

# HuSoCap

---

REFLECTION



Igor de Kuijer

# REFLECTION PAPER

---

Date: 20-5-2020

Student name: Igor de Kuijer

Studennunber: 4803531

Phone number: +31 6 40987606

E-mail: i.a.de.kuijer@outlook.com

Main tutor: Henk Bultstra

Building Technology Tutor: Jelke Fokkinga

Board of Examiners Delegate: Frederika Welle Donker

# Introduction

The studio Public Building provided a starting point concerning public buildings and their role in the public and semi-public domain. The studio wants to investigate the future of buildings with a public role in the built environment. How can a public building combine different types of programme to contribute in the public realm of neighbourhoods, cities or even countries? My personal interest also lies in what architecture can contribute to the public realm in a positive way. As architects we fill in the environment of people living in urban areas. This leads to not only positive but also negative developments. People lose public space and get disconnected from each other. That's the reason why I chose this studio, to research how a public building can contribute to contemporary issues facing urban areas.

The studio proposed two sites in two different cities to conduct research on. The aim of the research was to uncover not only problems in the neighbourhoods in which these sites were situated but also chances that are available to exploit. My site to research was named Skydebanehaven, in the neighbourhood of Vesterbro in Copenhagen. Problems that face Copenhagen recently are an increasing segregation amongst the population that even lead to a law implemented in 2018 named the "ghetto legislation". This legislation marks certain residential areas as "ghettos" and for these residential areas new rules apply.

The goal of the project is to contribute in decreasing/preventing segregation in the neighbourhood of Vesterbro by connecting different groups of people. This will be done by merging different programmes into one building that attracts different target groups and connects them.



Fig:1. Project site in Copenhagen

# Relation research and design

The graduation studio posed Copenhagen as a testcase for a public condenser. More specifically the park Skydebanehaven in the neighbourhood of Vesterbro. Copenhagen is a city which invested a lot in the public space the past 20 years and has therefore developed some interesting public spaces and buildings. The aim of these investments was to make Copenhagen the best city to live in according to city rankings. This led to Copenhagen being the happiest city in the world on paper. However is Copenhagen really the best city in the world to live in, and if so for whom?

To find out what is needed in Copenhagen and more specifically Vesterbro research has been done in the P1 on different scales to find out what current problems are and what current developments are taking place in Copenhagen. To do this, everybody participating in the studio performed research into different topics to discover what current developments are in Copenhagen. The result of this research would be used to form a personal position and thus a starting point for my individual research.

The P1 research showed that segregation is an increasing problem in the city of Copenhagen. This is due to a lack of integration of people new to Copenhagen. This lack of integration is caused by different factors. Examples of people new to Copenhagen trying to integrate into Danish society uncovered how difficult it actually is to achieve this. One of the hardest problems with integrating is finding employment in Copenhagen. Examples can be found that people, applying for a job they are overqualified for, are being refused for the job.

The research from the P1 has provided me with a starting point from which to investigate further. It showed me that segregation is increasing in Copenhagen. As a result the government physically tries to solve this by relocating inhabitants from the ghettos to more prosperous neighbourhoods. Physically this could solve the segregation but socially it just creates smaller types of clusters. This started my interest in how a public building could play a positive role in this development. These conclusions of the research formed my position on this subject and a starting point for my research continuing in the P2.

Thus my personal position gave me two main questions on which to investigate further. The first question was: What is needed for people to integrate into a new society? And following this question was: How can a public condenser contribute in this?

This lead me to researches concerning social issues like integration and diversity. Research by Robert D. Putnam shows that to fully integrate into a society different types of capital are needed. He names these types of capital: Physical Capital, Human Capital and Social Capital. These three types of capital also determine how happy people are. Physical capital is the stuff somebody owns, being it money, a house, a car etcetera. Human Capital is the skills people have, either physically or mentally, that gives them a thing to do and thus have a meaning. Social capital is the social connections people have. The social interaction makes people happy, but these social connections also give people opportunities. This research also mentioned that most of the time people get a job not through what they know but through whom they know. This gave me the idea to combine these two types of capital, human and social capital, to not only give the people human capital but at the same time give them the opportunity to increase

their social capital. The research has provided me with a programme of requirements. It gave me requirements for the urban design. It gave me requirements of the functions that I wanted to implement in my building. And it gave me requirements of what the strengths of the current situation were which I wanted to maintain.

Continuing in the P3 and the P4 my research gave me a solid foundation to start the research by design phase. By making models and sketches I knew what I was looking for in my models and sketches. This made it easy to reject inadequate solutions I was designing for my project.

If I look back on the research part the sequence in which this research is done is good. First to do exploratory research to look at developments in general and to trigger your personal interests. Then secondly form a position in what you want to achieve and eventually what can architecture contribute and how are you going to do this for this particular design assignment?

