



## Designing the experience city

### *The role of Hybrid Cultural projects*

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# Designing the Experience City - The role of Hybrid Cultural Projects

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TOPIC: DESIGNING THE EXPERIENCE CITY

## **Abstract:**

This article takes its point of departure in the pressure of the experience economy on European cities - a pressure which in recent years has found its expression in a number of comprehensive transformations of the physical and architectural environments, and new architectural eventscapes related to fun and cultural experience are emerging. The physical, cultural and architectural perspectives of this development as well as the problems and the new opportunities with which the 'Experience city' is faced are discussed in the paper. The article focuses on the design of the Danish Experience City with special emphasis on hybrid cultural projects and on performative urban spaces. It presents the first findings of a research project mapping the different approaches to urban transformation and experience design, to the level of strategic thinking and planning, and to the content of the programs implemented.

Special emphasis is put on projects combining experience, leisure and learning, and on projects which have clear goals related to the

improvement of social interaction, performance and cultural exchange. The article contains two sections. In section one, we present the main theoretical concepts and framings that will guide the understanding and the analysis of the experience city. In section two, we focus on the design of the Danish experience city and present the first findings of our ongoing research project. We analyse 15 Danish cases, which are represented in relation to their strategic and urban design importance, their social and cultural content, their architectural representation and the programmes they contain. The article ends with a short discussion of some of these preliminary findings and an engagement with the discussion about the trajectory of future research.

## **Keywords:**

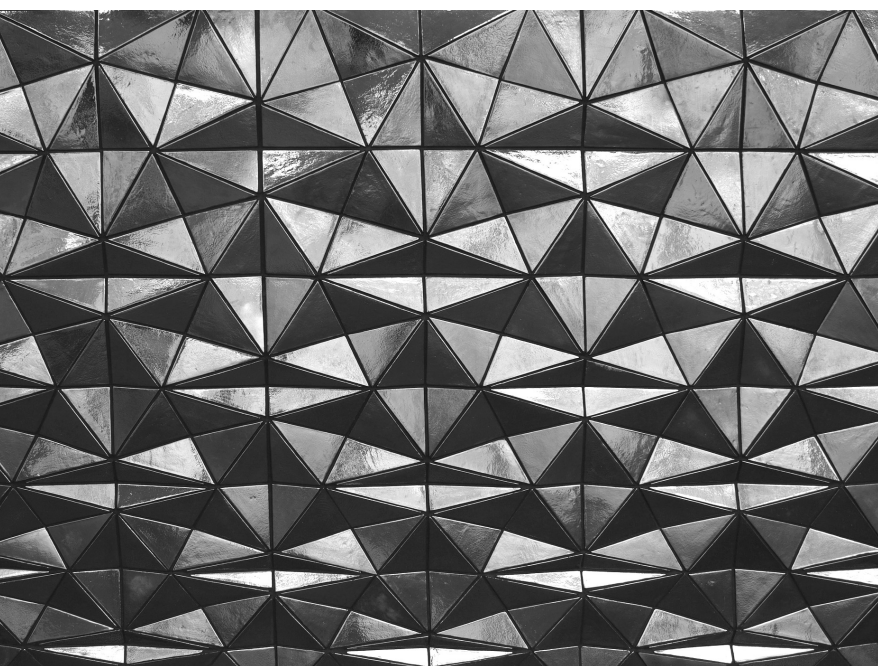
Experience city, cultural projects, preformative urban spaces, public domain, learning environment

## Introduction

Many cities are currently supplementing the central shopping areas with new event spaces, pedestrian streets and café environments. Experience and entertainment have become main priorities, and performative architecture has become an important element in the experience city. But it is not only the pedestrian streets and the classic locations in the old city centres that are affected by the modern city-dwellers' demand for experiences. The transformation of the old industrial areas, the water fronts and the recreational facilities in the vicinity of the cities are also a part of this demand. The buzzword in this context is the development of an "experience economy" as the driving force behind these transformations. Strategic planning efforts are focused on the experience economy as an essential factor in developing the physical and cultural image of the city as well as its economic basis (Hall 2000, Landry 2000, Metz 2002, Boer and Dijkstra 2003, Kunzmann 2004, Zerlang 2004).

The current societal transformation processes of globalisation, increased regional and global commerce and mobility patterns and a general shift towards the immaterial side of production are all vital background dimensions to the 'experience city'. Harvey speaks of a transformation from Fordism to 'Flexible Accumulation' (Harvey 1990:41) as a way of understanding the transformations of the organisational and spatial frame of capitalism. But also the way capital works in its changed relationship between

*The Alslion Building.  
The wall to the concerts hall has  
been created by Olafur Eliasson.  
Photo: Gitte Marling*



the material and the immaterial has called for new terminologies, as for example when Lash and Urry identify a new regime of 'Reflexive accumulation' (Lash & Urry 1994:60). Diverse theorists have argued for a renewed understanding of the 'Knowledge-based economy' (Jessop 2004:49) and the 'Informational mode' of capitalism (Castells 1996) that together create '*Experiencescapes*' illustrative of the material and immaterial dimension of the new economy (O'Dell & Billing 2005).

