

PORTRAIT OF A CITY

ACTIVATING THE BLIND SPOTS IN HISTORIC PART OF SANDNES



WHERE

The project is situated in Sandnes in south western Norway, in the historic part of the city center. This area is based on the first street structures in the city and is characterized by clusters of buildings from the second half of the 19th century. The area used to be the city's urban center with its main street, Langgata, being the urban spine.

The whole of Sandnes city center feels fragmented with lack of connection between its urban spaces, a feeling reinforced by an elevated traintrack dividing the historic area from the harbour. The area around the harbour has a completely different character to the historic area and is currently undergoing an enormous urban transformation. Several previously inaccessible industrial sites are being transformed into publicly accessible areas, and its new buildings can be characterized as grand, individually expressive and self-referential.

WHAT

Having grown up in this city, there are areas in the periphery of Langgata I have passed by multiple times but what kind of spaces they are, their function and use have not registered. Several parts seem left behind and uncared for which has resulted in no contribution to the urban fabric, movement and urban social life. They are part of the fragmentation, 'blind-spots' to the everyday person and are experienced as backsides to the main axis, Langgata.

The aim of this project is to look at the potential of these blind spots to expand and enrich the understanding and use of the area. On a bigger scale it is to see what potential lies in them for the historic part of the city to keep up with and react to the urban development happening by the harbour; keeping up by having a development on its own terms.

PORTRAIT OF A CITY

ACTIVATING THE BLIND SPOTS IN HISTORIC PART OF SANDNES

*Marthe Selvikvåg Wernø
Bergen School of Architecture
Diploma Program 2021*

TUTORS:

APP: HECTOR PINA BARRIOS

DAV: HEDIG SKJERDINGSTAD

SOCIAL SCIENCE: TORD BØ BAKKE & FRODE F. JACOBSEN

TTA: KIM CHRISTENSEN & ANDRE FONTES

SUSTAINABILITY: MARCO CASAGRANDE & NANCY COULING

1:1: ALBERTO ALTES & CECILIE ANDERSON

WRITING AS TOOL: PAVLINA LUCAS

HELPERS:

INGEBORG KATIE ÅTLAND: ARCHITECTURE STUDENT

- FINILIZING EXISTING SITUATIONS IN MODELS, PRINTING

MATHIAS S. WERNØ: CARPENTER & BACHELOR IN ENGINEERING

- TABLES FOR EXHIBITION & PAINTING WALL

CONTENT:

- 4. SOCIAL SCIENCE EXPLORATIONS
- 5. CONCEPT MODEL
- 6. WHERE
- 10. WHAT
- 12. WHY
- 14. HOW
- 17. TIMELINE
- 18. CV
- 19. PREVIOUS MASTER COURSES

SOCIAL SCIENCE EXPLORATIONS

The Urban Connection

Through social science readings and writing I explored the development of urban spaces and the social life which happens within them. In an effort to understand the use and shaping of the urban scene, I looked at tendencies and development which have occurred to bring us to where we are today. Commercial culture has greatly shaped the public life of modern cities, and moving from the rational organization of the city during industrial times, urban life and the individual in its setting today is increasingly defined by its consumption of goods and leisure. I looked at peoples behavior in public space and what conditions and elements influence and construct this in connection with cities being landscapes of consumption.

Our behavior in these spaces are to various degrees dictated and we have become more passive in our experiences and views of the city. Some people challenge this disconnection, and although the aim should be to create environments which not only makes inhabitants of space but participants in space, the solution is not clear. How do we in the contemporary urban world encourage people to engage in their surroundings to make meaningful relations? And how can we intertwine this with the current aspect of consumption of goods and leisure; with the thought in mind of what occurs from what socially produces spaces and its form and design and what is experienced and socially constructed by the users?



