SOLLEFTEÅ UNGROWING

A SHRINKING PERSPECTIVE ON PUBLIC SPACE FROM WITHIN A GROWTH DEPENDENT SYSTEM

HANNAH WRIGHT

SOLLEFTEÅ UNGROWING - a shrinking perspective on public space from within a growth dependent system

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Photos from Sollefteå town centre (Wright, 2018)

PREFACE

The topic of this master thesis is the result of many thoughts and questions that has arisen in me during my time studying landscape architecture, about how growth and shrinkage relate to the urban space and how this affects the work of the landscape architect or urban planner.

I would like to thank my supervisor Nina Vogel for the support, shared knowledge and advice throughout the process. I would also like to thank my family in Ådalen for providing a helping hand during my field studies.

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Malmö, 2019-01-18

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores public space in shrinking communities and how the development of these spaces is affected by common growth ideals that exist within urban planning. Through literature studies it is found that growth-led planning, driven by the possibility to increase economic value of the urban space, has embedded a dependence on private investors in the development of urban environments. Even though shrinkage is a common phenomenon, acceptance is often low and urban planning usually continue to use conventional planning methods aiming to regenerate growth. This approach is usually unsuccessful and can create issues connected to public space, for example vacant space and negative effects on the social space.

Further, this thesis looks at alternative concepts and phenomena within urban development that take place outside of the growth-paradigm to see what these approaches might offer public spaces within shrinking contexts. A relational view on space and the landscape is identified as one of the key notions when looking at what these alternative approaches can offer shrinking communities. Through this perspective, the complexity of shrinkage and public space in shrinking contexts can be emphasised through an open-endedness and process-focused approach to space that can facilitate to address challenges that exist in these contexts and to base development on current conditions rather than visions of growth.

The topic is then put into a Swedish context through a case study in Sollefteå municipality. The results presented in the case study indicate that the municipality show some of the dynamics described above, where planning is approached through a conventional perspective where the shrinkage has still not been fully accepted and growth continues to be a dominating notion and aim in planning documents. Challenges concerning vacancy, difficulty to carry out plans and challenges in creating attractive social spaces are also observed. The similarities between case and theory, as well as the challenges observed in the case study, indicate that Sollefteå might find opportunities through alternative approaches to planning that have not been offered by the conventional planning currently practiced.

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TRAIN TRACKS BY THE STATION, SOLLEFTEÅ (WRIGHT, 2018)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

"The main street in Ramsele, the summer 1976. Cafes with outdoor seating, people strolling the streets. Tourists passing by. All the Nordic flags are hoisted onto the flagpoles. Ice cream, heat and movement. It is more like something you would imagine in an Italian village somewhere near Rimini." (Norrlandspodden, 2018, own translation)

The above quote is a childhood memory described by journalist Po Tidholm in the podcast *Norrlandspodden* (2018). Sofia Mirjamsdotter, also a journalist, agrees and says that she has the exact same childhood memories from the nearby localities Junsele and Vilhelmina (Norrland-spodden, 2018). The reason for speaking about these seemingly ordinary childhood memories is the subsequent depopulation that has occurred in these areas. The invited guest in the episode is Mats Jonsson, a cartoonist and editor known for his autobiographical comic books of which the latest, *Nya Norrland*, depicts the experience of growing up and leaving a community in decline. In the podcast he raises the issue of realising that his childhood memories of flourishing communities in southern inland of Norrland might only have been a time within brackets, an exception in a normally sparsely populated region (Norrlandspodden, 2018). They carry on talking about accepting or not accepting the depopulation and decline in the northern inland of Sweden and their opinions on how Swedish politics are handling the question. The topic ends with Jonsson concluding his view, being that if you want to stay in these areas, you should at least be given a fair chance to do so (ibid.).

The opening quote is interesting because it depicts various aspects of public space. Firstly, it shows the importance of both social activity and functions for the experience of a public space. In the book *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre claims that space is the structure for social and lived experiences at the same time as it is highly connected to function. He talks about space as a process through which a social space develops over time when it gets appropriated by both individuals and groups, who's actions and interactions both define and are part of the social space itself (Lefebvre, 1974).

Lefebvre also claims that analysing social spaces can be a tool to analyse society (Lefebvre, 1974). In the discussion summarised above, the participants are using their childhood memories of public space and the changes they have experienced in these spaces over time, to draw conclusions about society. Public space can be considered a vital part of any community and for society as a whole. Arguments supporting this stance are, among others, that it has the potential of being a democratic venue (Parkinson, 2012) and a social space that has the power to increase the quality of life of the inhabitants (Madanipour et al., 2013, for further expounding on this topic, see part *3. Theoretical framework part 2*).

When assuming that public space is vital to any community and that the condition of public space reflects society, appropriate and functioning methods to work with these spaces under different circumstances can be considered important. However, already in 1974 Lefebvre argued that capital and capitalism had a huge influence on space (Lefebvre, 1974) and in the current context public planners and architects are often relying on private investors to generate growth to be able to achieve urban development (Rydin, 2013). The problematic part of this relationship between growth and development is that this approach does not work for all communities at all times (ibid.)

An example of communities where relying on growth for urban development might not work are shrinking communities and regions, just like the localities mentioned in the childhood memories above. Shrinkage is a phenomenon that is far from new and that occurs all over the world, still the acceptance of shrinkage is generally very low (Pallagst, 2008). Many planners and architects have little experience of how to work with shrinkage and it is common to view it as a form of negative decline within the current growth-based culture of planning (Hollander et al., 2009). The most common approach to shrinkage, which rarely succeeds, is to aim to create new economic growth to recover a growing population (ibid.).

In the discussion summarised above traces of the struggle to accept shrinkage, when it means that the places in your memories no longer exist in the way that they used to, can be seen. At the same time, they point out an important aspect of shrinkage: the people who choose to stay. The positive memories presented in the podcast are of a time before the decline seen in this public space setting. The memories show functions of public space but even more they are describing social interactions and experience in relation to the actions of others. If public space is important to inhabitants, both because of its physical functions and its potential as social space, then it is also important that qualitative public space is maintained in declining areas that cannot rely on growth or private investors to provide it, so that new positive memories can be made in these spaces for the people that chose to stay.

This project departs from the assumption that public space is important for any community and that it is a space defined by dynamic processes and social aspects and not only by the urban form and function. Through this view the discussion of public space will hopefully be able to move beyond development through market investments to see other alternatives. Here, urban planning and landscape architecture can play an important role in creating a fair opportunity of access to public space for the people who choose to stay in shrinking communities.

