Velle, 2019). According to a note from the City Antiquary office in the same case, the building that was originally built as a residential building in 1812, have previously been used as a café, piano-warehouse and as a furniture store. It is listed, considered to have cultural heritage value as an example of the suburb development in the area prior to the city expansion in 1859 (Korsakel & Zachariassen, 2019). Little has been done with the building since it was restored in the 1950s, and it has now been vacated since 2008 (Korsakel & Zachariassen, 2019; Velle, 2019). The City Council had to pull the breaks, when the cost of the renovation was estimated to be twice as high as the initial 25 MNOK (Boger, 2021).



Figure 28: Hand sketch of the Poster House at Grønland (own illustration)

Pedersen argues that it is *“impossible to understand where these sums derive from”*. He thinks it is partly connected to the municipal acquisition rules, and that the market is rigged to respond to such tenders. He shows to Ormsundveien 12 as a similar example, an old villa owned by the municipality, where the costs for renovation are estimated to roughly 40 MNOK. *“If a private individual had bought such a house, no one would consider it reasonable to spend 40 MNOK to restore a single-family home. You would spend maybe 2-5 MNOK, and a whole lot of working hours. But as soon as it is the municipality and the public touch it... Right? I cannot understand how it ends up like this”*.

In the context of high restoration costs, it is also relevant to discuss how private developers can be encouraged to invest in the reuse of existing buildings. The informants were challenged on how we can expect private developers to engage in reuse-projects, if there is a common attitude that such projects come with low margins and high uncertainty and risk. That such an attitude exists in the building industry was confirmed amongst the informants and is also pointed to by several authors (e.g., Bullen & Love, 2011; Nordby, 2021; Entra, n.d.). Grønn Byggallianse (Eng: Green Building Alliance), a member organization working for environment and sustainability within the building sector, published a tips booklet (Grønn Byggallianse, 2019) named "*Think twice before demolishing*" (own translation). They argue that one of the most common myths, and which is often decisive when choosing to demolish a building, is that it cheaper to demolish and rebuild than rehabilitating an existing building (Grønn Byggallianse, 2019). First, Wilberg points to the need for predictability. "*You must clearly communicate what is possible, and what isn't. What is the room for manoeuvre?*" According to the former City Antiquary, it is essential that private developers understand what they are buying, especially when it comes to complicated properties with legal protection clauses and cultural heritage value.

Second, she argues that it is not necessarily accurate that buildings with cultural heritage value are more expensive to reuse. "*We often argue that the developer should make as few changes as possible with the building. If they listen to that advice, it doesn't need to become very expensive.*" In other cases, Wilberg suggests that real estate developers need to understand the commercial potential that exists in cultural heritage, and that it can be money well spent. She illustrates her point by explaining about the newly developed hotel Sommerro, that consist of both new construction as well as the old buildings of Oslo Lysverk (energy company) and the old bathhouse Vestkantbadet, restored to its original condition from 1932. A project in which the well-known Norwegian "hotel-king" and real estate developer Petter Stordalen had referred to Wilberg as "*the most expensive lady he had ever encountered*". Yet afterwards, according to Wilberg, Stordalen came to agree that the elements in which the City Antiquary had fought to preserve now constitutes resources "*that sells*". A case study (Berg, 2018) looking into cultural heritage as a resource for property development, found that real estate developers increasingly focus on soft factors such as identity and character as a way of making "*use of history and historic elements in valuation of property*" (Berg, 2018, p. 317). According to the study, accepting the presence of buildings with cultural heritage value can also be used as leverage to get approval for a higher degree of utilization on the rest of the development area. Thus, the new role of heritage buildings as a premise for development, might in fact be what has led to an increased focus on cultural heritage value, rather than it being a decisive factor for investment alone (Berg, 2018).

Apall-Olsen on the other hand is more concerned with the need of "*help from outside*". While still being on the topic of stimulating reuse investments, this allows us to make a gradual transition to the legal restrictions, as her key concern is a clearer framework for the building industry in

the EU taxonomy. The taxonomy is a regulation created to help the private sector understand which investments are environmentally sustainable and follows the objectives from the Green Deal. The regulation aims to “reward and promote environmentally friendly business practices” (EU-taxonomy.info, n.d.) Apall-Olsen argues that “it is very important that we get clearer rules in the EU- taxonomy, as a superior framework. For instance, you could be refused loans if you are unable to demonstrate how you adhere to certain sustainability objectives”. Whilst Apall-Olsen states that the taxonomy is a crucial aspect, she believes that it has failed to incorporate cultural heritage and listed buildings. In her opinion, the EU-taxonomy acts as if all buildings can improve their climate footprints significantly, which is not the case for all buildings. Further, she believes that we are in need of better economic incentive-programs. “We have to acknowledge that there are greater costs connected to this kind of development, and there is greater risk. Thus, we need state incentives and subsidies, and economic backing from authorities to facilitate that kind of development. If we have ambitions to reach any of the sustainability objectives by 2030, we must change the way we look at our existing building stock.” Wilberg is also requesting economic incentives, specifically calling for listed buildings being exempted from property taxation, which is already the case for legally protected buildings in Oslo as of now.

5.2.3 Legislation

The legal framework and challenges connected to this have been described in the previous chapter in relation to the new amendment of the Planning and Building Act. The informants largely confirm what has already been described in the previous chapter, related to little flexibility and strict assessment of applications to deviate from technical requirements in old buildings. This discussion will not be repeated in its entirety, but some additional reflections will briefly be pointed to.

Arentz argue that the issue is not mainly the law itself, but rather the strict processing of applications for dispensation, change in use, and exemptions from technical regulations. “In fact, possibilities already exist to a large degree in the legislation we have, so we ought to focus on encouraging a more liberal interpretation of it”. Several of the informants illustrate the challenges by referring to projects they have previously been involved in. Although their stories are about different people, in different locations, with different projects, it appears like the same story with different wrapping. Someone identifies a potential for a vacated building, or a part of a vacated building, and has an idea for how it could be taken into use. Often, the idea is an interim and low-threshold use, that can contribute to some activity in a certain area. Yet, their examples all end the same way. The municipality requests that an application for a change in use must be processed, as the new use is not in line with current permissions. They often insist that technical faults must be improved to fulfil regulatory demands. For the initiator, the alternative is to apply for exemptions, still at risks of having the application rejected, and either way stuck in a time and resource demanding process that creates to high of a threshold to move forward with their idea.

Note that I was not aware of the amendment of The Act when discussing the matter with the informants, with one exception. The amendment was discovered before the latest interview with Bjørberg. He was however well suited to comment on the changes, as he has been involved both in developing the suggested Rehab-TEK and later in giving input on necessary legislative changes to KDD. In his opinion, the amendment is clarifying. Arentz commented on the amendment in an email after the interview, she similarly consider the amendment to be a *“step in the right direction”*.

Whilst the informants are all pointing out the underlying considerations for technical regulations, such as universal design, accessibility, solar conditions etc., they are requesting better systems to separate between projects that are permanent and temporary. Wilberg argues that it is not without reason that these rules exist, and that *“people would live in cold basements”* in their absence. Yet, she quotes the French author and historian Voiture to point out how the regulations, which are designed to set a standard for buildings often used over long time periods, make the temporary aspect difficult: *“the best is the enemy of the good”*. According to Arentz, municipalities are missing out on great projects and activities because of the idea that every technical requirement must be met in every case, not considering their temporary nature.

As seen in the legislative review, it has been suggested to introduce a separate provision in the Act that specifically limits the number of technical demands that must be fulfilled for temporary measures within existing buildings (Eriksen & Skrede, 2016). This idea is supported by several of the informants. Bjørberg argues that this should be assessed based on a ladder-principle: *“why should we fulfil all possible demands every time? Even if I want to use some empty premises for a start-up workshop for four weeks? The only relevant demand should be fire safety, escape routes and basic health and safety concerns”*. Arentz similarly emphasizes that the best outcome would be to get a separate legal basis for temporary measures for existing buildings, that could give a permit with exemptions from some technical regulations for e.g., a three-year period. *“Then it could be prolonged after an assessment and the responsible actors would document how the temporary use functions, what activities are initiated, that it is not troublesome for the local environment etc. And if it is considered satisfactory after 3+2 years, you should be able to keep operating permanently. Another important aspect is that the initiator would be responsible, and get the necessary permissions, to upgrade the building adapted to the level of the needs you have for operations”*.

Moving away from the technical regulations, Apall-Olsen highlights that we need to *“dare to use”* the existing legal grounds we have to regulate development. Regulation in this context, is understood as the legal right the planning authorities (municipalities) have to determine the direction of urban development through municipal masterplans and zoning plans, and the right to establish legally binding provisions to an area in such a plan in accordance with The Planning and Building Act. The power of regulation is strong, but you need planners and politicians that are

willing to stand in opposition. Regulation is per definition limitation, as the limits of the degree of utilization are set, and thus the economic profit for the developers. *“Politicians and planners have to dare to remove value from the developers.”* Yet, this needs to be profoundly based on dialogue. The process needs to be a negotiation. As value is removed from one place, it can be added with increased degree of utilization another place. When there are private owners the planners and politicians need to engage in dialogue with the real estate developers early in the process, describe the municipal needs and address what kind of activities the building can be used for.

Apall-Olsen further argues that planners could work on what kind of labels or terms are used on vacated buildings in land-use plans, the so-called land-use objectives (Nor: arealformål). More flexible land-use objectives can make it easier for developers to find fitting use for a vacated building, within their concept for the development on the given site. As part of this study, the problem statement has been discussed in a focus group consisting of consultants in the zoning-plan division of Multiconsult. Here, it was similarly argued that using less specific land-use objectives could provide a higher degree of flexibility for the developer. The land-use objective *Sentrumsformål* (Eng: downtown purposes) is an example of a more flexible regulation, that allows for *“businesses, service provisions, housing development, offices, hotel/accommodation and hospitality (...)”*, rather than one single defined use (KDD, 2022). The land-use objective is primarily used in larger area zoning plans but can also be used in smaller zoning plans when you want less detailed control of the land-use, according to the Ministry (KDD, 2022).

Arentz, with her background from Danish projects, several times argues that *“everything is easier in Denmark”*, and that there is a greater will to allow for temporary use despite the technical condition of buildings not complying with every technical regulation. A master’s thesis (Isaksen, 2018) that reviews temporary urbanism as a strategic tool in Copenhagen, does however emphasize several of the same challenges that are pointed out in the Norwegian context. It is described how temporary use, which often constitutes a changed use of a buildings, *“requires that safety, accessibility, environment etc., are updated to follow latest laws and requirements”* (p. 32). Broholm et al (2012) argues that it is often more economically beneficial to leave the building empty, than to carry out all the necessary investments in order to comply with technical regulations. The practice of exemptions from technical regulations is not described, and it is possible that there is a more consistent and predictable practice in Denmark that make processes simpler. According to Arentz, *“it is much easier to exempt yourself from the regulations in Denmark, they allow for trial and error, whilst in Norway we are much more bound by the legislation and regulations”*.

Nonetheless, it is illustrated that the municipality of Copenhagen through land use plans are attempting to facilitate for temporary urbanism. According to Isaksen (2018), sequence plans that determine the order of urban development aim to clarify which areas are suited for temporary

activities, and this was further emphasized in the provisions to the plan. The provisions specifically allowed for a “*broader use of temporary urbanism (...) if it is created in the perspective area of the city*” (Isaksen, 2018, p. 33). In another master’s thesis, from The Oslo School of Architecture, the author Helgason (2020) looked into transformation of protected industrial plants in the city and how temporary urbanism could be used as a means for transformation. He compares Oslo to Copenhagen, and refers to how the industrial area at Refshaleøen in Copenhagen uses temporary urbanism to influence the long-term planning of the area.

“The temporary urbanism can at best lead to the users getting a sense of attachment to the areas and that their use affect future plans. Physical building structures and urban spaces can be developed gradually (by adopting the Plan-guide approach), and the possible use of existing buildings are investigated and tested with an adaptive-reuse approach. The challenge is that this to a little extent is facilitated for through municipal masterplans or zoning plans in Oslo”. (Helgason, 2020, p. 115, own translation).

Helgason (2020) here points out the lack of planning methods like the Plan-guide approach in the Norwegian context, as used in Refshaløen, Copenhagen. The Plan-guide was conceptualized by Alexandre Chemetoff in Nantes, France in 1999, as the suggested plan named Ile de Nantes (Didelon, 2021). As opposed to a Masterplan demonstrating the final result for the transformation of an area, the Plan-guide for Ile de Nantes consisted of two maps. The first map was a comprehensive analysis of the existing area, public spaces and buildings. The second showed different hypotheses or scenarios for how the development could be carried out. As put by Didelon (2021), the two maps together represented “*the urban form as it is and could be – rather than should be since the design was meant to develop*” (Didalon, 2021, p. 3). Through ad-hoc initiatives on the area, and by temporarily testing the use of the buildings throughout the development period, the aim of the method is to use temporary urbanism as a way to influence the permanent development and final plan of a site (Didelon, 2021).

5.3 Cooperative approaches – breaking silos

Q: If we wanted to develop a roadmap for strategic approaches to reactivate buildings, what would be most important to include?

“That would be cooperation. (...) It is difficult to disregard your own reality, needs and wishes, and to understand who the users are and what needs they have. I think it is necessary to establish places that facilitate cooperation.”

– Apall-Olsen

Arentz is also concerned with establishing places for cooperation, and argues that this does not exist today, at least not successfully. She argues that current forums in the city districts are unable to reach out to the citizens and fail to create arenas for dialogue, exemplified with the city districts' *åpen halvtime* (Eng: open half hour). In the open half hour, local residents “*may present current issues and inform the politicians about cases they are concerned with*” (Oslo Municipality, n.d. e). “*The problem is that it is a one-way monologue, and then the politicians get to ask questions. There is no room for debate or discussion*”, says Arentz. In her opinion, an interesting format for such collaborative arenas are Bylabber (Eng: City Labs). A City Lab is “*an arena for co-creation, dialogue and idea-development, and should engage and involve the local community in urban development processes*” (Byberg & Eide, 2022, own translation). She argues that each city district should have a City Lab, that would not only facilitate better participation processes, but that could also lead to public-private collaborations and initiatives for the unrealized potential that lies in vacated buildings. Arentz argues that the city district's vacated buildings can be put on the agenda in the City Labs, to gather interested stakeholders, relevant actors and competence in a “*taskforce*”.