However the way in which time was distributed over these roughly four stages was out of proportion. Because research had to be done on two cities one loses half of the time doing exploratory research. This research was helpfull to make a start, however to really go into depth the research in the P2 was more interesting. In my opinion research in the P2 could be more elaborate and therefore take more time. Maybe also put the position forming in the P1 and use the P2 to really research into this personal position.



# Relation between HUSOCAP, the public building studio topic, the master Architecture track and the faculty architecture and the built environment.

The master track of architecture teaches students to develop creative and innovative building projects that use design as a means to deal with the technical, social and spatial challenges encountered in the built environment. This graduation thesis focuses on current social challenges that Copenhagen faces and what a public building could contribute to solving these challenges. A public building in the current days does not only have a functional role but also has a social role in a city. Example: libraries nowadays not only provide books and information for the visitors but they also provide a place for people to meet and share thoughts with each other.

## Technical challenges

Technical challenges we face nowadays are mostly connected to climate change and sustainability. In my opinion there are two types of sustainability. On the one hand we have climate change, caused by an increase of greenhouse gases. On the other hand we have the depletion of materials we use, not only in buildings but in all our daily lives. Because of climate change we have mainly focused on reduction of greenhouse gases. However the depletion of materials is also a serious issue we face nowadays. Therefore I focused on using renewable resources and designing for reusability. This mostly influenced my material choices for construction.

## Spatial challenges

Husocap is located in a densely populated area in Copenhagen. It is situated in Skydebanehaven, a park in this dense neighbourhood. With public space becoming more rare in cities I did not want to temper with these good qualities this park already has (see Fig. 2). So one of my starting points was: Keep the current qualities of this quiet nice park in the middle of this dense area.

## Social challenges

As I mentioned before my graduation thesis focusses on the current social developments in Copenhagen and the consequences this has for the neighbourhood of Vesterbro. At present Skydebanehaven already has a social role in Vesterbro and overall in Copenhagen. This quality exploited in developing solutions in the decrease of segregation.

The faculty of architecture and the built environment teaches students of working in a multi-disciplinary way. This means working together with other students and at the same time acquiring knowledge of all the aspects of architecture. Blending knowledge and skills from design practice, from the physical and social sciences, technology and engineering, this environment explores innovative ways to create more sustainable development.

This comes down to designing an integrated building with the above specialities interwoven into one design. I'm quite happy with the result that turned out of my process. Some minor things I would like to have researched further are sustainability for this building. I mostly used my background knowledge I had on the subject and applied it to this project. Maybe if I had done more research on this subject I would have come to a design where I felt more confident about that aspect.



**Fig:2. The park Skydebanehaven**  
(Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/risager/8902901690/>)

# Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.

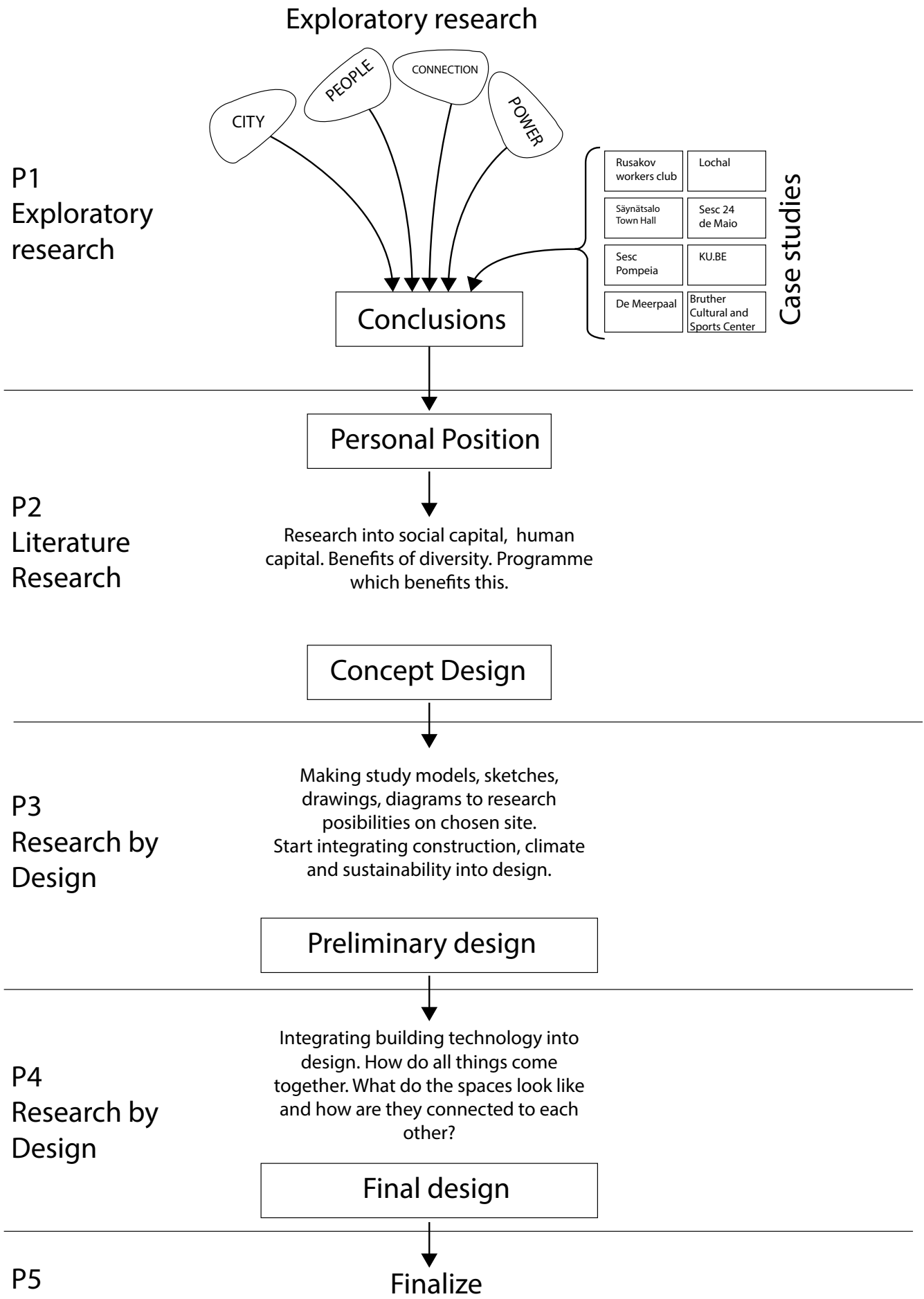
Part of the research was finding the actual condition of the public in architecture. A public building can be a singular building, an interior or a part of a hybrid structure, a series of prototypes or a layer in a landscape. The studio also opted multiplicity as a property of buildings and building elements. Also how can a public building act as a catalyst for the stimulation and development of its environment?