In this article, "experience" covers many analogous concepts such as discovery, practice, to live through something. And as a consequence of the experience, one will be skilled, experienced, and competent and tested. This means that there is an element of learning, refinement and culture which is often ignored in the more marketing and market oriented discourse of the experience economy and experience city. In this sense, the "experience economy" places new demands on the urban political strategy, on the cities' cultural networks, on local artistic competences, and on the spatial and architectural frames. To focus explicitly on Danish cases of experience city design and policy making is obviously a deliberate choice that makes less evident, but on the other hand, it brings into focus the particularities of the Scandinavian Welfare City and its intimate relation to the practices of experience city design.

The theoretical framing is at a 'global' level necessitated by the need to understand the macro-processes shaping the conditions of contemporary urban development. The cases are at 'local' level so to speak. In order to bridge these levels we develop new concepts at the mesolevel. In a longer time perspective these concepts need to be more fully developed and both 'tested' against more local cases as well as related to the macro-theoretical conceptualisations.

## Framing the 'Experience City'

We have chosen to focus on two areas of the 'experience city' which we believe would be of interest seen from an urban design perspective. Firstly, we discuss *planning and architecture within the experience city*. Under this theme, the issues are the role of hybrid cultural projects in the urban transformation process, and how they impact public planning practice agencies and processes. This theme also has to do with how the projects influence the urban architec-

ture and the new challenges architecture might face in the experience city. The second area has to do with *the social and cultural programmes of the experience city*. Under this theme, issues of social inclusion and cultural diversity are at the centre. In the following section we present key ideas within such a framework.

### The role of urban architecture in the experience city

In the midst of this context of change, urban designers and urban policy makers have come to re-orient the tasks of urban governance and planning in the direction of '*luring potential capital into the area*' (Rogerson 1999:971). The mainstream assumption is that within this field of increased inter-urban competition, leadership and risk taking attitudes are the keys to success (Lever 1999:1042). Moreover, the assumption seems to be that the less tangible dimensions of urban life are not just the everyday life conditions to urban dwellers, but one of the vital competitive parameters:

'As interurban competition on a global scale became the norm in the 1980's and 1990's, image took on an ever more vital role in urban economies ... 'Quality of life' became the rallying cry of many big-city mayors elected at this time, based on a 'broken window' theory whereby the simple appearance of disorder had a material effect of provoking criminal behaviour, thus justifying urban policies based more on cleaning up those appearances than on addressing underlying social issues'

(Greenberg 2000:250)

Within this sense of transformation the importance of knowledge and the institutionalisation of knowledge within regional and national systems of knowledge management and creation took off (Bathelt, Malmberg & Maskell 2004:32). The number of strategic and proactive 'responses' to the situation of increased global urban competition has given rise to the notion of the 'entrepreneurial city' (Hall & Hubbard eds. 1998).

The contemporary urban situation is thus marked by fundamental transformations in the cultural, economic and social basis for urban life. The question is how this relates to the making of urban spaces and architecture? One of the most direct attempts to deal with this question is the work of Anna Klingmann in the book '*Brandscapes. Architecture in the Experience*



*Economy* (Klingmann 2007). To Klingmann '*designing for experience requires connecting architecture to the user's personal dreams and desires*' (Klingmann 2007:19). Accordingly, architecture and urban interventions may contribute to engaging its public on the level of the senses in meaningful connections (Klingmann 2007:51), which moves beyond the iconic buildings so characteristic of much contemporary urban intervention (Jencks 2005). The city may be discussed within the framework of Klingmann's as a site of use, symbolism and experience. Put differently, we may ask how city designs and urban spaces produce use value, symbolic value or experience value (Klingmann 2007:6) This means that urban spaces and interventions herein may not only have an important use value and symbolic dimension, but also a (perhaps under-theori-

Alsion, Sønderborg  
(Architects: 3xN):  
Programs like new university and research park are combined with concert hall, public restaurant and train station. It has become a new cultural generator in the city as well as in the region.  
Photo: Gitte Marling





Restaurant and public performative urban space included in pedestrian bridges over the river Mur in Graz.  
Photo: Gitte Marling

sed) experience value (Klingmann 2007:44). With reference to Bernd Schmitt's analysis of marketing we may want to re-phrase our

understanding of architecture (and urban intervention) in the experience economy along four distinct dimensions leading to a fifth level of synthesis. In Klingmann's terminology, one would be looking at a synthesis of 'sense architecture', 'feel architecture', 'think architecture' and 'act architecture'. Assuming that these four dimensions all merge into one synthesis we may start to speak of 'relate architecture' in which sensing (our bodily engagement with spaces), feeling (our emotional engagement with spaces), thinking (our cognitive and reflective engagement with spaces) and acting (our socially transformative engagement with spaces) come together in a strong emotional and cognitive relation between subjects and urban architectures (Klingmann 2007:50).