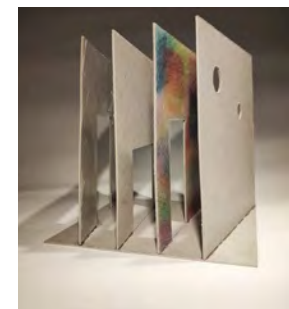
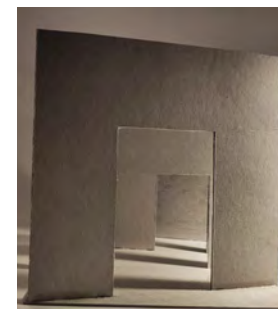
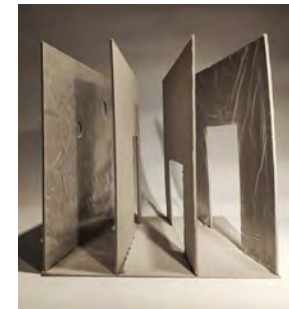
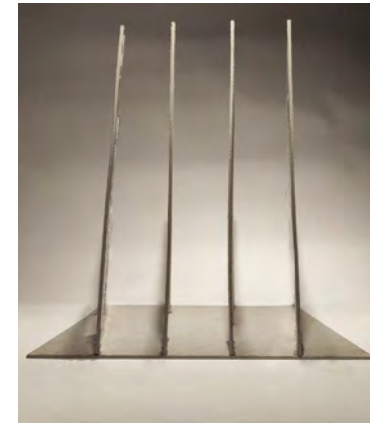
CLAIMING ONES SPACE

«Thus the social construction of space is the actual transformation of space - through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting - into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning»

Setha M. Low, 1996

«What we are searching for is the room that the design can provide for the 'occupation' of the space with a multiplicity of meanings. Public domain, in this view, needs not 'de-sign', but rather 're-sign': the invitation to occupation by new meaning.»

Smith & Steinø 2018

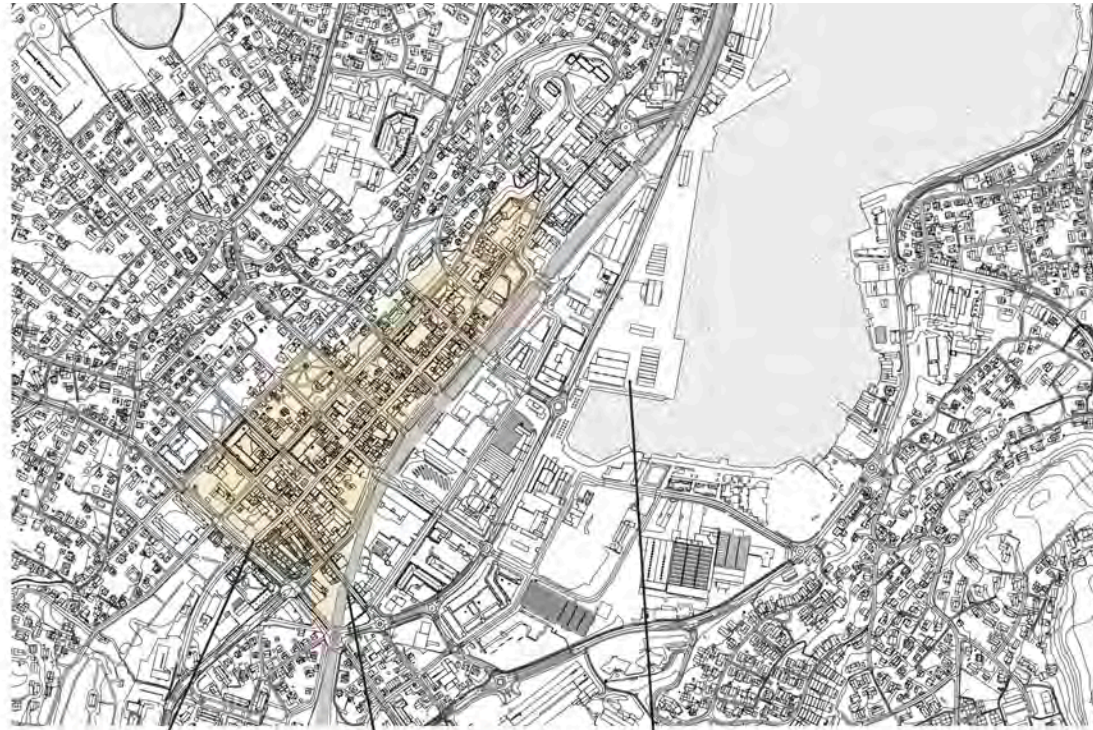


CONCEPTUAL MODEL
- CHANGING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE

WHERE

The project is situated in Sandnes in south western Norway, in the historic part of the city center. This area is based on the first street structures in the city and is characterized by clusters of buildings from the second half of the 19th century. The area used to be the citys urban center with its main street, Langgata, being the urban spine.