1.2 AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this project is to investigate appropriate ways to approach public space in shrinking communities in Sweden through looking at the municipality of Sollefteå, the municipality where both Junsele and Ramsele mentioned above are located, as an example. This will be done by looking at how the public space has developed over time, how it is approached in urban planning and comparing this to alternative movements and approaches from other cases.

Beside this, the project aims to form an overall theoretical understanding of the topics of growth-led urban planning, shrinking communities, public space and also alternative approaches to the development of public spaces, as an analytical context for the study of the particular case.

The research questions are the following:

o *What are the characteristics of growth-led planning and how do they correspond to the circumstances in shrinking communities, especially concerning the public space?*

o *What spatial development strategies can be identified in the shrinking town Sollefteå and how can these be connected to the current state of the public space?*

o *What alternative planning practices exist for public space in shrinking communities that could offer new opportunities for the public space in Sollefteå?*

1.3 SELECTING THE CASE: SOLLEFTEÅ

This thesis is conducted through a case study (see part *4. Methodology*) by looking at the case Sollefteå municipality and in particular Sollefteå town, situated in the southern inland of Norrland. In this area, many municipalities have been facing long term depopulation and Sollefteå has been chosen as an example as one of many municipalities in this region facing this challenge. The municipality of Sollefteå has one bigger town seat, Sollefteå town, a few smaller localities, Långsele, Ramsele, Junsele and Näsåker, and various villages with populations of less than 200 inhabitants (Sollefteå kommun 2017b). In this thesis, the focus will lie on Sollefteå town with a secondary focus on the municipality as a whole and the surrounding region to provide context.

Fig. 1: Sollefteå municipality's location in Sweden (Wright, 2018)

Besides being located in an area that is generally facing depopulation, there are some further aspects of Sollefteå municipality that makes it an interesting case to study. In January 2017, the maternity and emergency surgery wards at Sollefteå hospital were closed due to financial issues, which has caused Sollefteå to receive attention in national media (SVT, 2018), since women in the area now have to travel up to 120 kilometres to the nearest maternity hospital (Initiativet Ådalen2017, 2017b). The closing of the maternity ward has led to demonstrations engaging 10 000s of inhabitants in the region and occupants have been protesting at the hospital ever since its closure (Initiativet Ådalen2017, 2017a) and in the moment of writing this thesis the occupation has been going on for more than 1.5 years.

Sollefteå town, jokingly claimed by the local population not to be a real town but a ski track in between two regiments (Johansson, 2018), has seen the closure of its two military regiments during the late 1990s and early 2000s (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b). With the loss of the military activity in the town, two large neighbourhoods have been opened up to the public with the intention to find new purposes for the buildings and open spaces in the area (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). Thus, Sollefteå is facing major redevelopment which makes it an interesting case to study for this thesis as it provides an opportunity to look at their approaches for doing so.

1.4 DEFINITIONS

SHRINKING CITY/COMMUNITY
There is no official definition of a shrinking city, but the Shrinking Cities International Research Network (SCiRN) defines it as "a densely populated urban area with a minimum population of 10,000 residents that has faced population losses in large parts for more than two years and is undergoing economic transformations with some symptoms of a structural crisis" (Pallagst, 2008: 7). Since the towns and localities mentioned in the context of the cases study in this thesis do not have populations of more than 10 000 inhabitants and are not defined as cities, they are instead referred to as shrinking communities in the thesis. As will be seen later in the thesis (see part 5. *Analysis: Sollefteå*) the communities have however been undergoing population loss and structural and economical changes during large periods of time during the past decades.

SOLLEFTEÅ TOWN
Although the seat town of Sollefteå only has a small population (currently of approximately 8 500 inhabitants) (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2018b) it was classified as an official city/town (*stad* in Swedish) between 1917 to 1971, when the official definition of *stad* was abolished in Sweden. In Swedish the word *stad* is commonly used to describe the prior official cities/towns (Svenska akademien, 1986), however the Swedish language does not differentiate between the words *town* and *city* in the way the English language does. In this thesis Sollefteå will therefore be referred to as a town, since this indicates a smaller number of inhabitants than what a city would have and therefore better illustrates the reality of Sollefteå.

LOCALITY AND VILLAGE
In Swedish most communities are defined as *tätort*, with the official definition being that it is a densely built-up area of at least 200 inhabitants with a maximum of 200 meters between buildings (Svenska akademien, 2010). Statistics Sweden suggest that *tätort* should be translated into English as *locality* or *urban area* (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2018a). In this thesis, all communities defined in Sweden as *tätort*, with exception of the former official towns/cities (*stad*), are defined as localities. Communities that are smaller or less densely populated to fit this definition of locality are referred to as village.

PUBLIC SPACE
In Sweden different legal definitions of public space exist, such as *allmän platsmark* and *offentlig plats*. However, there is no official definition that includes all space that is accessible to the public or perceived as public space. In this thesis, public space is defined as space that is perceived as public and accessible. For more about this, see *3. Theoretical framework part 2.*

1.5 LIMITATIONS

The intention of this project is to critically reflect upon how growth ideals are affecting the spatial development and planning of public spaces in shrinking communities in Sweden. The aim of this project is not to find any new growth strategies for these communities, but to investigate alternative development approaches for public space that can be relevant to consider within the given context.

The topic of this thesis is investigated through the analysis of Sollefteå municipality's planning documents and field studies of selected public spaces in Sollefteå. These two data sources have been chosen since the planning documents provide information on the general approaches and plans for the development of the municipality, as well as motivations of these, whilst the field study provides knowledge of the current state of the public spaces as well as experience of these. Recognising that there are also other sources of information that can provide to the understanding of how public space is approached within the municipality and town, a selection had to be made due to the timeframe available for writing this thesis. Also recognising that there exist more public spaces in the municipality that have not been included in the case study, also because of the selection made due to the timeframe of the thesis. For motivation of the public spaces included in the case study see part *4. Methodology*.

In part *3. Theoretical framework part 2* some alternative approaches to the development of public space are presented. Whilst various other approaches exist, these approaches have been selected because of their previous testing in, or potential for, public spaces in other shrinking communities and thereby also their potential to add some insights of opportunities for the development of public space as a part of the analysis of the case study.

