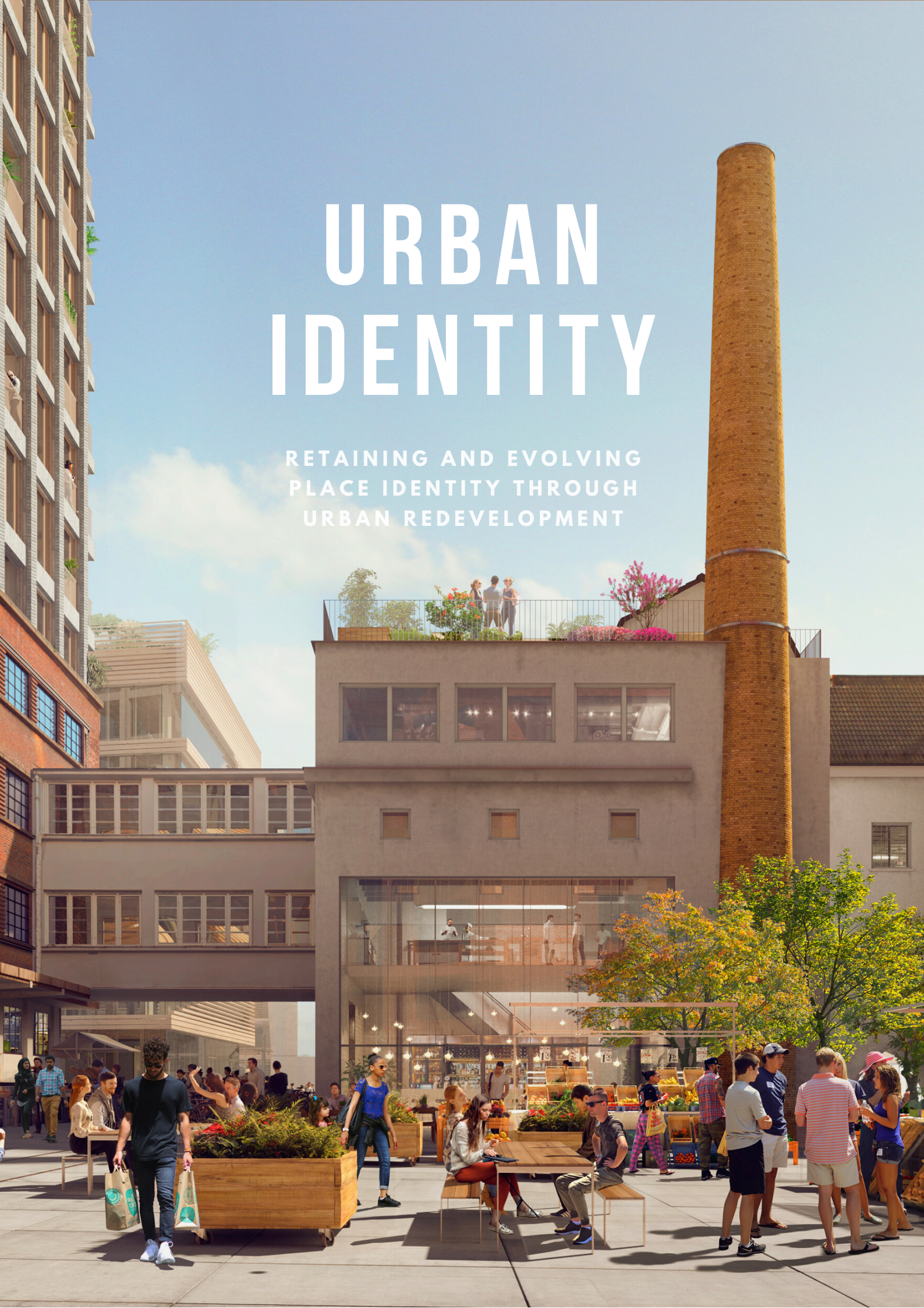


# URBAN IDENTITY

RETAINING AND EVOLVING  
PLACE IDENTITY THROUGH  
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT





MSc in Nordic Urban Planning Studies, Master Thesis  
Roskilde University

Title: Retaining and Evolving Place Identity through  
Urban Redevelopment

Author: Ida Maria Greenwood

Supervisor: Kirsten Simonsen

Finalized: May 2022

Number of Pages: 73

Front Page: Illustration of Landbrukskvartalet by Transborder Studio

Keywords: place identity, place narrative, place branding  
urban densification, urban redevelopment



## ABSTRACT

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With a growing population, Oslo expands from within. Introducing urban densification as the main development strategy, inner-city neighbourhoods are desired to be redeveloped into attractive places with increased city life. This involves a process of changes that challenge not only the physical environment but also the existing identity and narrative of the district. As the city becomes increasingly dense, existing neighbourhoods are challenged to meet new conditions both for structural development and for urban life.

This thesis explores how place identity is retained and evolved through structural redevelopment. It seeks to uncover definitions of place, place identity, and the professional management of existing and evolving identities in relation to a place in transition. A place makes a case, in this thesis - an urban quarter called Landbrukskvartalet (*the agricultural quarter*). Both existing and visioned place identities are studied through the lens of narrative inquiry, uncovering stories about place in the past, present, and future. Insight into the management of identity by planners, here the urban developer and the architect, is examined by conducting two interviews. In the following, the study also brings up questions of gentrification issues in relation to densification, place branding, and identity construction. The issue of preserving cultural identity is also brought forward from a sustainability perspective as it is suggested to be potential a fourth pillar of sustainable urban development.

What is place identity? How can it be studied, constructed, and managed? And how does it guide, challenge, or inspire the transformation of existing neighbourhoods in the city? These questions are addressed throughout the thesis and attempted answered in the conclusion, where I connect the theory of place identity to the stories of Landbrukskvartalet and the plans for its ongoing redevelopment.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks to my supervisor Kirsten Simonsen, for insight and guidance.

Thanks to Maren Bjerkeng from Aspelin Ramm and Espen Røyseland from Transborder Studio for contributing to the thesis through interviews.

Thanks to Benedicte for long hours at the library.

And thanks to Johan for two great years in Copenhagen and for always being my main supporter.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract.....   | 1         |
| Acknowledgements.....                                       | 2         |
| <b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>                                 | <b>4</b>  |
| Thesis Structure and Reading Guide.....                     | 5         |
| The Dense City.....   | 6         |
| The Cultural City?.....                                     | 9         |
| Research Question and Problem Area.....                     | 11        |
| The Case: Landbrukskvartalet.....                           | 12        |
| <b>2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>                        | <b>14</b> |
| Part I: Place and Place Identity.....                       | 16        |
| Part II: Exploring and Constructing Place Identity.....     | 22        |
| <b>3. METHODS.....</b>                                      | <b>26</b> |
| Methodology.....  | 27        |
| Choice of Methods.....                                      | 28        |
| Tales of the City: Uncovering Existing Identities.....      | 29        |
| The Planner's Tale: Insight to Intentions.....              | 32        |
| Desired Identities: Envisioning the Future.....             | 34        |
| Validity and Limitations.....                               | 37        |
| <b>4. ANALYSIS.....</b>                                     | <b>38</b> |
| Part A: The Stories of Landbrukskvartalet & Gamle Oslo..... | 40        |
| Part B: Managing Place Identity.....                        | 52        |
| Part C: Retaining and Evolving Identities.....              | 60        |
| <b>5. CONCLUSION.....</b>                                   | <b>68</b> |
| Reintroducing Insideness and Authenticity.....              | 69        |
| Potential Future Studies.....                               | 71        |
| Bibliography.....   | 72        |
| Figures .....   | 73        |



1.

# INTRODUCTION



## THESIS STRUCTURE AND READING GUIDE

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This thesis contains a total of six chapters and is structured as follows.

**Ch. 1** starts off the thesis by introducing the general field of study, the specific research question, as well as the case of Landbrukskvartalet.

**Ch. 2** presents the theoretical framework used in the thesis. The theory itself is presented in two parts:

(I) Place and Place Identity, and (II) Exploring and Constructing Place Identity

**Ch. 3** provides information on the methodology and choice of methods, and a guide to how the methods are conducted.

**Ch. 4** presents the analysis of data gathered from methods. The chapter portrays the study findings through three parts: (A) The Stories of Gamle Oslo and Landbrukskvartalet, (B) Managing Identity, and (C) Retaining and Evolving Identities.

**Ch. 5** sums up and reflects upon the essence of the findings and presents a conclusion to the research question. It also discusses the consequences of the study and potential further work.

The thesis is meant to be read in the presented order.

## THE DENSE CITY

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In an era of urban growth and densification, place identities are under constant renegotiation. As cities and their populations become increasingly diverse and dense, existing districts and neighbourhoods are being challenged to meet new conditions for life in the city and modern urban ideals. Inner-city areas, both in Oslo and other comparable urban environments, are under densification pressure, generating particularly high demand for plots and increased real estate prices. This way, the existing urban structure is challenged by new physical construction developments, but also gives rise to questions regarding sense of belonging, gentrification and loss of place identities.

In Oslo, densification has been adopted as a strategy for the urban development to and corresponds with the city's population growth. The city area is geographically limited by nature regulated woods (Oslomarka) in the north and east, which are legally protected from destruction through *Markaloven* (Markaloven, § 5). To the south, the city is bounded by the fjord (Oslofjorden). The remaining areas are called the 'construction zone' (byggesonen) and make up approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the areas of Oslo Municipality. The construction zone is already largely built up with housing, business areas, parks, public buildings and infrastructure. This means that the city no longer has open spaces for development. However, this does not imply that the city will stop evolving. The existing urban structure serves as a starting point for further development. In order for Oslo to be able to handle the expected population growth and continue to develop in line with modern cityscapes, densification is a key strategy.

Urban densification is often considered a strategy for sustainability measures and is linked to the threefold of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. This also applies to Oslo's Municipal plan for urban development (Oslo Kommune, 2020). By addressing densification from the approach of cultural heritage, new perspectives and issues emerge. The urban areas that undergo transformation through the densification process do not only hold valuable nature resources but also valuable culture. This may involve older buildings, park structures, or urban spaces that have been attributed special cultural-historical value, either by the population or by the authorities. Looking to Oslo, the densification strategy had met both positive and negative responses from the residents. Some believe that densification of the city is an essential part of sustainable urban development, while others see densification as a threat to the qualities of existing neighbourhoods. In 1996, the Ministry of the Environment (Miljødepartementet) issued a guide for densification, which, among other things, lists both the positive and negative effects of the strategy. One of the negative potential consequences of the strategy was described as follows: "*Densification can disturb or destroy district's distinctive characteristics, cultural-historical elements and landscape features*". (Miljødepartementet, 1998, p. 6) In this connection, some have put forward an ideal of



planning such densification to be carried out as an extension of the historic city, and not at the expense of it (Skrede & Berg, 2018 p.5). However, this is complicated in practice as densification projects are affected by different and at times conflicting interests. In research literature, some now call for a fourth pillar of sustainability - namely cultural sustainability. Some argue that culture primarily serves social or economic conditions, while others suggest that culture - in the anthropological sense - permeates all forms of human activity and should therefore be included as a natural part of the sustainability pillars (ibid).

An important driver for the densification strategy in Oslo is the incentive to provide (affordable) housing for the growing population. Currently, the population increase, alongside other economic factors, has led to a 94 per cent rise in housing prices over the past ten years (Eiendom Norge, 2022), and in the latest years, single first-time housing buyers could only afford 5,9 per cent of the units sold in Oslo (NBBL, 2019). However, densification does not necessarily provide such affordable housing. In several cases in the larger cities, new housing developments generate such high prices that potential residents are kept out of the housing market. (Millstein & Hofstad, 2017). That way, an urban densification policy can potentially contribute to gentrification of neighbourhoods or larger areas. This raises questions of whether urban development based on the same densification ideals all over the city is a way to achieve goals of diversity and sustainability or a way to get generic and homogeneous cities - and how are place identities managed within the process?

