

Cultural Heritage in Urban Areas

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I shall present a selection of relevant Norwegian projects and programmes concerning cultural heritage in urban areas. Main priority will be the following subjects:

- Definition of substantial elements and aspects of the character and identity of historic urban areas.
- Evaluation of new architecture in the historic setting.

I will also briefly mention examples of

- Methods of integrated planning for protection, preservation, enhancement and rehabilitation of cultural heritage - safeguarding plans.
- International comparative studies (bad and good examples).

1. National priorities of the cultural heritage administration of Norway

In the plan for 2001-2005, the directorate for cultural heritage has given top priority to:
Development of complete systems for mapping and evaluating cultural environments.

This should include

- Analyses of different types of environments and contexts
- Analyses of character of place
- Evaluating heritage values and limits of tolerance for change
- Indicators that show change over time
- Registers that may handle information of the aspects mentioned

Other areas of priority are

Cultural heritage and cultural environments as a resource for development of settlement and ..

Treatment of cultural heritage in building permits

Increase the representation of identified groups/types of monuments and sites.

Identification and conservation of cultural heritage and cultural environments representing the sami culture.

Institutions involved

Directorate for Cultural Heritage: Directorate under the Ministry of Environment

Tasks:

- National heritage authority – practical implementation of state policy
- Ensure that a representative selection of monuments and sites is preserved for present and future generations

- Seeing that cultural heritage considerations are taken into account in all planning processes, and that the interests of cultural heritage are safeguarded at all levels in the same way as the interests of society as a whole.
- Develop and disseminate necessary knowledge concerning values, use and conservation of cultural heritage.
- Helping to increase awareness among the general public of the value of their cultural heritage through education and information.

Nordic World Heritage Office:

Education and research:

NTNU: Norwegian university of science and technology, Trondheim. Faculty of architecture, planning and fine art.

Dept. of architectural history

Dept. of town and regional planning

AHO: Oslo school of architecture

Institute for Urbanism

Institute for

NLH: Agricultural university of Norway

Dept. of land use and landscape planning.

Research:

Funding: Research council of Norway

Government adviser, funding agency, co-ordinator.

Relevant programmes: Landscape in change

(Landscape being interpreted as the sum of nature and culture in our surroundings, including urban areas.)

NIKU: Foundation for nature research and cultural heritage research.

NIBR: Norwegian institute for Urban and regional research

SINTEF: The Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Research at the Norwegian Institute of Technology)

Byggforsk: Norwegian Building Research Institute

2. Brief overview – projects and programmes

SINTEF Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Department for Architecture and Building Technology

Contacts. Professor Researcher Eir Grytli, Research Director Dag Kittang

Areas of expertise:

- Conservation of cultural heritage buildings
- Environmentally friendly buildings (Low-energy buildings)
- Building maintenance and facility management
- Developing design guidelines for different types of buildings

Ongoing projects :

- Historic towns - between conservation and development.

The aim of the study is to discuss principles and methods for design and adaptation of new constructions in historic urban areas, in order to make a better correspondence to the cultural heritage values and the historic setting of the urban environment. The project will be presented in detail.

- Environment and resource analysis of urban renewal

The aim of the project is to develop a method for studying the environmental impact and the use of resources in different urban planning strategies: Conservation and reuse - demolishing and renewal.

- Conservation and renewal in Xi'an, China

This project is a NORAD funded project conducted by NTNU (The University of Trondheim) where SINTEF takes part especially on heritage matters. The aim of the project is to contribute to a sustainable development of an old housing area in the center of Xi'an, China's old imperial capital. The project focuses both on housing qualities, environmental questions and conservation.

- New use of old buildings

The aim of this project is to discuss different aspects concerning the special problems arising when new functions are to be put into extant buildings - functionality, economy, environment/indoor climate, security, conservation - and especially seen in relation to laws and other public regulations.

- Access to heritage buildings for disabled

The project aims at producing a guidebook on how to improve access to heritage buildings for persons with disability problems. It focuses on different types of disability, on conservation aims, and show examples that as far as possible combine the needs of accessibility and protection.

- Energy saving and building conservation

The phase 1 of this project was carried out in 2000 and will be proceeded in 2001-2002. The project focuses on how energy saving in old dwelling houses can be carried out without reducing the heritage value of the building. The study discusses especially the possibilities for use of renewable energy in old buildings. The aim is to produce a handbook based on the results of the project.