1.6 DISPOSITION

In the next two parts, the *theoretical framework (2 and 3)* of the thesis will be introduced through four main topics: growth ideals in urban planning, shrinking communities, public space and alternative movements. Based on these theoretical perspectives and the alternatives studied an analytical concept is developed that is used in the thesis case study. After this, the *methodology (4)* of the thesis is presented followed by the part presenting the *analysis and results of the case study (5)*. The last part contains the *discussion and conclusion (6)* of the thesis, followed by a list of *references (7)*.

FACADE OF BUILDING IN NIPAN, SOLLEFTEÅ (WRIGHT, 2018)

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK PART 1: GROWTH DEPENDENCE AND SHRINKING COMMUNITIES

2.1 URBAN PLANNING AND THE IDEAL OF GROWTH

2.1.1 ECONOMIC GROWTH AS A DRIVING FORCE

In many western European countries, the period after the Second World War until the late 1970s was characterised by a social democratic political landscape, aiming to create a middle way between capitalism and socialism. This meant accepting liberal capitalism through allowing private investors and free markets to run the economy whilst managed by the state to secure social objectives such as employment with fair wages, health care and necessary infrastructures (Taylor, 2000). During the late 1970s and 1980s, economic instability lead to a revival of a more classical liberalism which was also applied on urban planning. Liberal theorists meant that urban planning had to be seen within the given political and economic context, the capitalist market economy, and that planning should therefore be governed by market forces and that the role of urban planning should be to facilitate the market (ibid.).

Urban planning in the context of the capitalist market economy is driven by the gap between the economic value of a site in its current use and its potential economic value if the site is further developed. This means that changes in the urban environment will occur when there is a possibility to increase the economic value of a specific site through developing it and it also means that the desired outcome of urban development is increased economic value on land (Rydin, 2013). Within this market-oriented way of practicing and discussing urban development and planning, overall value and economic value is often regarded as the same thing, meaning that a site with a higher economic value is considered as more valuable to society than a site with a lower economic value. This perspective is likely to result in an exclusion of all other possible ways to value a site within the urban environment, for example through social or environmental perspectives, since this is not included in the market-oriented definition of value (ibid.). This way of defining value creates a need for urban planners to compete to attract new investments for urban development (Bengs, 2005), since this is considered to have a positive effect on the community (Rydin, 2013).

Increasing the economic value is often assumed to have a spatial spill-over effect and that economic investment at a specific site will thereby contribute to further growth and development within the local area (Rydin, 2013). It is also commonly assumed that attracting investment and increasing the economic value of a site will create a high demand from potential users and that this kind of economic investment in the urban environment also have a potential to generate side-benefits for the community as a whole (ibid.). This way of urban planning is highly associated with the common modern notion that economic growth will increase prosperity in society, however, this perspective has also been put under considerable criticism (Jackson, 2009). In the text below, some of these critical perspectives on growth-dependent planning will be presented.

2.1.2 DEPENDING ON STAKEHOLDERS

The need to attract investment for urban development has given economic stakeholders increased power over the planning system (Bengs, 2005; Rydin, 2013) This is often referred to as the **shift from government to governance**, where officials no longer carry out changes by using solely their own power, but instead include a number of stakeholders in both formulation and implementation of policy and plans (Rydin, 2013). Although this is often claimed to be more democratic, increased influence of private investors is probable to lead to less public control over land (Bengs, 2005) and has also contributed to further embedding of growth-dependence in the planning system (Rydin, 2013).

This shift from government to governance has led to the invention of the **collaborative planning approach**, recognising that planners have less opportunity to carry out changes without the involvement of stakeholders. In this approach a variety of actors are included, both private, public and from the civil society and the approach has come to be strongly embedded within the current planning system (Rydin, 2013). However, it has also come to be subject for some criticism.

One fundamental problem with collaborative planning is the already existing power relations in society, where private stakeholders hold a lot of power because they also hold financial resources that are crucial for development in the current market-led planning system (Rydin, 2013). Another problem relates to the inclusion of the civil society, where it has been seen that "it tends to be a rather specific group of people who take the lead in planning, a group that is not necessarily representative of all residents or the most vulnerable among those residents" (Rydin, 2013: 33). Rather, it has been noted that it is often high-income groups from the civil society that have the ability to involve themselves both in affecting and opposing decisions taken about urban development (ibid.).

According to Oswalt et. al., collaborative approaches to planning have often been seen as unsuccessful. This since public and private parties often see the inclusion of the civil society merely as complicating their work, whilst participants from the civil society "experience a frustrating powerlessness, because while they have a say in things, they are not allowed to make their own decisions or map things out" (Oswalt et. al. 2013: 14). In reality, the ideal situation proposed by collaborative planning, where all actors have the same prerequisites for participation and decisions are made based on consensus and common understandings, rarely exist (Rydin, 2013).

Market-oriented capitalism works in a contradictory way when applied to urban planning since it has a great need for public intervention to provide the market with necessary infrastructures and maintenance for the market forces to operate, at the same time as it aims to limit the pub-

lic control since a true democratisation of the urban space would be a danger to capitalism by decreasing the possibility to steer urban development through economic investment (Foglesong, 1986). By promoting the concept of stakeholders, there is a great probability that particular interests are prioritised at the expense of wider public interest and that democratically elected representatives will have less control over the urban development (Bengs, 2005).

2.1.3 THE AIM FOR PROSPERITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

In the book *Prosperity without Growth*, Jackson defines the word prosperity as the sensation that things are going to get better, both for oneself and for others. He describes it as a kind of shared vision that is believed to be attainable and that the feeling of attainability in this vision is particularly important to keep society together (Jackson, 2009).

The conventional notion today is that prosperity can be reached by economic growth, where higher incomes produce an increased freedom and quality of life for those people who benefit from it. But Jackson argues that the vision for society today lacks the feeling of attainability that would be necessary to achieve prosperity, since reaching the conventional idea of a good life today is systematically eating away at the chances of a good life in the future (Jackson, 2009). Capitalism relies on benefitting of nature and for continued growth an increase in both production and consumption is needed. This can be obtained through crossing geographic limits and appropriating new space, but with an ever-increasing pressure on natural resources it is inevitable to reach the limits of what the ecological system can handle (Harvey, 2010).

Within urban planning the common aim is to achieve social, economic and ecological sustainability. Planners often see themselves as having the role to unite these three, often conflicting, interests but frequently underestimating the emphasis put on the economic part when intending to do so (Campbell, 1996). Campbell identifies three main conflicts in striving for economic, environmental and social sustainability within market-led planning (ibid.). The first is the conflicting interest between social and economic interests of urban space when non-owner and owner groups have contrasting interest (Campbell, 1996, also identified by Foglesong, 1986 as "the property contradiction"). The second conflict is the previously mentioned need to exploit natural resources to generate economic growth, creating a conflict between environmental and economic interests. The third conflict lies in the market's reluctance to provide for both social and environmental sustainability due to the economic costs of doing so, even though they are highly dependent on one another (Campbell, 1996).