Pedersen argues that cooperative and alternative approaches are important parts of the solution to restore and reactivate vacated buildings: “*The municipality, and the public sector in general, often find costly solutions, precisely because they are so bound by procurement rules and legal frameworks. And on the one hand that's good, as barriers against corruption, and to create transparency and predictability. But at the same time, it makes the process extremely static, and it makes it difficult to find reasonable solutions*”

The previously mentioned villa in Ormsundveien 12 serves as an example, where the local neighbourhood has initiated a project to renovate the building as part of an urban ecological project. The case has been described in many media articles and illustrates several of the issues connected to reactivating municipal, vacated buildings, e.g., the consequences of failure to carry out maintenance, high renovation costs, legislative challenges and alternative project approaches. The villa was up until 2008 used as municipal housing, but has been vacated ever since (Slåen, 2022). The article describes how Frederica Miller, architect and chairman of the foundation Ormsundveien Økogrend (Eng: Eco-village), have developed a concept for how the villa area can be utilized to create up to 40 housing units, in line with the municipality's goal for the third housing sector. The eco-village has suggested that local residents themselves can carry out restoration, given that they can rent the building at a reduced price. The municipality decided that “*they would try to release the empty villa to the eco-village. That has yet failed to happen.*” (Slåen, 2022). These types of initiatives represent a great opportunity for reactivating vacated buildings and reducing costs, according to Pedersen. “*By involving others and having an alternative project approach, one that is not tied to the public procurement-regime, we would: a) find more reasonable solutions; and b) bring about more actors on whom we can distribute costs*”. He thinks that the costs should

be distributed both to the existing and conventional actors, but also to non-profits, foundations and alternative contributors. But as illustrated in the article (Slåen, 2022), there have been several challenges. City Council Hanna Marcussen says that it is challenging to lease out the property, as it would make the municipality legally responsible for the living standard. The municipality's price estimate to restore the Villa for housing is somewhere between 36-43 MNOK. In contrast, the eco-village argue that they can do it for 2-3 MNOK, and questions the municipality's calculations. For instance, the municipality's price estimate includes a gardener, something the eco-village argue they are more than capable of handling on their own. Alternatively, the eco-village must buy the property from the municipality, at a market price level, due to OECD-regulations (Slåen, 2022).

Arentz also highlights the importance of collaborative approaches: *"The municipality cannot – they should not and cannot – manage all these buildings by themselves."* Both Vesterhus and Arentz argue that many of the management models of municipal buildings are not economically sustainable. Arentz refers to Popsenteret (municipal centre and museum for popular music) as an example, which according to her *"is experiencing a troublesome economy, due to a limiting economic model based on public money and operations, rather than more sustainable broader partnership models. This has caused reductions in capacity amongst other things."* She further argues that the only models the municipality operates with, is either to manage and operate a building and service themselves within a narrow and rigid framework, or to sell to private actors with a list of requirements, such as with the former main library Deichman. Vesterhus similarly argues that the way in which the Culture Agency operates they *"can never in fact be economically sustainable. It is fully funded by the municipal treasury"*. He explains that a part of the idea at Old Munch with the temporary lease of premises, is precisely to ensure some lease income and sense of economic viability, which *"is an incredibly important aspect of sustainability, to ensure that the ends actually meet"*.

Arentz further emphasize that some of these buildings would be better off if they were managed and operated not by the municipality alone, but *"in collaboration with private actors and residents of local communities"*. According to her, that is just as much a matter of economic sustainability as of social sustainability, which will be discussed more in the following sections. Together with Pedersen, they have started the initiative named XMunchX. While the first X stands for the ex-museum, the second *"is the variable, what is at all times interesting and important. Those that are present defines the X themselves"* says Arentz, as she starts describing their initiative for Old Munch. The last X represents the unknown, all the activities that may take place in the old museum at any time.

Let us however start by looking to another project, that has been an inspiration for both the name and model of the XMunchX initiative. The Danish project *Institut for X* started in 2009. A group of people from the organization Bureau Detours got a permit to run a workshop in an old customs-

building, which eventually turned into a more permanent contract (Poulsen, 2017). Arentz was involved in the project. *“The project started in an old, closed freight terminal, where we gradually got access to more and more buildings. It has been a twelve-year project, where we’ve been working on expanding the horizons of local politicians, to better understand the area and its potential scope of activities”*. Arentz says the project has generated knowledge on co-developing an urban area with local stakeholders, rather than the *“for or against”* mindset that often occurs. Further, the project has showed the potential of alternative ways to put old and vacated buildings in use. According to Poulsen (2017), the project took a turn from a temporary measure to a transformative one, where temporary principles are used to contribute to *“rewarding perspectives to the permanent city”* (p. 26, own translation). The institute describe themselves as a generator for new ways to develop urbanity and Arentz states that they have *“developed a methodology that is used in urban development, in areas with many vacated buildings”*. She has taken that perspective, and those experiences with her, into how Old Munch can be developed.

Based on The Culture Agency’s announcement about short-term lease in Old Munch, Pedersen and Arentz created the initiative XMunchX. Through unconventional channels, social media and already established networks; a group of actors and organizations within arts and culture, social entrepreneurship, work practice and services for children and adolescents were gathered. It was an aim that most of the actors should facilitate for free activities. In total, 16 different actors joined, whereas 12 of these in fact ended up as being an active part of the XMunchX short term activity at Old Munch. Figure 29 shows a dark and empty exhibition hall in Old Munch, that XMunchX aims to fill with alternative use.

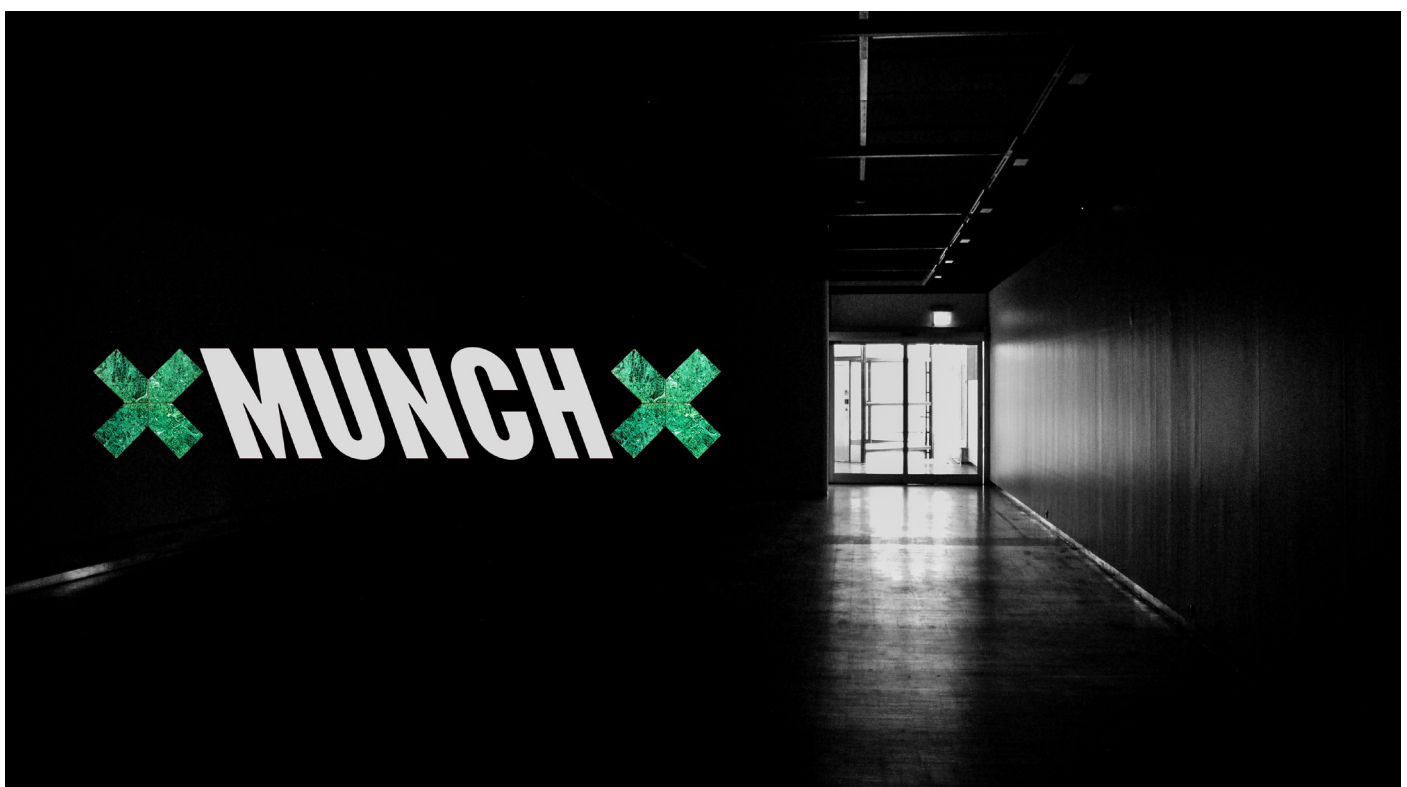


Figure 29: XMunchX in the empty exhibition halls of Old Munch (private photography)

When asked about the economical aspect of the initiative, Pedersen describes it as “a *puzzle of volunteer funding*”. Most businesses with an office or a physical space are leasing the space. By moving some activities to Old Munch, that will generate some income. He emphasizes that some of the funding will have to come from the municipality in operational support. Yet, Pedersen argues that such operational support is part of a circular municipal economy: “*You get a certain amount of financial support, where parts of it is paid back as rent to the municipality – back into the municipal economy*”. Further, Pedersen describes that the funding-puzzle should also consist of some commercial and public-oriented services, in addition to private foundations. Arentz thinks that a foundation, such as *Sparebankstiftelsen* (Eng: The Saving Bank Foundation), have a huge potential as a partner in a project as Old Munch. “*They should become Norway’s version of Realdania, and have a dedicated section working only with urban- and neighbourhood development*”. She shows to the Danish project *Underværker*, where local initiators and zealots can propose a project for a building or the built environment. People, and a jury, then vote on their favourite projects, and the projects with the most votes receive Realdania funding and expert-guidance to realize their project. “*The purpose of the campaign is to support passionate people who work with the built environment for the benefit of local communities*” and to “*remove barriers between volunteers’ good ideas and finished, realized projects*” (Realdania.dk, n.d.). The initiatives often take place in vacated buildings. A press release from the 2022 handout shows various examples of this:

“17 new zealot projects spread across the country now receive 12 million DKK to realize new construction and renovation dreams (...). Several projects reuse and rethink buildings that have become redundant” (realdania.dk, 2022), e.g., an old grain storage that is turned into a community for circus, theatre and culture in Odense; a bankrupt school is transformed into a centre for culture, sports and activity in Ålborg; and a protected day-care centre that is turned into a local community meeting place, with hotel rooms, workshops and art. The campaign also supports initiatives that aim to carry out necessary maintenance and renovation for existing services of value to the local community. 600.000 DKK was granted to an association to change the rooftop and isolation, “*necessary to continue as the town’s local meeting place*” (realdania.dk, 2022). After the interviews were conducted the organization *Nedenfra ideelt AS*, running the initiative *XMunchX*, have received financial support from *Sparebankstiftelsen* to “*equipment, communication and courses for activities at the former Munch Museum*” (*Sparebankstiftelsen DNB*, 2023).

Back to Old Munch and *XMunchX*, the idea is to put together a mix of various actors, so that the running operating costs are shared. Pedersen would ideally prefer a three-years pilot. “*It would enable us to develop an organization that gradually can take on more responsibility, both financially and practically. Maybe we are only able to generate 1 million NOK in lease income the first year. However, after three years, we may have grounds for generating 10 million*”.

5.4 Temporary urbanism as a long-term strategy

This temporary nature of the XMunchX project brings us to the next topic that has been discussed with the informants. Temporary urbanism is described by the informants both as a strategy to determine and influence permanent use, and as an important measure for daily maintenance and "janitor" services.

5.4.1 Temporary use as a testing ground

Apall-Olsen argues that the temporary phase of Old Munch should be actively used as a knowledge base for clarifying future use. She sees a huge potential in obtaining experiences *"the next five years through cooperation and uses by different groups, such as local, national, international and municipal actors, together with the free field and local cultural actors"*. Although Apall-Olsen considers it provoking that one has not succeeded in making a plan for future use of Old Munch, she emphasizes that the testing phase is important and that it may be a good thing that future use of Old Munch was not clarified in advance. If a new tenant had already been decided, *"it is not obvious that it would have been the right choice in a long-term perspective. So, I am positive about having an intermediate phase"*.

When asked about how we can approach vacated buildings for reactivation and reuse, Vesterhus points to temporary urbanism. *"I have thought a lot about temporality as a long-term strategy, and I really believe in it, also as a way of carrying out citizen participation. It is required by law to carry out participation, yet it is an unimaginably underdeveloped area. I think we should have a more strategic view on the initial phases and use them as integral parts of the development processes"*. Vesterhus thinks that many developers fail to see the value of citizen participation, and that it has become yet another box on the checklist that *"has to be ticked off"*. Further, he argues that the local community in Tøyen may experience a *"participation fatigue"*. Similarly, Apall-Olsen says that through the work of the Urban Area Regeneration Program (UAR-program), many surveys and participatory processes have been carried out in Tøyen and Grønland to identify local needs. She thus argues that *"many people are feeling that they have been excessively researched on"*. Arentz similarly believes that temporary urbanism should be used as an arena to gather insight, but does not agree that there has been too much public participation in Tøyen. *"I just think that they are tired of municipal participation processes, that seldom lead to much"*. Her experience, from activities in Old Munch during December, was that people responded very well to a less pre-programmed participation arena. A meeting spot where people of different ages, with different backgrounds and interests, could come together and have a higher influence over what one wants to do and participate in. Overall, however, the informants seem to share the view that such temporary arenas can be of high value to test different uses, to get insight from the local users and to create synergies between different users. To see how the users respond to a certain use, might constitute a more efficient way to gather insights than post-it notes and focus group interviews.