In the experience economy urban interventions may facilitate new deliberation processes and forms of interaction that point towards progressive experiments and hybrid socialisations. Put differently:

'When applied to architecture, Schmitt's modules imply that in order to create an architecture that bonds with people in their daily lives, attention needs to be refocused on the transformative dimension of space and the emotions created by its use'

(Klingmann 2007:50-51)

However, the analysis of the experience city must also include a more critical perspective acknowledging that these urban interventions also run the risk of fuelling social exclusion, cultural homogeneity and a culture of fear of the other (Marling & Zerlang 2007:6-7). Next to the new exciting possibilities of experience interventions, there are critical issues concerning the democratically legitimate base for branding, notions of identity production and the protection of minorities as well as issues of social inclusion and the commodification of the city (Jensen 2007b:118). Kvorning places this critical dimension to the new approach of cultural planning centrally:

'Are there other ways of dealing with these questions, the fear of the stranger, are there any other ways than the Disney way to deal re-establishing the system of learning from the stranger, are there ways of creating zones which can start a new process? That must be the key question for cultural planning'

(Kvorning 2004:55)

The creation of new urban interventions aiming at satisfying the demand for experience and stimulus, thus, do not necessarily need to be commercial and instrumental. Rather, the more critical insights of contemporary urban theory points at the potential for creating learning environments and situations where multiple and heterogeneous social groups may create new public domains. The notion of 'Public Domain' is here understood as '*places where exchange between different social groups is possible and also actually occurs*' (Hajer & Reijndorp 2001:11). Thus, hybrid cultural projects and performative urban spaces may be thought of as sites of 'learning from the stranger' and places of civil society based interaction (regardless of the fact that numerous projects stay firmly on the side of economic opportunity). In the words of Hajer and Reijndorp: '*public domain is thus not so much a place as an experience*' (Hajer & Reijndorp 2001:88). In the 'post-spectacular city' what matters is no longer architecture as spectacle and icon, but architecture as activity (Thackara 2005:185).

Summing up the theme of design and architecture within the experience city, we would point to a need for a supplement to the traditional 'master plans'. There is a need for planning tools and design processes which are more open and dynamic than we see them today, and

which cut across sectors (e.g. Hall & Hubbard eds. 1998, Lever 1999). Related to this, there is a need for organisations capable of handling such a wide arena of topics and agencies. Moreover, there is a need to break away from the established ways of thinking by 'stirring the city' (Bunchoten, R. & CHORA 2001) in order to re-connect agencies and agents of the city in novel and creative ways. Finally, we see a demand for an open and engaging type of urban design and architecture which performs interacts and reflects the hybrid programmes. The architecture must be open and inviting, and it must also represent the diverse target groups in the contemporary city (e.g. Hajer & Reijndorp 2001, Klingmann 2007, Marling & Kiib, 2007).

### The social and cultural challenges of the experience city

The second theme we want to address via the theoretical field is the notion of social and cultural programmes in the experience city. Here we get closer to the psychological and experiential dimensions of the new economy. Thinking about the social and cultural programmes in the city means understanding how the new experience economy is constituted, and what this might mean to people.

The German sociologist Gerhard Schulze pointed to the new orientation towards experiences and the social pragmatism related hereto in



the early 1990s. To Schulze, the prime factor in the transformation from the industrial society governed by tradition to new ways of engaging with notions of belonging, identity and everyday life is the individual's experience of instant meaningfulness and stimulation; *'Erlebnisorientierung ist die unmittelbarste Form der Suche nach Glück'* (Schulze 1992:14). In a post-scarcity society (Schulze does acknowledge that also within rich Western societies there are vast inequalities), the mental and practical orientation of social individuals is increasingly

From Bazar Fyn.  
Photo: Lasse Andersson



Bazar Fyn: will a new cultural intervention like Bazar Fyn in Odense give a more diverse urban life and create a public domain for exchange of cultures between the old citizens and newcomers?  
Photo: Gitte Marling

being defined by fun, exciting and stimulating activities and experiences. Balancing between risks of boredom and insecurity, the individual in the experience society seeks stimulation. Clearly, there is a discussion about the risk of totalising the dimension of experience satisfaction in Schulze's perspective. However, here we primarily use it as a stepping stone towards a budding understanding of new aesthetics and transformed meaning of experiences (Ritzer 1999, Schulze 1992). This orientation towards experience, seen as an act of individual stimulation, relates to the way urban spaces and architecture is less about the formal properties of the 'object' and more about the effects it generates for the subject (Klingmann 2007:11). The preoccupation with semiotics, signs and branding therefore connects to the ephemeral and liquid dimension of contemporary capitalism:

'The societal transformation process of Western countries has been characterised by a shift towards immaterial and experiential stimulation. Even though there are massive inequalities and welfare problems, the global shift has given completely new tools to social agents; both for constructing identities and relating to one another ... As experience and culture gain importance, cities world wide are engaged in constructing images and representations of their locations in accordance with these new trends. Therefore the culture-led, experience-oriented policy makers are looking towards the discipline of urban branding' (Jensen 2007a:212)

In literature, the much quoted notion of 'experience economy' is obviously a central layer next to the existentialist notion found in Schulze's work. To Pine and Gilmore, the hallmark of our economy is that it is an 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore 1999:6-14). Accordingly, there is a very high added value in

Every year the cultural week in Aarhus provides spaces and events for cultural exchange.  
Photo: Gitte Marling



moving from commodities, goods and services into the 'fourth dimension', namely that of the 'experience'. Adding the symbolic dimension of a nice café atmosphere makes the ordinary cup of coffee multiply the revenue potential (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Stressing the open-endedness of their way of seeing the new economy, they boldly state that '*there is no such thing as an artificial experience*' (Pine & Gilmore 1999:37), which is a clear suggestion that the sky is the limit in terms of turning the city into ever new sites to be consumed.