Jackson identifies the *dilemma of growth* as being on the one hand, unsustainable in its current

form since the consumption of resources and its implications on the environment are creating social injustice. On the other hand, that it is hard to create sustainability through alternatives, such as de-growth, within the current economic system, as the system is built in a way where a decline in consumption leads to unemployment and recession (Jackson, 2009). These dilemmas and conflicts can explain why the market-led system creates problems for planners to achieve sustainable development, that accommodate social, economic and ecological aspects, within the current context.

2.1.4 AFFECTING THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

Any specific idea of an ideal planning system is always connected to a certain vision of an ideal society (Bengs, 2005) and therefore it is important to consider how current political ideology affects the urban environment (Brenner, 2009; Bengs, 2005). This is necessary in order to understand how social aspects of the urban space are affected by power dynamics, exclusion and inequality and how this is formed under capitalism (Brenner, 2009). This also includes closely considering and questioning how the urban environment is changing and analysing the methods used within this development process (Brenner et al., 2015).

Current neoliberal and capitalist market politics can be seen to have a physical and geographical effect on the urban landscape and its public spaces. These politics have in many ways been breaking up previous spatial and territorial patterns defined by state control (Brenner et al., 2015). One example of this is how urban environments are being transformed by market-led development projects, often justifying changes to historic and social aspects of the urban space in the attempt to increase economic value (ibid.). Another example of the effects that these politics have on physical environment is to consider the impacts that rapidly growing urban environments have on the landscape as a whole, for example by looking on the impact on the agricultural land and natural resources that are needed to maintain the urban (ibid.). In this sense, the whole planet has now become urban, even though it on a planetary scale is in a deeply uneven way (Brenner, 2009).

As a consequence of globalisation and market-oriented capitalistic politics, this new uneven urban pattern can be identified in the landscape, with explosively expanding regions on the one hand and shrinking regions on the other (Brenner et al., 2015; Rydin, 2013). This pattern is characterised by contrasts that cannot be simplified with classic divisions such as urban/rural or north/south and east/west, but is instead a result of conditions such as growth and decline, wealth and poverty, inclusion and exclusion etc. These dynamics are reproducing themselves simultaneously at various spatial scales in the landscape, from local to global (Brenner et al.,

2015). Because of these uneven dynamics between economic growth and decline throughout the landscape, capitalism and economic growth cannot be regarded as a stable foundation on which to build urban planning (Rydin, 2013). This since the spatial unevenness of growth and decline become problematic in a context where the public sector is dependent on growth to be able to carry out urban planning and development (ibid.)

In the urban context there is an ongoing battle between political, economic, environmental and social perspectives to determine the future for both humans and the planet (Brenner, 2009) and urban space is being continually altered due to it being ever impressionable to social, political and economic factors. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the nature of the urban process under the influence of capitalism and to continually reinvent the critique, in the same way as the urban space is continually reinvented (Brenner, 2009). There is a pressing need for new ways to understand and influence the development of urban space under capitalism (Brenner et al., 2015) and to find potential alternative forms of the urban.

In the next section, these dynamics creating unevenness in the landscape will be further explored through looking at shrinking communities.

2.2 SHRINKING COMMUNITIES AND THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

2.2.1 DEFINITIONS AND REASONS FOR SHRINKAGE

The term **shrinking city** originates from Germany and has been used since the late 1980s. It is closely related to the term **urban decline**, that is often used in the USA to describe the consequences of post-war de-industrialisation (Laursen, 2008). There is no clear definition of what a shrinking city is (Pallagst, 2008), however it is often defined as an area facing economic and demographic decline over a certain period of time (Laursen, 2008). In this thesis, the concept of shrinkage will primarily be discussed with the term **shrinking communities** (for more on this, see section *1.4 Definitions*).

The reasons for shrinkage are various and historically it has often occurred as a consequence of war, natural disasters or epidemics. During the last decades further reasons for shrinkage have been identified, such as de-industrialisation and political, demographical and structural changes in cities and countries (Laursen, 2008).

De-industrialisation is one of the reasons for shrinkage that occurs as a consequence of globalisation and neo-liberalisation (Laursen, 2008). The transition from manufacturing to service industries and the moving of manufacturing industries to areas with lower labour costs, has led to a decrease in industry and unemployment in some areas, that in turn has led to outmigration and depopulation (Hollander et. al., 2009; Laursen, 2008).

The **centralisation** of urban resources and population to bigger urban regions leave smaller towns and cities with less resources and inhabitants. Many young people move to these growing urban regions in search for jobs and education and to leave challenges in the declining area, where they grew up, behind. This in combination with the **low birth-rates** of western Europe, is another reason for shrinkage and is also a reason as to why shrinking areas often have particularly high average-ages (Laursen, 2008; Oswalt et. al., 2013).

2.2.2 SHRINKAGE IN EUROPE

Shrinking cities have existed in Europe since the middle ages, with historically known examples such as the fall of the Roman empire and the spreading of the plague (Pallagst, 2008). With the late 19th century's shift from an agricultural society and the start of industrialisation came the movement of people to urban areas set around manufacturing industries, also affecting a start of depopulation in rural areas (Pallagst, 2008; Laursen, 2008). These new urban areas were strongly linked to capitalism and growth and with the invention of the railway further growth of urban regions, and the interlinkage of these, was possible (Laursen, 2008). However, the introduction of the railway also meant a further increased depopulation of rural areas (Pallagst, 2008).

By the 1970s a lot of industrial countries were facing economic challenges which eventually caused the great economic depression. This in turn led to a structural change in world economy that meant de-industrialisation in these industrial countries and the start of the globalisation era (Laursen, 2008). Globalisation meant a liberalisation of economic flows and a redistribution of industries in the world. It also changed the structure of cities and created a focus on the city as an engine of growth, which has led to an increased global competition between urban areas. This current structure, characterised by globalisation and neoliberal politics, has created the dynamics of growing urban areas on the one hand and shrinking areas on the other hand (ibid.).

Today shrinkage in Europe occurs mainly in post-socialist, Nordic and Mediterranean countries (Hollander et. al., 2009; Pallagst, 2008). In the northern European countries shrinkage often occurs in rural and peripheral regions, caused by a combination of de-industrialisation, low birth-rates and outmigration (Pallagst, 2008), which often favours the capitals and larger cities (Hollander et. al., 2009).