### **Gentrification**

is when people who belong to the middle class, or have higher education, take interest in and move into a district dominated by the working class, or underprivileged groups. Step by step, the district's population composition change and housing prices rise, while the original population group are pushed out, or have problems establishing themselves there. Gentrification also leads to physical and functional changes, such as upgraded housing, new shops, restaurants and cafés coming in and new jobs. (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008)

Researchers claim that gentrification has become a general trend that radically changes the inner parts of today's cities. Two main theories used to explain gentrification are: (1) economic explanation: Investors, property developers and individuals discover a gap between the market value of properties and the potential value in the near future. Such a gap implies a prospect of profit. (2) Socio-cultural explanation: The interest in living in central parts of cities has increased due to changing lifestyles and preferences. These explanations are not mutually exclusive and can be supplemented by other explanations. Gentrification has received a great deal of attention in social geography and is today also used for a number of adjacent phenomena, such as newly built gentrification (through new construction of homes and offices) rural gentrification (in agricultural areas) and super-gentrification (when the upper class takes over an area). Gentrification is often linked to increasing social inequality, exclusion and segregation. (Jordhus-Lier et. al., 2017)



1700



1881



1901



1971



1997



2013

Figure 1: Densification of inner-city Oslo. The case-study area marked in black. *Source: Transborder Studio.*

## THE CULTURAL CITY(?)

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Another approach to urban planning has in recent years made its mark on the development of Oslo in general, and the waterfront areas in particular. Sites that until recent years have been defined by harbour-, industry- and transportation facilities are to be transformed into attractive urban neighbourhoods. Alongside the densification strategy is an approach to urban development reaching towards cultural visions. (Forskning.no, 2010). While the development is promoted through spectacular cultural initiatives, such as the Opera-house, a new national museum, a new Munch-museum, and a new main library for the city, urban planning researcher Heidi Bergsli states in an interview that it is in fact not the culture itself that drives the development. She emphasises the point by stating: *"Culture serves as a force to attract new investments, businesses, and individuals that identify with the new areas. It is economical gains, not cultural and social considerations, that drives the development"* (ibid). The social and cultural diversity of the city might be threatened as a consequence of such cultural driven urban planning. While the gates and fences that previously closed off the areas from the public are torn down, they might now be replaced with symbolic barriers. (ibid)

Several of the mentioned cultural institutions (the National Museum, the Munch Museum, and the Deichman Library) have been moved from other places across the city and are now gathered within a few hundred meters along the waterfront. As a great investment is put to this new cultural destination, other districts of the city lose their previous cultural attractions and identity-bearing institutions. The dense new cultural hub could also be seen as a tourist-strategy as international visitors are now served with easy to access as they arrive from the central station or with cruise ships on the dockside. Meanwhile, one could ask if these new sites actually will promote more tourism in the long run, as they could seem to turn into maladapted copies of waterfront developments seen in other cities. Could it be possible to turn this around, and instead of looking outside the city and country for inspiration for new developments, rather look towards cultural heritage and notions of local urban neighbourhoods? The city certainly has several other qualities that could and should be promoted. (ibid)





Figure 2 and 3: The waterfront area *Bjørvika* in 2002 (above) and 2021 (below). Photos taken approximately 600m south of case-study area of Landbrukskvartalet. The photo from 2021 shows the Munch-museum (gray highrise, far left), the Opera House (white with glass facade by the water, center), and the Deichman Library (glass with vertical lines, center). Source: *Aftenposten*



## RESEARCH QUESTION AND PROBLEM FIELD

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By asking: **how are urban place identities retained and evolved through urban development?** I seek to uncover the place identities that exist pre-development, how these are challenged and managed through a phase of physical and structural redevelopment and presented in the future vision for the site.

Previous literature and studies widely address what place identity is and how can be experienced by the city's residents and visitors. These provide necessary definitions and understandings of place as a phenomenon, as well as identity of place, identity with place, place narratives, and experiences. Relatively little work, however, has focused particularly on how new challenges related to issues of densification affect existing urban identities. In this thesis, I intend to study how place identities are challenged by densification and new ambitions for the modern city. Meanwhile, I strive to uncover how existing urban identities provide basis, direction, and aims for new developments in the city.

I research the field through the lens of a case study of Landbrukskvartalet (*the agricultural quarter*) in Oslo. It is a quarter in the inner city, currently being transformed from a place built for production and logistics to a new urban destination with housing, workspaces, and public spaces. The redevelopment of Landbrukskvartalet serves as an applicable case for this study as it relates to both potential challenges and answers to the research question. With a great increase in number of residents and a densification strategy in the central areas of the city, this plot makes a rare opportunity and an attractive development project. Meanwhile, the high plot cost puts pressure on property utilization and affects prices of the housing and business units planned in the quarter, leading to potential discussions of gentrification and diversity issues. This case provides a tangible basis for understanding how new urban ideals such as densification can affect place identity. It also serves to address if and how the identities that exist within and around the quarter potentially lay out some conditions, guidelines, limitations, aspirations, and objectives for the current redevelopment. I intend to work towards answering the research question through the use of these three sub-questions:

1) What defines the existing identity of Landbrukskvartalet?

- How do the developers work with place identity at Landbrukskvartalet?
- What is the desired future identity of Landbrukskvartalet?

The case-study seeks to provide understandings that can be used to illustrate both challenges and solutions for place identities in cities undergoing densification. I attempt to determine the ability of place identities, both in terms of providing belonging in a diverse city as well as attractiveness and quality in a dense urban environment. The

conclusion should provide notions on how existing identities can give planners and developers direction in transformation- and redevelopment projects in urban areas.

## THE CASE

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This thesis explores issues of place identity through the lens of a case study. The case is of an Inner city urban quarter in Oslo, called Landbrukskvartalet. As the quarter is currently facing redevelopment, an opportunity opens up to explore how place identity is considered, used, retained, countered, challenges, and/or evolved through its transformation. The following paragraphs give a short introduction to Landbrukskvartalet and the district it is part of, leading up to the current redevelopment of the quarter.

Landbrukskvartalet is centrally located in the Inner city of Oslo. The area functions as a hub for public transport with great connectivity. Oslo Central Station lies within close proximity, providing regional trains and city wide metro-lines. These are further linked to trams and the bus terminal. Two new connections over the train track area, Akrobaten and Nordenga bridge, connect Landbrukskvartalet to Fjordbyen, a newly developed and still developing neighborhood by the waterfront, housing several large cultural institutions and the commercial Barcode area. On the north side of Landbrukskvartalet lies Grønland with a very different character. As a multicultural neighborhood it provides dynamic urban life but is also home of some of the cities most discussed socio-economic challenges.

Historically, the area served as a center for wood distribution, timber, and construction industry, and held structures for agricultural production that further led it to be a site for food markets and trade. Gartnerhallen (*the gardeners hall*), Kjøttballen (*the meat hall*), and Slakterhuset (*the butcher's house*) contributed to the creation of the area's narrative as a meeting point for trades and food distribution. The structures of Landbrukskvartalet held what was for a long time one out of two functioning dairy supplies in the city. The facilities housed administration- and office functions in addition to the spaces used for various dairy supply operations. The facility produced and distributed butter, milk, cheese, and ice-cream. Over time, the area became increasingly more affected by the constant development of the train lines and following structures. The use of private cars also had a great increase, providing the area with significant traffic challenges.. As a result, multiple large projects were introduced, involving development of larger roads and parking spaces. The municipality also upgraded older buildings in the area in the 80s. Postgirobygget, Politihuset, Galleri Oslo, and Oslo Plaza were all built between 1975-1989 and became strong landmarks from the given period.



The current redevelopment project plans includes keeping and transforming existing buildings, combined with new construction and new urban spaces. The quarter will house apartments, office spaces, production areas, hotel and (serveringssteder). Landbrukskvartalets existing design is about logistics; milk in and dairy products out. The current redevelopment looks to the original concept letting the flow of the milk define the concept. By building on the heritage from the dairy facilities, and putting focus on urban food culture, the project aims to demonstrate the role of agriculture in a sustainable urban future. The construction promotes wide use of wood and biobased building materials (Landbrukskvartalet, 2020).



Figur 4 and 5: Top: Photo of Landbrukskvartalet taken in 1952, after extension of the Dairy Supply finished in 1938. Source: *Oslo byarkiv*. Bottom: Illustration of the future redeveloped Landbrukskvartalet. Source: *Transborder Studio*





2.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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The theoretical framework of this thesis builds upon readings of previous studies on place, place identity, narrative, and place branding. The readings create a basis for the understanding of terms and definitions which the thesis further explores and uses as a framework for the conducted case study.

### **Part I: Place and Place Identity**

In order to explore theories on place identity, the first step is to understand theories regarding place. In this thesis, definitions of place are based on the writings of John Agnew (1987), and further contextualized and theorized by using Edward Relph's book *Place and Placelessness*. I have chosen to use his theories here as following theories on place identity also rely on his work. I present his phenomenology of place, and further determine how this study relates to humanistic geography and radical geography. The theory of place is connected to place identity, emphasizing how place identity relates to experience, meaning, and intended use.

### **Part II: Exploring and Constructing Place Identity**

The second part turns to how place identity can be explored and studied. Theories regarding narrative of place is introduced as it instructs the choice of methods for the thesis. Ruth Finnegan and Roberto Franzosi connect place and narrative, and provide the theoretical basis for why and how one can explore one through the other. Moving to identity construction, I present the phenomenon of place branding, and how construction of place identity can be demonstrated as part of promoting new or redeveloped urban areas. The knowledge conveyed here is essential for studying the future plans for Landbrukskvartalet and identifying how that particular project is branded and given new identities.

**PART I**

**PLACE &  
PLACE IDENTITY**

## PLACE AND PLACE IDENTITY

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*"What is place? Is it merely a synonym for location, or a unique ensemble of nature and culture, or could it be something more?"*

(Seamon & Sowers, 2008)

### **Space or Place?**

The discourse on Space and Place is comprehensive. Theorists of the field have been discussing whether or not it is the place that comes first, the place where we are born, the place we identify with, the place that gives meaning to the everyday of our lives. Such places are considered to be the basis upon which we enable our ability to imagine the spatial. Space, on the other hand, is more abstract. Some researchers accentuate how space is some kind of materialization of the social and can be transformed into place through human interaction. (Sæter & Seim, 2018). This study revolves around place, referring to specific geographical sites, in this case studying Landbrukskvartalet in particular. Theories on place and place identity form the framework for the research.

This chapter first introduces theory on what place is and how philosophers, planners, and researchers define and discuss the phenomenology of place. Here, studies of the ways in which to define, see, and experience place serves as valuable insight in itself but also provide a necessary basis for further theories regarding place identity. As I have chosen to explore place identity through the use of narrative, I also introduce theories on narratives in the context of place and why it serves as a useful tool in this case. An approach based on a gathered sum of these theoretical perspectives provides a basis for the conduction of this thesis, and will therefore also serve as a guide for the analysis. It is the cumulative knowledge base that arises as to the result of several different theories, which accurately captures the diversity in the interesting and complicated relationship between humans and their physical surroundings.

### **Phenomenology of Place**

The interaction between humans and their physical environment is diverse and has various qualities and consequences. Edward Relph presented his research method, *phenomenology of place* in his book of 1973 and 1976 called *Place and Placelessness*. This phenomenology is based on the interpretive study of the human experience of place. It aims to examine human experiences and meanings through situations and events as they are known in everyday life, but with special focus on the elements of such



experiences that are generally unnoticed or beneath the level of conscious awareness (Seamon & Sowers, 2008). At the time of Relph's studies, in the 1970s and 80s, humanistic geography was particularly prominent. This approach emphasizes people's relationship to place. How the place is a source of meaning and belonging for people and what gives places identity are central questions within this approach. Humanistic geography is particularly influenced by existentialism and phenomenology, in contrast to the strong position of positivism in quantitative geography (Relph, 1976). What this implies in terms of methodology, I will get back to in chapter x.

The discourse, understanding, and definition of place have evolved throughout history. Agnew (1987) introduces place through a threefold division of the concepts of location, locality, and experience of place. In simpler words, the divisions point to differentiating between physical, social, and cultural perceptions of place. A naturalistic approach implies a physical and objective understanding of place as location. This approach closely relates to the perception of place used in everyday life conversations, where place is something physical but also something that one can point to on a map and explain based on its relation to other points on the map. This understanding emphasizes the materiality and nature of place and refer to how a place, as an area, relates to a greater scale of space (Førde et al., 2013). Place as a location also often imply that the place itself is not necessarily in focus, but rather functions as a frame or landscape for its structural or material content as well as the activities that can exist and be practised and experienced there. The most subjective understanding of place can be linked to how places are constructed through human experiences and interpretations (ibid). The subjective mind and human perception will generate various interpretations of place, relying on how material structures are perceived by humans as 'intended objects', given existence through action and intended use. This way, places hold the potential to create experiences of, for example, affiliation, attachment, isolation, safety, insecurity, peace, stress, and so on, based on the subjective user of the place. When operating with this understanding of place, one is requested to make note of the location and its content, but put focus on the place as experience through people's senses. What can be considered as in between the two mentioned perceptions of place is the understanding place as locality. This implies a social approach, looking directly at the content of the place. According to Cresswell (2009), a place does not exist until people attach meaning to the spacious position it is made out of. This understanding of a place must be seen in the context of a reaction to the traditional understanding of the concept of place. Instead of simply defining places as locations, this perspective invites questions regarding the interaction between places and people and highlights the social aspect of place. According to Førde, looking at place as locality, broadens the concept of place by seeing how the place and its content mutually affect each other, including structures, activities, and people. This establishes the spatial dimensions of human *lifeworlds* and gives rise to concepts such as *sense of place* and *place identity*. (Simonsen, 2016).