Vesterhus further argues that temporary activities can help generate traffic, that in turn allows for further activity on the site. He thinks that it is potentially important to bring in some actors “of a certain size”. He argues that the manpower and (financial) muscles they constitute provide further opportunities. *“Many people considered it as snobbish to have an architectural festival in Old Munch. Yet, because of that we have an open café in the building today. It was through that traffic we were able to establish the [customer] foundation to open a café. So, I think a good approach to facilitate future use is to host an event of some size that helps build the structure of continued use”.*

5.4.2 Temporary use as a social practice

While the debate about moving the Munch Museum from Tøyen to Bjørvika was ongoing, many argued that Munch was important for the local identity of the residents of the district. The informants however, state that the Munch Museum at Tøyen only to a limited extent has been an important institution for local residents, especially in recent years. They emphasize that Tøyen originally has been an important destination for knowledge, art and culture, and look back to the establishment of the university Kongelige Fredriks Universitet in Tøyen Hovedgård (Eng: main estate), which also included the uprising of the Botanical Garden. Apall-Olsen emphasize how the area later, by King Carl III Johan, was considered as the location of the new Royal Castle. When the Munch Museum was established next to the Botanical Garden in 1964, both Apall-Olsen and Pedersen consider it to have been of some significance throughout the 60s, 70s and perhaps 80s.

However, Pedersen says that *“I do not think it has been important for the neighbourhood the last decade”*. He further adds that whilst it in recent years have been important for parts of the population, this has increasingly been divided into two parts of the Tøyen population: *“There are two levels. For many residents, those that have a natural interest in Munch, and who have sought it out, it has been convenient to have the museum close by. However, for the population of Tøyen that struggles with living condition challenges, the Munch Museum has been insignificant”*. Apall-Olsen similarly argues that the Munch Museum has been *“unaware of its surroundings”*, and that they to a very limited extent have had any outreach to the local community. Rather, they have had a role as a national, and even international institution. *“They haven’t engaged with the local community, rather, they have turned their back on it”*. Both the informants do however emphasize that they have seen a slight change in recent years.

On this note, it is interesting to see whether the new and temporary use of the building can contribute to creating an outreach to the local community, and whether it can constitute a social practice.

Wilberg argues that temporary urbanism allows for generating some income for the building manager during planning and case proceedings, whilst also being a socioeconomic instrument.

“You give people that may not have the financial capacity to lease, the ability to gain access to such spaces. The low-income segment. That may be artists, young people in an establishment phase, start-ups, people that doesn’t necessarily have a lot of money. You give them a place to be – and just as important – a place to be together with other people. A lot of exiting things can derive from that, and you get a situation where one plus one is not two, but maybe three or four”

A similar discussion occurs in the conversation with Vesterhus. Pointing to the Bragaglia & Rossignolo study (2021) and the Les Grands Voisins case, Vesterhus has similarly experienced that temporary urbanism and alternative co-working spaces can help newly established businesses to find a customer base and test their business idea. This can provide a financial foundation for the startups, allowing them to further develop their business and possibly enter the ordinary rental market for a more permanent business space. Vesterhus tells the story about *“the juice guy”* from his time at Greenhouse Oslo. *“He started with this tiny kitchen juicer. After a while he imported a huge, professional juice-making-machine, and produced tons of juice. He wouldn’t have had the possibility to do so without Greenhouse”*. He describes Landbrukskvartalet (Eng. The agricultural district) as a place that was able to attract both commercial and experimental actors. According to Vesterhus, positive synergies came about in the meeting between different groups of people. *“It was a strange meeting between people and different interests. And as everything took place so freely, a lot of good things happened that would never occur in a more rigid system with stricter rules”*.

Several of the informants are also concerned with what kind of actors one should bring into such temporary phases. Pedersen, with his background as a social entrepreneur, is asked specifically about whether such initiatives could lead to unintentional processes of gentrification, or if it can in fact be a socially engaged practice.

“Of course, with temporary urbanism, and also in the case of Old Munch, it depends on which actors you bring in and who gets access. I believe that by bringing along the network of actors that we did, we may have provided access for some actors that wouldn’t have applied on their own. And I think it was very important that Forandringshuset got to run the café (...). If a large commercial business had run it, one that would base its business model on a liquor license and target the nightlife segment, I think that you would have a completely different kind of profile than we have with Forandringshuset who offers job training for young people”*

*Old Munch Café is run by KFUK-KFUM Forandringshuset, and is a project where youths from 16-23 receive job training. It is organized as a non-profits, where all income is invested back into hiring more young employees to Forandringshuset (forandringshuset.no, n.d.)

Vesterhus raises the same concern. He argues that many of the private commercial actors have a very similar business-model, one that often tends to be based on a liquor license. *“I think it is very important to avoid that here. That is a goal, to create a space that is not based on selling beers. You don’t have to sell beers to create a social meeting place”*.

Pedersen emphasizes the societal effects of a model like XMunchX, and the effects of creating arenas for art and cultural practice. This is about more than only reactivating Old Munch and mere economic questions. *“It is about establishing places for young people, where they can create and gain a sense of mastery, as an alternative to loitering in the streets”*. He explains that their model can provide working practice and training for youth, in an area where many people are on the edge of society and have failed to enter the labour market. This affects everything from poverty, overcrowding, youth crime and public health. *“We must see these things in relation to each other.”* Tøyen is a diverse neighbourhood, and XMunchX could potentially have a substantial reach. Pedersen illustrates how youth could gain experience from a variety of fields, anything from tech and electronics to scenography and painting. Further, he argues that being exposed to the breadth of possible work opportunities can spark an interest amongst the youth they didn’t previously know they had.

Arentz argues that we must look at it in a more holistic picture, and that daring to invest in social-innovative measures could help the municipality in a long-term perspective. *“Today, most of the budgets in the city districts go into putting out fires, and there is often little left for creative thinking and innovation”*. The youth clubs, children’s groups etc., are the first to receive budget cuts when the budgets become too tight, as they are not statutory expenses. She thinks that in a long-term perspective, a targeted investment in these non-statutory services would in fact result in less pressure on all the statutory services that are eating up the budgets today. Arentz further points out how different actors may benefit from each other in the old Museum building. She proposes a public workshop in the old workshop premises:

“It could be a place that was run together with NAV (social welfare office), where people could learn from janitors, and maybe even co-run it”*. Whilst some can pay for courses with an instructor; it could be a free offer for youth, as a cooperation with local schools.

*Note: “Janitor” in this context, and as described in the following chapter, is not understood as publicly employed janitor. Rather, it is referred to anyone who can function as a “social and practical” janitor in a bottom-up operation of vacated buildings. In the case of Old Munch above, it should not be confused with the actual two janitors that are hired by Oslo Building KF to deal with daily operations of the building.

Yet, Pedersen argues that for such social impacts to be legit, the time-perspective must be considered. He reflects on the 5 months pilot that was carried out before Christmas: *“There is a reason as to why we argue that a three- or five-year pilot should be carried out: Because, for the neighbourhood, something that short-term does not provide lasting value. In fact, it might even have negative effects, and you can get the impression that an arena is taken away from you. I think that for the neighbourhood and the local community, temporary solutions are seldom of interest. These local needs must be solved long-term”*.

5.3.3 Temporary use as the public janitor

Whilst it is too late for the buildings that have already experienced a persistent decay, such as the previously discussed Kirkeristen, several of the informants argue that temporary users of buildings serve an important role as public janitors. Arentz argues that *“it is not sustainable or appropriate that the Culture Agency should operate Old Munch as a culture building. Let us just do it ourselves, all of us that are using it temporarily”*. *“We are trying to argue that we must develop a sustainable operating model, one that is not only about social sustainability, but also about economic sustainability. The municipality cannot continue to pay for everything themselves (...). They are even paying for Old Munch to be washed every now and then, when in fact the temporary users would be more than capable to do so themselves”*. She refers again to Denmark and argues that this is a tested and working model, where many actors contribute to developing and equipping existing buildings, and to carry out daily operations. Bjørberg refers to similar models in England, where students and startups get cheap rents and must carry out necessary maintenance in return. As pointed out by Bjørberg, we all know *“that the best way to maintain a building’s standard is by using it”*. Wilberg similarly argues that *“the best strategy to prevent buildings falling into disrepair is called the janitor (...) because escalating decay is the result of someone not being the janitor, and certainly not a good one. So, in the long term it pays off for everyone that society is a good guardian of community values”*. But Wilberg also offers a critical perspective and points out that there are some examples of neighbourhood associations being responsible for maintenance of publicly owned property, where the result has been inadequate.

5.5 Mapping and assessing the building stock

Vesterhus advocates for better systems to understand the state of the buildings. He argues that we should first understand the buildings’ fire-safety and security conditions, in addition to the technical infrastructure. That is essential to understand what the buildings are suitable for. *“We way too often start from the wrong end and try to push some political need on to a building. Yet often, there is a discrepancy between what it is actually built for and what it allegedly should be used as (...). Thus, we should have a more strategic approach to documenting and digitalizing during the process of investigating future use. It could also save a whole lot of time for the architect in the continued development process”*.

Vesterhus also points to the need of digitalizing and streamline processes connected to short-term lease models. He argues that this exists for long-term contracts, but not for temporary, short-term uses, e.g., in Old Munch. *"We should build a digital foundation for the building, to better streamline and automate these processes (...). Anything from digitalizing room numbers and locking systems, to payment and signing solutions. The municipality spends ridiculous amounts on processing such things, they don't have the system for it"*.

Vesterhus was himself involved in creating the website Enterspace in 2015. The aim was to function as a link between owners of vacated space and possible tenants (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). The idea was to facilitate smarter use of vacated premises and create an arena where landlords, tenants and other stakeholders could find each other. The website is no longer operational. Unfortunately, the project was not much discussed during the interview, and attempts to later learn more about why the project was terminated were not successful. However, Vesterhus does emphasize that knowledge about vacated buildings should be made more available for relevant stakeholders, and that there should be continued attempts to find better solutions for communicating vacated properties. Arentz similarly argues that there is no well-functioning service that communicates the location of, extent of, or information about vacated buildings, or services that attempt to gather local insight or arrange for bottom-up initiatives. *"As of now, Facebook groups are the only platforms where engaged stakeholders are active, because no other alternatives exist"*. She further emphasizes that whilst there exist many good solutions in other cities and countries *"the challenge in Oslo is that someone needs to manage it. And the way it is now, the municipality doesn't have the resources"*. Arentz further states that such kind of digital tools should not be developed by the municipality themselves, rather, *"we could accomplish a lot of the municipality set aside some funding and allowed another actor to organize it"*. If the municipality were to develop an app or a website, it would quickly become extremely expensive *"and it wouldn't work at all, just like they have been doing with Old Munch"*. Whether Arentz is referring to the same website as Vesterhus is not certain, but Vesterhus does emphasize that they have been working on a website allowing private actors to submit rent requests for the different venues of Old Munch. *"We have been fighting tooth and nail to get permission to make the website. It shows how there are many things that would've easily been solved in a private setting, that are unnecessarily cumbersome in the public sector"*.

According to Apall-Olsen, the municipal real estate managers need improved knowledge about the buildings they manage. *"The public sector doesn't have an adequate portfolio management to understand enough about our buildings"*. She refers to the Green list as an interesting approach to better understand our physical building stock, and the potential for re-use. The suggestion about a green list can be found in *Kulturmiljømelding 2021-2023* (Eng: the Cultural environmental notice), a political notice that describes the status, challenges, opportunities and measures within the field of the cultural environmental policy (Oslo municipality, 2021). The goals of the notice are amongst

others to contribute to achieving climate and sustainability objectives through conservation and development; to safeguard cultural environments through a knowledge based and targeted management; and to consider and communicate cultural environments as resources in urban development processes (Oslo Municipality, 2021). As stated by the former City Antiquary Janne Wilberg: *"Demolition should not be at the top of the agenda, but reuse should"* (Røed, 2021). Wilberg, who argues that cultural heritage conservation *"is a gift to the green shift"*, explains that the green list would focus on *"the 89 percent"*, being the number of buildings in Oslo that are not formally protected or listed. *"We believe that the true potential, what will be of significance in terms of climate, is the 89%"*. She insists that we cannot tear down existing buildings uncritically, and that climate considerations are the key reason as to why we should safeguard the existing building stock. Further, we should learn from good re-use projects that have been carried out on formally protected buildings and bring along the same principles and methods on the remaining building stock.

"Through mapping out the different areas in the city and by identifying the cultural environmental values in planning, such cultural values can be put on a so-called Green list, where a greater degree of change and transformation is allowed". (Cultural heritage notice, 2021, own translation). In the notice, it is argued that the current legislation does not facilitate the conservation of buildings that lack a formal protection status. The Green list is thus about identifying solid and well-functioning buildings, advocating for less demolition and more reuse (Røed, 2021). Wilberg points out that it is not the City Antiquary that should be responsible for such a list, but rather the Planning and Building Agency (PBE). As they are responsible for large area zoning plans, and large zoning plans in general, they have the best opportunity to influence the development.

Wilberg illustrates the need for such a list by looking at Løren. The former industrial area Løren, has during the last two decades been the subject of vast development and population growth, growing from roughly 1000 inhabitants before the urban transformation started (Bjerkestrand, 2022) to 11.455 in 2023 (Bydelsfakta, 2023a). The transformation was initiated when the real estate developer Selvaag bought a large military camp in 1999 (Bjerkestrand, 2022). Wilberg, who at the time was employed in the *Forsvarsbygg* (Eng: Norwegian Defense Estates Agency), worked with how existing buildings with cultural heritage value could be incorporated into a new urban setting. She was responsible for a national protection plan of military buildings of cultural heritage value. This was according to Wilberg how they were able to conserve Kanonhallen and some other important identity markers. *"If we at the time [of the development process at Løren, authors note] had known that they would remove everything else, we would have tried to conserve larger parts of the camp. Those that grew up in the area, and return years later, won't recognize any infrastructure or any buildings, except from the few that we were able to keep. For urban development to be successful, you need to bring along some identity markers, to provide a sense of history for the area"*. Wilberg points out that this is one of the ambitions of the green list,

to help bring along qualities of the past in the development of the future. Apall-Olsen highlights the same aspect and argues that many buildings provide value for the local sense of identity and affiliation, despite not being formally or legally protected or listed. Further, Apall-Olsen believes that existing buildings contribute to a greater degree of innovation in urban development. They make us “ponder on how to relate to our surroundings”. She notes that in areas where developers “start from a clean sheet”, not having to regard existing buildings, we often end up with “incredibly uniform neighbourhoods”. The photograph from Løren by Dan Neegard (figure 30), is described as iconic by the author, showing “the very symbol of anti-human urban development in Oslo” (Lundgaard, 2021). It has been rampant on social media, in chronicles, in online debate forums and has been shown in lectures I myself have attended at the university. It is interesting to consider whether the area would have been less debated and the new buildings less uniform, if old buildings had played a greater role in the area.