But there is more to the ephemeral and immaterial dimension of the experience economy than adding atmosphere and themed environments. The presence of social actors, creative groups and institutions seems just as important. It is, in the words of Landry, a creative milieu which is:

'... a place – either a cluster of buildings, a part of a city, a city as a whole or a region – that contains the necessary preconditions in terms of 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure to

generate a flow of ideas and inventions. Such a milieu is a physical setting where a critical mass of entrepreneurs, intellectuals social activists, artists, administrators, power brokers or students can operate in an open-minded, cosmopolitan context and where face to face interaction creates new ideas, artefacts, products, services and institutions and as a consequence contributes to economic success' (Landry 2000:133)

And, moreover, the clusters of creative agents are seconded by an intense seeking of fun and ludic experiences by the urban dweller as it becomes clear that leisure is not a secondary activity of cities in the new economy:

'Leisure is more than the time you can spend as you like; it has become an omnipresent culture of fun with an enormous economic importance. Our social identity is determined by the way we spend our leisure at least as much as by the work we do or the possessions we own' (Metz 2002:8)

*The cultural week in Aarhus.  
This year the worlds' longest sofa  
was a popular resting place for  
all kinds of tired feet.  
Photo: Gitte Marling*







*Brandts is one of the oldest hybrid cultural project in Denmark. It is located in an old factory in the core center of Odense. It contains Kunsthalle, a photo museum and a media museum. The three institutions works together and have established a learning lab, that communicate the activities to guests, especially children in a very professional way. Brandts has had a large effect on the cultural development in Odense and on the urban transformation of the city centre.*

*Photo: Gitte Marling*

Without going deeply into it, one of the key urban leisure activities of the contemporary city must be acknowledged to be shopping or even the merging of entertainment and shopping into 'fun-shopping' (Boer & Dijkstra 2003:185).

From this discussion, and related to the previous one, it seems to us that the democratic 'Welfare City' needs to strengthen its diversity. This might mean overcoming the fear of the 'strangers' by creating common experiences and facilitating curiosity and mutual learning (Bauman 2002). Indeed, there is a need for public domains to facilitate this, and there is a need to develop new dynamic cultural prototypes that are socially inclusive (Marling & Kiiib 2007). But it also becomes evident that events and cultural programmes which can absorb the flux and dynamics of the experience city are of great importance. Often, this must be done by means of strategies for nurturing creative groups and artists (Landry 2000).

Summing up this theoretical framing, we would argue that one should pay attention to a number of dimensions in the empirical analysis of the cases (see figure on page 26). This would mean looking into questions of how the institutional make-up in general, and the configuration between state, market and civil society in particular, is configured. Secondly, an inquiry into precisely which prevailing rationales are underpinning the projects and interventions. Thirdly, we would be interested in showing how the interventions facilitate material practices and symbolic interpretations, and what the relation is between use value and issues of symbolic and experiential value. We should enquire about the kinds of interaction and experiences that are enabled (or constrained) by these urban interventions as well as the sort of interactions and mutual learning processes that will be shaped in and by the projects.

In the exploration of the Danish projects to follow, we will primarily be focusing on the role of the projects in the urban architectural context

and the importance of the cultural programmes in building a diverse cultural life and new public domains. Moreover, we will focus on the strategic role of the project in the urban transformation and planning efforts. From the theoretical framing of the experience city, we now turn towards the mapping of Danish examples as part of a work-in-progress research activity.

### Designing the Danish Experience City

We are currently witnessing the appearance of many new projects within culture, sports, urban space and art, also in Denmark. In the light of our definition of the “*Experience City*” in the introduction to this paper, there are many projects that seem particularly interesting. These are the projects that we label “hybrid cultural projects” and “performative urban spaces”. “*Hybrid cultural projects*” are characterised by a conscious fusion between urban transformation and new knowledge centres, cultural institutions and experience environments. Similarly, “*performative urban spaces*” are characterised by stages for performance, for learning and for experience. The performative activity can take on the guise of events – something temporary, but still recurring, which influences the shape and identity of the space. We use a differentiated notion of ‘performative’ as we operate with three dimensions to this concept. First, performative can be seen as interactive buildings or programs that people can interact with or trigger (e.g. the case of Amagerbrogade). Second, we understand events, sports and play as dimensions of the performative (e.g. the case of Islands Brygge). Third, performative can be related to the cultural scenes of the city (e.g. the case of Aarhus Fest week). It is a thesis that the strength of these projects is the conscious combination between learning and playing, between public and private, and between artistic quality and the popular activity. The starting point is a common willingness to include many different groups, and at the centre of it all a dynamic hybrid of edutainment, high culture and bodily exertion is challenging our traditional perception of urban life.

Performative urban spaces are interesting as they, in conjunction with the hybrid cultural projects, will be able to latch on to a variety of different purposes that have to do with cultural understanding and exchange. In these projects, we find a certain drive towards a public urban life that does not merely encompass the well-



off and the well-educated parts of the population; the projects have the potential to include and activate newcomers to the Danish society, the young ones, the old ones, the not so well-adapted etc. Thus, it is the overall thesis that these hybrid cultural projects, stages and spaces are potential “public domains”, i.e. places for social and cultural exchange between lifestyle groups with different values and worldviews (Haajer & Reijndorp 2001). Moreover, it is the thesis;

*From the Brandts Kunsthalle in Odense.  
Photo: Gitte Marling*

- That these projects will contribute to further a *new urban political agenda* within the current debate about the future of our cities in “The Experience Economy”;
- That they can become the hotbed of a new *urban culture* that consciously fuses the traditional shopping and café life of the city with knowledge, experience and play;
- That they contribute to the development of *new architectural typologies and urban spaces* that often draw upon the scale and typological multiplicity of the industrial architecture and

the harbour environments, and which, through a new orchestration, will help both enrich our architectural heritage and create new architectural projects focusing on transparency.