The whole of Sandnes city center feels fragmented with lack of connection between its urban spaces, a feeling reinforced by an elevated traintrack dividing the historic area from the harbour. The area around the harbour has a completely different character to the historic area and is currently undergoing an enormous urban transformation. Several previously inaccessible industrial sites are being transformed into publicly accessable areas, and its new buildings can be characterized as grand, individually expressive and self referential.



1



2



3



The development of Sandnes

The city of Sandnes has been heavily defined by its industrial adventure in the 19th and 20th century with production taking up space both in and surrounding the urban hub before eventually in the second half of the 20th century moving out of the city center. For a long period of time it was the fastest growing city in Norway with most people settling outside the urban center.

Concerning consumption of goods and leisure, Sandnes followed the development seen in America, although on a much smaller scale, with an increased focus on this aspect. This is seen evident in the emergence of an urban department store in the 60s in Langgata, followed and taken over by a suburban shopping mall in the 80s (which still exists and is highly used today), and current big urban inward-facing mixed-use shopping malls in the city center. This resulted in the urban scene being changed, leaving the former main shopping/consumption street and surrounding area (historic area) to some degree behind.

It was first in the late 90s/early 00s a focus on urban life and use emerged. Modernity was important and the harbour was looked at as the potential new urban center.

With a disconnect of what was and what came the urban center never achieved the vibrant urban environment most people possibly desired and, I will argue, are still longing for today.



Sandnes 1899



Department store



Suburban shopping mall

WHAT

Having grown up in this city, there are areas in the periphery of Langgata I have passed by multiple times but what kind of spaces they are, their function and use have not registered. Several parts seem left behind and uncared for which has resulted in no contribution to the urban fabric, movement and urban social life. They are part of the fragmentation, 'blind-spots' to the everyday person and are experienced as backsides to the main axis, Langgata.

The aim of this project is to look at the potential of these blind spots to expand and enrich the understanding and use of the area. On a bigger scale it is to see what potential lies in them for the historic part of the city to keep up with and react to the urban development happening by the harbour; keeping up by having a development on its own terms.



WHY

This part of the city has affectional value to many people, but with many unutilized spaces not having been given meaning it needs to be looked at what its potential is going forward. By 'meaning' I refer to the meaning given to space by its users. The historic city center is small and there is a need to understand how we use our square meters, and how we can use them as efficiently as possible to create a city for the people with the limited space that is given. By challenging today's situation and activating the blind spots, the area can be given new meanings and uses beyond what conditions allow for today without negatively affecting what one appreciates about the area. These spaces provide an opportunity to expand one's understanding and use of the city, to make personal choices out of a variety of spaces, and they work as enablers for new networks to be made.