Figure 30: Løren. (Photography by Dan P. Neegard, 2021)

Wilberg also emphasizes that a justification for the green list is that many buildings that become threatened with demolition in urban transformation processes are of very good condition. She argues that sparing the buildings “constitutes a good resource management”. However, in such processes of extensive transformation, Wilberg argues that if a building is not formally protected or listed, the ship has sailed, and PBE are unable to handle them. Thus, for such a list to be enforceable, Wilberg says that an amendment of the legislation might be necessary. However, she emphasizes that it is just as much about negotiation, early dialogue and about giving justified

guidance to developers. *“One aspect is the formalities, but another is what signals are given”*. Further, the former City Antiquary argues that such attitudes to reuse could be better incorporated into existing plans and VPORs.

Whilst the green list for now remains an idea, a group of students at the School of Architecture Oslo seems to have had a similar idea. Their project, that is also named The Green List, focus solely on the environmental aspect and illustrate the material resources of “the 89 %”. The result of the student-initiated project is the website www.gronnliste.no. The website further elaborates Wilberg’s above reasoning, arguing that the existing building stock, despite not being listed or protected, constitutes a high resource value. They have looked further into the environmental impacts of demolition and reuse, where some key points from their references are highlighted in the textbox below:

In a year the construction industry of Norway generates close to two million tons of waste, whereas almost half of it derives from demolition of existing buildings. Each year roughly 22.000 buildings are destructed, amounting to more 60 every single day (SSB, 2021). Many of the buildings being demolished are in a good condition. The demolition is often justified by the need of optimizing energy sufficiency, due to poor isolation and substantial needs of heating. Consequently, new construction can appear more climate friendly. However, the GHG-emissions from energy use connected to heating and operation of existing buildings are minimal (Grønn Byggallianse, 2021).

The fact that the building-, construction- and property sector still accounts for 16 % of Norway’s total GHG-emissions is due to substantial CO₂ emissions from extracting, processing and shipping materials connected to construction (Asplan Viak, 2019)

In the case of demolition, it can take more than 60 years before a new building has equalized the greenhouse gas emissions deriving from new construction, compared to conserving an existing building. Each demolition case and each new building therefore brings us further away from the target of 50% greenhouse gas reduction in 2030 compared to the emission level in 1990. (Fufa et al, 2020).

Based on www.gronnliste.no

The student-initiated Green List highlights the material resources of the buildings that are not listed, formally conserved through PBL or legally protected. The values are based on an ongoing work by Oslo Municipality and Enova to develop reference values for GHG-emissions of new construction in a life cycle perspective. Hence, the buildings demonstrate the amount of CO₂

equivalents each building represents, valued by the number of kilograms CO₂e it would cost to construct a new similar building of the same size. In total, the buildings represent 13 million tons CO₂e (of similar new construction), which is equal to the total yearly emissions of the Norwegian petroleum industry (gronnlister.no n.d.). An extract of the website visualized map is shown in figure 31.



Figure 31: The Green List students' project. (www.gronnlister.no)

In this section, the research questions are discussed in light of the study's theorization and findings. The three sub research questions form the structure of the discussion, and ultimately the main research question is addressed. The topic is complex and there are many aspects to consider. For that reason, the findings section is partly communicated as a discussion, and not all relevant aspects are highlighted again in this chapter. Instead, the reader should see the latter chapter as a part of the overall discussion.

6.1 What are the potential impacts of reusing vacated buildings?

The theorization and the findings, both through document analysis and insights from the data gathered through interviews, tend to focus on one or several aspects of sustainability. Consequently, the potential impacts will be discussed based on the three dimensions: social-, economic- and environmental sustainability.

6.1.1 Social impacts

Going back to the overall justifications for conservation, several have a social dimension. First, several authors emphasize old buildings' significance as identity markers in the city. Tiesdell et al (1996) argues that old buildings can contribute to an areas' cultural identity; Carmona (2021) states that they convey a sense of place; Cherci (2015) suggests they create affiliation and local identity; and Norberg-Schulz (1932) describes how our (people's) identity presupposes the identity of the physical place. Their suggestions are supported by the informants, and particularly highlighted by those with a background from the field of cultural heritage. Wilberg similarly highlights that identity markers of the past are important when developing the city of tomorrow. Besides, both Wilberg and Apall-Olsen argue that many buildings, despite not having a formal degree of protection, can be of importance for the local sense of identity.

There is a connected matter when discussing the physical buildings' ability to influence our local and individual identity, feeling of belonging and affiliation. Some authors (Leon & Schilling, 2017; Yakabu et al, 2017; Branas et al, 2012) argue that the "opposite" of conservation – the act of leaving buildings to fall into disrepair – have negative social impacts. The broken window theory depicts a notion of one broken window leading to several more, and the authors show increased levels of vandalism, crime, residents feeling unsafe, public health issues etc. As described before, there is a lack of research on these social effects of vacated buildings in a context like Oslo, that is not characterized by same extent of vacancy rates. The same goes to whether property prices of a neighbourhood are affected by vacated and dilapidated buildings. Villa Sorgenfri has been

depicted as a building where persistent neglect has led it to a state of demolition (figure 32), and further research should aim to uncover the effects of such a building on the neighbourhood it exists within.



Figure 32: Villa Sorgenfri and its surroundings (Photography by Dan P. Neegard, 2021)

As stated by Skrede & Andersen (2019), the way we ascribe local identity to an area, should not be reduced to physical form. Yet, they (and the above authors in the description of identity markers) convey that there is a connection between the built environment and how we experience places. Consequently, it is reasonable to believe that reuse and renewal of buildings like Villa Sorgenfri would positively contribute to the nearby resident's affiliation and pride to their own neighbourhood.

Myers & Wyatt (2004, p. 286) referred to vacated buildings as “a potential resource for reuse and development”. For municipally owned buildings, these might just as well constitute a potential resource for improved social services, leisure, and meeting places for children and youth. The previously described Ormsundveien 12 illustrated an example in which a local association suggested to renovate the vacated building and prepare it for residential units. The aim was to contribute to the municipality's ambition to establish a third housing sector. Whilst it has not been realised, due to the legislation preventing the municipality to sell the building below market price level, it illustrates a potential. This potential to create social arenas, neighbourhood meeting places, workshops and leisure clubs is arguably higher in vacated, old buildings, than in new construction. As phrased by Jacobs (1961, p. 248) “a depreciated building requires less income than one which has not yet paid off its capital costs”. Consequently, they could present a well suitable arena for such activities. However, it is presupposed that the cost of renovating an

old, vacated building, is lower than regular (new) construction, which certain examples such as the Poster house and Ormsundveien have illustrated that is not the case – at least not when the municipality is the customer.

The potential resource for social development is also interesting in the case of Munch. The building from 1963 arguably has protection worthy qualities considering its significance as the legacy of Edward Munch, its architectural features and its adaption to the surrounding landscape. As accounted for initially, such physical qualities can by itself be of significance for our sense of affiliation and identity to an area. However, whilst the debate at the time of relocation brought about several arguments of Munch's significant role as a part of the local identity of Tøyen, the informants argue that the museum to a small extent has engaged with the local community. Thus, they cast doubt on whether the museum has contributed to a sense of place on Tøyen, especially considering groups exposed to living conditions challenges. With that in mind, it is worth exploring whether temporary urbanism can constitute an effective tool to make accessible what was previously perceived to be reserved or intended for another socio-economic group.

As seen, Old Munch has been – and will continue to be used in 2023 – for temporary activities. Temporary urbanism is a strategy that has been widely adopted to revitalize marginalized urban areas in cities (Madanipour, 2018). However, there are critics of this approach (Colomb, 2012; O'Callaghan & Lawton, 2015), who argue that it can lead to gentrification and displacement of existing residents, especially if it is co-opted by policymakers and commercial actors as part of an entrepreneurial agenda. Similarly, they argue that temporary urbanism may diminish the original purpose of providing cheap spaces for marginalized groups and that activities which do not generate financial value become more difficult to undertake.

So, what should the approach to temporary urbanism be in the Norwegian context, considering the conflicting views on its implications? Can it be a socially engaged practice, contributing positively in terms of social sustainability? Or should we, quite on the contrary, be careful to use temporary urbanism due to the possible negative outcomes? As emphasized previously in this study, we should be careful to negate the value of temporary urbanism based on studies written within a context vastly different from that of Oslo. In many of the studies, temporary urbanism is discussed in light of its character as a tool to regenerate large, unpopulated areas, following historical events, e.g., the reunification of Germany and the suburban flight from American rust-belt regions (Colomb, 2012; Madanipour, 2018). The effects of such strategies are not necessarily transferable to the effects of implementing temporary urbanism within the more dispersed and small-scale nature of vacancy that exists in Oslo. As stated by Tardiveau and Mallo (2014), the mainstream scholarly discussions on temporary urbanism often tend to focus on intermediary use of post-industrial sites in neglected and dilapidated states. The common criticism is based on

some creative and intermediate activities persuading the real estate sector of the area's potential, consequently resulting in the creative actors' eventual displacement. The Oslo map of vacancy in the previous section did however clearly show that this is not the case in Oslo in 2023. The vacated building portfolio is dispersed and represent a variation of land use objectives, whereas for example kindergartens by far exceed former industrial plants.

It has nonetheless been illustrated that more nuanced approaches to temporary urbanism exists, and that it is not necessarily either good or bad. Bragaglia & Rossignolo (2021) perspective on temporary urbanism falls somewhere between the critical and the positive approaches, presenting a middle ground that allows for a nuanced understanding of the concept. They illustrated the social nature of the temporary activities, providing homeless shelters, work training, legal counselling for immigrants, free masks handout during the COVID-19 pandemic etc. Many of the same concepts are illustrated in other projects, such as the Danish Institut for X, and not least in Old Munch through the XMunchX project. Bragaglia & Rossignolo (2021) call for a conscious attitude towards how the contradictory tendencies of the just- and the neoliberal city can be intertwined in temporary urbanism. In the case of Old Munch, political case documents, the announcement for temporary letting, and the attitudes of the informants during interviews, indicate that such a conscious attitude has been present. The announcement of temporary letting did for instance emphasize that certain organizations would be prioritized, e.g., those working with children and youths, local roots activities, free or inexpensive services etc. Further, rather than choosing a big commercial actor to run the café, Forandringshuset was chosen, a non-for-profits organization having local youth running the café as part of a work-training programme.

But, as stated by Madanipour (2018), the temporary activities are just that – temporary. In the interview, Pedersen similarly notes that short-term, temporary solutions provide little value to the local community, as local needs must be solved long-term. However, as illustrated in the case study of Les Grands Voisins, the key is *“to understand how far the temporary can affect the long-term city”* (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021, p. 14). The case illustrated that despite the temporary nature of the homeless shelters, the activities that took place during the five-year period contributed to the implementation of an emergency reception centre in the permanent development. Further, it showed that entrepreneurs and start-up businesses were able to enter the ordinary rental market as the five-year period had provided them a financial basis for further operation of the business. Similar experiences were illustrated by Vesterhus, referring to intermediate co-working spaces in Landbrukskvartalet that helped start-ups test their ideas and find a customer base and a professional network.

The temporary nature of such activities is connected to the progress of determining permanent use for each individual building. At one point, when permanent use is decided and necessary construction permits are granted, the temporary use will come to an end. However, if the

municipality implement temporary urbanism as a long-term strategy for reactivation of vacated buildings, these social measures and activities can continue to exist. Not in the same building, but nonetheless they will exist. As pointed out by Madanipour (2018), spatial fluctuations and changes in demand will always leave behind some buildings without productive use. To hyperbole, temporary urbanism could be imagined as a touring social circus, going from one vacated building to another, offering cultural and social activities with an aim to identify and implement local needs and services. Not only would the aim be to provide these services during the “circus”, but also to influence future and permanent use of the buildings.

Continuing with the topic of temporary urbanism at hand, there are several aspects worth discussing, which makes for a good gradual transition from social to the economic impacts. Madanipour (2018) argues that the outcome is often unbalanced when the temporary activities cease, not in favour of those in precarious situations. The rationale is a situation in which some marginalized group has been allowed access to an area temporarily, and the real estate developers ultimately are the big winners. The cultural activities that have been temporarily finding place, have contributed to land valorisation. However, the very people that have helped create a good reputation for the area and increased its economic value, are soon displaced as the real estate developer now can demand a way higher rent than what the marginalized groups can afford. Thus, he criticizes that the flexibility and benefits of temporary urbanism, that is often cheerfully described, is only temporary.

This might very well be true for the cases referred to by Colomb (2012), Madanipour (2018) and O’Callaghan (2015). Nevertheless, it can appear like certain authors describe temporary urbanism as if something that existed only for a short period and then ceased to exist, never actually existed at all. There seems to be an impression that positive impacts from interim use of places do not count, if they do not exist forever. Looking at Old Munch as an example and imagining for a second a scenario where the former museum is sold in January 2024. It is sold to the private organization AllForProfits AS, with no intention of offering work-training for adolescents or displaying art exhibitions for minority culture groups. With no intention of having a workshop in the basement. In fact, none of the social services and activities that have existed temporarily are carried forward in the new programming of the building. Does that automatically negate the value of what has been finding place temporarily? Or is it possible to imagine that the society has benefited from the social activities and programmes, e.g., that several teenagers now have real work experiences on their resume and have obtained knowledge and practical skills? That these might continue to work, rather than receiving social welfare aid from the public. That the society might have benefited from a troubled kid learning that he is interested in craftsmanship and that he will pursue that as a career path, rather than loitering on the street? Or would we have been better off if the building was sold to AllForProfits AS right away?

The point of the imaginary story above is that even though temporary activities cease to exist, the impacts they potentially have for the local society in terms of work-training, education, knowledge sharing, learning of practical skills etc., do not go away simultaneously. It might just as well be lasting knowledge and experiences, that have been of considerable benefit for the greater society, looking at it from a bigger picture. This also constitutes a clear economic perspective. As emphasized by Arentz, a targeted investment in social activities within these temporary programmes could contribute to a reduced pressure on municipal services over time. A successful work training programme could in turn result in less people being dependent on social benefits. The city district of Gamle Oslo has the highest share of people between 21-29 years that have not completed high school (Bydelsfakta, 2023b). Thus, the potential of such activities to help train and motivate adolescences to pursue a study programme or a carrier path, should not be overseen.