Accordingly, the perception of place as locality serves as an important theoretical position going into the further study of place identity. Place as location will be, and has already been, used here to illustrate the site of the case and its relation to its surrounding landscape and other places. Meanwhile, Place as experience also carries a rather significant function in this thesis, as this understanding is important both in narrative construction and working with existing and future place identities. This is something I will address further in ch. 4 as I seek to answer sub-question II about how developers work with place identity, further leading up to sub-question III on desired future identities. Two particular terminologies related to place as experience are presented here as understanding these terms will be used again in the conclusion:

### **Insidiness and Outsideness**

The experience of place can partly be demonstrated through the more specific experience of insidiness or outsideness. This concept described by Relph allows a more direct approach to addressing the human experience of place and its meaning. Relph presents seven modes of insidiness and outsideness. These modes are grounded in various levels of experiential involvement and meaning. The value of defining these seven modes is that they are applicable to specific place experiences while providing a conceptual structure which enables understanding of such experiences in a broader sense and in more explicit terms. A higher level of insidiness provokes feelings of being present, safe, enclosed, and at ease. The highest level is what Relph refers to as existential insidiness, where the person experiences a deep, unselfconscious immersion in and into the given place. Most of such experiences of existential insidiness may be within the home or another place that provides high levels of the feelings associated with insidiness. On the other hand, experiences of outsideness may raise feelings of being threatened, exposed, or stressed, promoting a lived division or separation between the person and the place. Existential outsideness, the highest level, stimulates strangeness and alienation. This can be felt by people who experience a new place for the first time, or who revisit a place that has changed from how they remembered or knew it from before. Relph suggests that the more profoundly inside a person experiencing a place feels, the stronger a connection is built between person and place. The crucial phenomenological point is that outsideness and insidiness constitute a fundamental dialectic in human life. Through varying combinations and intensities of outsideness and insidiness, *"different places take on different identities for different individuals and groups, and human experience takes on different qualities of feeling, meaning, ambience, and action."* (Seamon & Sower, 2008, p. 3)

### **Placelessness**

Relph also, through terms from phenomenological and existential philosophy, examines

how places may be experienced as authentic or inauthentic. He proposes that an authentic sense of place is a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places. He follows up by adding that such authenticity requires an experience of place that is “not mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor stereotyped conventions”. (Relph, 1976, p. 64). The authenticity of a place relies on the sense of place that is created through constant use. This way, a nondescript urban neighbourhood can be as authentic as the Greek Agora embedded in deep history. The challenge rises when the authentic sense of place is overshadowed by the implementation of standardized landscapes with anonymous spaces and exchangeable environments, resulting in an insensitivity to the significance of place and rather stimulating a sense of placelessness. Relph suggests that placelessness arises from an uncritical acceptance of mass values or techniques, undermining the culture and individuality of authentic places. (ibid)

The notions of place both as a social practice and as experience raise the question of whether the experience of place is something universal or individual. Architectural theorists such as Lynch (1960) and Norberg Shultz (1972) argue that it is the spacious structures that form the basis for how one perceives a place. By analyzing the structures and how this affects people, one can uncover what could be seen as a place's character or identity. According to Førde et al (2013), this understanding of a universal place character has later been criticized because it fails to emphasize the subjectivity of experiences of places, and how wide such experiences differ. Following that, the identity of a place is not limited to one universal identity but could hold several characteristics and elements of identity. Today, there is a general perception that people interpret places differently and that a place can provide a basis for a diversity of experiences, roles, and identities. (ibid).

### **Identity of Place and Identity *with* Place**

This diversity of place experiences can be linked back to the studies of Relph (1976) and his definitions of place identity. His work divides the concept in two, by addressing the differences between identity *with* place and identity *of* place. Identity with place is about place affiliation, referring to how humans relate to a place and how one individually and collectively connects to it from *within*. Such connection would vary from person to person, some examples might be one's home, a church, or other places potentially consisting of elements that provoke identity and affiliation on an individual level. The experienced level of place affiliation is confined by how individuals identify with the diverse narratives and characteristics that exist within the place. Relph emphasizes the meaning and importance of such place affiliation by arguing that people need it in order to avoid the feeling of rootlessness and provide a basis from which perspective and consideration of the outside world can emerge and be further explored. In contrast to



identity with place and place affiliation, identity of place refers to place perception which to a larger extent is something that comes from the outside. This can relate to stories about the place that contribute to a larger collective of myths, narratives, and expectations to what kind of experiences one might have at the place (Førde et. al. 2013). The place perception will therefore to a greater extent be a product of the descriptions of the place and its content. Such descriptions from the outside create a basis for both negative and positive expectations, also for people who have not themselves experienced the place of topic.

This thesis aims to uncover conditions related to identity *of* place. However, even though the term place identity can be divided into these two definitions by Relph, identity with place and identity of place will partly overlap. Just as people get affected by their surroundings, they hold power to share stories and contribute to the construction of place identity (ibid).

# **PART II**

## **EXPLORING & CONSTRUCTING PLACE IDENTITY**

## EXPLORING AND CONSTRUCTING PLACE IDENTITY

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Places can be seen as part of a world of symbols, where the place and its elements tell stories about life. In this context, places are considered public, created and known through common experiences and involvement in common symbols and meanings (Relph, 1976, p. 34). This emphasizes that place relations must be understood as innovative and dynamic processes, which include not only the subjective but also the intersubjective and social aspects.

### **Exploring Identity through Narrative**

In the following, the relation between symbols, stories, and identity is explored through the writings of R. Franzosi (1998) and R. Finnegan (1998). In order to examine the existing identities of Gamle Oslo and Landbrukskvartalet, this thesis seeks to uncover existing identities through narrative inquiry. One can argue that places become places by the way people talk about and relate to them, and further argue that place identity takes the form of narrative. The narrative provides information that does not pertain simply or directly to the unfolding events, by rather serves stories that carry symbolic value.

Ruth Finnegan (1998) conveys insight into how narratives shape human experiences and truths about the world. She emphasizes how storytelling is not just a tool for formulating autobiographies, but a way in which we know ourselves, others, objects, and elements in the environment surrounding us. Narratives play a major role in organizing knowledge and experiences, which further shapes the personal basis of how we see the world again and again. We do not only tell stories, "but also compare them, accept or reject them, put them into context." (p. 1). Franzosi presents several definitions of narrative in his article but what they all have in common is referring to narrative as making sense of a linear organization of events. Using narrative analysis enables bringing forward not only the linguistic characteristics of the story but also sociological data hidden behind the lines. This is valuable as narrative texts often bear in them sociological information and empirical evidence. Even beyond narrative texts, narrative analysis can be used to study initially quantitative sociological material, such as surveys, as these too often hide powerful narratives behind numbers. (Franzosi, 1998, p. 519). Narrative inquiry could even be conducted using images. While working with oral and verbal narratives requires use of imagination to bring action and setting to life, visual narratives show selected actions and settings but require imagination to make sense of what happened before, in between, and after scenes (Horvath, 2018). Narrative inquiry is used in both exploring text, qualitative data, and images in this thesis. The way in which it is used is further explained in chapter 3.



A central reason for Relph's exhaustive study of place is his firmly held belief that such understanding might contribute to the maintenance and restoration of existing places and the making of new places (also see Relph 1981, 1993). He argues that, without a thorough understanding of place and its significant influence on human everyday life, one would find it difficult to describe why a particular place is special and impossible to know how to repair existing places in need of mending. In short, before we can adequately prescribe, we must first learn how to accurately describe—a central aim of phenomenological research. Relph highlights places where people can experience compound and complex images as more attractive and valuable. Such places are considered more appealing places for people to live, work, and spend time. Places like this evolve from their characteristics and therefore keep on attracting people, resources, and capital. (Carmona, 2010).

In the context of new urban development, the mentioned theories lead us to the use of cultural symbols and narratives in the creation and branding of redeveloped places. Such elements not only serve as a way of differentiating the given place from other places but are also a way of creating recognition and identification with and of the place. Such cultural references can be important in creating identity, sense of belonging and empowerment. Identity and place are intertwined so that stories about place become stories about identity (Lichrou et al. 2017. p. 161).

## **Selling the City**

However, aspects of the local culture can be commodified and used in *selling* the city. This could imply a direct meaning of the term *selling* related to sales (or rent) of property, housing, workspaces or areas for production, service, and so on, but could also refer to "selling" as attracting new visitors, tourists or concepts as a result of targeted marketing. This is called Place Branding and can appear in the form of marketing a specific real estate project directly linked to economical interest, while it can also appear as a political phenomenon even on an international level. While some theories suggest there are differences between place marketing, destination branding and place branding, I, in this case, consider them to be concerned with the same matter and chose to use place branding as term for the described notions forward in this thesis.

Branding is increasingly applied to sites on various levels across nations, cities and destinations. (Lichrou, et al., 2017). Place branding incorporates functional and visual elements while relying heavily on representation. It addresses not only the place itself but also constitutions of its meaning and symbolic value in relation to its time and context. In the case of cities, Kavaratzis (2004, p. 70) argues that place branding:

*"is understood as the means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase*

*inward investment and tourism and also for achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest."*

That way, a *place brand* is to be considered "*a representation of identity, building a favourable internal (those who deliver the experience) and external (with visitors) image (leading to brand satisfaction and loyalty; name awareness; perceived quality; and other favourable brand associations*" (Govers & Go, 2016, p. 17). This highlights the link between experience, identity, and image of place. Assessing these correlations, Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) propose that place branding is best understood as dialogue among place stakeholders.

By turning from exploring existing identities towards constructing place identity, the people who were earlier seen as current or potential residents, visitors, users or observers of place, have now stepped into a new role as current or potential customers. It is these customers that are the targeted audience for the branding. The construction of place identity through such branding is about "*organizing principle that involves orchestrating messages and experiences associated with the place to ensure they are as distinctive, compelling, memorable, and rewarding as possible*". (Baker, 2007, p. 26). While Baker presents the benefits of branding, he suggests that it is a way for the place-maker (for the sake of this case, that would imply the planners, developers, and architects) to strategize. Branding can provide direction for the strategy of entering into cooperations and partnerships, planning for publicity, increasing place attractivity, building a strong place identity, and communicating with customers.

Meanwhile, such branding may compromise what Relph refers to as the 'authenticity' of the place, and fail to resonate with existing and locally constructed narratives and identities. As argued by Kearns and Lewis, urban place branding is "*invariably political and a means by which citizens can gain or lose influence on their collective future*" (Kearns & Lewis, 2019, p. 882 in Hudson et. al., 2019). It is a risk that place stories create or transform into moral geographies that establish what activities are possible and desirable in the given place, as well as limiting who can belong and what rights they have. This invokes the idea that only certain people, things, or practices belong. These theories on place branding will be used in order to address sub-question II.



**3.**

# **METHODS**



## METHODOLOGY

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A radical turn from the early 1970s led the field of socio-geographical studies to move away from quantitative geography and towards becoming a critical social science characterized by rather humanistic-oriented approaches. This meant that qualitative methods gained a greater influence in the field. These qualitative studies generate knowledge about how the world is experienced and given meaning by the people who populate it and thus act as an appropriate methodology for the purpose of this thesis.

The next section explains how the use of interview and document analysis is used to find answers to the sub-questions and further point to answers to the main research question of the thesis. The interviews present conversations with 'key informants, who by virtue of their position and experience possess valuable information and insight into the relevant issues of the thesis.

The texts of the analysis bring forward a perspective that could be linked to neo-marxism as they search for links between social relations and material expressions in neighbourhoods and urban landscapes, and how the capitalistic urban development of Oslo has affected these places and their identity.

## CHOICE OF METHODS

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In order to uncover how the identity of Landbrukskvartalet is retained and evolved through its redevelopment, I have chosen particular methods that collectively aim to provide solid material for the analysis. The choice of methods directly links to the three sub-questions:

- I. What defines the existing identity of Landbrukskvartalet?
- II. How do developers work with the current and future identity of the place?
- III. What is the desired and planned identity for the redeveloped Landbrukskvartalet?

The methods chosen to answer each question are presented in the following paragraphs, in the presented order.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative method for exploring social processes and how humans use narratives to construct meaning, understanding, intent, and order in a dynamic everyday life. Narrative method and analysis use narratives as empirical research material to study human experience and are concerned with the way humans organize their experiences and give them meaning through stories. By constructing stories about everyday life, we make connections between the events and experiences we take part in, and give these synthesized experiences a meaning, based on our interpretations, understandings, and knowledge, already gained from previous events and experiences. Through the use of narratives characters, happenings, and places are causally linked and given meaning.

## Tales of the City: Uncovering Existing Identities

Aims to address sub-question I: What defines the existing identity of Landbrukskvartalet?

In order to properly study how place identities are retained and evolved through urban development, it is necessary to uncover some of the narratives that form the existing identities of Landbrukskvartalet and its surrounding area. Only by having insight into the stories that make up the identities that are already associated with the area, am I able to say something about how it relates to and is transformed by the new redevelopment. The existing identities are studied using narrative inquiry in document analysis.

### Exploring Place Narrative through Document Analysis

In this thesis, narrative analysis is used to study documents. The analysis involves looking into three documents to collect symbols, elements or characteristics that collectively make up narratives about the place. This includes making note of how the documents emphasize both social and material elements provided in the texts through descriptions of for example events, materials, structures, demographics, objects, activities, rituals, trends and micro-cultures. The aim of conducting a narrative analysis of the given documents is to uncover stories about the places that point towards a certain existing identity or identities. Three formats of documents are analyzed:

#### **Hundre års meieridrift i Oslo**

*One hundred years of Dairy in Oslo*  
by Eivind Wekre

#### **Situasjonsbilde av bydel Gamle Oslo**

*The current image of district Gamle Oslo*  
by Oslo Kommune

#### **Oslo - Steder i byen**

*Oslo - Places in the city*  
by Peter Butenschøn

In the following paragraphs, I introduce each of them and give reasons to why these documents in particular have value in terms of exploring the existing identities of the area.

#### **Hundre års meieridrift i Oslo** / *One hundred years of Dairy in Oslo* by Eivind Wekre

##### What is this document?

This book follows the history of dairy production and distribution in Oslo over one hundred years beginning in the 1870s. By the end of year 1971, Fellesmeieriet (the common dairy) marked 100 years of dairy distribution in Oslo and decided to mark the milestone by looking back at important events through this book. It was ordered by Fellesmeieriet to be written by editor Eivind Wekre.