***How is the institutional make-up in general and the configuration between state, market and civil society in particular?***

***What are the prevailing rationales underpinning the projects and interventions?***

***How do the interventions facilitate material practices and symbolic interpretations?***

***What is the relation between use value and issues of symbolic and experiential value?***

***What are the kinds of interaction and experiences enabled (or constrained) by these urban interventions?***

***What sort of interactions and mutual learning processes will be shaped in and by the projects?***

Table 1.  
The analytical questions.

From the Brandts cultural project  
in Odense.  
Photo: Gitte Marling



## 15 Danish hybrid cultural projects

From our survey sent to all 99 Danish Municipalities in the autumn of 2007, it is evident that all municipalities are directly engaged in cultural projects and experience strategy making. In the overview of the projects, it has been interesting to notice that all cities and municipalities have engaged with the experience economy and, in a diverse set of ways, attempted to make it a dynamo for city branding, urban transformation and cultural development. It has also been interesting to see that architecture so far, has not got the leading force it ought to have, even though many projects, small and large, have seen the light of day. From these, we have selected 15 large projects with the main characteristics that we find to be of particular interest in relation to the research question. The 15 projects are listed with their main characteristics described (see the table next page). The projects are divided into three overall categories; buildings and urban architecture, performative urban spaces, and temporary cities/urban events.

As we are engaging in understanding the ways in which the projects play different roles in the urban transformation and strategic planning process, we are approaching this from a research strategy of labelling or 'naming' some of the main characteristics. Needless to say, this is not a completely finished process and the coining of concepts and labels can most certainly be discussed. The fact that they are first impressions and interpretations of the empirical material is a fundamental feature of the research and thus invites to other interpretations as well. In this phase of the research into designs of the experience city, we see it as a vital part of the research outcome to conceptualise and contribute to an adequate vocabulary that may help facilitating further analysis and research as well as public debate about the nature of these urban interventions. The labelling will fall into three main categories: the role of the projects in urban transformation and planning, the role as creator of new forms of culture, meeting places and public domains, and, finally, their relation to urban transformation and architecture. Importantly, this labelling is a heuristic device as the real life complexity of the cases may transcend the diversification of concepts. The implication being that some projects may be within more than one category.

## Selected projects of Danish Experience City Design

| Projects   | Cultural Programmes and Target Groups   | Role in Planning and Urban Development  | Architecture  |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>1. Nordkraft</b><br>Aalborg<br><br>Transformation of a former Power Plant at the water front...<br><br>Rhythmic music, cinemas, media, sports, leisure, shopping                                | Target Group:<br><b>Cultural public/cultural elite</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and diverse</b>  | Urban Strategy: <b>Lighthouse Project</b><br><br>Agents:<br><b>Public</b><br>Many agents                                  | Architectural status:<br><b>Icon / historic monument</b><br><br>Interval:<br><b>Permanent</b>         |
| <b>2. Paper Factory</b><br>Silkeborg<br><br>Transformation of a former factory plant at the stream.<br><br>Culture, Cinema, institutions, business, hotel, housing, fitness and workshops          | Target Group:<br><b>Cultural elite</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and diverse</b>  | Urban Strategy: <b>Lighthouse Project</b><br><br>Agents:<br><b>Private/Public</b><br>Many agents                          | Architectural status:<br><b>Historic monument</b><br><br>Interval:<br><b>Permanent</b>                |
| <b>3. Alison</b><br>Sønderborg<br><br>New architecture at the stream.<br><br>University, Train terminal, Science park, Concert Hall, restaurants   | Target Group:<br><b>Cultural elite</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and diverse</b>  | Urban Strategy:<br><b>Lighthouse Project</b><br><br>Agents:<br><b>Public</b><br>Many agents                               | Architectural status:<br><b>Icon</b><br>Modernistic architecture<br><br>Interval:<br><b>Permanent</b> |
| <b>4. Birk Cultural Centre</b><br>Herring<br><br>New development in the suburb<br><br>Art Museums, Education and Research  | Target Group:<br><b>Cultural elite/Cultural Public</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and diverse</b>  | Urban Strategy:<br><b>Void</b><br><br>Agents:<br><b>Public-Private partnership</b><br>Many agents                         | Architectural status:<br><b>Icon</b><br>Modernistic architecture<br><br>Interval:<br><b>Permanent</b> |
| <b>5. Bazar Fyn</b><br>Odense<br><br>Transformation of a factory site in the core of the city<br><br>Bazar, Exotic market, cafe's, Business incubators   | Target Group:<br><b>Subculture</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and homogenous</b><br>Related to business, leisure and shopping                  | Urban Strategy:<br><b>Linear Attractor</b><br>New development<br><br>Agents:<br><b>Private partnership</b><br>Many agents | Architectural status:<br><b>Container</b><br>Historic buildings<br><br>Interval:<br><b>Permanent</b>  |
| <b>6. The Cultural Arcade</b><br>Vordingborg<br><br>Collection of public cultural institutions and housing in old silo at harbour<br>- Library, Music School, Theatre, concerts, exhibition spaces | Target Group:<br><b>Cultural Elite/Cultural Public</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and homogeneous</b><br>Related to public service and culture | Urban Strategy:<br><b>Lighthouse</b><br><br>Agents:<br><b>Public partnership</b><br>Many agents                           | Architectural status:<br><b>Container</b><br>Historic buildings<br><br>Interval:<br><b>Permanent</b>  |