6.1.2 Economic impacts

From socio-economic deliberations to more tangible numbers; there is little doubt that vacated buildings constituting a waste of economic resources.

The theory review has shown that there are significant costs connected to vacated buildings, that they represent no utility value and no earnings for the owners (Stendebakken, 2018; Yakubu et al, 2017). The costs are typically connected to MOM (maintenance, operation, management), capital, ground rent, insurance, energy, security etc. Stendebakken (2018) has additionally found that these costs are often disregarded when it is decided whether purpose-built buildings should be refurbished, or on the contrary if the given service is to move into a newly constructed building.

Several examples have been illustrated through the findings. In 2018, the estimated annual operation cost for Old Munch, without productive use, was estimated to 8.6 MNOK (note 90/2018). This has increased to roughly 13 MNOK due to high inflation and large increases in energy prices (interview, Apall-Olsen). The municipality has used 75,3 MNOK on acquiring, operating, maintaining, and finally refurbishing Skar camp to prepare it for sale, all this time never having taken it into use (Borg et al, 2022). Annual maintenance for the residential block Hagegata 13 at Tøyen is estimated to 500.000, and it has been vacated for the last nine years (Pettrem et al, 2021). 5,9 % of Residential building KFs buildings were empty in 2019, with a total market value estimated to 3 billion NOK (Kirkebirkeland, 2023). As stated by Wilberg, this is an expression “*of poor resource management*”. Myers & Wyatt (2004) argue that the buildings represent “*a potential resource for reuse and development*” (p. 286). Reusing vacated buildings can allow the owners to generate new income through new uses, thus restoring the utility value and profitability of the building. To have systems in place allowing us to more quickly clarify future use of vacated municipal buildings, would constitute a considerable saving for the municipal treasury.

Other authors have demonstrated that vacated buildings affect surrounding property prices (NVPC, 2005; Han, 2014). Whilst the Philadelphia study referred to by NVPC (2005) claims that property prices were reduced by net 7.624 USD if they were located less than 50 meters away from a vacated building, Han (2014) showed to the distance decay impact, i.e., the closer the distance, the greater the impact on property value, and further the time aspect, i.e., that short term vacancies to a little extent affects property values.

Whether these findings are transferable to Oslo has not been answered through this study, but Villa Sorgenfri can again serve as a good subject for discussion. Whilst perhaps speculative, it is reasonable to believe that the property prices of the apartments with balconies located 8,5 meters away from the dilapidated orange villa, would benefit from having a neighbour building with vital use and where persistent maintenance is carried out. Similarly, many of the vacated buildings in Oslo are described as eye-sores for the local communities, and may affect how the area is perceived. See figure 33 for a selection.

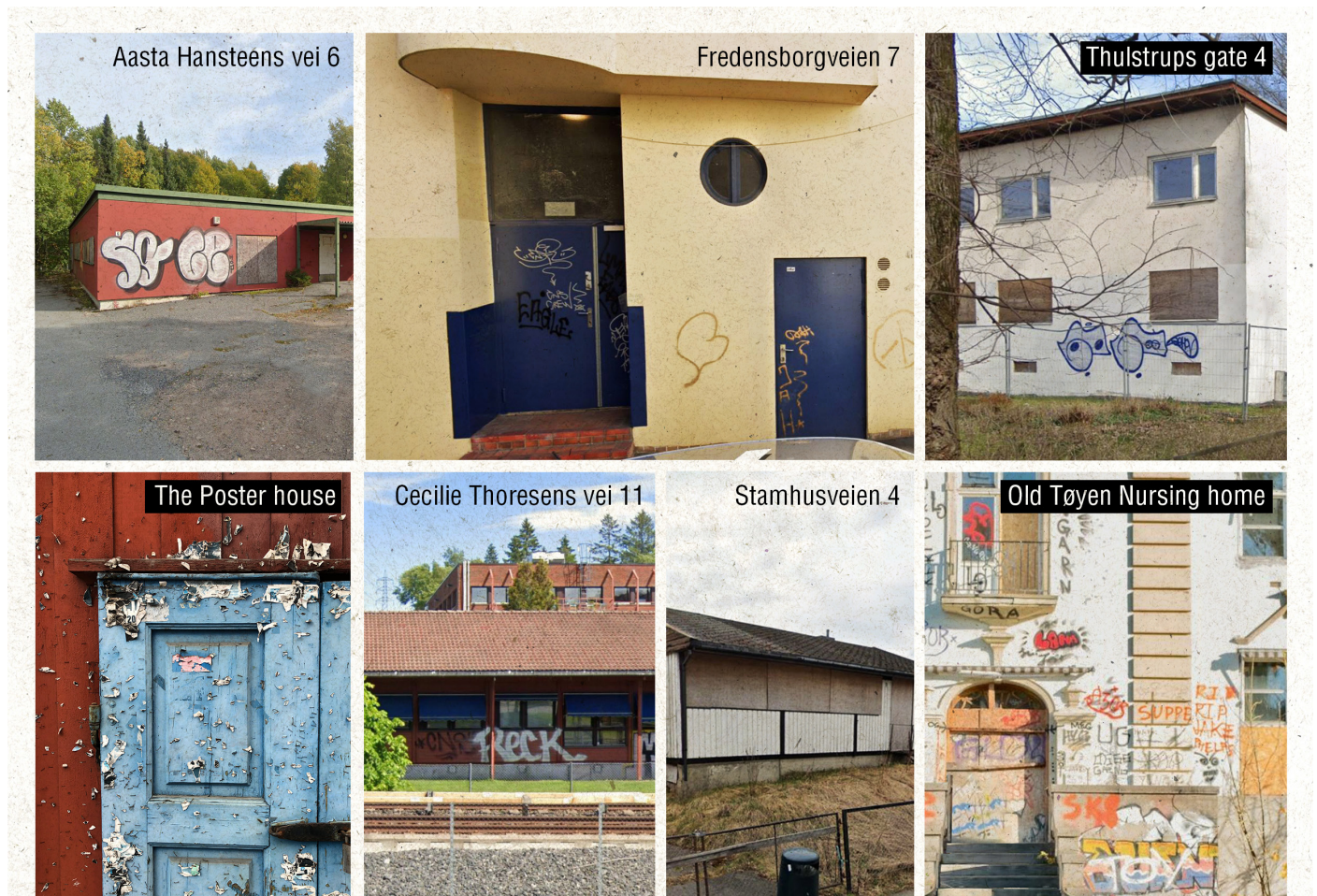


Figure 33: Collage of a selection vacated municipal buildings (private photographs and Google Street View)

This is however as much a call for more research on the phenomenon, as it is my own reflections. I have myself lived in a joint ownership (Nor: sameie) housing block in City District Gamle Oslo that is again and again subjected to graffiti, where the 50 shades of white on the façade perfectly illustrates the repeated attempts to hide any traces of vandalism and unwanted activities. Whilst this is slightly on the side of vacated buildings, the residents concern and eager to cover up the

graffiti resemble the ideas of the broken window theory. In meetings with the joint ownership members, several have expressed concern that a graffiti covered façade negatively impacts the reputation and consequently the property prices of the neighbourhood. The issue and similar concerns exist in various places in the city, apparent by a simple web-search using key words such as graffiti, Oslo, property-prices and vandalism. A news article in the economy and business newspaper E24 titled "*remove graffiti before the home-sale*" argue that a block covered with graffiti negatively affects the real estate price (Sættem & Aamodt-Hansen, 2015). The literature has illustrated that vacated buildings commonly have not only graffiti on the facades, but several visible signs of neglect (Han, 2014). In Oslo as well, Villa Sorgenfri and several other vacated municipal buildings, are similarly characterized by blocked or broken windows, peeling paint, graffiti, and an overall appearance of decay and dilapidation, as seen in the figure on the last page. However, at risk of inaccurately describing the vacated building stock of Oslo, there are many of the buildings that appear to be in a good state, at least based on what can be seen with the naked eye.

As highlighted by Wilberg, the escalating decay of buildings is a result of "*someone not being the janitor*". Considering the gradual decay of vacated buildings, actual use is highlighted as the best form of conservation. This is emphasized both in terms of temporary and permanent use. Colomb (2012) demonstrates that one of the key rationales underpinning temporary urbanism is the (free) maintenance of public property, and Madanipour (2018) similarly depicts how temporary tenants help reduce the "*dark appearance of decline*" (p. 1099). Protecting by using (Omland et al, 2007) has become an important principle in Norwegian Cultural Heritage conservation, supporting the notion that a building has better preconditions for a healthy life if it contains users that look after it. Arentz demonstrates this further by looking to examples in Copenhagen, where ad-hoc initiatives are given access to vacated buildings, and according to her contributes to a great extent in rehabilitating and redeveloping them.

Another aspect is that of functional diversity, constituting both a financial and a social aspect. As seen, Tiesdell et al (1996) argues that older buildings' reduced prices make it possible for economically marginal but socially crucial activities to exist in the city. Similarly, Jacobs (1961) claims that new buildings only allow for those who can support high costs of new construction, and subsequently that old buildings are necessary for "*vigorous streets and districts to grow*" (Jacobs, 1961, p. 244). As illustrated, Wilberg's argument resembles Jacobs', arguing that not everyone can afford state-of-the-art standard, and that we must allow the mediocre but functioning buildings to exist in the city. Glaeser (2012) offers an opposing view and argues that we cannot restrict new construction and impose conservation of old ones, as this will be opposed to the main principles of supply and demand. If the demand rises, according to Glaeser, we must build more, and "*when cities restrict new construction, they become more expensive*" (Glaeser, 2012, p. 11). Myself, I do not understand Jacobs – or Wilberg – as to depreciate new construction.

Rather, they call for a diversity of building ages and the juxtaposition of both old and new buildings in the cities. Again, it is the narrative that “*a depreciated building requires less income than one which has not yet paid off its capital costs*” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 248), and that this allows for a diversity of tenants, not only well-established chain businesses, high profit, or heavily subsidized institutions (e.g., public museums, operas etc.) Nevertheless, constructing more buildings is not synonymous with demolishing all existing old ones, and at my discretion, the two claims are not necessarily contradicting each other.

6.1.3 Environmental impacts

The environmental aspects are only briefly reviewed in this thesis, as a part of the bird’s eye view approach to understand the possible approaches to and implications of reactivating vacated buildings. As a student from another field than that of environmental and climate research, I try to point out some effects with caution, aware of the complexity.

However, the authors referred to in this study present solid arguments to reuse the existing building stock. Stendebakken (2018) offers criticism towards those justifying demolition by using the notion of new buildings as more energy-efficient, often wrapped in terms like zero-emission buildings or passive houses. This is supported in another study (Fufa et al, 2021), that illustrates how it may take 10-80 years to compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions deriving from new construction, even though the new building has reduced yearly emissions. A case study (Asplan Viak, 2021a) found that upgrading existing building stock resulted in lower greenhouse gas emissions than demolition and new construction. They also found that it was cheaper to upgrade than to rebuild in 20 out of 24 buildings, whereas it was considerable cheaper for 15 of the buildings. A second study (Asplan Viak, 2021b) showed that when it is decided to rebuild, rather than reuse, the new construction is generally larger than the original and demolished buildings. As remarked in the study, we cannot solve the climate challenges by increasing energy sufficiency, if we simultaneously increase consumption (Asplan Viak, 2021b).

Whilst this might be easy to understand, the challenge lies in the changing societal needs making buildings outdated. Several authors (Omland et al, 2007; Lynch, 1984) have highlighted how this represents a key conflict within the conservation discourse, as old buildings, despite their inherent values, might not be fit to cover the needs of tomorrow. Adaptive reuse has consequently emerged as a well-suited strategy to safeguard both cultural and the environmental impacts by reusing rather than demolishing (Fufa et al, 2021; Bullen & Love, 2011; Cherci, 2015). This is a necessary approach to reach the Paris agreement objectives (Fufa et al, 2021).

The informants, perhaps not surprisingly considering their involvement in work with empty buildings, similarly emphasize the possible environmental benefits by reusing vacated buildings.

However, they do emphasize a reluctance to invest in reuse within the field of urban development, in particular due to the perceived financial risk of taking on such a project. This marks the beginning of the discussion on existing barriers.

6.2 What are the most significant barriers to reactivate vacated buildings?

Both the theory and the findings in this thesis have identified and carved out various challenges to the reactivation of vacated buildings. In this discussion, they are reduced to three main categories. First, the substantial need for investments to prepare vacated buildings for new use is discussed, referred to as the maintenance backlog. Second, the sector division of the municipal real estate management. And finally, legislative barriers.

6.2.1 The maintenance backlog – who bears the cost?

The financial barrier is quite unequivocally highlighted by the informants as the biggest challenge in terms of reactivating empty buildings. It is referred to as the maintenance backlog. A situation where a persistent lack of maintenance has driven buildings to decay, and which has transformed several buildings into investment objects. The municipal, vacated buildings are often characterized by needing substantial investments to prepare them for future use. Amongst the informants, there tends to be a common conception that the municipality allows the decay to continue until the investments to restore the buildings become so substantial that there is no other alternative than either demolishing or selling the property. The Audit Office report (2023) demonstrates how maintenance of Old Munch was put (close to) a standstill due to the decision to relocate. Several years later the National Theatre had a desire to establish a permanent scene in the former museum building, but pulled the breaks as the costs became too high. It perhaps serves as an example of how inadequate maintenance can lead to challenges in reactivating such buildings as the productive use ceases.

The case of Munch is, despite the 2013 political decision to relocate, an example where the maintenance was reduced way before the productive use ceased. The case is however the same with the de facto vacated buildings, where the Audit Office report (2023) clearly revealed that the municipality did not execute an adequate degree of maintenance on their own, vacated buildings, many of which with some degree of protection. Further, it is stated that the persistent lack of maintenance of vacated buildings “*lead to decay, deteriorated real estate values and increased maintenance expenses in a long-term perspective*” (p. 9) as new buildings for municipal purposes must be leased or acquired.

Representatives from the municipal real estate management bodies contributed to the report. They emphasized that the vacated buildings were not prioritized when there were other pressing

issues in within their organisation's area of responsibility (Audit Office, 2023). The reasoning makes perfect sense – it is easy to understand that an enterprise with responsibility for nursing homes prioritizes investing in new and desperately needed beds for patients rather than repairing “the broken windows” of an abandoned hospital. The budgets are tight, and had they been big enough this would (hopefully) be an unnecessary study.