HOW

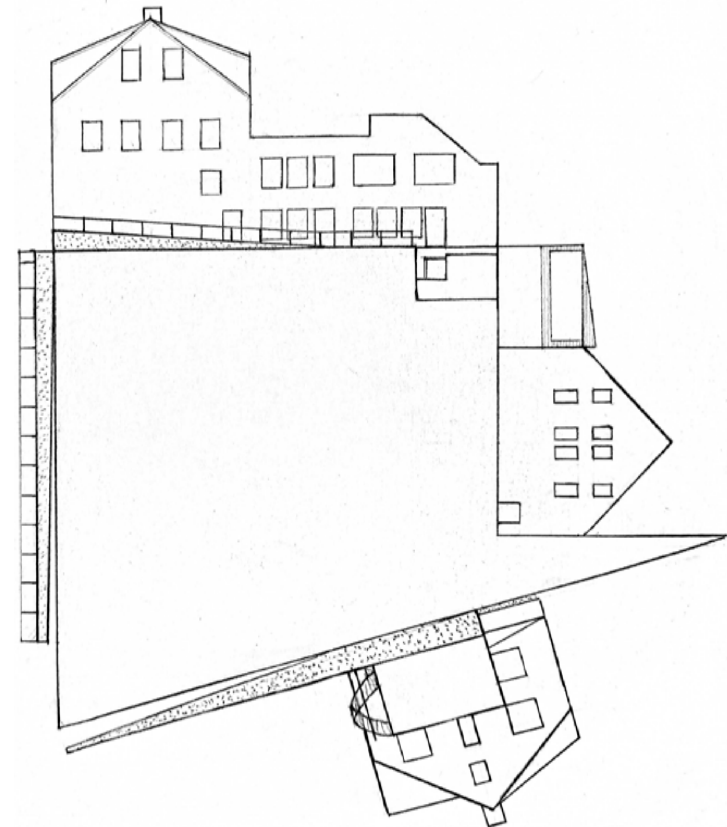
The research consists of both city and site analysis and participation work. This circular process has been done in an effort to uncover the big narrative: city - neighborhood - sites - people.

I have zoomed in on three situations with differences in appearance, size, history and/or context to investigate how different spaces in this area can be treated. The proposals are reactions to both the spaces' given situations and the implementations' contributions to the area and city center as a whole.

In an effort to understand where I am working, who I'm working for and what I'm working with I have explored the different layers which I find important in defining what the city is today. The circular process is done in an effort to understand how things have occurred and what defines the spaces and surrounding area today. The process is divided into two categories, one looking at the historical, political, economic and ownership aspects, and the other at usage, memory, images and social exchange aspects which defines the city and spaces.

Within the spaces, and the surrounding context which participated in creating them, lies the potential to read the traces of what is happening. I investigate how they can be individually treated, what interventions can happen and how they respond to one another and the existing situations; having both a big scale significance and small scale significance, with the human presence and movement in the urban context in the center.

Through analyzing these layers I get a better understanding of what buildings, structures, implementations and interventions will serve the area, city and people best in regards to a more unified city center and this area having a development on its own terms.