Fig. 2 : Areas with declining population in the Nordic countries (yellow) (Wright, 2018).
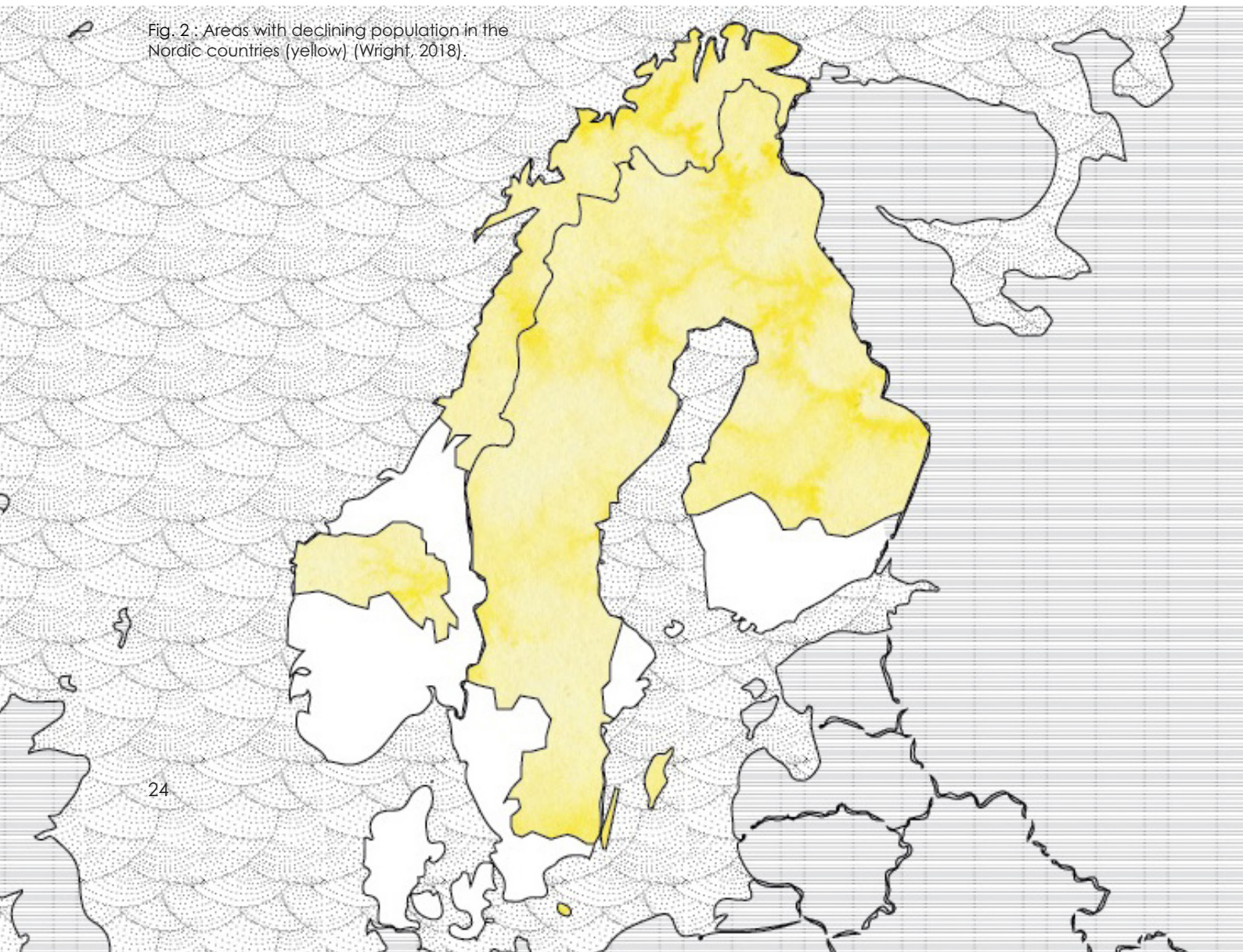
Even though growth is currently the dominating model for urban development, the number of shrinking communities is continually increasing. The last few generations have become accustomed to a continuous global growth but seen from the perspective of the human history as a whole, the period of growth over the last centuries can be considered very brief. Growth is now starting to become increasingly unevenly distributed throughout the landscape, with more shrinking communities as a consequence (Oswalt et. al. 2006).

2.2.3 SHRINKING COMMUNITIES AND URBAN PLANNING

Even though shrinking communities and regions are common and far from a new occurrence, the acceptance of the phenomenon is usually very low (Pallagst, 2008) and within urban planning it has almost been considered taboo and has often been neglected in development discussions (Oswalt et. al. 2006). However, spatial and geographical imbalance between growth and shrinkage has been a topic within many academic fields for a long time and more recently it has also started to gain focus within architecture and planning. This has led to the start of discussions about planning strategies coping with the distinct circumstances of shrinking communities (Laursen, 2008).

A dilemma when talking about strategies for shrinking communities is that urban development is often considered to be coupled with generating growth (Pallagst, 2008). For example, it is common that growing communities are associated with a positive narrative of urban development generated by economic growth, whilst shrinking communities are only linked to a negative narrative of stagnation and decline (Laursen, 2008). Therefore, the most common strategy for the development of shrinking communities is to aim for regenerating economic and population growth, a strategy that is usually unsuccessful (Pallagst, 2008). Even though urban planning should be able to handle changes in both growing and shrinking areas, there is little knowledge on how common planning approaches for growing communities could be adapted to and used in shrinking communities (Hollander et. al., 2009).

Conventional planning, focusing on using private investors as the main driving force for urban development, has often led to vacant spaces in communities facing social and economic struggles and shrinkage. These vacant spaces are then often left empty in wait for an economic investment that can formally repurpose the space, an approach that is not only disregarding space with low financial value, but also parts of the population with less social and financial resources (Oswalt et. al., 2013). However, social inequity does not necessarily have to be a consequence of shrinkage. It has been seen that good social conditions and quality of life can be achieved in shrinking communities through phenomena such as grassroot initiatives and community organisation

(Hollander et. al., 2009). This shows that for shrinking communities it is particularly important to question conventional planning approaches and adjust urban planning to the actual current circumstances, developing strategies for the specific needs of the given situation (Pallagst, 2008, Laursen, 2008).