When the needed investments become too high, the alternative is often to put the building up for sale. The informants show more opposing views on whether selling may constitute a correct strategy in certain cases. Wilberg argues that selling might very well be the correct option for certain buildings and depicts a notion of the successful sale of the former main library Deichman, where several demands were placed on potential buyers. For example, it was required that the building should continue to address the public and have an outward-facing character. Apall-Olsen refers to the same matter as scandalous, and Arentz similarly considers it as unfortunate. Her main concern, which is also similarly expressed by other informants, is that these kinds of public buildings are often primarily based on a beer-sales-model if they come into the hands of commercial actors.

However, it is not as easy as leaving the matter in the hands of the private developers, mainly due to two economic considerations. First, developers are eager to tear down existing building if it unleashes a greater potential for development or higher degree of utilization of the property. The informants have highlighted several examples of this, such as Økern, Løren, and the much-debated Sotakiosken, a small, listed kiosk that the local community have fought tooth and nail to conserve as the area is about to be further developed. Second, reuse comes with a perceived financial risk.

As accounted for, there are few that oppose the positive impacts from reusing existing buildings and limiting new construction. Yet, there seems to be a reluctance to take on reuse projects. The Green Building Alliance list some common perceptions in the building industry: It is more expensive to rehabilitate than to reuse; only new buildings can be green and environmentally certificated; it is difficult to utilize areas efficiently in old buildings; and it is difficult to comply with technical regulations. However, according to the authors, these are myths contributing to unnecessary demolition (Grønn Byggallianse, 2019).

Bullen & Love (2011) indeed demonstrates that many consider it more cost-efficient to demolish and rebuild than to redevelop an existing building. 53% of the respondents in their study consider the “*inability to estimate economic viability of adaptive reuse*” to be a barrier for this kind of development (Bullen & Love, 2011, p. 416). The Architectural company MAD proudly demonstrates the greenhouse gas emissions reduction in their pilot project KA13 (Nordby, 2021), but simultaneously states that it has neither been simple nor cheap to carry out (Entra, n.d.).

Langston et al (2008) quite on the contrary argues that converting an existing building is generally cheaper than new construction as many of the components already exist. Thus, reusing the structural elements should entail a significant cost reduction. However, they do emphasize that cost driving problems can be encountered, such as asbestos or foundation subsidence (Langston et al, 2008). The informants similarly offer different perspectives to the matter. Apall-Olsen argues that reuse projects do bring about higher costs and greater risk, whilst the former City Antiquary Wilberg argues that if the developers would just listen more carefully to the City Antiquary and limit the comprehensive interventions to old buildings, the costs could be reduced.

Whether it is in fact more expensive or on the contrary cheaper is debated, and highly context dependent. The various perceptions and claims apparent through the literature and the interviews, may all have roots in reality. The essence is that each individual buildings in a sense constitutes its own reality. Stendebakken (2018) review of 24 protected buildings demonstrated that the cost of rehabilitation of formally conserved buildings ranged between 9.352 –129.042 NOK / square meter and 23.332 –131.141 NOK/ sq m for legally protected buildings. The author emphasizes that these figures should not without further consideration be used as a basis for cost assessments of the rehabilitation of protected buildings. However, they give a picture of the magnitude of the costs, and it illustrates the wide range. Again, it serves to illustrate that each building must be carefully assessed individually, and that a best-practice model for adaptive reuse cannot be implemented without considering the significant contextual differences.

The increased costs may, according to Stendebakken (2018), be connected to the reduced flexibility that comes with protection. The aim is to conserve the cultural heritage, and cost overruns cannot easily be solved through budget cuts like with new construction (Stendebakken, 2018) Real estate managers' previous experiences of such cost overruns, or even the reports of others' experiences, may contribute to what the Green Building Alliance referred to as rumours connected to reuse. The study by Nesbakken et al (2015) demonstrates that legally protected buildings are almost as often threatened by decay as buildings with no protection, and that challenges in upgrading a building in line with changed needs can lead to a lack of maintenance and ultimately vacancy. It is argued that protection is not always the best measure to safeguard old buildings (Nesbakken et al, 2015). Although the study is not from Oslo specifically, it illustrates a common perception. Namely the challenges of adapting buildings with some degree of protection to changed needs. This can however be addressed from two perspectives. The former, as partially communicated in the study by Nesbakken et al (2015), is that strict and formal protection limits the room for manoeuvre to adapt and change the building, and that it consequently falls into disrepair. A second perspective, that is emphasized by Wilberg and Apall-Olsen, is that the level of cultural heritage knowledge and competence is not sufficient within the real estate management organisations. Hence, the perceived risks and belief that *nothing is allowed* lead to *nothing being done*.

6.2.2 Legislation

The discussion concerning whether protection is an adequate tool for safeguarding and stimulating use of the built environment will not be elaborated further in this section but will briefly be revisited in chapter 6.3.

The debate concerning the Planning and Building Act has been reviewed in chapters 4 and 5, and there is little existing research that can be used to further elaborate the discussion in light of vacated buildings. The legislative challenges are in particular connected to temporary use. Eriksen & Skajaa (2016) and Bjørberg demonstrates how the main principle in the Planning and Building Act is that technical regulations must be met in temporary projects to the same extent as for permanent projects. There are two possible ways to “get around this”, either re-zoning or applying for change in use and dispensations from technical regulations. The main concern is that this often demands a lot of resources and may be expensive and time consuming. Further, both the legal review and the informants state that the municipality has been assessing the applications very strictly, often resulting in rejected applications. Whilst all the informants emphasize that technical regulations are important to ensure good living conditions, light, ventilation, noise etc., the reasoning is that these requirements should not be as strict for projects that are time limited.

As seen, there have been several suggestions to improve flexibility for temporary reuse. Bjørberg was a contributor to developing the suggested rehab-TEK, that would replace other technical regulations in cases that concerned existing buildings rather than new construction. It was also suggested to introduce a new paragraph in the Act, that would provide a legal basis for exempting technical regulations (except essential fire and safety regulations) if the project was limited to a period of less than two years. The result was however neither the first nor the second, but an amendment of the Act, aiming to “*clarify the framework conditions in the law, so that the regulations are easier to understand and practice*” (Prop. 64 L 2020-2021, own translation). In the interview with Bjørberg, he expressed that the change was clarifying and promising. Arentz similarly consider the amendment to be a “*step in the right direction*”. However, she emphasizes that the best outcome would be to get a separate legal basis for temporary measures for existing buildings. The amendment was however not discussed with the other informants, as it was discovered after the interviews were conducted. Hopefully, the clarification of the legal basis for exemption from technical regulations will lead to a more predictable practice. Further research should aim to uncover whether the amendment in fact has the intended effect to create a clearer framework.

Whilst urban plans that determine future land use of the municipality is often developed by PBE and external consultants, the municipality has a key role as planning authorities in control of the overall land-use (Holth & Winge, 2019). Municipal masterplans and zoning plans set legally

binding restrictions for future development. As illustrated, such plans can also legally safeguard buildings from demolition through formal conservation. Apall-Olsen argues that planners and politicians must dare to use the already existing legal grounds to prevent the destruction of old and functioning buildings. Decisions that limit the potential of a property will often be unpopular amongst the opposite party, eager for as high profits and degrees of utilization as possible. According to Apall-Olsen, politicians must dare to stand their grounds, despite facing strong opposition from the other party. Further, both Apall-Olsen and the focus group of land-use planners from Multiconsult argue that certain land use objectives may contribute to a higher degree of flexibility for the real estate developer. If a vacated building is determined to Sentrumsformål (Eng: downtown purpose) in a new plan, it may give the developer a higher degree of freedom to program the building to a purpose that fits within their concept.

Two master's thesis both look into temporary urbanism in Copenhagen. They point out that attempts to carry out temporary activities in vacated buildings face the same issues as in Norway in regard to strict technical requirements (Isaksen, 2018). However, it is demonstrated that the municipality goes further than Norway in facilitating temporary use through land use planning. This is done by defining areas suited for temporary urbanism in the masterplan and in its provisions, and by using alternative planning approaches such as the plan-guide (Isaksen, 2018; Helgason, 2020). In terms of planning tools, the discussion would have been richer if representatives from PBE (Eng: Planning and Building Agency) were a part of the informants group. This did however not succeed.

5.2.3 The sectoral division

The sectoral division is emphasized as a challenge by several of the informants on multiple levels. It is regarded a challenge in the specific case of Old Munch; in municipal attempts to address the overall issue of vacated municipal buildings; and as a general issue slowing down municipal and planning processes.

Oslo is the capital city and the largest city of Norway. With 709.037 inhabitants it is almost 2.5 times as big as the second largest city Bergen. It is run with a parliamentary governance model, and structured with a City Government, a City Council with nine departments and several subordinate agencies and municipal enterprises. In addition, there are 15 City District Councils. The findings revealed that 13 different bodies manage municipally owned property, in addition to all the 15 city districts. However, the majority (67%) is managed by Oslo Building KF, an enterprise that is the result of a recent merger of three formerly separate enterprises within education, healthcare, and culture/sport. Residential Building KF (19%) is the second largest. Then, there is a big leap to the next managers, with EBY (4%), BYM (3%), Oslo Harbour KF (2%) and The Culture Agency (2%). The remaining 3% are distributed amongst all the previously mentioned agencies

and city districts. EBY, despite not managing a lot of property, is the municipal landowner, responsible for sales and acquisitions.

Apall-Olsen argues that the size of Oslo, not in terms of the land area but rather the size of the organization, has made it extremely challenging to work strategically. An AFI-report addresses the particular issues that arise in big cities. The authors emphasize that there has been an increased focus the last decades on addressing big city planning and management issues, to establish a clear capital city policy, and to solve city challenges in cooperation across disciplines and sectors (Brattbakk et al, 2016). The informants strongly confirm the statement of Folde (2021), who argues that sectoral division can lead to excessive specialization and poor coordination between disciplines and sectors, consequently slowing down municipal processing time. Arentz refers to Oslo as a multi-headed troll, where sectors are incapable of speaking with each other and are highly unaware of each other's work. Vesterhus similarly highlights that each agency is too concerned with their own political objectives, making the holistic point of view challenging.

The informants, representing various sectors and roles themselves, also to a certain degree illustrate the point through their own considerations of the other agencies and actors. Arentz (with her background as a curator in DOGA) depicts how little BYM understands about the field of arts; Vesterhus criticizes the Culture Agency for not understanding property management from an economic sustainability point of view; Pedersen criticize the administration for their static approach to urban development and lack of ability to go outside their comfort zone; and Apall-Olsen and Wilberg, both having experience from the field of cultural heritage, criticize Oslo Building KF for lacking knowledge about heritage buildings.

The Audit Office report (2023) concludes that Oslo's system to clarify future use of vacated buildings is satisfactory. The report clearly demonstrates that some of the challenges are closely connected the sectoral division. An attempt has been made by EBY to create a cross-sectoral forum to review and assess the vacated building portfolio. However, the participants EBY, Oslo Building KF, Residential Building KF, BYM and the Culture Agency have not been able to transfer properties between each other to cover each other's needs.

Apall-Olsen emphasize that Oslo lacks a proper reception centre for vacated buildings. She argues that it is not enough that municipal real estate managers meet every now and then, but that the municipality should have an interdisciplinary reception centre that works operationally with vacated buildings. Arentz supports this notion, but additionally states that *"it does not help at all when it only consists of the municipal agencies. It doesn't lead to any new input"*. She argues that the interdisciplinary groups should instead exist at a more local level, e.g., in City Labs, as it is a better suited level to identify and reach out to relevant stakeholders. The need for a reception centre is supported by several of the informants. A well-developed reception centre

could constitute the driving force for strategic approaches to reactivate vacated buildings. The exact organization of such a reception centre is not to be suggested here. However, some key discussions can be mentioned. As seen, Oslo has assigned this work to EBY, and that might very well be reasonable. As the municipal landowner they have first-hand access on relevant information about the building stock, and it is already within their objectives to coordinate urban development processes, develop areas for public and commercial purposes, acquire, dispose, manage and rent out property (Oslo municipality; nd c). The German ZZZ is on the contrary an example a similar task that has been outsourced to an external consultant business. The municipal agents are nonetheless involved, and the consultants are given access to key information as municipal representatives are included in the steering group of the project (URBACT, n.d.) A third option would be that the planning authorities, in this case PBE, would be the coordinating agency overseeing such a centre, perhaps better capable of facilitating an interplay between land-use planning and the objectives of the centre.

6.3 Which tools and approaches can be implemented to reactivate vacated buildings?

The aim of this study is not to determine what exact methods are best suited, or comprehensively review all the existing tools. Rather, it is to show some good practice examples and point out what kind of tools could potentially contribute to the identified issues in the context of Oslo. Consequently, not all examples from the theory review will be revisited. Instead, the focus will be those who can potentially be of relevance based on the findings of this study.

Addressing the financial aspect

The maintenance backlog and substantial need for investments in the vacated building stock is clearly identified as a challenge. It exacerbates the condition of vacated buildings and efforts to reactivate, but it is also highlighted as a direct cause for why buildings are ultimately left vacated. The best preventive measure is consequently increased budget items for regular and adequate maintenance of municipal buildings. As quite simply put by Wilberg: *"we must set aside a pot of cash (...), especially for the vacated buildings. Simply to catch up on the maintenance backlog"*.

Further, green investments must be made cheaper and more lucrative. As stated by Langston et al (2008), the mere focus on economic factors have *"contributed to destruction of buildings well short of their physical lives"* (p. 1710). Ellefsen (2003) highlights that the planning economy has been replaced with the market economy, and it is perhaps time to acknowledge that developers are ultimately driven by their goal to achieve as high profits as possible. Better tax incentives and subsidy programs are in demand from several quarters. The Green Building Alliance argues that the current tax regulations provide insufficient incentives to rehabilitate rather than demolishing and rebuilding (Grønn Byggallianse, 2019); Entra requests *"a clearer system to get started with the green shift in the [real estate] sector, making this both easier and cheaper to execute"* (Entra,

n.d.). Apall-Olsen requests “*state incentives and subsidies, and economic backing from authorities to facilitate that kind of development*”. Whilst Wilberg suggests that listed buildings should be exempted property taxation, just like legally protected buildings are in Oslo. Tax incentives and subsidies have been suggested elsewhere previously. Alker et al (2000) demonstrates that a fiscal tax was suggested for construction in the UK, that would not occur in redevelopment of brownfields. It was similarly suggested to offer subsidies and grants to organizations that engage in redeveloping brownfields (Alker et al, 2000).