Table 2.  
Selected Danish cultural projects and performative urban spaces



|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>7. Islands Brygge</b><br/>Copenhagen</p> <p>Peoples Park at a brown field in city harbour</p> <p>Free swimming, skating, barbecue, beaches and culture house</p>  | <p>Target Group:<br/><b>Cultural public/Subcultures</b></p> <p>Programs:<br/><b>Many</b><br/>Related to public service and culture</p>                                     | <p>Urban Strategy:<br/><b>Field</b></p> <p>Agents:<br/><b>Private-Public partnership</b></p>   | <p>Architectural status:<br/><b>Icon</b><br/>Historic ruins</p> <p>Interval:<br/><b>Permanent</b><br/>Activities by seasons</p> |
| <p><b>8. Solbjerg Square</b><br/>Copenhagen</p> <p>A former railway area transformed into a square with performative elements as light, steam and green elements</p>  | <p>Target Group:<br/><b>Cultural public</b></p> <p>Programs:<br/><b>Few</b><br/>Related to transit and park elements</p>   | <p>Urban Strategy:<br/><b>Void</b></p> <p>Agents:<br/><b>Public</b></p>  | <p>Architectural status:<br/><b>Icon</b></p> <p>Interval:<br/><b>Permanent</b><br/>Activities by seasons</p>                    |
| <p><b>9. Underværket</b><br/>Randers</p> <p>A covered square and part of a block transformed into a cultural meeting place with shops, cafe's education and events</p>  | <p>Target Group:<br/><b>Subculture/Cultural public</b></p> <p>Programs:<br/><b>Few and diverse</b><br/>Related to shopping, events and public service</p>                  | <p>Urban Strategy:<br/><b>Lighthouse</b><br/>Small</p> <p>Agents:<br/><b>Public</b></p>  | <p>Architectural status:<br/><b>Container</b></p> <p>Interval:<br/><b>Permanent</b></p>   |
| <p><b>10. Amagerbrogade</b><br/>Copenhagen</p> <p>New performative places along the street, story-telling. Multiple programs. Combining different neighbourhoods to the street. Interactive technologies.</p> | <p>Target Group:<br/><b>Cultural Avant-garde /Cultural public</b></p> <p>Programs:<br/><b>Few and diverse</b><br/>Related to shopping, events and public service</p>       | <p>Urban Strategy:<br/><b>Linear Attractor</b></p> <p>Agents:<br/><b>Public</b><br/>Collaboration with local citizens</p>                                | <p>Architectural status:<br/><b>Icon</b><br/>Interactive spaces</p> <p>Interval:<br/><b>Permanent</b></p>                       |
| <p><b>11. Roskilde Festival,</b><br/>Roskilde</p> <p>Music festival with 80.000 participants. Music venues, cinema, theatre, events, exhibitions.</p>   | <p>Target Group:<br/><b>Cultural Avant-garde/Subculture</b><br/>Jung people</p> <p>Programs:<br/><b>Many and homogeneous</b><br/>Related to rhythmic music and culture</p> | <p>Urban Strategy:<br/><b>Field</b><br/>Planning by coincidence</p> <p>Agents:<br/><b>Private</b><br/>Many NGO agents</p>                                | <p>Architectural status:<br/><b>Temporary architecture</b></p> <p>Interval:<br/><b>Temporal</b><br/>One month city</p>          |
| <p><b>12. Festival week</b><br/>Aarhus</p> <p>One week open and inviting event in the city. Exposes culture as part of urban transition with Theatre, cultural events, music, street art and performance.</p> | <p>Target Group:<br/><b>Cultural Avant-garde/Subculture</b><br/>Jung people</p> <p>Programs:<br/><b>Many and homogeneous</b><br/>Related to rhythmic music and culture</p> | <p>Urban Strategy:<br/><b>Field</b><br/>Cultural strategy and City Branding</p> <p>Agents:<br/><b>Public-private partnership</b><br/>Many NGO agents</p> | <p>Architectural status:<br/><b>Temporary architecture</b></p> <p>Interval:<br/><b>Temporal</b><br/>One week city</p>           |

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| <b>13. The Cultural Night</b><br>Aalborg<br><br>52 different cultural venues during one night  | Target Group:<br><b>Cultural Public</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and homogeneous</b><br>Related to rhythmic music and culture      | Urban Strategy:<br><b>Field</b><br>Cultural strategy and City Branding<br><br>Agents:<br><b>Public-private partnership</b><br>Many NGO agents | Architectural status:<br><b>Temporary architecture</b><br><br>Interval:<br><b>Temporal</b><br>One night city |
| <b>14. Metropolis</b><br>Copenhagen<br><br>10 years program of a series of cultural biennales with seminars, workshops, events, mobile sections around the city. | Target Group:<br><b>Cultural Avant-garde</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and homogeneous</b><br>Related to rhythmic music and culture | Urban Strategy:<br><b>Field</b><br>Cultural strategy for performative art and experiments<br><br>Agents:<br><b>private</b><br>Many NGO agents | Architectural status:<br><b>Temporary architecture</b><br><br>Interval:<br><b>Temporal</b>                   |
| <b>15. Middle Age Days</b><br>Horsens<br><br>Festival once year. Theme event circulating in the city. Attract 200.000 people from Denmark and Europe             | Target Group:<br><b>Cultural Public</b><br><br>Programs:<br><b>Many and homogeneous</b><br>Related to shopping and culture            | Urban Strategy:<br><b>Field</b><br>Cultural Branding strategy<br><br>Agents:<br><b>Private-public partnership</b><br>Many NGO agents          | Architectural status:<br><b>Temporary architecture</b><br><br>Interval:<br><b>Temporal</b><br>Once a year    |