Traditionally, planning has been about developing land to build on and then to construct buildings on these sites. However, as population numbers stagnate or shrink in formerly growing communities, this perspective becomes irrelevant. Instead, development becomes "more about addressing what has already been built and how it accumulated over a long period of time. In this process, the view is reversed: the built environment is no longer the goal, but the starting point. A different perception of the existing city is associated with this change. And new perspectives on development open up from this perception" (Oswalt et. al., 2013: 15). By this, shrinking communities can offer a way to move beyond growth-dependent planning and towards more sustainable and locally rooted approaches (Hollander et. al., 2009).

2.2.4 SHRINKING COMMUNITIES AS A PART OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

Within the academic field of urban planning in shrinking cities, it is a common notion that shrinkage should be seen as a part of a bigger cycle of shrinkage and growth, where they are both aspects of each other (Pallagst, 2008, Laursen, 2008; Oswalt et. al., 2013). Both growing and shrinking areas can be viewed as parts of an overall urban fabric, where shrinkage is considered to be a variation of the urban and not something completely different from other kinds of urban realities. Regarding shrinking communities as a part of a larger urban pattern, where some areas grow whilst other shrink, is a more useful perspective for urban development than to only look at shrinkage alone (Laursen, 2008).

One way of doing this, is to look to the discipline of landscape urbanism, which is a hybrid discipline between landscape and urbanism that focuses on looking at the complex mix of elements that make up the urban landscape (Corner, 2003). Within landscape urbanism an inclusive view of the landscape is used, where city and countryside, built-up and open landscapes are all defined as part of the urban landscape, questioning if dividing the landscape in traditional categories, such as urban and rural, can provide an overall idea of the landscape (Laursen, 2008). It also distances itself from dividing the urban environment into categories such as natural or artificial, instead viewing it as an entity and a human habitat (Lindholm, 2011).

Through the perspective of landscape urbanism, the focus is shifted from mainly looking at the urban landscape from a spatial perspective, common in traditional urban planning, to focusing

on process and relations through an open-ended and heterogenous world view. The landscape urbanism approach intends to be flexible, to be able to meet the ever-changing demands of cities and landscapes (Corner, 2003). This perspective is relevant also when looking at shrinking communities, since neither growing nor shrinking communities can stay eternally static and unchanged. The urban environment is always an arena for choices between alternative changes, irrespective of whether it is growing or shrinking (Sandercock, 1998).

Lindholm claims that "the notion of 'landscape' functions particularly well in handling a complexity as an entity" (Lindholm, 2011: 8). And it is just this that landscape urbanism intends to do, believing traditional planning to be inadequate and inefficient in this aspect (Corner, 2003, Laursen, 2008), since the complexity in handling market forces, community activism, changing political desires and environmental problems has converted the planner into a mediator (Corner, 2003). Lindholm defines two differences between traditional urban planning and landscape urbanism; firstly, that landscape urbanism is more inclusive and open to receive information from non-traditional established sources and secondly, that landscape urbanism works from several scales and with a relational view of the context, which can achieve both flexibility and stability within planning since it uses the actual current landscape as a starting point at the same time as it views it in the context of the landscape as a whole (Lindholm, 2011).

Through embracing complexity and accepting that dynamics of the urban landscape are going beyond any singular control, and therefore outcomes and effects can never be predicted with certainty, both strengths and weaknesses in the urban complexity are acknowledged (Corner, 2003). At the moment, landscape urbanism is more of a progressive movement than theoretical formulations, "eager to make a difference now, instead of waiting for guidelines to emerge from well-grounded theory, only then to be applied to a well-established apparatus" (Lindholm, 2011: 15). The landscape urbanism approach to the urban landscape can be useful when looking at shrinking communities, since it does not depart from any general solution of how to intervene in the urban space. Instead, it explores social, cultural and economic dynamics to find suggestions to site-specific approaches for planning (Laursen, 2008).

In the next part, *3. Theoretical framework part 2*, the relational view of space focusing on process and dynamics is further explored through looking at public space and some alternative approaches to its development and also considering what opportunities this perspective might offer for public space in shrinking communities.

FACADE OF BUILDING, ORRTORGET, SOLLEFTEÅ (WRIGHT, 2018)

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK PART 2:
PUBLIC SPACE AND ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

3.1 PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC SPACE

3.1.1 DEFINING PUBLIC SPACE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Public space is often defined as the opposite of private, but usually a series of graduations where public and private collide can be seen in the urban landscape and therefore the distinction between private and public is really not that strict and easily identified (Parkinson, 2012). Another common way to define public space is by its accessibility to the public, where space accessible to everyone can be considered public space (Hajer et al., 2001, Parkinson, 2012), which is also the main definition used in this thesis. Other factors that might be used to define public space is how the space uses public resources or if it is used as a venue for practicing public roles (Parkinson, 2012). Examples of urban spaces that are often considered public are parks, squares and streets, but also indoor environments such as public buildings and privately-owned shopping centres.

The importance of public space in the urban environment can be emphasised by talking about its role in a democratic society. It is commonly said that democracy requires public spaces to function, since it can provide a venue for democratic discussion (Parkinson, 2012). Public space can therefore be considered an arena of change that creates opportunity to address challenges that society is facing concerning cultural, economic, environmental, political and social questions. Public space is necessary in all attempts of urban transformation (Madanipour et al., 2013) and the shaping of society is highly reflected in the shaping of its public spaces (Hajer et al., 2001).

The appearance and spatial qualities of public space can represent both ambitions for and neglect of the urban environment (Hajer et al., 2001). Together with buildings and other urban elements it symbolises layers of history of a place, where uses and values can change over time and create variable environments (Madanipour et al., 2013) and the development of public space has the ability both to create or reduce opportunities for certain groups or uses (Hajer et al., 2001). Public space can offer a setting for activities free from the need of consumption, often required in the private open spaces provided by the market, and thereby it can provide for people with all different kinds of economic circumstances (Rydin, 2013).

Public space is an important contributor to the possibility for inhabitants to experience good quality of life (Rydin, 2013, Madanipour et al., 2013.) and when accessible and maintained, it can make an urban environment more just and democratic (Madanipour et al., 2013). Below, two different perspectives on public space are presented: public domain and relational space. These two perspectives have been selected since they build onto the concept of relation and process presented in the previous section and since the site-specific approach that this entails can offer useful perspectives for shrinking communities (Laursen, 2008).