Lastly, someone ought to investigate how the price for rehabilitating municipally owned buildings end up as high as they do. Pedersen illustrates the matter with Ormsundveien 12, where the cost of rehabilitating an old villa is estimated to 36–46 MNOK. An eco-village association, with an architectural trained board leader, suggests that they can rehabilitate the same villa for 2–3 MNOK. Similarly, the rehabilitation cost for the 180 square meter wooden house in Grønland, The Poster house, is estimated to 50 MNOK. Pedersen questions the system of municipal procurements, whilst Bjørberg and Vesterhus argue that it is wrong of the municipality to base the rehabilitation costs on the market price levels and standards.

Several of the informants argue that we must mobilize other actors to contribute to bearing the costs for such projects. Grut (2016) state that we must mobilize human as well as financial resources (Grut, 2016). Lanzoni (2021) emphasize that we should aim to solve issues of reuse and regeneration through cooperative approaches and mobilize different sources of financing. This could vary from “*public, private, user fee, alternative sources such as crowd sourcing and so on*” (Lanzoni, 2021, p. 55). Arentz looks to the Danish Realdania, a private association which supports architectural and planning projects, and illustrates how e.g., the project Underværker has initiated several bottom-up initiatives breathing new life in vacated buildings. In the Norwegian context, Sparebankstiftelsen (Eng: The Saving Bank Foundation) is raised by several of the informants as a potentially similar contributor.

Lastly, and an important aspect in terms of economic considerations: we need to increase predictability for reuse-projects. This will be described in the following section.

Mapping and assessing the building stock

We must understand the qualities and potential of the existing building stock if developers are ever to engage in reusing and developing them (Kohler & Hassler, 2002; Myers & Wyatt, 2004). Apall-Olsen similarly states, about 20 years later, that the public sector of Oslo lacks “*an adequate portfolio management to understand enough about our buildings*”. Through the work of this study, I have myself encountered challenges of finding relevant information about certain buildings, such as total built area (BRA), current use, condition, ownership status etc.

As stated by Myers & Wyatt, “*developers need to know what property is available, what the previous use involved, the size of the vacant property, and the level and accessibility of service provisions*” (p. 2).

Several approaches to mapping and understanding the physical building stock are presented through the theory review, and there are certainly many others out there. Some relevant ones are highlighted in the following section.

The theory review shows that one type of tool that exists in various forms around Europe is those that aim to uncover the extent of and identify vacated buildings. As seen, Eriksen & Skajaa (2016) separate between three forms of such mappings: 1) open websites and activist mapping; 2) mappings on behalf of the local state; and 3) communicators of empty premises on behalf of private landowners/ agents between landowners and tenants (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016; Arnold, 2015).

The mapping that is repeatedly referred to in this study as the Oslo Map of Vacancy belong in the second category. Since 2011, EBY has been responsible for a survey of vacated buildings, where the municipal real estate managers report quarterly. As seen, the Audit Office states that some buildings were not included in the overview, and that some were added long after the building was abandoned. There is however no overview that includes buildings that are not owned by the municipality. Consequently, to my knowledge, there is no understanding of the true extent of vacancy in Oslo as of now. Although this study specifically investigates municipally owned properties, the negative impacts of vacancy are not limited by such ownership (disregarding the aspect of wasting tax money and the municipal treasury).

The theory review shows several examples of attempts to map vacated buildings. The German Leerstandsmelder is an open web site where anyone can register empty premises in a map with relevant information (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). It is an expression of an activist mapping where the community has reacted to the paradox of increasing real estate prices and spatial pressure coexisting with vast areas of under-utilized space in the city (Arnold, 2015). It could be argued that the same paradox exists in Oslo, and it has been demonstrated that certain associations have attempted to use vacated buildings as a means to provide cheaper housing in a real estate market with ever-increasing prices (e.g., Ormsundveien Eco-village). ZZZ is a project where the municipality has outsourced a service to a private agency, working operationally as bridge between temporary users and owners of vacated space based on information from the ministries that finance the project (Urbact, n.d). Similarly, the Berlin district Marzahn-Hellersford established its own task force in the early 2000s to connect owners of vacated sites to temporary tenants. The city of Brussels combines visual assessments (field surveys), data from water and electricity

management and the population register to identify vacated buildings in a GIS-service (Lanzoni, 2019). Another approach is online GIS services that aim to gather insight from the residents of a local community. The Longford NUA project in Ireland is an app and web-solution where citizens can share their knowledge or ideas about the past, the present and the possible. The focus is not limited to vacated buildings, but it has anyhow contributed to finding ideas for underutilized areas (Lanzoni, 2021).

The informants emphasize that Oslo municipality could benefit from the implementation of some variant of these services. It is possible to imagine a service that could combine some essential features, e.g., a web service that shows vacated buildings in a map, some information about the premises, and allows for citizens and organizations to register input about potential future use. Arentz depicts a situation where Facebook has become the only alternative, but is simultaneously sceptical towards the municipality being the driver of the development of such services.

The need for better knowledge about vacated buildings goes further than identifying them. As seen, in Oslo, there is a decent overview of the whereabouts of vacated municipal buildings. One aspect is the above, to gather information, insight and visions for future use. Yet, as stated by Vesterhus, we need to understand what the building is suited for. Vesterhus argues that we should go further in creating a digital foundation for municipal vacated buildings, to understand its condition, fire- and safety aspects and technical infrastructure. *“We way too often start from the wrong end and try to push some political need on to a building. Yet often, there is a discrepancy between what it is actually built for and what it allegedly should be used as (...) Thus, we should have a more strategic approach to documenting and digitalizing during the process of investigating future use”*. We could arguably say the same thing about any suggested use, not only the political desires. To assess what constitutes the correct future use of any buildings, we must first understand what the physical prerequisites allow for.

This aspect of better knowledge about vacated buildings is also of high importance in connection to the perceived risks of reuse. As accounted for earlier in the discussion, several authors (Langston et al, 2008; Bullen & Love, 2011; Grønn Byggallianse, 2019) argue that perceived financial risk lead to demolition rather than rehabilitation. Wilberg emphasizes that the most essential aspect in order to facilitate developers investing in reuse is predictability. To know what you buy and the potential room for manoeuvre. The Hong-Kong study (Langston et al, 2009) is an attempt to offer greater predictability. They propose an ARP-model (adaptive reuse potential), where a building is rated on selected parameters and ultimately given a percentage score indicating its potential for reuse (Langston et al, 2009).

The green list, which was suggested in the Cultural Heritage Notice (2021) is also emphasized by several of the informants as an approach to better understand the resource as well as cultural

value existing buildings constitute. As stated by Wilberg, only 11% of Oslo's buildings have some degree of protection. Consequently, the remaining 89 % constitute the most important potential for reuse in a climate perspective. A student-initiated project with the same name (Pløhn & Larsen, 2021) maps out the resource value of existing, non-protected buildings, demonstrating the environmental impacts of demolition. However, the green list as suggested in the political notice is rather intended to highlight some specific buildings that – despite not having an adequate degree of heritage value to be formally protected or listed – can be buildings of local importance or constitute a potential for further (re)development. The goal is nevertheless to demonstrate that we should rethink our existing building stock, and put reuse, rather than demolition, on top of the agenda.

Considering the findings of studies looking into the condition of protected buildings and the cost of performing changes and adaptations to such buildings (Nesbakken et al, 2015; Stendebakken 2018), the introduction of a green list should be carefully assessed. As stated by Wilberg, it is important that such a new concept does not result in more bureaucratic processes or more confusion, but that it rather serves as a knowledge base for developers and planners, providing a better understanding of the inherent values of the existing building stock. Or to present an opposite approach, Apall-Olsen floats the idea that it could all be made more bureaucratic, and that a general prohibition to demolish existing buildings could be imposed: *“It is an interesting thought to impose a general prohibition, so that the developer would have to argue in each case why it is necessary to demolish the buildings”*, then the pros and cons could be assessed in each case.

Kohler & Hassler's (2002) article written more than two decades ago state that: *“Teaching in schools of architecture is even more exclusively oriented towards the design of new buildings, producing young architects who enter the profession with the expectation of designing and realizing new buildings”* (p. 227).

Building on that reflection, a personal retrospect at my own studies is fitting. The work with this study has introduced me to many of the concepts of reuse for the very first time. Whilst there indeed are optional courses with a greater focus of environmental sustainability, basic knowledge of the environmental impacts of new construction versus reuse should be a part of the mandatory study programme. Students are, to my opinion, not adequately challenged when they suggest removing existing buildings from course projects. This is important as students in urban development through their upcoming work careers potentially will be in positions allowing them to influence future development. The universities training students in urbanism, planning, architecture and real estate development, have a responsibility to provide future practitioners essential knowledge on what constitutes sustainable development.

Temporary urbanism as a long-term strategy

The potential of temporary urbanism as a socially engaged practice has been discussed in the chapter 5.1.1, and will not be repeated. Similarly, the perspective of temporary use as the public janitor is already covered, but it does make up an important part of why temporary urbanism may constitute an important long-term strategy for reactivating vacated buildings. Yet another perspective is raised. Bragaglia & Rossignolo (2021) emphasize several benefits for public actors engaging in temporary urbanism. Some of them being that it allows for: testing new solutions to challenges; gathering consensus for future development; and stimulating creativity and social-innovative participation (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021, p. 376).

In the case of Old Munch, as the significant institution it ones portrayed and also simply due to its large size, the informants consider it valuable with an intermediate phase. Apall-Olsen say that if permanent use had been determined right away, *“it is not obvious that it would have been the right choice in the long-term perspective”*. Vesterhus similarly argues that we should not start with determining the use of a vacated building, before we truly comprehend what the building allows for. Through temporary use the programming of the building can be tested. Several of the informants describe temporary use as a “piloting-phase”, that could contribute to a more informed permanent use. Arentz and Pedersen describe how local residents have responded well to the activities at Old Munch, and emphasize that temporary use has the potential to influence the long-term plan. As stated by Vesterhus, it may be a good arena for carrying out citizen participation, being on the exact location at question. The arguments they present resonates with Bishop & Williams (2012), who argue that temporary urbanism has the potential to challenge standard planning processes, influence authorities and facilitate for democratically anchored processes.

It should be emphasized that the debate on land valorisation and gentrification is not forgotten. However, the municipality as the landowner is in a unique position to program the building in a way that does not necessarily prioritize financial profits. Consequently, the lessons learnt from temporary phases could be of great significance in giving input and knowledge about local needs for future use. It might just as well provide useful information about what does not constitute the correct use, and in advance hinder failed investments. That is, if a temporary project through e.g., a 2-year-period offer a youth library service, and it turns out that it fails to generate traffic, that may indicate that this path should not be followed further. Perhaps the service is sufficiently covered through other venues. If the municipality on the contrary had invested tens of millions in a permanent youth library, to then learn the same lesson, that would constitute a rather expensive lesson. Both Vesterhus and Apall-Olsen highlight that whilst temporary urbanism is well suited to include smaller, marginalized groups, it may be smart to bring in some larger actors as well. Vesterhus, who was responsible for the Oslo Triennale of Architecture, argues that *“vast amounts of money are spent in a short time. Thus, we wanted to contribute to building the infrastructure for future use”*. The traffic generated through the festival, more than 10.000 visitors, allowed Old Munch to open a café, that is still open today. He further depicts how the festival has helped raise some awareness of future and temporary use of the building and mobilize engagement.

First an important note: Having approached this thesis from a bird's eye view, I have not gone in depth into the specific considerations that should be assessed in each single case when considering whether a building should be conserved or demolished to allow for new construction. I emphasize that I do not suggest that a building must be preserved in any case solely because it is old, or that conservation always constitutes the right choice. Decisions to demolish should however be based on an informed judgement, considering the value of the building. The value judgement should however not only be based on economic considerations. Rather, the building should be assessed based on all three dimensions of sustainability, also social and environmental.

7.1 An attempt to answer the main RQ

An appropriate way to start this chapter is with a statement from Arentz: *“there are a hundred different ways to approach this. But what I can say with 100 % certainty is that Oslo Municipality cannot come to a good solution by themselves. We and those who live around these buildings must be a part of the process”*. It is highlighted as a beginning of this final section as it summarizes much of the reasonings from previous studies, theory and the insights from the informants. It has become clear that attempts to reactivate vacated buildings face both structural and administrative barriers as well as financial. It is also highlighted as the start of this conclusion as it makes an important point in terms of this study. There are a hundred different ways to approach this and a variety of existing and suggested tools that can be used. The most important aspect does however seem to be that no agency, enterprise, municipality, administration, planner, architect or other single actor can solve this issue alone. Neither will one new digital mapping tool, law amendment, algorithm for reuse potential or budget item remove the issue.

The research question asks:

How can cities develop strategies to reactivate vacated municipal buildings?

First, the theorization and findings strongly indicate that a best-practice strategy which solves the challenge of vacated buildings in any city cannot exist. It is repeatedly demonstrated that the context of any building will and should be considered in an attempt to reactivate it. This is demonstrated on multiple levels, as there are great variations between continents, countries, regions, municipalities and neighbourhoods, to the very specific characteristics and limitations that come to expression in each single building. Doratli (2005) states that *“there can (...) be no uniformly strategic approach in terms of revitalization”* (p. 762) and Healey (2009) further argues that to reduce such strategies to a uniform concept can diminish the room for judgements and lead to overseeing the local context (Healey, 2009).

A strategic approach involves working towards a changed direction, “to open up new possibilities and potentials, and to move away from previous positions” (Healey, 2009, p. 440). So, what is the previous, or current, position? The status quo is a situation in which 135.000 square meters of vacated buildings are overseen as potential resources for future development. Whilst perhaps city officials would refuse that claim, the findings indicate that the potential for redevelopment these buildings represent is unfulfilled. The fact that 50 % of the buildings have been vacated for more than five years (Audit Office, 2023), strongly supports this claim. Whilst we do not know the actual extent of costs this entails annually for the municipality; single examples have demonstrated that lasting vacancy constitutes a substantial financial waste of resources. This study has not investigated the effects of the presence of vacated buildings, however, drawing on the findings from previous studies there are possibly also socio-economic and social consequences. Other studies, despite often originating from cities with vast population decline following big crisis or economic transitions, illustrate that the presence of vacated buildings may lead to reduced property values, collection points for unwanted and criminal activity, weakened place attachment and sense of pride for the neighbourhood etc.