### The role of the projects in strategic urban design

In relation to the role of the projects in related to strategic urban design, we find in the empirical material four main categories; *Lighthouse*, *Linear Attractor*, *Field* and *Void*. We label projects '*Lighthouse*' if the project contains a cluster of programmes localised within a relatively confined area in the city. These are expressions of a public strategic intervention, and they are related to large investments. Lighthouses stir large local attention and often have a massive local backing. They function as motors for existing activities and generate new cultural products and activities. Within the sample of projects presented in this article, Alsion in Sønderborg, Papirfabrikken in Silkeborg and Nordkraft in Aalborg are illustrative examples of lighthouses. Next, we coin the notion of '*Linear attractor*'. By this is meant a series of widely different yet related projects to be found along a line or a very long-stretched field. They express the goal of creating a new transformation and dynamics by connecting different elements (e.g. city neighbourhoods, programmes etc.). As examples of linear attractors Amagerbrogade and Solbjerg Plads in the Copenhagen area could be mentioned. The

third category under the theme of urban transformation and planning is the '*Field*'. A field in this terminology identifies the cultural intervention spread over a larger area. It can refer to multiple touch-down locations in the city by different but related projects and events. A field can embed a broad form of intervention, but it can be focused in time. Examples of fields are Aarhus Festuge, Middelalderdage in Horsens and Metropolis in Copenhagen. The fourth and final category to be found under this theme is the '*Void*'. Voids are islands or negative sites of force within the urban fabric. A void is surrounded by fields attracting large investments, and they represent a hole in the city's portfolio of strategies and interventions. By being a negation to the well-established and higher ranked areas, the void attracts alternative social and cultural activities by coincidence. Simultaneously, the void functions as an incubator for alternative milieus and often works as a site for exposed groups and the avant-garde. Often, the void itself is locus for contestation and political manifestations. Examples of voids in the selection presented here are Islands Brygge and Christiania in Copenhagen, and Roskilde Festival in Roskilde.

In order to get an overview of the projects' relative positioning in relation to their role in the urban transformation and planning, we have analysed them in relation to if there are few or many and if they are permanent or temporary concerning the number of programs planned at project start. Furthermore, we look into if the projects predominantly are strategic or 'not planned' and public or private at the level of strategic planning also at the project start. In relation to the number of programmes planned, there is a large cluster of projects at the temporal/many group and another cluster at the permanent/few group suggesting quite some variation in the types of projects. Within the issues of strategic planning, we see that the projects tend to cluster either at the private/not planned group or at the opposite pole, at the public/strategic, suggesting (not surprisingly) a strong political lead in the public projects.

### **The project's role as creator of new forms of culture, meeting places and public domains**

Under the theme of new forms of culture, meeting places and public domains, all the selected projects are aiming at gathering more activities and programme in order to establish a cultural synergy effect. Here we find the four categories of *Cultural Elite*, *Cultural Avant-garde*, *Cultural Public* and *Subcultures*. The categories specifically explore the relationship between programme and target-group. The first one we would like to draw attention to is the '*Cultural Elite*'. This is the nomenclature for projects targeted at the middle class, the well-educated and the economically well-off. The projects within this category seek to challenge the pre-conception of the target groups, to stimulate reflection and afterthought, and they often contain elements of learning. Examples of cases within this category would be Alsion in Sønderborg, Papirfabrikken in Silkeborg and the Culture Centre projects in Birk in Herning. '*Cultural Avant-Garde*' describes the projects especially targeted at young people or the cultural avant-garde seeking challenges and 'edge' in their cultural experiments. Examples are Metropolis in Copenhagen and Roskilde Festivalen. '*Cultural Public*' labels broader projects in their audience appeal and aims at being socially inclusive by addressing themselves to different user groups. Examples are Nordkraft in Aalborg and Islands Brygge and Amagerbrogade in

Copenhagen. Finally, the '*Subculture*' category describes projects that, besides a general appeal, have a special focus on social and sub-cultural groups and seek to facilitate a meeting with the broader population. Examples are Underværket in Randers and Bazar Fyn in Odense.

Under the theme of new forms of culture, we have analysed the projects in relation to the cultural quality and the relevant target groups at the project start. Here, the dimension is narrow or broad in relation to target groups and learning or entertainment in relation to activities. The projects show a tendency to mainly be located at the broad inclusive target group end of the continuum and somewhat equally distributed in between entertainment and learning.