### Why is it relevant?

As Landbrukskvartalet initially was developed to house the dairy and served as the main site for all dairy-related activities during most of these years, some of these chapters held information about the place that could not be gathered elsewhere. In order to understand the historical context of the site and how it came to be a site for production and distribution, this book provides helpful insights.

### **Situasjonsbilde av bydel Gamle Oslo** / *The current image of district Gamle Oslo* by Oslo Kommune

#### What is this document?

This report from March 2021 is published by Oslo Municipality and relates to several other documents and programs for district Gamle Oslo. It especially focuses on the demographics of the district and what social and socio-economic characteristics of Gamle Oslo. It provides empirical data on living conditions, housing situation, employment rates, and so on, while putting these numbers in written context of the overall development of the city.

#### Why is it relevant?

These demographics can be considered to make up the characters in the story of bydel Gamle Oslo. Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of the social profile of the residents. While empirical data risk presenting a less nuanced image of reality, these facts still provide important characteristics that serve as part of the narrative construction. As this is a municipal, official, and public document (in a series of more relating documents), the content of these empirical data and descriptions of the current situation in the district should also be relevant information for developers, planners, and others working with the development of the district. One can by that, assume that the actors involved in the current redevelopment of Landbrukskvartalet do have knowledge of, if not the document itself, than the main content and insights of this empirical work.

### **Oslo - Steder i byen** / *Oslo - Places in the City* by Peter Butenschøn

#### What is this document?

In his book, Peter Butenschøn emphasizes the diversity of the urban areas of Oslo, and points out how Oslo is not just Oslo but is rather made up by the several neighbourhoods or city districts (bydeler) carrying their own separate histories, stories, and identities. The book provides chapters regarding areas all around the city. To examine the narrative he conveys of the particular areas of, and around, Landbrukskvartalet, this research uses his chapters on Gamlebyen, Grønland, Vaterland, and Barcode.

#### Why is it relevant?

If the previous document *Situasjonsbilde av bydel Gamle Oslo* instructs the characters of the story of this place, *Oslo - Steder i byen* instruct the setting in which the plot of the story happens. The texts give descriptions of the visual, esthetic, and evocative characteristics of the area. As Butenschøn in his book describes not just the district of Gamle Oslo, but also several other areas all around the city, he also emphasizes how these areas are created and recreated both individually and in relation to each other.

This relates to Relph's idea that place identity is not merely about the uniqueness of place, but also refers to how a place is similar to or different from, conflicts with, or relates to other places (Relph, 1976, p. 34). The district of Gamle Oslo consists of several smaller neighbourhoods whose borders vary from strict and structural to rather diffuse. The quarter of Landbrukskvartalet is quite small in itself and exists either alongside or as part of other neighbourhoods with their own individual identities. Therefore, the narrative of four of these neighbourhoods is explored, as they are considered highly relevant for being part of the identity of Landbrukskvartalet, either directly or indirectly.

## **Coding**

Each text is analyzed using a coding method. In practical terms, this implies reading each text once before making preliminary codes that serve as 'headlines', something that can be tied to quotes or parts of the text that supports a certain narrative. During the second read, specific parts relating to the codes are marked out. Then, the preliminary codes are reviewed in order to decide on the extent of which they fit the text, provide a solid basis for a narrative, or if there are important parts that say something about the place narrative that should be marked but did not fit in any preliminary code. At this point, the final codes are defined and mark the parts of text used to explore the narrative formed by the author.

## The Planners' Tale: Insight to Intentions

Aims to address sub-question II: How do developers work with the current and future identity of the place?

The issue of how those existing identities are retained or evolved is attempted answered by interviewing two professional actors central to the development of the quarter. This part of the method is developed in order to explore how planners interpret the identity of Landbrukskvartalet, both generally and in the context of densification in the city. It also seeks to uncover how the actors use and work with place identity, potentially both knowingly and purposely, but also indirectly and through different languages. It aims to examine how the existing identities that are uncovered in the narrative analysis, relate to the redevelopment both in terms of why the actors chose to invest in this quarter particularly and how they have worked with creating a concept for the redevelopment.

### Insight to Intentions through Interviews

Looking to gain insight into these mentioned issues, I have conducted two interviews. Through these, I have been able to access information about the process of concept creation for Landbrukskvartalet in a way that would not have been possible through document analysis. The interviews provide insightful data not only about the official planning process, but also about how the two actors have worked with, prioritized, acknowledged, and interpreted terms of place identity. Meanwhile, maybe just as importantly, enables uncovering what they do not see as part of the identity or chose to not prioritize, or even see as elements that should be countered through the redevelopment. I conducted two interviews:

Espen Røyseland  
Architect at Transborder Studio  
*responsible for the architectural  
delivery to the Landbrukskvartalet project*

Maren Bjerheng  
Head of Development at Aspelin Ramm  
*one of the three developers of  
Landbrukskvartalet*

The first features Espen Røyseland, architect of Transborder Studio and responsible for the architectural delivery to the Landbrukskvartalet project. The second interview is dialogue with Maren Bjerheng, Direktør Utvikling (Head of Development) at Aspelin Ramm, one of the three developers of Landbrukskvartalet. The intention of inviting the architect and the developer to interview was that they as professionals could provide insight into different aspects of working with the same project. That way, the collected data from both interviews had a greater chance of catching a greater part of the spectre of working with place identity, both generally and in this given project.

## Conducting Interviews

The interviews were conducted separately, as semi-structured and recorded interviews. This involved the making of an interview guide ahead of the conversations. The guide listed both important and potential questions I should ask the interviewee at the point of conversation. Meanwhile, the guide did not function as a script that needed to be followed, but rather as a tool for me as the interviewer to help lead the conversation while at the same time, making sure I was asking well-thought-out questions that were relevant for providing data that could help answer my research question. As the interviews were held with approximately 1 and a half months in between, my research developed in the meantime, and led me to make some edits to the guide between the first and second interviews. The conversation of the first interview featuring the architect was structured actively around a 3D model, maps, and graphic work. However, the dialogue with the developer did not rely on any such tools. After the conversations were held, I wrote direct transcripts of the interviews using the recording, to make the data analyzable.

Both interviews are analyzed using a coding method, practically similar to the document analysis coding. This implies reading each transcript once, making preliminary codes, doing a second read, marking parts relating to the codes, and so on. Finally, a number of codes are defined and mark the parts of the transcripts used to uncover the actor's work with place identity.

Interview guidelines and ethics were followed before, under, and after the conduction of these interviews. The interviewees were both provided with a written invitation to the interview meeting, stating the relevant formalities related to privacy and use of the shared information. They both gave written consent to this invitation preliminary to the interviews. As the conversations were held in Norwegian, the analysis does not present direct quotations. However, the translated quotations directly presented in the analysis are reviewed and approved in writing by the interviewees.



## Desired Identities: Envisioning the Future

Aims to address sub-question III: What is the desired and planned identity for the redeveloped Landbrukskvartalet?

As a continuation of the planner's work with place identity, I here intend to study how the visions for the new Landbrukskvartalet are presented. The analysis will seek to discover how the future plans for the quarter relate to existing identities of the area (that are explored already through narrative document analysis). Does the new concept indicate a strong bond to the past? Have certain elements of the existing identity been given special emphasis in the new visions, and have some characteristics been counteracted or opposed? And how is the new Landbrukskvartalet branded to potential residents and other visitors?

### Narrative Analysis of Project Documents

Project plans provide decided-upon facts about regulations and intended desires and visions for the development through text and illustrations and serve as elements of analysis. In this case, I have chosen to analyze two project documents using the narrative inquiry approach, just as in the first part where existing identities were explored. This is a decision made in order to compare the 'old' and 'new' identities or identities based on the same methodology. As previously, I aim to uncover what stories the document provides of the future quarter, by looking at both social and material elements and characteristics. This way, I will be able to discover potential lines drawn from historical or recent events, cultural factors, activities and more, and how these characteristics are retained or evolved in the new constructed identity. The two documents are:

**Planforslag for  
Landbrukskvartalet** *Planning  
Proposition for Landbrukskvartalet*  
by Aspelin Ramm

**Landbrukskvartalet  
Illustrasjonshefte**  
*Landbrukskvartalet Collected  
Illustrations*  
by Transborder Studio

These documents describe and show the intended and desired outcomes of the project. Planforslag for Landbrukskvartalet (*planning proposal for Landbrukskvartalet*) is a public document that serves as a basis for the legal and official planning process. It includes both regulations that are already decided upon by developers, owners, and planning authorities, specific structural propositions that have not yet been through the regulation process, as well as descriptions of intentions, and motives for the project. Illustrasjonshefte (collected illustrations) is an appendix to the Planforslag, with

approximately 50 different illustrations giving graphic information about the structural elements planned at the quarter, positioning, function, architectural expression, intended use, and so on.

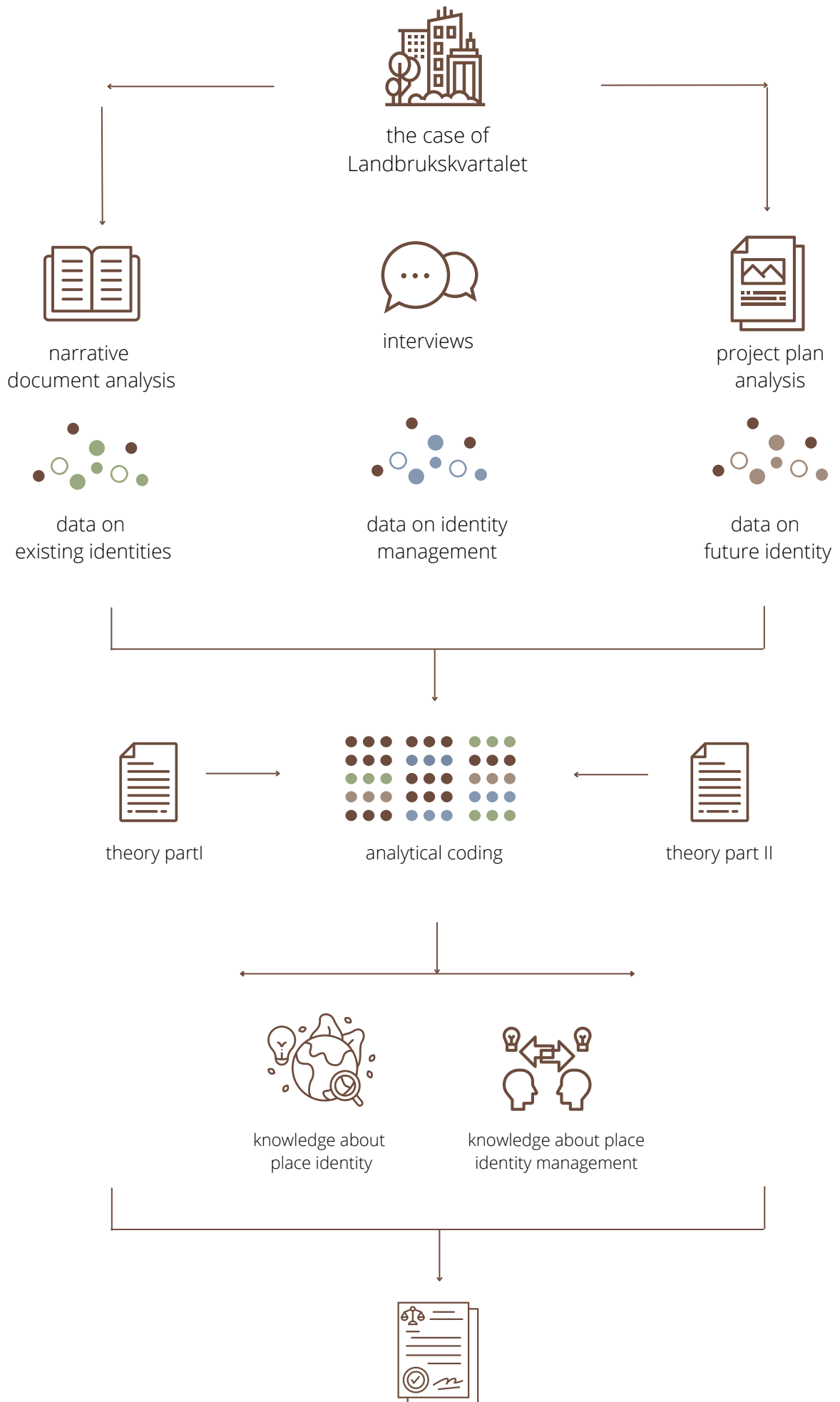


Figure 6: Methods Model

conclusion, discussion and reflection

## VALIDITY AND LIMITATIONS

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Narrative analysis, like any form of analysis, has certain limitations. As attention is required to identify stories that are made up and connected by separate events, it is time-consuming and does not allow for studying a large number of texts or sources in a thesis such as this. The information gathered and analysed through this research approach is not unlikely to be partly distorted by subjectivity of the conducted sources (in this case, biased writers of the texts) and/or by the researcher herself. This can appear by example in the form of emphasising certain elements as key issues, unnuanced presentation, or generalisation. The narrative inquiry can not entirely reflect reality, as it simply can not include all aspects of the real world. While the narrative relies on connecting separate events, there will always be real characters, ideas, or elements that are out of scope for that narrative creation and therefore will not be considered part of the narrative.