The potential impacts of reusing vacated buildings are justified through the three dimensions of sustainability, namely economic-, social-, and environmental sustainability:

The economic, as reactivation could help generate new income for the owners, and reduce unnecessary costs connected to acquiring, leasing or constructing alternative buildings for municipal services. It is demonstrated that persistent vacancy represents a continuous expense connected to operations (maintenance, management, capital, ground rent, energy, insurance), so a more efficient strategy to determine future use for vacated buildings would constitute a substantial savings for the municipality.

The social, as vacated buildings represent a potential resource for improved social services, leisure and meeting places that cover local needs. The potential is particularly evident for vacated buildings, based on two reasonings. First, following Jacobs’ (1961, p. 286) logic, “*a depreciated building requires less income than one which has not yet paid off its capital costs*”. Second, the municipality does not have the same earnings requirements for each building as private actors. Thus, although economically sustainable operation models should always be encouraged, the municipality is still in a unique position to program a building with social activities, either as the main or supportive function.

The environmental, as the construction industry is responsible for 36 % of EU greenhouse gas emissions and 16 % of GHG-emissions in Norway. It may take more than 60 years before a new building has equalized the greenhouse gas emissions deriving from new construction, compared to conserving an existing one (Fufa et al, 2020). Reusing existing buildings entails a reduction of

GHG-emissions from extracting, processing and shipping materials connected to construction (Asplan Viak, 2019). As demonstrated by the former City Antiquary of Oslo, Janne Wilberg, we cannot limit reuse to the 11 % of buildings that are protected or listed: *“the true potential, what will be of significance in terms of climate, is the 89%”*.

Further, three main challenges are identified as barriers to reactivate vacated buildings through the findings of this study are:

The sectoral division and silo-thinking

Oslo is a large city with more than 700.000 inhabitants, 50.000 municipal employees, 9 city council departments, 31 agencies, three municipal real estate enterprises and 15 city districts. Thus, different municipal real estate managers, landowners and planning authorities are dispersed into different departments. Oslo's governance is characterized by complexity, high sectoral division and silo-thinking, which is also expressed in urban development processes, e.g., those concerning redevelopment of vacated municipal buildings. Excessive specialization and lack of common platforms lead to insufficient coordination between different disciplines, and the processes are quickly slower than necessary (Folde, 2021).

The maintenance backlog and substantial need for investments

The maintenance backlog is highlighted as the biggest barrier to reactivate the vacated building stock. A persistent lack of maintenance has turned the vacated buildings into substantial investment objects. Consequently, the municipality is struggling with preparing the vacated buildings for reuse within a torn and pressed municipal economy. Inadequate maintenance is also highlighted as a key factor contributing to buildings becoming vacant and ultimately demolished (the Audit Office, 2023).

A subordinate issue is little will in the industry to take on reuse projects due to perceived risk and reduced profitability. Several authors and parties are requesting subsidies and incentives to reduce the threshold for green investments.

Legislative limitations to execute temporary activities in vacated buildings.

During the last decade, efforts have been made to ensure more flexibility in the legislation and greater predictability in the case processing, in cases regarding temporary measures within existing buildings (Eriksen & Skajaa, 2016). Informants of this study greatly support the notion of little flexibility and strict municipal processing. As of January 2023, an amendment of the Act came into force, aiming to increase predictability and lower the threshold for municipal case handlers to give exemptions from the technical regulations. The informants consider it a step in the right direction but are still advocating for a separate legal basis concerning temporary measures in existing buildings. Future research should investigate the effects of the amendment.

As pointed out by Grut (2016), municipal authorities' have a key role in managing the urban development, but they need to engage with and mobilize the local community, academia, the civil society and private business sector (Grut, 2016). When strong sectorial interests become apparent, strategic planning can constitute a useful tool to facilitate collaboration towards a common goal, within manageable timeframes for all parties involved (Folde, 2021).

The informant group, which together represents a breadth of knowledge and experience on the topic of reactivating empty buildings, reuse, temporary use, management of municipal buildings, legal expertise, etc., all support the notion that Oslo lacks a reception centre which works operationally with vacated buildings. A reception centre for vacated buildings is a term that was introduced in the first interview with Apall-Olsen, and that has been further discussed in the following interviews. The main rationale is that the municipality lacks a defined unit that is responsible for this work. Other relevant parties should also know about and be able to report local needs or ideas to such a unit. It would constitute a dedicated taskforce in the municipality that works operationally with mapping vacated buildings, local needs, ideas for future use and temporary as well as long-term tenants.

As of now, EBY is the agency coordinating the mappings and working on clarifying future use for vacated municipal buildings. The project has been an attempt to coordinate different municipal real estate managers. Yet, both the Audit Office report (2023) and descriptions from the informants clearly depict that this coordination have not adequately facilitated an efficient clarification of the municipal vacated buildings. Considering the complexity of the building portfolio and of Oslo municipality as an organization, it appears like the format of quarterly reporting and meetings between the municipal real estate managers is not sufficient to solve such complex challenges.

The informants offer different perspectives regarding how such a centre should be organized, who should be the responsible agency, or whether it should be outsourced to someone outside of the municipal system. How such a centre should be organized should be investigated further. Yet, regardless of who would "own" the centre; three main aspects are highlighted to succeed with the strategic approach to reactivating vacated buildings: cooperation, scale and alternative design processes.

Cooperation

The informants argue that to succeed with such complex challenges, different actors must cooperate. Essential tools to succeed are capacity building, cooperation and to mobilize human as well as financial resources (Grut, 2016, p. 10). Quarterly meetings between different municipal real estate managers does not constitute cooperation in the broadest sense. For a strategy to take place it must resonate with local stakeholders, who must be enrolled "*with the power to invent, invest and regulate subsequent development*" (Healey, 2009, p. 441).

Lanzoni (2021) demonstrates 10 case examples from EU-countries that have succeeded in adaptive reuse and regeneration processes, through collaborative management. That involves distributing and delegating parts of the development process, work and financing between private and public bodies, NGOs, the local community, associations etc., (Lanzoni, 2021). However, as emphasized by the informants, the aim to collaborate should not stop when future use is determined. Instead, the cooperative approach should be an integral part of the development process and continue to express itself in the daily operations of the building. The usual narrative of public participation is not (alone) the justification for a broader sense of involvement. Rather, the informants argue that the municipality cannot continue to manage and operate each building themselves, and that the only other alternative is to sell. Hence, to succeed it is critical to adopt some operation models that to a greater extent are based on cooperation, alternative funding and a private-public interplay and juxtaposition.

However, the informants do not suggest that this should apply for all buildings. If a vacated building can be reused as a nursing home, a school, a kindergarten, etc., no one argues that it must be co-managed by the local neighbourhood, private businesses and NGOs. The point is nevertheless that if the municipality can reassess how some of these buildings are run and adopt models where also other actors partake in funding, operating and maintaining these buildings, this could in a long-term perspective contribute to a more sustainable practice.

It is clearly demonstrated that the huge maintenance (investment) backlog both brings buildings to decay and abandonment as well as representing a financial barrier to reuse. Old Munch alone cost around 13 MNOK a year to operate without any productive use. Models that to a greater extent see commercial, public and volunteer services in connection could be a part of the solution to reactivation, and positive synergies could emerge as a result.

Scale

Busquets (2009) argues that the European cities that have succeeded with strategical plans have two things in common. The first aspect is that they tend to work within a scale that is not too extensive. As seen, Oslo has grown to become a large municipality in the Norwegian context, and it is challenging to assert the needs and reveal all aspects of a situation holistically. On that note, whether or not the centre should be organized as one overall municipal centre should be carefully assessed. Maybe the task is too comprehensive, and that a new strategic approach to the issue will not be enough to navigate the complexity of real estate management and urban development in a more efficient matter. As stated by Apall-Olsen, and supported by several scholars, the act of working strategically within a big-city is not a simple task. Perhaps it is a better alternative for the needs to be mapped out at a city district level, and for relevant actors to be identified and included in the work to reactivate each individual building.

Or perhaps something in between. Namely, that overall work on mapping the extent of vacated buildings and the municipal and state needs for purpose-built buildings, is done on the municipal level. Whilst unresolved buildings where no clear future use has been revealed are delegated to the city district level. Then actors at the local level can be engaged further by gathering a work group of professionals and relevant stakeholders with better knowledge on the local context.

The QUA *Quartere Bene Comune* policy in Italy shows an approach with similarities to the latter. The urban policy QUA works as a superior framework for guiding thinking and action and facilitate neighbourhood agreements between the municipality and local stakeholders in geographically limited local communities, with defined projects for urban interventions and regeneration (Lanzoni, 2021). A temporary citizen laboratory is developed and used a meeting place to identify relevant stakeholders, investors, competence and develop ideas for a concrete project. The vacated university Villa Levi in Bologna is one example of a building that is rehabilitated and reused as a result of a neighbourhood agreement (Lanzoni, 2021). City labs have been suggested in this study as an arena to reach out to local stakeholders, organizations, businesses and to put vacated buildings on the agenda within a local community. This study does not particularly investigate city labs and whether they have the potential to contribute to mobilizing “*human as well as financial resources*”. The key point is that we perhaps should look at issue of vacated buildings at a smaller scale, to succeed with solving the large-scale issue.

The case of Old Munch has despite its many occurring challenges demonstrated that it is possible to quickly mobilize and find temporary use when several actors come together to work intensively on one building. At spring 2022, a cross-sectoral work group was established (Oslo Building KF; City District Old Oslo; the Culture Agency), in May 2022 the application process for temporary letting was opened, and by June 2022 there had come 44 applications whereas 16 got granted. Temporary activities open for the public opened in August.

Alternative design processes

The second aspect that was pointed out by Busquets as a key factor to succeed with strategical plans is to use an open design process that plays out over time (Busquets, 2009). Both previous studies and the informants point out various approaches for methods and arenas, e.g., city laboratories, city labs, design methodology, temporary urbanism etc. In example, the only other study (Lanzoni, 2021) that is directly focusing on strategic approaches to reuse underutilized buildings, emphasize engaging stakeholders in the design process, collaborative design and experimental approaches to test solutions and ideas before the final decision-making (Lanzoni, 2021). Temporary use as an alternative design process is often suggested by the informants as a response to failed efforts to identify a use for vacated building through ordinary “*top-down approaches*”.

As suggested by Vesterhus, *"we way too often start from the wrong end and try to push some political need on to a building. Yet often, there is a discrepancy between what it is actually built for and what it allegedly should be used as"*. Consequently, some buildings are trapped in the system and become the subject of a political debate about what constitutes proper future use. As seen, several of the buildings shown in the Oslo Map of Vacancy have been vacated for more than 5 years (the Audit Office, 2023). On that note, it is argued that temporary use could represent an arena for a more organic design process, where the future use is determined through testing and failing. That could, according to the informants, help identify relevant stakeholders and possible investors or contributors, test how the market responds to different programming of the building and be an arena for gathering insight and execute on-site participation processes with the local community. Similar approaches have been illustrated in other countries, such as the plan-guide method, used e.g., in Refshaleøen, Copenhagen (Helgason, 2020) and in Nantes, France (Didelon, 2021). The method facilitates temporary urbanism as a testing ground during the planning process, and the final plan is influenced by the activities taking place during planning. According to Helgason (2020), there is however a lack of such planning approaches in the Norwegian context, which is also emphasized by the informants.

So, how can cities develop strategies to reactivate vacated municipal buildings?

Through this study, the complexity of the issue has been highlighted. Similarly, various approaches and tools to cope with vacated buildings have been mapped out, many of which appear to be promising also within the context of Oslo. However, the potential they constitute is strengthened if they are applied in combination and if they are able to resonate with various stakeholders involved in the process. Further efforts should be made to investigate the possibility of establishing a reception centre for vacated buildings, that is anchored not only in the formal real estate management bodies of the municipality, but in various municipal and private institutions, across numerous disciplines, which can look at the possibility of both conventional and alternative forms of reactivating vacated buildings. The lack of a well-developed reception centre is however not the only aspect that is highlighted through this study. Several external issues contribute to occurring challenges in connection to reactivation. Hence, a municipal reception centre should also be an advocate for increased municipal budgets for rehabilitation, improved subsidy- and incentive programs and a functioning legislation. Further, they should work educationally towards an acknowledgment that the reuse of empty buildings constitutes good resource management.

Presenting these findings to a wider audience in this topic field is also an important next step to revise and refine the different approaches. The topic should be set on the agenda – together with the various stakeholders – to develop a roadmap for a more economically-, environmentally-, and socially sustainable practice. As put by Apall-Olsen: *"If we have ambitions to reach any of the sustainability objectives by 2030, we must change the way we look at our existing building stock."*

7.2 Future research

Three potential pathways for future studies are:

A future study could go further in suggesting how such a centre could be organized and implemented in the municipality. At what level could it be organized to succeed in mobilizing action and preventing a too extensive scale? Which actors should partake in the daily operations? Should the operations be outsourced to an external actor, or should a municipal agency coordinate the centre, in that case which?

“Reactivating Vacated Municipal Buildings: A Study on Organizing a Reception Centre in Oslo Municipality”

As has become more apparent throughout the study, the way the municipality is structured and organized have great implications for the real estate management, and further for the progress of case proceedings in clarifying future use or working multisectoral with the issue. Vedeld (2022) investigates “the co-creation paradox”: how small towns tackle complex challenges based on their governance strategy. This approach could similarly be interesting regarding vacancy. The informants of this study have all to a large extent advocated for cooperative approaches, which have affected the outcome and suggestions of this study. However, the suggestions are not linked to a bigger debate on governance or planning theory. Some will argue that participatory approaches are not the correct means to address the issue. A future study could compare various governance strategies and how they relate to building a strategic approach to vacated buildings.

“Building a Strategic Response: How Governance Strategies Affect Municipal Approaches to Reactivate Vacated Buildings”

Several of the informants question how the cost-estimates and budgets for rehabilitation projects of municipal properties end up as high as they do. Some argue that it is wrong to set a market-standard as a basis for rehabilitation, whilst others have argued that it is something wrong with the municipal procurement regime. It would be useful with an in-depth analysis of the discrepancy between municipal contracts and alternative non-municipal calculations for rehabilitation of vacated buildings. Looking again to Ormsundveien 12, it is remarkable that the municipal cost estimation for the rehabilitation is 25-43 MNOK, whilst the private association argues the job could be done for 2-3 MNOK.

“Unwrapping the Cost Discrepancy of Municipal Rehabilitation Projects: Investigating the Differences Between Municipal and Non-Municipal Actors’ Costs Calculations”

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