The research in the P1 consisted of two methods. The first method was a more exploratory research approach. The goal of this research was to discover what Copenhagen is as a city and what current developments are on the topics of the city, the people, connection and infrastructure and economics and urban development. The second method was case study research on already realised public buildings provided by the studio. The public building group was divided into groups of three students with each group taking one exploratory research topic and researching one public building case study. The conclusions of these researches gave me a framework from which to form my personal position for the P2 of what I wanted to achieve in Skydebanehaven. See Fig. 3 for the total overview of the research process.

My personal position guided me towards research in the social sciences. I did research in what benefits of diversity are to a society and what the challenges are. When I discovered this the next step was to study how this could be achieved successfully. For this I did research in to the concept of physical, human, and social capital. Robert D. Putnam is an American political scientist who did a lot of research of the contribution of diversity to a society and how this can be achieved. In his researches he implied that these three types of capital are essential for an individual to fully integrate into a society. As an architect you are limited to what you can do on these kinds of subjects. For example I cannot simply provide people physical capital, that would mean giving them items with value. However I can design a building that gives people the opportunity to increase their human and social capital.

After the P2 I started making a lot of study models to really fit my building into the area. I already had a volume after the P2 but although the concept showed quite good in this model I knew it would become difficult to fit the whole programme in the available volume and keep the spatial qualities in this shape. This was with the knowledge of what would be added in terms of circulation, construction climate and sustainability. Also the concept design did not yet fully use the benefits of the park. So the P3 consisted mainly of research by design. How can I fully exploit my position on the chosen location with the formed programme.





**Fig:3. Visualisation of the design process**

# Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social context.

An increasing urban population in the world results in more construction in our urban environments. The public space available to people is decreasing since each construction is taking away original space that was before available to all. This keeps raising the question how we should arrange our public space in urban areas. This graduation thesis researches the role a public building can fulfill in this urban space in Copenhagen and how this space can be designed in a way that suits its role in the city and the site.

Because of globalisation diversity is increasing in metropolitan areas all around the world. A negative side effect of this diversity gone wrong is an increasing segregation. This graduation project researches how different target groups can be attracted in Copenhagen specifically and in the way architecture can contribute in reducing segregation. This also touches upon the previously mentioned concept of multiplicity with different types of programmes for different target groups. Multiplicity meaning in this graduation thesis a building which has two different functions. One being the ability for visitors to enrich themselves, the second giving visitors a chance to meet and connect to new individuals from one of the two target groups. These target groups being: Copenhageners and people new to Copenhagen.

# Personal comments

This is the first time the studio Public Condenser is provided in the master track of architecture. I really enjoyed the studio and the subject it provided to research. I have some minor remarks on the process of the research part. In my opinion it is better to provide one city without a specific site. This way students can conduct better research and choose a site following this research. That way the site might complement the research and eventually the design in a better way. I know it was possible to opt for a different site, however without the research for other sites it is not possible to give valid arguments to switch sites. Therefore I kept the site Skydebanehaven. I'm not mentioning Skydebanehaven as a bad site, I'm just curious if this would also have been my site if I did not have a pre chosen site and how my research would then have influenced my decision.