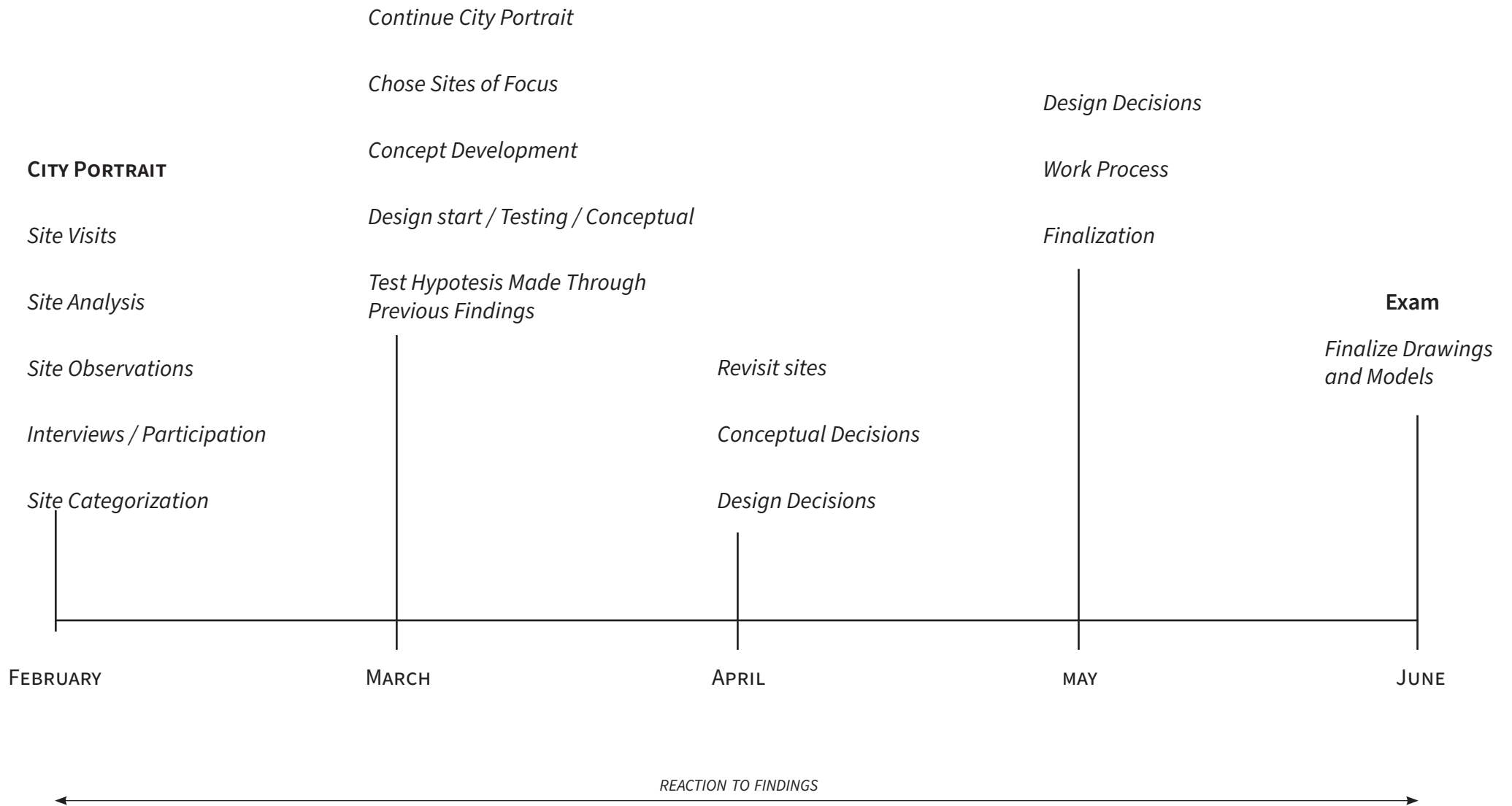


Participation Work

The work is both qualitative and subjective. Through participation work where participants were asked to map out this part of the city center from their memory as they remember it and add their own personal memories connected to it, I was able to analyze consistencies, tendencies and stand-outs which provides an overview of social situations, consumption situations and everything inbetween. The aim was to figure out what proves valueable to the city's inhabitants, how this area is used and how this project's implementations and/or interventions can extend, accentuate and create new possibilities for meaning-making, use and connection to this part of town, and perhaps in extension other parts of the city center.



TIMELINE FOR WORK PROCEDURES



CV

MARTHE SELVIKVÅG WERNØ
20.02.91
MARWER@STUDENT.BAS.ORG
+47 45289828

EDUCATION

University of Bergen - 2013-2014
Administration and organization theory

University of Bergen - 2011-2012
History

Bergen School of Architecture - 2016 - today
Masters degree in architecture



PREVIOUS MASTER COURSES

Exploration in Ocean Space - Fall 2019 Nancy Couling, Vibeke Jensen

The project focuses on the North Sea and the structures and politics which define it. The aim was to rethink the human made division of the sea and create a new division which functions to the benefit of the ocean and all marine living creatures as well as serve a purpose for human usage and economics both at the present time but also take into consideration future prosperity.

Complex Context - Fall 2020 Andre Fontes, Tom Chamberlain, Hector Pina Barrios

This project focuses on creating spaces and places which facilitates support through its program for the youth in Loddefjord. Planning for the youth doesn't exclude other user groups as they often show a dynamic ability to claim space regardless of program and create duality of space; the aim is the interplay of unprogrammed and programmed places which can offer flexible and dual use of designed places.

Meeting Room / Spaces of Encounter - Spring 2020 Jan Liesegang, Helgard Haug, Andrea Spreafico

The project looks into the concept of community house and how to rethink these buildings to fit in a contemporary and increasingly urbanized world. The project looks into three locations, urban, suburban and rural to see what elements could be transferred and which ones needed to be changed to functions with its context.