The interview can also provide biased information gathering. In this case, in particular, the interviewees have an obvious economic and acknowledgement-related interest in the identity construction and public perception of the project. Therefore, elements of the project that they may consider favourable to highlight in the means of such a perception, regarding their work or the project, might be fronted and given redundant attention, or overshadow less favourable topics or elements.



4.

**ANALYSIS**

## ANALYSIS

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The methods described in the previous chapter provide the data which is explored and studied in the following analysis. The total analysis is presented in three parts:

### **Part A: The Stories of Gamle Oslo and Landbrukskvartalet**

Aims to answer sub-question I: What defines the existing identity of Landbrukskvartalet? The data collected from the narrative document analysis provide the basis for part A. Here, the analysis seeks to describe the narrative of Landbrukskvartalet and its surrounding areas. The analysis pursues to discover place identity or identities of Gamle Oslo and Landbrukskvartalet by uncovering stories of place.

### **Part B: Managing Identity**

Aims to answer sub-question II: How do developers work with the current and future identity of Landbrukskvartalet?

The data collected from interviews provide the basis for Part B.

This part aims to determine how the developer and the architect relate to the concept of place identity, how they perceive the identity of Landbrukskvartalet and subsequently manage it when planning, developing, and rebuilding the quarter.

### **Part C: Retaining and Evolving Identities**

Aims to answer sub-question III: What is the desired and planned identity for the redeveloped Landbrukskvartalet?

By combining the findings in part A & B, the final part of analysis strives to discover how the identities of Gamle Oslo and Landbrukskvartalet set terms, guide, challenge, inspire, limit, or in other ways have affected the redevelopment project. How will the identity of the finalized project relate to previous identities?



# PART A

## THE STORIES OF LANDBRUKS- KVARTALET AND GAMLE OSLO

This part studies how the conducted methods revealed narratives of Landbrukskvartalet and its surrounding areas

## THE STORIES OF LANDBRUKSKVARTALET AND GAMLE OSLO

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This part of the analysis can be seen as exploring *the scenes and characters of the stories* of Gamle Oslo. It introduces narratives of Landbrukskvartalet and Gamle Oslo, the district Landbrukskvartalet is part of. These narratives or stories are presented in order to highlight events, activities, myths, symbols, conflicts, or other elements that in combination make up what can be seen as place identities. I first introduce 'The Story of Landbrukskvartalet', gathered from narrative analysis of the document *Hundre års Meieridrift i Oslo* as explained in the chapter of methods. Meanwhile, Landbrukskvartalet is just an urban quarter and part of the larger district of bydel Gamle Oslo. Therefore, I follow up by presenting stories of Gamlebyen, Grønland, Vaterland, and Bjørvika with data gathered from Oslo - Steder i byen. As these places surround the quarter, they highly affect its identity through similarity, contrast, and relation. To further uncover the identities of Gamle Oslo, I present the analysis of Situasjonsbilde av bydel Gamle Oslo through which I take a closer look at 'the characters of the stories' by studying the demographic and socio-economic tendency of the district. Finally, part A is summed up and discussed in terms of answering the sub-question of existing identity.

Quotes from the texts (*Oslo - Steder i byen* by Peter Butenchøn) are marked in blue and with page numbers.



## SCENES OF THE STORIES

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### **The Story of Landbrukskvartalet**

The story of Landbrukskvartalet starts in the 17th century. After a city fire in 1624, the city was moved to the western side of Bjørvika and named Kristiania. The area that held the city before the fire, on the eastern side of Akerselva, was now reestablished with new structures. It turned into a suburban area and kept the Oslo-name. Vaterlands bro and the streets of Grønland and Grønlandsleiret formed the main entrance into Kristiania from north and east. The important transport connection and the waterfront formed the structural elements for the building construction in the area.

Historically, the location of Landbrukskvartalet made it a meeting point between the city and countryside. Markets and structures for agricultural processes emerged and took place there from the mid-1800s. Farmers gathered at the square to sell cattle, wood, milk, and eggs both to each other and to residents of the city. Additional lines on Østbanestasjonen opened in 1854 to supply the production with raw materials. The houses on and around Grønland Torg (square) were replaced by three grand halls from ca. 1911, Gartnerhallen (*the gardener's hall*), Kjøttballen (*the meat hall*), and Slakterhuset (*the butchers house*), which contributed to the creation of the area's narrative as a meeting point for trades and food distribution. Landbrukskvartalet housed what was for a long time one out of two functioning dairy supplies in the city. The organization of Kristiania Melkeforsyning (*Kristiania Dairy Supply*) was formed in 1911 and started to develop a plan for a central main dairy supply facility at Schweigaards gate 34. The buildings were drawn by architect Ole Eriksen Stein and were provided with an architectural expression affected by the jugend- and neo-baroque style. At the time, the facilities could process up to 50 million litres of milk annually. In 1946 Melkeforsyningen merges with another earlier established dairy supplier, Kristiania Meieribolag, and becomes Fellesmeieriet (*the common dairy supply*), and the unit in Schweigaards gate 34 (street) became the main facility. Now housing a growing administration and office functions in addition to the spaces used for various dairy supply operations, the facility produced and distributed both butter, milk, cheese, and ice cream. During the 50s and 60s, the dairy supply was extended and Landbrukskvartalet was further developed. A transport station was built, drawn by Ahasverus Munthe-Kaas Vejre, able to serve eight trucks, 2 car tanks, and two train tanks at once, handling 500.000 litres of milk in four hours. Another administration building was put up to make room for more office spaces. Fences with gates were installed as security and to keep the quarter free from public use as it was already busy with workers.

Today, the functions of Landbrukskvartalet have changed as markets, production and

trade no longer dominate the activity of the quarter. The building structure from the dairy supply facilities still remains. While some are taken into use as office spaces and for temporary cultural events, the buildings appear quite introverted and inactive especially due to gates and restricted access. In terms of connectivity, the quarter is linked to both regional and local hubs of public transport, particularly through the close proximity of Jernbanetorget (*the railway square*) and Oslo S (*Oslo Central Station*). Followingly, traffic from both trains, buses, trams, and cars has a strong influence on the area. To the south lies the new *Central Business District* and Bjørvika, newly developed and still under construction. High-rise buildings here house financial institutions, while several other landmark buildings here are home to cultural institutions. On the north side of Landbrukskvartalet lies Grønland, with a very different character. This neighbourhood is much older in terms of establishment and is now a patchwork of old structures from the 1700s, municipal initiatives of the 80s and 90s, and new real estate investments. It serves as a meeting place and provides dynamic urban life with a multicultural identity.

### **The story of Gamlebyen**

*Such backyards have always been a prerequisite in order for the cities to function, breathe, grow, as the flipside of the coin.* p. 17

*The railway tracks and roads entering the city separated the area, making it polluted and unpleasant.* p. 17

Butenschøn conveys the story of Gamlebyen as a story about the city's backyard. This is the place for those functions of the city that are highly necessary, but less pretty and preferred kept away from the eyes of visitors, whether they are tourists or local flâneurs. Such functions might be storage spaces, noisy or smelling production, parking lots, garbage disposal, or transportation facilities. Although such facilities are essential to obtain and retain a functioning city, Gamlebyen was charged for the needs of a greedy city. These areas were developed without particular care for the place itself or its history or the living conditions of the people actually living there and gained a rather industrial expression. The traffic is particularly present, both from the railway tracks and from the main roads from the north and south going into the city center used by both buses and private cars. These mobility facilities have to a great extent taken over the area, separating it into smaller pieces of urban islands. Not only has it created large barriers for pedestrians, but also blocked views and created noise and dust.

Still, the urban occupants find ways to live and prosper in these conditions, and Gamlebyen might not be limited to a backyard, at least not an unpleasant and dirty one. The neighbourhood is rich in community volunteers determined to promote local interests, such as keeping and opening up green areas. Ambitions for the future are linked to cloudy memories from the past, before traffic issues and closed production spaces, when Gamlebyen had squares and markets and a connection to the fjord. In the

meantime, families move into newly developed apartments, the number of cafés with exotic names along the streets rise, small shops open behind dusty windows, and strollers are parked on the sidewalk during midday hours.

*As it turns out, Gamlebyen can take care of itself, even in the next century.* p. 32

*It has become a place of peace and harmony that this neighbourhood has barely known for 500 years, even if the rumble from cars and trains and the construction cranes never is far away.* p. 33

## **The Story of Grønland**

The story of Grønland symbolically starts at Smalgangen, a pedestrian street filled with different stores. Especially crowded is the food market, where the greatest variety of lush, colourful vegetables and fruit are placed out on the sidewalk. Men, women, and children are all part of the herd that moves in and out of the stores and down the street toward the square and subway station.

*... kids sneaking between men, with multiple skin tones, all running different errands, some to shop, others just to be present, to monitor, see, exchange and meet others.* p. 347

Grønland has become a symbol of the international Oslo and is the place where the immigrant cultures really have gained a foothold. The streets have been filled with a different and alluring urban life making Grønland an important meeting place for many. In addition to the residents of the neighbourhood, others come to visit Grønland and feel at home here, as it is the home of a variety of institutions, and organizations, as well as having mosques and stores with the desired supplies and selection. The density between facilities was also key to youth and elderly without a driving license. This diversity of culture is acknowledged both by local immigrants as well as visiting ethnic Norwegians. For some, the symbol of the international environment has been demonstrated as an inspiration and a selling point. In 1997 the Norwegian real estate developer Olav Thon introduced the plan for Grønland Bazar, wanting to utilize the lively and exotic trade culture that had found its place here. However, the immigrants preferred their own businesses, and what was originally inspired by the foreign cultures eventually had to lean on Norwegian and Swedish chain stores in order to stay open. Still, real estate agents selling apartments here make sure to promote the exotic life at Grønland.

p. 357

*It has a character of authenticity, completely unaffected by the close proximity to others and quite different parts of the city...*

Differences are at the core of the city, rather than similarity. Diversity presents itself as the norm of urbanity. Previously, ethnic Norwegians might have defined their identity

with the contrasts of we and them, but are now instead engaging in interaction of transitions. This way, the city becomes more complex. Not multicultural but culturally diverse, as the multicultural implies separate and homogeneous cultures side by side. In the city, the lines are washed away and hard to perceive. Affected by the impulses, public spaces become a melting pot of diversities.

*A walk down the streets of Grønland on a Saturday is a walk in a city with open windows.*

p. 361

## **The Story of Vaterland**

Vaterland is in many ways the core of the city centre. It serves as a mobility hub, as it is the site of Oslo S (Oslo Central Station), with local and regional trains, Oslo Bussterminal (Oslo Bus Terminal) with 1100 daily departures, and Jerbanetorget (The railway square) which is a stop on every metro-line going across Oslo in addition to several tram lines. This great extent of public transport systems has a huge effect on the area, dominating how it looks, sounds, and how it allows people to move and stay.

*... here, the labour day starts with streams of people who arrive from all over the region, up and down ramps and escalators, and on bridges above the streets, heading into the city or to another transfer to means of transport. They are all on their way. Later in the afternoon, this moving traffic becomes thinner, fewer rolling suitcases that slam against the metal patterns on the ground (..) the targeted and routine-like streams of travellers are replaced by teenagers without the rush, mothers with strollers, retirees on slow walks, and immigrant families wandering the stores.*

p. 303

Vaterland might be the place that foremost demonstrates the average Norwegian population. Both because so many travel through this area every day, but also because of its central location, both in terms of geography and mobility, becomes a necessary stop on the way for all kinds of social profiles, whether it is businessmen on their way to work at Barcode, women with strollers on coffee runs, homeless people meeting up, or tourists arriving or leaving the city.

The massive pressure on movement in this area has made it into a transportation space, and not a place to stay. That does not mean that there have not been multiple attempts to develop Vaterland into a place of its own. When the municipality decided to tear down the entire construction of the area in 1954, there were few opponents to the verdict. Here, planners intended for the country's largest remediation project, with visions of demonstrating the optimism of post-war planning and modern models for the growing city. The plan for the new construction emphasized Oslo's new shopping centre, and certainly no intention for production or housing. After quite a long process of strategy and financing, the planned project had grown into a proposal of double the volume that was regulated for the area, all packed into one giant building, drawn by a single architect



and built as by a single contraction. The building structure would confiscate 9 quarters and roam 34 floors, becoming the highest building and most expensive construction project across the Nordic countries.

*When such a rational machine of a mega building could now be built next to the country's largest railway system and metro hub, the bankers felt quite certain that they had discovered a solution to the future challenges of the big city - along with great opportunities for profit.*

p. 297

The vision for Vaterland met great resistance from the political left, demanding housing for regular residents. These demands were simply met with a couple of luxury penthouse apartments on top of the planned construction, now adding up to 37 floors. Soon, the opposition strengthens, relating not only to this project and area but also gathering resident organizations for protecting existing and traditional housing environments in several places in the city. The Vaterland project still became a suitable and symbolic target for criticism of profit interests leading the urban development, giving the project itself a face of greed. After long periods of conflicts and restructuring of plans, the entire project was pulled in 1972.

*Vaterland was left as a huge parking lot for several years, a thought-provoking wound in the face of the city.*

p. 301

This place still struggles to find an identity of its own, as it is still limited as a place of expediency. The realized project of Galleri Oslo was supposed to make the big city dreams come true, introducing a street underneath a glass ceiling, shops, eateries, and six small squares named up after metropolises of the world. Today, nearly all the shops are closed, except a couple of kiosks close to the entrance. The squares lie there unused. A lonesome bingo hall has survived for the time being, but that is hardly enough to cover up such an expensive embarrassment of urban development.