3.1.2 HENRI LEFEBVRE AND RELATIONAL SPACE

In the introduction to this thesis (see part *1. Introduction*) some ideas of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre were used to discuss an experience of public space in a shrinking community in Sweden. The ideas of Lefebvre have been influential for many different perspectives on architecture and planning, for instance for the relational perspective presented in the book *Public Space and Relational Perspectives: New challenges for architecture and planning* (Knierbein et al., 2015).

According to Lefebvre, space should not be considered a form that can be filled with whatever that fits and regards this view on space as an error in thinking connected to the view on space as an object. Instead he considers space to be neither a subject nor an object, but a process that is defined as a structure for social and lived experiences and also by its functions. Through this perspective, space is developed through a process in which the space gets appropriated by both individuals and groups over time. This process leads to the creation of social space, which is defined by the actions of the people within it. Lefebvre also considers these actions to be part of the space itself and that these social spaces can reflect aspects of society (Lefebvre, 1974). These ideas about space can be seen clearly in the way that Knierbein and Tornaghi write about relational space, as seen below.

It is common within current urban planning and architecture to focus more on the permanent physical environment than social and cultural dynamics and possibilities for exchange provided by the space (Hajer et al., 2001, Knierbein et al., 2015). Knierbein and Tornaghi connect this focus to a positivist view on space where space is considered as something absolute that exists independently of human experience, which they claim to be a common conception within market-oriented urban planning. According to the positivist perspective, public space is often considered an object to be divided between different professionals who are technical experts within fields concerning the physical environment. Knierbein and Tornaghi argue that this perspective inhibits socially inclusive urban change and that it can thereby also contribute to structural conflicts. This because of its neglect of political, social and cultural aspects of space and the consequences interventions might have on these aspects (Knierbein et al., 2015).

In contrast to this approach to space, Knierbein and Tornaghi advocate for a relational perspective on public space, that aims to connect space and process by viewing it as something that is in constant change produced over time and by the relationship to, and experiences of, the people within the space. However, the relational view of public space is often either neglected or criticised within architecture and planning practice, principally because of its high degree of abstraction and complexity and that a better way to work with a relational approach to space is needed (Knierbein et al., 2015). Working with public spaces through relational approaches has

the potential to "help the understanding of material and immaterial aspects of different urban development phenomena by focusing on social process, as well as on their cultural and political contexts and inequalities" (ibid.: 6). Despite critiquing the degree of theoretical abstraction, they also point to the opportunity to learn from grassroot and activist initiatives, which often use a relational approach to space. Through embracing this perspective, a connection between planning and design, politics and the population and its dynamics can be established (ibid.).

As previously mentioned, Lefebvre identifies appropriation of space and social dynamics as important defining factors of space. Below, this will be addressed through looking at the concept of the public domain.

3.1.3 THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

In the book *The New Public Domain*, Hajer and Reijndorp approach public space through discussing its potential to act as a public domain, a space where "an exchange between different social groups is possible and also actually occur[s]" (Hajer et al., 2001: 11). The concept is that all public space has the potential to be a public domain, even though this is not always achieved. A common vision of public space is for it to be a space where different groups in society can meet, but the authors argue that meetings between different groups are not realistic since it is unknown what is needed in the physical space to establish these meetings. Instead they speak about exchange between different groups in the public space as the defining element of public domain This is a wider definition that implies the confrontation with others as a way of developing one's own ideas of the world, even when this confrontation is only symbolic. (ibid.).

Often when discussing how to create an inviting and functioning public space, focus lies on the permanent physical environment and defined functions as well as social and physical order (Hajer et al., 2001, Madanipour et al., 2013, Knierbein et al., 2015). This way of thinking, along with the previously mentioned wish to creating meetings, can be considered to be the current dominating discourse of public space and its development. However, according to the concept of public domain, focusing too much on the design of the public space when trying to create inviting environments can be a superficial approach that is neglecting the value of social exchange (Hajer et al., 2001).

Instead, the notion of a public domain highlights the idea that public space becomes inviting when frequently used by one or many groups that thereby appropriate the public space. This has the potential to influence the space in both negative or positive ways (Hajer et al., 2001) and even though appropriation has the potential to influence the public space negatively, it is also

necessary for it to function well (Hajer et al., 2001, Sandercock, 1998). Moreover, public space as a venue for both positive and negative experiences makes it a dynamic environment that creates opportunities to address needed societal issues (Madanipour et al., 2013). Positive experiences of public space often require a public domain dominated by a group that is not one's own (Hajer et al., 2001). This is because positive experiences of public space and the urban environment are not only connected to the feeling of belonging, but also to the possibility of feeling anonymous and to observe the spontaneous happenings created by strangers (Sandercock, 1998).

Sandercock argues that public officials often wish to regulate how the urban space is used, but really there is also a need for non-commercial, unregulated public space where appropriation is not inhibited (Sandercock, 1998). Order through regulations allow for some activities, whilst some activities require informality and therefore regulations to control the use of public space can be associated to the power over the possibilities to create a public domain (Madanipour et al., 2013). Still, despite regulations constructed by public officials, people continue to find creative ways to appropriate space and perform activities in the urban environment to fulfil their needs and desires (Sandercock, 1998).

Connected to the relational view of space, the perspective of the public domain criticises the idea of public space as a space of programmed functions and as a frictionless environment, since this inhibits the creation of public domains (Hajer et al., 2001). According to Hajer and Reijndorp "[p]ublic domain experiences occur at the boundary between friction and freedom" (ibid.: 116) and that the public domain can be created not through copying functioning public spaces in other places, but through working on the relationship between the physical and the social environment of the space. This can be done by aiming to create spaces that can be meaningful to specific groups and also by looking at how different places are connected to one another (ibid.)

As previously mentioned, whilst being partly neglected and regarded as solely theoretical concepts within traditional urban planning and architecture, views of space through process and as relational and dynamic are already used by progressive movements and grassroots to create spaces in the urban landscape that meet their needs (Lindholm, 2011; Knierbein et al., 2015). In the next section, some alternative urban movements are introduced and their potential for shrinking communities are considered.

3 .2 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR PUBLIC SPACE

*"Our fundamental finding is that urban shrinkage is a widespread First World occurrence for which planners have little background, experience or recourse. They are only beginning to comprehend it and find ways to respond to it. In particular, they have to overcome their aversion, usually induced by the growth-oriented wider culture they operate in, to the very idea of shrinkage. They believe it means a pessimistic, unhealthy acceptance of decline. **But planners are in a unique position to reframe decline as an opportunity: a chance to re-envision cities and to explore non-traditional approaches to their growth at a time when cities desperately need them**."* (Hollander et. al., 2009: 5, own highlighting)

Public space in shrinking communities faces different challenges than public space in other cities. Instead of the planning revolving around solving conflicts of competing interests in public spaces, which is common in growing cities, public space in shrinking communities often faces challenges relating to lost activity and liveliness. Interest from private actors and citizens is often lacking, which leads to the public planners being the lone actors of urban development (Altrock et al., 2015). Further, planning in shrinking communities often have to cope with an increasingly low confidence in public development and its possibilities to improve the quality of life for its citizens (ibid.).