NTNU

Dept. of town and regional planning:

Ongoing projects:

The Management of Planning Applications in Cities with Historic Centres

Comparative studies from Trondheim, Lincoln, Norwich and Hoorn.

Study the influence of the owner/builder

- attitudes of public servants and results of their actions
- Formal proceedings

Dept. of architectural history

Educational programme – postgraduate level: Principles and practice.

Contributor to the SINTEF-project “Historic towns – between conservation and change”

3. Definition of substantial elements and aspects of the character and identity of historic urban areas:

NIBR: The use of place analyses in urban planning.

3.1 Background – how do municipalities deal with urban identity in planning processes

Dealing with identity requires methods for mapping and describing characteristics or qualities of urban areas – in Norwegian terminology named place analysis. Different approaches to analysis may be

- historic architectural
- structuralist
- perception psychology
- phenomenological

In 1993 the Norwegian Ministry of Environment published guidance material that covers all these approaches. A large number of municipal planning authorities have completed analyses more or less inspired by this guidance.

The directorate for Cultural Heritage commissioned the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) to do a study in a 5 municipalities that had completed analysis and a following municipal plan, and used this to control development for a minimum of 3 years. Places included were Stavanger, Hamar, Skien, Drøbak and Sykkylven. The intention was to examine what were the practical results from analysing the physical environment – what could be traced in plans and projects, and what were the causes for good or bad experiences.

The survey covered the process from initial definition of planning problems, through analysis and plan, to final approval of plan and following implementation. The analyses and plans examined were mainly to be used as a knowledge basis against which local planning and building authorities can evaluate future building projects

3.2 Experiences from processes

Of the five cases studied, only one comprises an explicit discussion of the relationship between registration and value assessment. Value assessment proved to change through time. This is given attention also because the change was registered after a short period.

In two cases the analyses were performed by the local planning administration. The remaining municipalities used external consultants. This was considered equally successful, partly because external consultants could look at the situation with “fresh eyes” (cfr. Edward Relph and Ingrid Järnefeldt)

All the processes examined were followed by reference groups. Politicians were in general not directly involved in the process, and played a minor role in preparation of the

analyses. In one case there were several theme groups contributing to data collection and taking part in discussions during the process. I shall come back to this case.

3.3 Use and results

The analyses were used actively in the preparation of municipal or sub-municipal plans. Examination of the plans and interviews showed that

- Place analyses bring architectural, aesthetic and historical values into the planning discussion
- Conclusions and recommendations that find a place in the planning documents are preserved for posterity
- Place analyses can be used effectively to assess projects after completion of the plan
- Factors other than the analyses are given equal weight

3.4 Stavanger and the importance of identifying urban qualities

Stavanger was chosen as one of the five cases in this study. The city is regional centre in south-west Norway, and was a small town until late 19th century, built with small wooden houses. Central parts of the city have maintained this identity to a high degree, all through the rise and decline of the canning industries and into the era of oil production.

3.5 When conservation areas are defined – how set the limit for changes?

An urban conservation plan defines conservation areas, but what qualities should define the limits for building new houses and constructions in central Stavanger? Municipal planning authorities needed a plan to govern building activities that were necessary to keep the city alive and adapted to current changes. Still, they did not want the city to lose its soul.

The urban planning authorities initiated an analysis, combining elements from structuralist methods and from the danish SAVE. They recruited professionals to join reference groups, mainly because of their knowledge within the specific themes to be treated. 12 groups were established, and discussions in these groups formed an important part of the process. According to the project manager, this was in many ways more important than the methods inspiring the analysis.

The representatives from the administration are quite satisfied with the experience from using thematic groups in collecting and analysing data. They add that it might have been an advantage to use external consultants that could have looked at the city “from the outside”.

3.6 Contents of the analysis

Landscape and urban form

Cultural landscape

Reconstruction of historical landscape

Artistic interpretation of landscape, to illustrate significance of local daylight conditions.

Qualities of place

These are named as qualities that form important parts of the citys identity, and should be maintained and enhanced. Examples: The heart of the city, elements of nature that gave name to the city, sea houses/warehouses, the city and the water, main spaces of the landscape, “Chamber Stavanger” (small scale urban areas with intimacy), medieval street structure etc.