*They wished that Vaterland would get an intrinsic value that contributed to a chain of open, public spaces. But the inside of 'Oslo City', 'Byporten' and 'Galleri Oslo' and the windy urban spaces outside never made it as part of such a chain. The houses grew too big, too hard and dismissive, too simply programmed and one-sided to provide a pleasant life between facades. There is still reason to wonder how it could possibly go so wrong, after such great ambitions and debate.*

p. 307

## **The Story of Bjørvika**

Bjørvika is highly characterized by its location as a port by the fjord. Historically, an important hub for shipping and dock work with harbour sheds and loading cranes. A busy place for workers, while inaccessible and uninteresting for the rest of the city's population. The everyday life of the city revolved around main streets and parks, without any particular tie to the harbour areas. Only occasionally, people would make their way down to the dockside, such as on winter days when the fjord was completely frozen and

invited to skating and horse racing on the ice, or when the ship to America departed. No sooner than almost 40 years later, the new Town Hall opened. Meanwhile, a new direction was set for the city plan, going straight across the established line of the main street Karl Johan. Reaching south towards the fjord and the world of Nansen and Amundsen and Norwegian shipping that already had gained a central role in the emerging national identity.

A series of political rulings lay behind the development of Bjørvika from a transport area and dock site to urban construction. Bystyret (*City Council*), decided in 1985 and 1988 a change of function for the harbour areas running several kilometres along the city, while a more detailed plan for the development of Fjordbyen (*the fjord-city*) was presented through rulings of 2000 and 2008. During this process, the greatest ambitions, toughest negotiations and most complicated conditions were related to the area of Bjørvika. The existing traffic structures were in need of larger interventions, real estate ownership was contested, the ground highly polluted and contained multiple unresolved archaeological finds. Such uncertain conditions demanded serious considerations and great public ambitions. In the competition presenting proposals for the development of Bjørvika, the municipality requested initiatives that could answer to an urban structure rich in experience and tied to a public waterfront. The discussion of and plan for a national opera became central and the project was realized not only as a goal in itself but also as means to new achievements in Bjørvika.

The leading left-wing party spoke loudly of the planned area as a friendly urban environment for 'most people' with connections to Grønland and Gamlebyen with low buildings, less traffic and pleasant small streets towards the fjord. However, one of these visions was statutory or made part of any public rulings. The highrise of buildings that now make up Barcode was hardly what they imagined.

*"We could not see the consequences of such big volumes. We should discuss the basic principles of the development again" was a political statement. But it was too late for a re-match or principled thinking.* p. 372

The Opera-building is considered a great international success, and a bold and original expression. The accessibility for the public to walk on the roof was not part of the municipality's order but is a gift in terms of user-friendly architecture. Down the street are the Barcode-buildings placed shoulder to shoulder, supposed to be slim with air and light in between. However, they became both higher and wider than in the drawings, and two of them have even grown into each other. The chain of buildings could be experienced as a massive wall against the traditional urban structure that has now been placed in its shadow.

The great ambitions of Bjørvika have also given life to real achievements, that followingly

give good conditions for the still ongoing and future development. The fjord opened up to be accessible to the public, is clean, and provides opportunities for swimming and fishing. A large number of housing units have been built to contribute to the high pressure on homes in the inner city. A new large public library can attract more life, alongside new museums and recreational initiatives. The papers frequently convince residents that new signal structures will *put Oslo on the map*.

*Fjordbyen is a dynamic play about enormous values, innovation, and rather bold moves for the future of the city. Visionary city planners throughout history such as Christian IV, Lindstow and Grosch, Harald Hals, and Erik Rolfsen would probably be impressed (but maybe also a bit frightened) about everything going on in their city.* p. 385

## EXISTING IDENTITIES

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The historical identity of Landbrukskvartalet appears to be as the meeting point between the urban city and the rural countryside. Defined as highly active, it demonstrates its narrative through trade of agricultural produce and production, especially through the presence of the dairy supply. The representation of public life can be seen as providing experiences of being present or safe, relating to the theoretical term of insiderness. As the place was at the time created and recreated through constant use, is constantly added to its level of authenticity. However, the active life and production that once took place at Landbrukskvartalet are no longer there to attract either workers, farmers, or visitors looking to get groceries from the market. The closed-off and inactive current state of the quarter might provoke experiences of unsafety, strangeness, or outsidersness, and can make it appear as a non-place or inauthentic.

The surrounding areas of Gamlebyen, Grønland, Vaterland, and Bjørvika all have their own narratives and elements of identity. As they are in fact neighbourhoods and not just a quarter such as Landbrukskvartalet, they will naturally carry a wider range of events, activities, symbols, myths, and other elements that contribute to the creation of place narrative. As they are all closely related to Landbrukskvartalet geographically, it is pertinent to assume that their identities have a somewhat transmittable effect on Landbrukskvartalet, or even that Landbrukskvartalet is by some considered part of those areas and therefore also part of their identity. Characteristics that are considered elements of identity (based on the narrative document analysis) of the presented places are:

## **Landbrukskvartalet**

Meeting point of the city and the countryside

Agricultural trade and produce

Inaccessible and inactive

## **Gamlebyen**

Production and industrial facilities

Railroads and traffic

Initiatives for greenery and urban family life

## **Grønland**

Cultural diversity

Food markets

Meeting place

## **Vaterland**

Mobility and traffic

Conflicting interests

Not a place to stay

## **Bjørvika**

Turn towards the fjord

'Central Business District'

Culture



## CHARACTERS OF THE STORIES

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The number of residents in district Gamle Oslo has had a great increase in the last decade. While the population of the entire city rose during the period 2010-2020, district Gamle Oslo is growing faster than the rest of the city, 20 per cent above the average district in general. (Oslo Kommune, p. 7) Citizens with short residencies, living in Gamle Oslo for a quite limited period have been a strong tendency for several years. The district is considered an attractive place for young people settling in the city. However, the same group of residents tend to eventually move to other districts for larger housing and other facilities, especially in cases of family formation and having children. While this high frequency of residents on the move has had a decrease since 2019. One reason contributing to the slight decrease in moving frequency relates to an increase in real estate prices. As the transactional costs of selling and buying real estate have gone up, it serves as an argument to keep apartments for longer periods of time. (ibid).

Folkehelsebarometeret (*the public health evaluation*) point to some current socio-economic challenges in district Gamle Oslo. The evaluation looks at conditions in the district compared to Oslo in general and Norway in general. These comparisons revealed statistics related to socio-economic conditions that are considered more critical for the citizens of district Gamle Oslo than in the city and country generally. Persistent low income and amount home-renters over 45 years old were highlighted as economic challenges of the district (Oslo Kommune p. 6-7). The number of families in small apartments classified as 'cramped living' and young people dropping out of school are higher than average, while youth participation in recreational activities, physical activity, and life expectancy are lower than average. (ibid)

While Oslo is considered a multicultural city, the ethnic diversity is greater in district Gamle Oslo than in the city in general. Non-Norwegian or immigrant residents make up about 40 per cent of the population in the district. Nevertheless, the increase of immigrant residents gave a smaller growth in Gamle Oslo than other districts combined in the period 2010-2020. The development of the new neighbourhoods of Kværnerbyen, Sørenga and Ensjø have conceivably contributed to this tendency, as these new housing areas have attracted a larger number of financially strong households of ethnic Norwegian residents.

These new development projects, on top of the current trend of real estate price increase in general, make the total increase of housing prices in Gamle Oslo higher than in the city seen as a whole. Housing prices have more than doubled in the past 10 years, a far steeper increase than in general salary rates of the local residents (and other residents of the city). As a result, living in the district will form a rather large group of residents imply smaller apartments or renting. Segregation grows as the average income

in the district has in fact gone up, but so has the number of low-income households, especially in the neighbourhoods of Grønland and Nedre Tøyen.

## CONTRASTING STORYLINES

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The narratives point to a range of old and new, strong and weak, established and developing elements of identity across the studied district. While the older neighbourhoods such as Gamlebyen and Grønland showcase characteristics of cultural diversity, local initiatives, and production, the new and still developing Bjørvika conveys very different urban traits with its workplaces especially related to financial institutions and sculptural modern architecture housing art exhibitions and opera performances intended to attract citizens from all over the city as well as visiting tourists. Landbrukskvartalet is situated more or less right in the middle of these quite contrasting identities. Local grocery stores with foreign fruit and vegetables to the north, Michelin star restaurants to the south. Local immigrant families to the north, commuting businessmen to the south. While some of the older parts of Gamle Oslo seem to be challenged with socio-economic-related issues, the context of these matters are changed by new developments and followingly new residents in the areas of and around Bjørvika.

# PART B

## MANAGING PLACE IDENTITY

This part studies how the developer and architect see, use, and manage place identity

## MANAGING PLACE IDENTITY

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This part analyzes the conducted interviews in order to work my way towards answering sub-question II: How do developers work with the current and future identity of Landbrukskvartalet? Through the process of analysis, I have separated this part in two: First - while I have studied the existing narrative of Landbrukskvartalet through other sources, it is important to uncover how these actors, the developer and the architect, interpret the current narrative and identity of the place and how it corresponds with the elements of identity from Part A. This forms an important foundation for further investigating how they work with that identity going forward with the development. Second, I aim to address that exact process of development, by asking 'how have you worked with place identity in this project?' to gain a more direct insight into their active approach to the topic.

Quotes from the interviewees are marked in blue.

## The Identity of Landbrukskvartalet from the Planners' Perspective

Aiming to answer the first part about how the actors interpret the existing identity of Landbrukskvartalet, the first interview actually pointed to an important finding for the second part: The architect, in particular, had done quite an extensive research of their own, intending to uncover the current identity of the quarter. I will get back to that later in the second part.

In several segments of the interviews, the conversation is drawn toward the historical narrative of the quarter in terms of its earlier form, function, activity, and identity. The notion of a meeting place, both referring to a meeting between the urban city and the rural hinterland as well as a place where farmers and city residents met each other and one another. The trade of agricultural produce is seen as a condition and a great part of such meetings, all the way from small booths exchanging eggs and vegetables, to the huge butcher's hall. The growth and evolution of these market-like facilities and activities became an essential part of the narrative, as they turn into large installations for managing production and supply of produce. Both Røyseland and Bjerkeng accentuate the dairy supply as important in terms of place identity, both through the organization and the facilities. Bjerkeng brings forward the perspective of industry and production in the city, and Røyseland highlights how logistics and distribution became guiding factors for the structural development of the quarter.

*'Farmers came here to sell their produce, vegetables, eggs, poultry. (...) Eventually, large production and processing facilities were installed. Huge facilities to handle the exchange between the city and the countryside.'*

*E. Røyseland*

Following a chronological timeline of the development of the area around Landbrukskvartalet, the architect emphasize a turn towards heavier structures based on planning for logistics, production, and transportation. And while such facilities promoted elements of efficiency and utility in the area, the affirmation of human-scale and pedestrian-friendly living conditions was not prioritized. Referring to a satellite photo of inner city Oslo from 1984, the architect state:

*'what central Oslo really looks like at this point is just one huge parking lot.'*

and

*'A place for logistics and industry and polluted air. Not a place to live'*

*E. Røyseland*

He follows this up by referring to a movie from 1990 called *døden på Oslo S* (death at Oslo S (Oslo Central Station)), which is filmed mainly around the central station area and in close proximity to Landbrukskvartalet. The movie serves as quite a strong narrative



itself and portrays the area as rough, hard, and cold, with images of tall metal fences and cars everywhere. Røyseland states that the plot of the movie is obviously fiction, but that it definitely plays on a public perception of the area. He stresses how the district, and particularly Grønland, has been perceived as a problem area for many years facing peculiar challenges. Followingly stating that in the 1800s Oslo Municipality (Kristiania at the time), wanted the city border to be defined by Akerselva (the city river), and by that avoid demanding issues rising on the eastern side of the river. A problem at the time was for instance related to rental rules which made it impossible for landlords to increase rent over time, resulting in a situation where it was more profitable for them to let their buildings decay than to upkeep maintenance. This led to low living conditions for the residents and neighbourhoods turning into unpleasant environments. Grønland stayed within the city borders and was upgraded by the municipality in the 80s and 90s. While the redevelopment was a success in many areas, Bjerkeng states that the area is still to some related to issues of crime and drugs, and Røyseland underlines that poor living conditions are still a greater challenge here than in other areas of the city. These issues might have become even clearer as they are highlighted through the contrast of the new development areas of Bjørvika. With its currently closed gates and introverted state, Bjerkeng refers to it as a vacuum in between more extroverted and vivid existing urban identities.