### **The project's relation to urban transformation and architecture**

The relationship between physical transformation and architectural expression is the last theme we want to explore. Here we find the four categories of *Icon*, *Historic Monument*, *Container* and *Temporary Architecture*. '*Icon*' refers to those cultural projects that distinctly distinguish themselves from the architectonic context and which, by their form, constitute a landmark (Lynch 1960) or a focal point (Cullen 1971). Generally, they have a large symbolic branding value to the city as a whole and strengthen the status and image of the local site of its placement. The "Icon" may work as a driving force in the physical transformation of the city. Often, icons are time specific monuments and remarkable illustrations of contemporary architecture. Examples would be Alsion in Sønderborg and Nordkraft in Aalborg. The '*Historic monument*' is the description of the architectural transformation of older listed buildings, for example old industrial facilities being transformed into new cultural programs. The historical monument carries the narrative of the city within and is often seen as a positive and well estimated architectonic element. Examples are Papirfabrikken in Silkeborg and Nordkraft in Aalborg. The '*Container*' is a term developed to describe cultural projects that in a relatively anonymous manner slide into the urban architectural context but which in no way call for attention architecturally speaking. Neither do such projects work as an architectural force. It can be new buildings and it can also be redeveloped old buildings. Examples are Underværket in Randers and Bazar Fyn in

Odense. The final category is *'Temporary Architecture'*, and, as the name suggests, these projects are predominantly characterised by their ephemeral and non-permanent features. They might be installations or temporary events that are either unique and only exist once, or they may be re-created in a cycle of temporary creation. The temporary architecture projects may have large branding implications, or they might direct attention towards overlooked architectural qualities and potentials in the city. Examples of this category are Amagerbrogade and Metropolis in Copenhagen, Aarhus Festival week and the cultural night in Aalborg.

Finally, we analysed the projects in relation to the architectural status in the urban fabric with the dimensions point or field and iconic or generic spanning the analytical space. The result is widely differentiated projects. However, there are identifiable clusters of generic/point and iconic/point, in particular, but also with a number of 'field' projects where the precise identification lies somewhere between the generic and the iconic.

## Discussion and concluding remarks

In the discussion and concluding remarks, we would like to return to a more general discussion of the questions from the analytical frame. That is to say, when trying to understand the design of the experience city, we need to point to issues of the institutional make-up and the configuration between state, market and civil society. We need to enquire into the prevailing rationales underpinning the projects and interventions. There are important issues of how the interventions facilitate material practices and symbolic interpretations, and how the relation is between the use value and issues of symbolic and experiential value. As our understanding of the experience city is also related to the social geographies of power that these interventions shape, we are interested in what sorts of interaction and experiences are enabled (or constrained) by these urban interventions, but also which types of interactions and mutual learning processes will be shaped in and by the projects.

Our initial findings from exploring the Danish Experience city point to new ways of conceptualising the city. In relation to urban transformation and planning, we found four main categories; *Lighthouse, Linear Attractor, Field and*

*Void*. In relation to the number of programmes planned, there was a large cluster of projects at the temporal/many group and another cluster at the permanent/few group suggesting quite some variation in the types of projects. In the issues of strategic planning, we see that the projects tend to cluster either at the private/not planned group or at the opposite pole of public/strategic suggesting a strong political lead in the public projects. In relation to the project's role as creator of new forms of culture, meeting places and public domains, we found the four categories of *Cultural Elite, Cultural Avant-garde, Cultural Public and Subcultures*. Analysing these in relation to if they are narrow or broad in their target groups and if they relate to learning or entertainment activities was the next step. The projects showed a tendency mainly to be located at the broad inclusive target group end of the continuum and to be somewhat equally distributed between entertainment and learning. Finally, when looking at the relationship between physical transformation and architectural expression, we found the four categories of *Icon, Historic Monument, Container and Temporary Architecture*. Analysing illustrating the architectural status in the urban fabric in relation to point or field and iconic or generic, the result is widely scattered projects. However, there are identifiable clusters of generic/point and iconic/point in particular but also with a number of 'field' projects where the precise identification lies somewhere between the generic and the iconic. As these are only the first preliminary attempts to explore the design of the Danish experience city, more work needs to be done on this. In particular, this general overview of projects will be followed up with detailed case-studies.

However, on a general note, some preliminary conclusions are possible. The intent behind the new projects is to give the urban culture a qualitative lift through a combination of different programmes that are expected to further creativity and artistic exertion. They are also expected to help promote fellowship and understanding between many different cultural groups in the city. The cultural life in the city can be strengthened in a socially sustainable manner. Urban culture is put on the agenda as many different issues at the same time: a culture of knowledge and learning, a physical culture for play and performance, a tolerant culture for the social encounter, and a participatory entertainment culture that reaches far beyond

street musicians and café latte. The projects intervene in city-life and the citizens' use of the city's venues and available cultural offers. Initially, many of the projects seem to be established at disused industrial facilities and to borrow their scale and typological multiplicity from the industrial architecture and the harbour environments whilst simultaneously adding new architectural elements of their own. The projects are very attentive to architectural and spatial transparency, transition and open programming.

From the analysis so far, we have partly found reason to establish new concepts in order to come to terms with these new hybrid forms of urban interventions in the experience city. Furthermore, we have shown some of the differences and similarities between the cases. However, more knowledge is needed for us to

be able to claim a deep understanding of these new urban interventions and practices. In particular, we would argue that this is the case within three more distinct fields: that of urban transformation and planning strategy, urban culture and architectural typologies and urban spaces. Research into the experience city will form a considerable basis for politicians, urban designers and private investors in their planning of the urban environments of tomorrow. It will, however, also ensure that the citizens' experiences with new urban qualities and designs are considered in order to create positive city-experiences rather than merely commercial experiences. The production of new knowledge within this field of research will be vital for overcoming the new urban challenges that confront the experience city in the long term.

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