3.7 Evaluating the contents of the analysis

Among the aspects mentioned in the interviews are:

“We see the qualities of Stavanger in a new way, and more clearly.” (Conservative member of the city council)

The analysis gives education on the historical development of the city, and a better understanding of the long lines of history.

It makes people see the totality and context, not just the fragments.

This is written in a clear and understandable language, and communicates in an excellent way

Easily read and easily understood – you feel like taking it along home, or using it as a gift.

Readers are impressed by the professional quality of the analysis.

3.8 From analysis to plan

The sub-municipal plan for central Stavanger was partly based on conclusions and recommendations in the analysis. Quality of place is given a chapter in the plan, and the 14 elements named in the analysis can be found in the plan as it was finally accepted by the city council. This plan is not a detailed set of rules and guidelines for urban design – it may rather be described as a fundament for further development through detailed local plans.

It seems that elements from the SAVE-analysis are most clearly recognized in the plan, specially the 14 qualities mentioned. Elements from the realistic urban analysis are not so easily traced. The study does not give clear answers to why, but indicate that a lack of clearly named values may play a part. On the other hand, this may be read as a reminder that this way of analysis demands a consciousness on how and when to discuss the values.

3.9 Using the analysis

Politicians still use the analysis as background material in discussions, to ensure the understanding of context and quality. Property developers also use the analysis as background material. Qualities named in the analysis had a decisive influence when politicians rejected a proposal for some of the urban development projects proposed in recent years. In wide circles, it is accepted as a common basis for the shaping and development of Stavanger.

The planning and building departments in the administration are the most frequent users of the analysis. Both the knowledge and the recommendations are valuable in planning, and evaluation of plans and projects. The analysis has even been used in the training and education program for new members of the city council and other municipal fora.

Naturally, a good analysis and an accepted plan has not managed to prevent every unexpected change. As mentioned in the general results in the report from NIBR, there have been deviations from the frames and limits defined in the plan, despite clear recommendations in the analyses

- hotel allowed to build 14 stories (plan says 4)
- developers propose 14 stories high buildings when plan says 7

3.10 Some recommendations from the NIBR-report

Content

- The content and the function of the place analysis in the planning process should be discussed and specified by the municipality
- The value basis must be rendered visible and assigned a date

- The areas of application of the methods and their appropriateness for different planning tasks should be discussed and clarified
- The level of detail requires discussion
- Language and presentation are vital

Process

- It is essential that “somebody” incorporates the place analysis into the planning work
- The content of the analysis must have local legitimacy
- Good experiences with drawing on external professionals
- Place analyses are a useful tool in conflict solution

3.11 Follow-up activities from the Directorate

2001: Establishing interactive internet service for information concerning place analyses – methods, examples, results,

Planned activities:

Improving methods and tools for cultural environment analyses, including tools for assessing vulnerability, or the tolerance for change.

4. Evaluation of new architecture in the historic setting:

Historic towns - between conservation and development.

The aim of the study is to discuss principles and methods for design and adaptation of new constructions in historic urban areas, in order to make a better correspondence to the cultural heritage values and the historic setting of the urban environment.

Report from 1. phase, february 2001. Conservation theory, urban conservation, the city as a monument – and studies from three Norwegian cities: Trondheim (2 projects), Bergen (5 projects), Kristiansand (4 projects).

Aims:

1. Uncover possible differences in attitude and values among the participants of conservation process, and find if they constitute problems for urban conservation.
2. Study local plans as tools securing historical urban areas, and discuss effects of other tools.
3. Study the possibility to develop design tools that, in a more fundamental way, may contribute to improved adaptation of new structures in historical urban areas.

Examples of the projects studied:

Bergen: Vågsbunnen.

Framework: Local plan (Overhead)

Projects:

Kong Oscars gt. 2

Empty plot of land, after a fire burned down the former building.

Owner applied to build a new house, total 4 stories, plus withdrawn top floor, in wood and concrete. Project was based on a concept from an architectural competition. The urban

conservation officer supported “a new building, designed in consideration of the cultural heritage values of the area, and will accept a modern building”. The same urban conservation officer did have strong comments on the project presented. Reasons were:

- Height was increased with 0,5 meters
- Wooden constructions were replaced with concrete
- Dimensions of windows were changed
- Stairs and .. facing the side alley were removed

The result was considered not successful, even though the principles were good. Size, proportions, design and materials are changed. The result clearly shows how much you depend upon the professional skills of the architects involved.