*'Barcode and the buildings on the south side of Schweigaards gate demonstrate one of the sharpest economical separations of the city. It's like two different worlds'*

*E. Røyseland*

The identity of Landbrukskvartalet is in this part considered to consist of elements that refer both to just the quarter in itself and also to elements of identity that may have their source in the surrounding neighbourhoods presented in Part A. In terms of these, it does vary whether Landbrukskvartalet is seen as bordering to or being part of, both geographically and in narrative and identity discourse. Therefore, the presented elements of identity are here not distinguished by place besides Landbrukskvartalet. Based on the two interviews, particular symbols, events, activities, or other elements that are considered part of the identity construction on Landbrukskvartalet by the planners, are:

A meeting place for the urban city and the rural hinterlands

The Dairy Supply

Dominating structures for logistics, industry, and transportation

A vacuum between contrasting place identities

These elements of identity do to quite an extent overlap with the ones that were uncovered in Part A. A lot of emphasis was put on the notion of the meeting place, connecting the city and the countryside, just as in the narrative image that was created of Grønland, referring to both historical and current events and activities. In relation to that meeting place, but also as an element in itself, is the aspect of food, whether it is referring to markets and grocery shopping or to large-scale production and distribution. Another repeated factor was the very dominant and present logistical structures, especially the train lines and road system with their barriers, noise, and pollution. The interviews also pointed to contrasting images in the area in terms of building structure and architecture while maybe most importantly concerning issues of segregation and living conditions of residents.

Although it is not marked as a narrative from the interviews, Bjerkgeng in her interview confirms the notion of active locals that engage in working with their neighbourhood. She states that Aspelin Ramm has been collaborating with several organizations and volunteers in the planning process. What was brought forward in Part A, while not highlighted in the interviews as strong an identity bearing element, was cultural and ethnic diversity. Neither of the interviewees brings forward cultural appropriation or cultural activity as part of the existing identity. That does not necessarily mean that they do not consider any current cultural initiatives as part of the identity, but one could assume that the cultural heritage related to the market and dairy supply is seen as more important, stronger or a more effectful matter of identity.

### **Working with Place Identity**

Moving on to the planner's work with place identity, I return to what was mentioned when introducing the planner's perspective on existing identity. Studying place identity was actually an essential work for the architect when they were engaging in the project of Landbrukskvartalet. Røyseland emphasizes the importance of such work and how it was significant to their way of getting the architectural role in the first place. Four architectural firms were invited to present proposals for the project. Røyseland tells how Transborder Studio, his architectural firm, was a 'wild card' up against larger and more established firms. He states that capturing and understanding the place was key to their winning proposal.

*'Place identity and the role and understanding of this project was our way into working with Landbrukskvartalet, and the reason we won the competition. We had captured a good narrative of the place - what is this place, what is important here? What is important to keep, cultivate further, and what is its role in the city.'*

*E. Røyseland*

He presented a quite extensive study that the firm had done to explore the historical

development of Landbrukskvartalet, looking into the marketplace, dairy distribution facility, and how its functions formed the architecture of the quarter. Whilst the research also examined elements of the current situation, these were limited to the physical landscape and cityscape analysis of availability and access, area mobility, distances, and so on, and did not include any social mapping. Aspelin Ramm, however, Bjerheng explained, has conducted a survey to map local residents' needs and wishes in order to study how these could be considered answered through the redevelopment. Bjerheng states that as they started exploring these perspectives, a new layer was added to the story of Landbrukskvartalet.

*'it started with a 'production in the city'-story which based on the history of the previous use (..) As we worked further with the current issues of the area, it also became about finding solutions to how we could work not just with creating a pleasant area, but also with the challenges of the area; to avoid exclusion and promote inclusivity, especially for youth. This added another layer to the story.'*

*M. Bjerheng*

Røyseland explains that understanding the existing identity of place has been particularly important to their work with designing the physical structures and spaces. It became particularly crucial in this project because of the already dense plot. Being able to uncover links between the structures at the site and notions of identity has been essential to making sense of how the quarter can be redeveloped through both keeping existing structures, as well as making space for and building new ones.

*'With the existing structure, there is no free space left on the plot. In order to build something new, something has to go. (...) This brings up a situation where we have to determine what's important here. What's important in relation to the place's history, cultural and industrial history, function, architectural history - the inherent qualities of the structure. And eventually, how can all of this play a role in a new urban understanding'*

*E. Røyseland*

Part of the elements of identity served as inspiration and are planned to be reintroduced in the redevelopment project. Especially the narrative of a meeting place, bringing features of the countryside into the city, seems to be given a central position in the new concept and identity construction. Elements of identity, especially the narrative of a meeting place as a meeting point for city and country, seem to have been given a central place in the planned concept and in the construction of a new identity.

*'This enables us to tell an amazing story and recreate that meeting where it belongs (..) Evolving from being a closed facility into a destination. A project that interacts with the surrounding cityscape, just as it did historically. And then, new connections to the city are made and drawn through the quarter, establishing new movements with a completely open situation.'*

*E. Røyseland*

experiences of safety, such as described by Relph as notions promoting insideness. This could potentially facilitate an arena where activities that might have been diminished before, can find new ground and grow. That way, activities, rituals, or events that are considered part of the existing identity might gain a greater position of acknowledgement.

*'if we are able to facilitate safe spaces for activities to happen, we can enhance the positive qualities that are already there to a greater extent'*

*M. Bjerkgeng*

Urban redevelopment is always a balance, and we have to always ask ourselves 'who is this for? And in what way?' is stated by Bjerkgeng. New residents will bring along economic power to support local stores, coffee shops and potential establishment of new services. Workplaces will also generate more activity and stimulate safety. These notions are all connected back to how a safer environment can provide a more vital ground for identity-related activities to grow. In the meantime, Bjerkgeng emphasizes how it brings forward the topic of gentrification:

*'interesting discussions on gentrification arise. How can we attract others aside from the existing local residents without issues of exclusion? How to make room for new activities and new inhabitants and visitors and at the same time create new urban spaces for those who are already there?'*

*M. Bjerkgeng*

Working with this issue, Røyseland constitutes that gentrification is indeed a relevant topic for this project, but also a political dilemma that lies deep beyond single development projects. Looking to how the architect can address the issue he turns to flexible building structures and space programming. Both Bjerkgeng and Røyseland highlight how the mix in housing units is important in order to secure diversity amongst the new residents. The production spaces are highlighted as democratizing elements in between traditional office spaces and workplaces. In addition, what is called a neighbourhood function is introduced, a cooperation project with the municipal department of district Gamle Oslo. While its future specific content and program seem to be still undecided, it is chosen and regulated to offer a social service directed towards youth. Bjerkgeng further explains how place branding is an important tool in terms of regulating gentrification. She claims that by branding the place correctly, it will attract future residents that are in fact interested in living in this exact area, and willing to contribute to what is happening within a lively urban quarter. It is also key to getting in contact with other actors that can contribute to the project, both professionals as well as locals, and actually bring them on board the redevelopment.

These findings suggest that both the developer's and the architect's work this far in the process of developing Landbrukskvartalet have involved exploring its identity. It has

functioned as a lens through which they have discovered both the existing conditions of the quarter, potential opportunities and challenges, as well aspirational aims for the result of the transformation. Place identity has been essential when constructing a basis result of the transformation. Place identity has been essential when constructing a basis for decision making regarding what structures to keep in full, which ones could be objects of transformation, and where new buildings would bring greater value than the current ones. In addition, place branding has been brought important means of communication towards actors, locals, contributors, and future residents.



# PART C

## RETAINING AND EVOLVING IDENTITIES

This part studies how the identity of Landbrukskvartalet are retained and evolved through its redevelopment

## RETAINING AND EVOLVING IDENTITIES

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This part analyses the two project plan documents seeking to uncover matters of sub-question III: What is the desired and planned identity for the redeveloped Landbrukskvartalet? The Planforslag and the Illustrasjonshefte present visions for the project and desired outcomes in text and images. The mentioned documents were analyzed using narrative document analysis as explained in chapter 3. In the following section, the visions presented in both documents are introduced in five themes, similarly to the uncovered elements of identity from analysis parts A and B.

Figure 4 shows the existing situation at Landbrukskvartalet, which is highlighted. Names of streets, structures and the park surrounding the quarter are named here as they will be referred to in the analysis.



Figure 7: Existing situation at Landbrukskvartalet, locating streets, the park, the church and two neighbouring quarters. Source: *Transborder Studio*

## Densification and Housing

The redevelopment introduces a new feature to the quarter. While the Dairy Supply at its time facilitated some options for workers to stay and live in the quarter during working days, housing had not been considered a feature of the buildings until today. In the planning proposal, the developer defines the project as part of the densification strategy of the city and introduces 200 new housing units to the quarter. The area dedicated to housing units is approximately 40 per cent of the total project, including new buildings and transformation of existing structures. As the quarter itself is already quite dense in structures, the housing units are mainly planned in a high-rise building installed on top of one of the old dairy supply buildings. In the current planning proposal the high rise has a total of 20 floors, including the base of the existing structure. Welcoming residents to the quarter brings forward perhaps the most important element of the new vision for Landbrukskvatalet, as it promotes a completely new social profile of a living neighbourhood. Meanwhile, the high rise building proposed as a densification solution to provide more housing units also brings a new visual and structural profile to the quarter.



Figure 8: illustration shows the proposed new highrise building of housing units built on top of the existing brick structure that originally housed facilities of the dairy supply. *Source: Transborder Studio*

## City life and Meeting Places in a Safe Urban Environment

The quarter is intended to open up, not only to its new residents but also to other visitors and users. In the documents, a great emphasis is put to the development of five new squares and a pedestrian street. Through programming and activation, these spaces are envisioned to bring life, safety, and intent to stay and use the area. An aim is to bring back notions of the historical meeting place. Open and active main floors are supposed to support the outdoor squares by providing services and attracting users to stay in the area both during the day and evening. The Planforslag describes sheltered and pleasant spaces for future users while the illustrations provide a layout of the square with a large number of seating options focused in and around the public squares. The notion of how increased activity throughout the day is linked to safer spaces in and around the quarter is given a central position in the documents. The planforslag repeatedly promotes a vision of a blooming urban life and the illustrations show crowded squares and busy main floor facilities.

### History of the Dairy Supply

Two of these public squares are presented with the suggested names Meieriplassen and Melkeforsyningen, a reference to the old Dairy Supply. The old Meieribygningen, earlier mentioned as what would be the structural base to the proposed highrise, is considered transformed. It previously functioned as a *tapperi* (facility for distributing large quantities of milk into smaller glass bottles), *kjerner* (facility for producing butter), and had separate zones for produce arriving, cooling installations, and transportation services. These areas are in the proposal transformed into spaces for hospitality, business and education spaces. The proposal also suggests keeping other buildings that were constructed as part of the dairy supply, including a building structure in three parts on the northern part of the plot. It was used as stables for the time when horse and cart served as the means of transportation for the distribution of milk from Landbrukskvartalet and out to the city. These spaces were also workshop areas used for repairing and producing tools used in the facility. As part of the redevelopment, the main and first floor of two of these buildings is suggested kept as a workshop area and production space. What kind of production might take place in these spaces is not described or illustrated beyond the illustration underneath. The Planforslag also takes the history of the dairy production outside, where what was once the production and working lines of the quarter, is demonstrated through an open rainwater management. It states *outdoor spaces and the urban floor, in particular, will be used to convey the story of the dairy supply in a unique way.* (Aspelin Ramm, 2021) This kind of installation is not marked or illustrated to any extent in the Illustrasjonshefte, besides what could be interpreted as part of it in the illustration underneath and as the blue lines in the graphic map in figure 5.



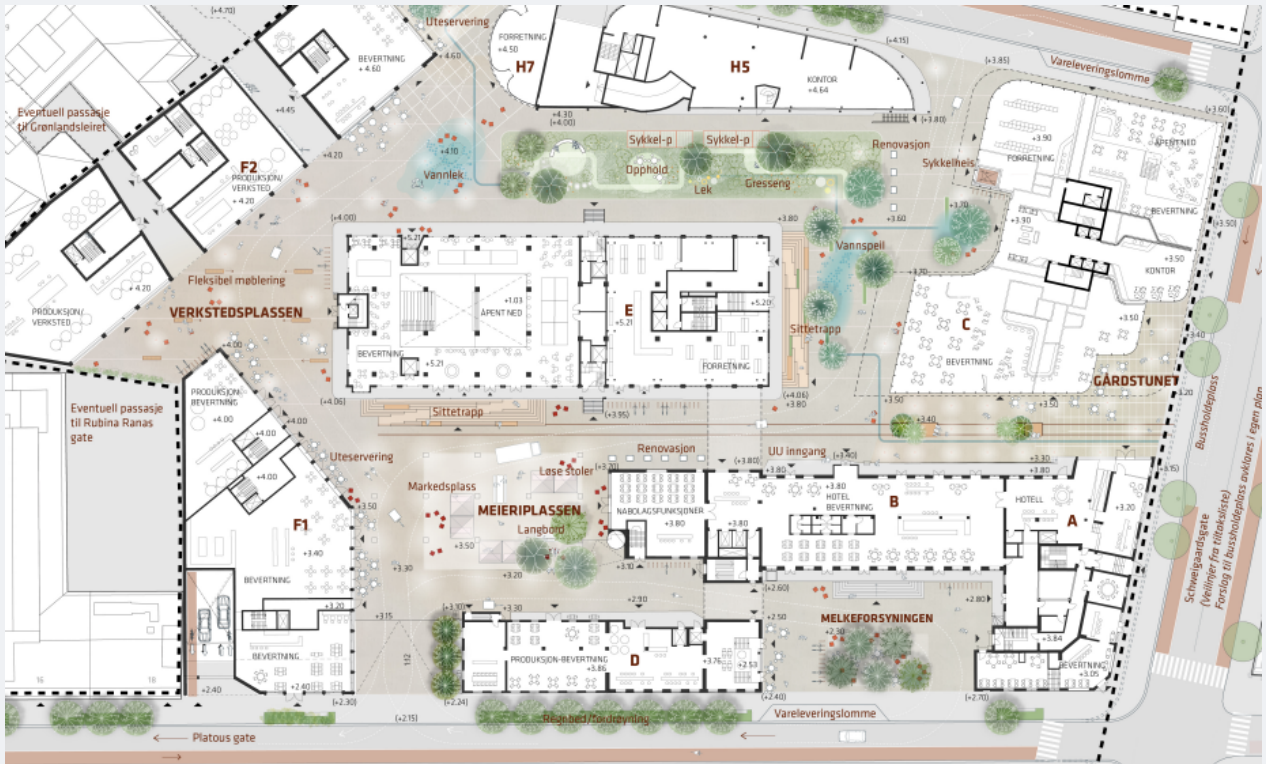


Figure 9: Plan of the urban floor and new squares at Landbrukskvartalet.