Nedre Hamburgersmug 3-9

Old buildings were demolished due to rot, fire damages etc. Intentions were to erect new buildings, and the cultural heritage office wanted the new buildings to be “copies, as good as possible, due to the effect on the built environment and the costs of archeological excavations that might otherwise follow. All basements should be preserved, as fundamentals of the new buildings.”

This was carried out, as far as the fundamentals were concerned. However, the buildings themselves were designed in a more modern architectural style, with scale corresponding with the surrounding buildings. Height was increased (as usual!!). Still, there were no conflicts in the process, and the urban conservation office found the new buildings quite satisfactory, considering the difficult site. Proportions have maintained a visual rhythm characteristic to the narrow street

Kristiansand: Murbyen og Posebyen.

Framework: Local plan, Murbyen - (stone house city) (Overhead)

Area rebuilt after the great city fire in 1892. Conservation plan approved 1998.

Projects:

Dronningens gate 2A

Office building behind the “Rheinhardt-building” – winning entry in an architectural contest 1996.

When treating the application, the Municipal building authorities wrote:

“The proposal shows a facade with a modern style, and seems well adapted to the adjoining facades and the scale in the street, not attempting to copy the historical buildings. The urban conservation officer has no objections to the project. Regarding architecture, the project is well designed and adapted to the built environment, with a consequent modern style.”

Building permit was given just before the local conservation plan was approved by the city council, but we must assume that the two matters were considered in context. It is hard to see how any harmony is achieved – or even attempted. Public reactions to the building were many.

Is the contrast between the rich details of the old building and the severe modernist expression of the new one too big?

The executive officer treating the proposal, considered the modern style to be a quality. We cannot trace this concept of quality in the conservation plan regulations.

Were heritage values really considered when treating this project, or was it simply assessed as a piece of architecture?

Gyldenløves gt. 5-7

This is joining two old properties, erecting a new office building on one. The first proposal was rejected by the building authorities 1998. New proposal was submitted January 1999. This time the project was approved. Significant features as described by the architect:

The building should not be higher than the surrounding buildings

Brick as main material in the facades, covered by a cornice corresponding with the cornices of the adjoining buildings.

The brick part of the facade is divided by the glass of the entrance...

The building authorities wrote:

Facades in a modern style, adapted to the dimensions and scale of the street. Materials in a slight contrast to the dominating masonry of the street.

The description shows that material and details have been given great consideration. The style is modern, like the previous project, but still this one is seen as better integrated in the built environment. It may seem that the careful use of details is part of the reason.

4.1 Discussion on completing the study

The first phase has indicated that:

A certain amount of system and consistency is applied to the urban policy in conservation plans. This system is not always followed when going from plan to the treatment of single projects in the conservation areas. This may be due to

- unclear theories and concepts of conservation, and of heritage and architectural values and qualities
- lack of consistent systems of governance in municipal planning and building authorities, possibly also in conservation offices
- differences in attitudes among the officials involved

SINTEF suggest in their project proposal the following process:

Phase 2: Study of detail plans (local plans) as tool for protecting historic urban areas, and discuss effects of other tools for protection.

Phase 3: Discuss principles and methods for design and adaptation of new constructions in historic urban areas, in order to make a better correspondence to the cultural heritage values and the historic setting of the urban environment.

Funding for this completion of the project is not provided yet. SINTEF has proposed a cooperation between municipalities (Oslo, Tromsø, Stavanger), the ministry of environment and the directorate for cultural heritage. The research council of Norway has rejected a proposal for funding. The municipality of Oslo has shown positive interest in the project.

5. Sustainable historic cities? A Baltic-nordic approach

Hans-Jacob Roald

Nordic World Heritage Office

How to initiate and manage a development in such a way that the historic city retains its position as a serviceable and significant place, without damaging its significant features?

These were some of the questions behind the project "Urban design guidelines", initiated by the world bank and UNESCO.

Intention: Preparing guidelines for the cities on the world heritage list, in order to avoid conflicts between protection and development.

Problem: the complexity of cities.

Answer: A limited study, based on the cities Riga, Tallinn, Visby and Ålesund, carried out by the Nordic World Heritage Office.

The book is divided in three parts:

1. Introduction and analytical studies
2. The case studies
3. Conclusions and recommendations

From part three: Simplified version of the matrix for environmental impact assessments and case studies: (Overhead)