Figure 10: Illustration of the planned quarter from the perspective of entering from Botsparken. The open rainwater management illustrated on the urban floor with a girl playing.



## Sustainability, Greenery and Urban Cultivation

Rainwater management is considered part of the sustainability measures in the project. The planforslag implies great sustainability ambitions for the project stating that Landbrukskvartalet will demonstrate how agriculture can contribute to a green shift in urban planning. This is planned implemented on multiple levels and realized through the decisions related to functions, actors and materials. The greatest sustainability focus is put towards implementing greenery both on the ground in the squares, and more extensively on the rooftops of five out of six building structures. These rooftops also contribute to rainwater management and are promoted as green outdoor recreational spaces for the residents. The plan for the roofs also includes opportunities for cultivation. Greenery is highly promoted in the illustrations, both in graphical representations of the area with structures and in images of the rooftop gardens.



Figure 11: Illustration showing the planned rooftop terraces with garden and cultivation opportunities.

## From Horse and Cart, Car and Truck, to Biking and Walking Mobility

Connected to both matters of the new meeting place and pedestrian street and sustainable solutions, the proposal suggests the quarter to be car-free. Access to public transport is highlighted as an important quality for Landbrukskvartalet and the close proximity to transportation hubs is highlighted in text and illustration. In the meantime, biking and walking are promoted as the mobility options inside the quarter as the developer proposes a no-car policy. Structural changes are suggesting opening up

facades both to Schweigaards gate and Hollendergata to create new passages and links between surrounding areas. That way, more people are invited into the quarter using it as a pleasant line of movement through the area, supporting the idea of an active environment all day.

The chart on the next page points to how these visions for the new Landbrukskvartalet relate to those elements of identity uncovered in Part A. Some are considered continued or reinforced symbols, events, and identities of the past, some are discontinued or unaddressed and not seen as part of the new identity, while some are introduced in a new form.

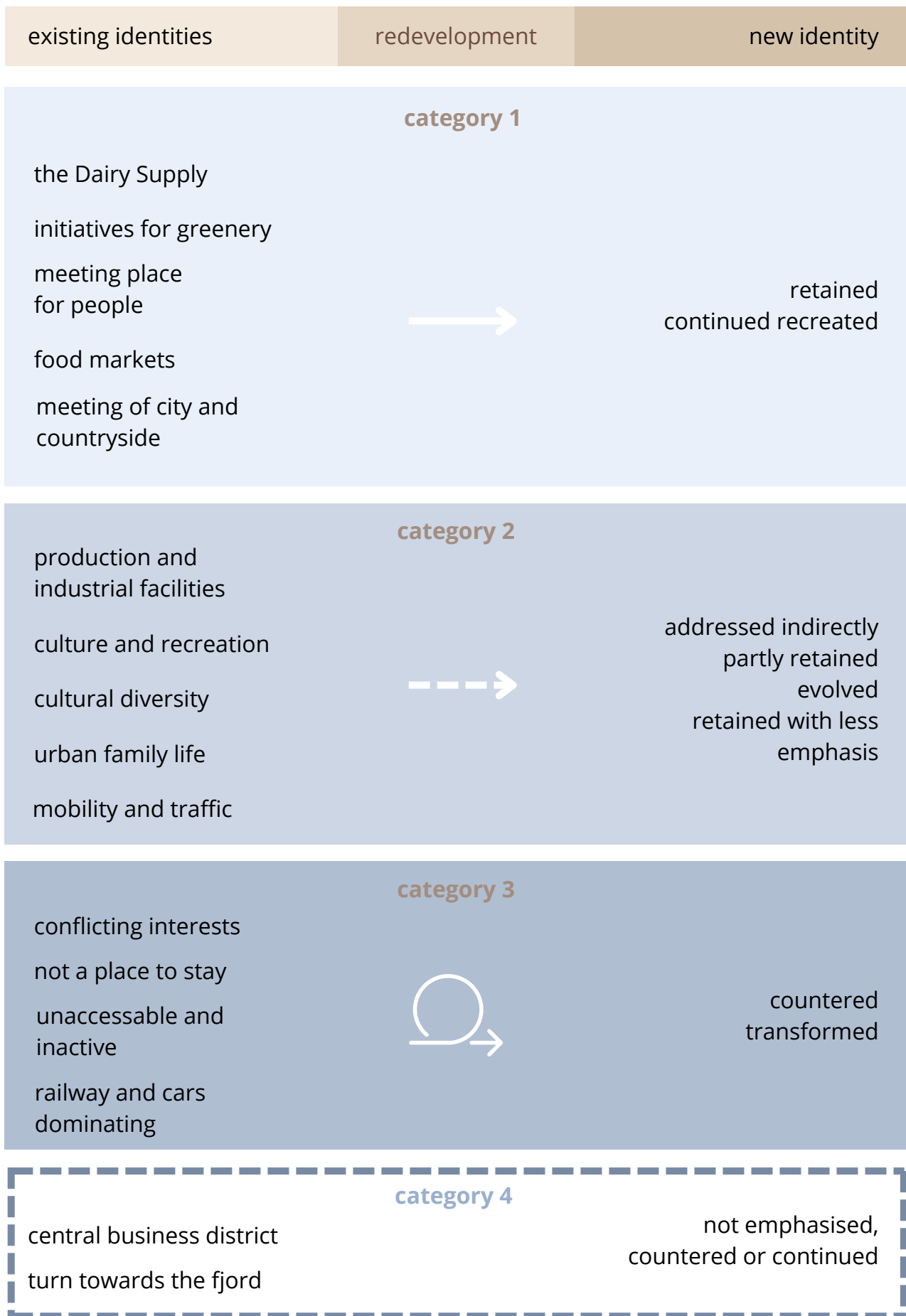


Figure 12: Analysis Model



**5.**

**CONCLUSION**

## REINTRODUCING INSIDENESS AND AUTHENTICITY

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Seeking to uncover how place identity is retained and evolved through urban redevelopment, I have in this thesis explored the existing identities of Landbrukskvartalet and Gamle Oslo, as well as the desired and planned identity for the finalization of the new Landbrukskvartalet quarter. My conclusion is based on how uncovered elements of identity are continued, recreated, countered, evolved or discontinued in the new plan for the quarter. I also suggest a theory in which I address what kind of elements that seem to have been decided to retain, evolve and discontinue, that could apply not only to this specific project but also to other similar urban redevelopments.

The elements of identity that are considered retained in this project are identified as the dairy supply, initiatives for greenery, food market, meeting place for people and meeting of city and countryside (marked category 1 in the chart). These are seen as providing particularly strong inspiration or direction for the new vision and are quite directly implemented in the plans for the redevelopment. These elements are perceived as highly related to the historical situation at Landbrukskvartalet, first as the marketplace for food and agricultural produce where farmers and city residents once met, which in time transformed into a site of industry and production, particularly in form of the Dairy Supply. Turning back to the theories of Relph, the historical site of Landbrukskvartalet might have been characterized by what he defines as an authentic place. It came to be a place through events, happenings and activities that served a great function to its users, whether it was the farmer who came here to sell his produce or the urban worker who came to buy it. It was created over time through its constant use as a meeting place and market. As part of the redevelopment, re-implementing the notions of the past market- and meeting place might be seen as an attempt to recreate the historical situation of the authentic place. However, in order to achieve such authenticity, the place needs to be created beyond its structural redevelopment. It must be taken in constant use in a way that is “not mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor stereotyped conventions”. (Relph, 1976, p. 64).

Programming, architecture, and facilitation can be part of engaging use over time that promotes authenticity. In this project, the planners (the developer and architect) put particular emphasis on how open and safe spaces, movement through the area, and a mix of residents and services provided within the quarter are essential to define further use of the spaces within and around the quarter. Connecting the quarter to its surrounding areas, opening up and activating the spaces can improve safety or experienced safety in the area. Keeping the production- and workshop from the dairy supply can facilitate cultural and recreational initiatives and a workspace beyond



traditional office spaces. This way, the planned design and programming of the quarter indirectly or partly address existing elements of identity. (see category 2). As these elements are linked to notions of safety and belonging, they can be considered as promoting the experience of insiderness, and characteristics of a pleasant and attractive place.

On the other hand, category 3 refers to elements of outsidersness. The dominating presence of heavy traffic, inaccessibility and lack of places to stay are here related to experiences such as stress, unsafety and barriers separating humans and place. These elements are not implemented in the redevelopment plans, but rather suggested countered by new visions. The previously prioritized railway and car roads are seen as qualities of the new quarter as they promote mobility and connection. Meanwhile, they are not considered part of the future inside the quarter. The plan suggests a car-free quarter prioritizing pedestrians and bike mobility. That way, the plan suggests countering the elements of existing identity that promote outsidersness and they can be seen as giving direction in terms of transformation and change.

While the densification strategy is the chosen tool for the process of sustainable urban development, cultural heritage issues have not received as much emphasis as environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The need for new infrastructure and housing in the city due to rapid population growth puts pressure on cultural heritage values. Although such cultural values often are mentioned in planning documents, these concerns are not sufficiently discussed in the context of sustainable urban development. The interest in constituting a fourth pillar in the sustainability model is brought forward, but it is yet to define how such an agenda should be integrated in modern urban redevelopment projects.

Whether the elements of the identity of Landbrukskvartalet are continued, recreated, transformed, or countered they are all in this project translated into a modern understanding of urban planning. The historical events of the food market and the local initiatives for greenery are reintroduced through the use of green rooftop gardens with the opportunity for cultivation. The story of the Dairy Supply is told through new use of the production and workshop spaces, and by following the previous flow of milk through the quarter in the modern form of open rainwater management. This way, a way to understand how the place identity of Landbrukskvartalet is retained and evolved is to consider it transformed as part of the physical transformation. It is developed to answer to certain needs and play on strategies that guide the current urban development. Meanwhile, defining the 'new' identity of the quarter will not be fully possible until it is established through the rediscovering, experience and intended use and experience of its future residents and visitors. It is first by that time, that one could again explore the new story of the neighbourhood.

## REFLECTION & POTENTIAL FURTHER STUDIES

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Cultural heritage can be considered a great component of quality in urban life and development. However, the two main methods of identifying and retaining built heritage, listing of individual monuments and buildings and designation of conservation areas, are not necessarily enough in order to deal with the less tangible features of the cityscape, such as street patterns, accessibility, activities, and stories. Yet, it is often precisely these features that give the urban spaces and places their unique characters, and provide the sense of belonging that lies at the core of place identity. Therefore, a potential continuation of this study could explore what effect the current tools for cultural heritage have in terms of retaining place identity and sense of belonging in the context of modern urban development. One could also study what strengthening the position of a potential fourth sustainability pillar could bring to the policy of urban development and redevelopment, and how it could be implemented in planning documents and projects.

This thesis to a great extent relies on the information and insight provided by the architect and developer(s) of Landbrukskvartalet. These are both private companies and stakeholders with interests beyond retaining and evolving the cultural heritage and identity of Landbrukskvartalet. The insights from the interviews as well as what is portrayed and promoted in the Planforslag, Illustrasjonshefte, and other documents regarding the project, are necessarily biased as they serve to promote the project in a certain (positive) manner, both for the general public and for the planning authorities that are to regulate the structural redevelopment. Another possible future approach to a further study of this topic could be looking into how market-driven urban development affects place identity through urban development. In Oslo, private developers are the biggest providers of housing in the city. It could therefore be interesting to look into how their economical interests affect the way cultural heritage and place identity is considered within urban development projects.

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## FIGURES

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Figure 1: Maps/satellite photos of inner-city Oslo: Transborder Studio. (2016, october). *Historien om Landbrukskvartalet*.

Figure 2-3: Photos of Bjørvika: Aftenposten.no. (2021, september) *Fra trafikkhelvete til lekegrind*.

Figure 4: Airphoto of the Dairy Supply: Oslo Byarkiv. Photo by Widerøe Flyveselskap/Helge Skappel. (1952). *Oslo Fellesmeieriet*

Figure 5: Illustration of Landbrukskvartalet: Transborder Studio. (2021).

Figure 6: Method Model by the author

Figure 7: Photo/map Landbrukskvartalet with streets: Transborder Studio. (2021). *Planforslag for Landbrukskvartalet*

Figure 8-11: Illustrations: Transborder Studio. (2021). *Illustrasjonshefte*

Figure 12: Analysis Model by the author

Illustrations on each chapter page: from *Illustrasjonshefte* by Transborder Studio