Shrinking communities face both economic challenges as well as the challenge to develop new and alternative methods for urban development. Growth-oriented approaches, that try to attract new inhabitants and economic investors, are usually unsuccessful and unable to turn the shrinkage around (Altrock et al., 2015; Pallagst, 2008), since there is little knowledge about how these approaches can be adapted to a shrinking environment (Hollander et. al., 2009). Often, they end up being inefficient both socially and economically (Audirac et al., 2010). Under these circumstances, urban planning should instead try to find ways to create a stable development based on the actual current conditions (see *2.2.3 Shrinking communities and urban planning*), however, both economic and social capital needed to develop new strategies are often low (Altrock et al., 2015), shrinkage offers the opportunity to find new approaches to planning and development and to create a new vision for the community (Hollander et. al., 2009).

Although shrinkage occurs all over the world, the main source of alternative planning strategies come from Germany, where new approaches have been elaborated since the beginning of the 21st century (Pallagst, 2008). These strategies usually focus on creating realistic visions for shrinking communities, which often includes recognising consequences of urban planning under the influence of globalisation and growth-dependence as being negative both for ecology and

social dynamics and trying to find alternatives to this (Audirac et al., 2010) and usually also put a focus on cultural revitalisation (Hollander et. al., 2009) and it is common for these new planning strategies to include citizens in planning in new creative ways, that are more elaborated than the established routines for participation (Altrock et al., 2015).

Below, two alternative approaches within urban governance, planning and development that can be identified in some of these strategies, *informal use and self-organisation* and *temporary uses of interim spaces*, are presented. These are presented under the headlines *open-endedness*, *including citizens* and *vacant land*, three aspects that have been identified as important for public space in shrinking communities previously in this thesis and that can be addressed through these approaches. This section is then followed by three examples of urban movements/phenomena that make use of these different approaches, thus illustrating how alternatives have been unfolded in Europe.

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS   *ALTERNATIVE MOVEMENTS/PHENOMENA*

TEMPORARY USE   DIY URBANISM

SELF-ORGANISATION   ———▸   REAL-WORLD-LABS

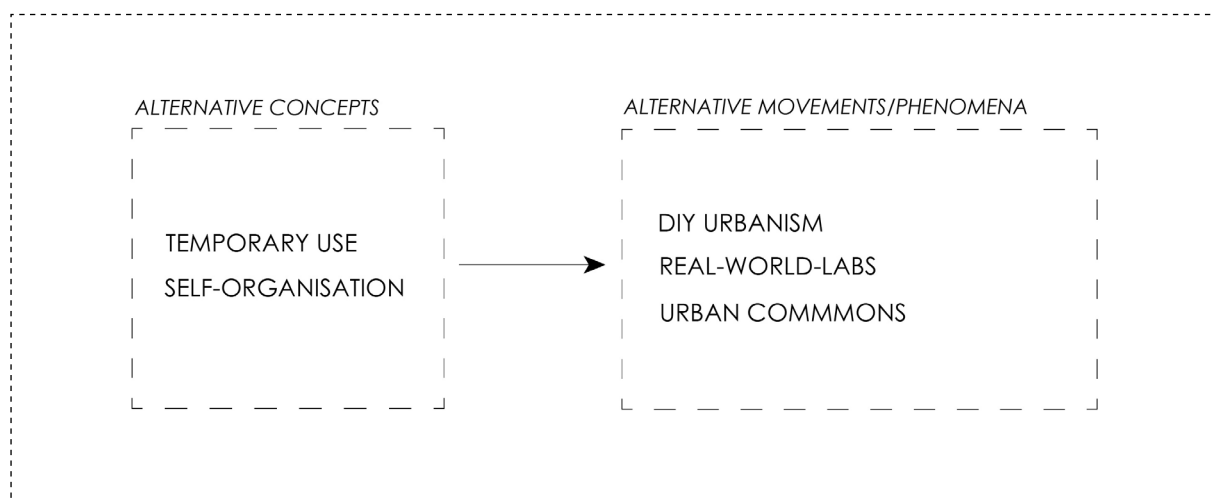   URBAN COMMMONS

Fig. 3: Diagram of how alternative concepts are linked in the thesis (Wright, 2018).

3.2.1 INFORMAL USE AND SELF-ORGANISATION

Self-organisation refers to initiatives and actions in the urban environment that are organised independently of formal planning authorities and often carried out, at least partly, with the initiative's own resources. In other words, they are initiatives that have both been initiated and carried out from the bottom-up. Even though these self-organised initiatives rarely take the form of actual protests, they often aim to achieve changes in society and the urban environment (Olsson, 2008). In this sense, self-organisation can be a way of political discussion in the public space solely through the appropriation of it and the activities taking place (ibid.). Thereby, it could be seen as an example of the quality public space has as a democratic venue because of the opportunity it gives for addressing challenges that society is facing by using the space (see *3.1.1 Defining public space and its importance*).

This bottom-up approach often involves realising initiatives through informal methods and both the space itself and social dynamics are defining elements in the potential to do so (Olsson, 2008). Self-organisation can be a way of creating social spaces in the urban landscape that creates opportunity for exchange of experiences, strengthening identity and social interaction between the people appropriating the space (ibid.). The appropriation of space may also contribute to positive experiences of the urban environment for citizens that are not actively involved in the appropriation itself (Hajer et al., 2001), since these experiences are not only connected to the feeling of belonging but also to the possibility of feeling anonymous and to observe activity created by strangers (Sandercock, 1998; see *3.1.3 The public domain*).

To be able to include both formal and informal activities and appropriations that occur in the urban space into planning, it is necessary "to leave the realm of what is officially approved, especially since many of these actions operate not only against the market economy, but also the planning system" (Lindholm, 2011: 13). This means considering all activities that are appropriating the urban space, not only the ones that are officially conducted through urban planning (ibid.).

OPEN-ENDEDNESS

Self-organising approaches open up for a view of society as diverse and variable in its dynamics, which can be connected to a view of space as relational and open-ended (Boonstra et.al., 2011). Creating urban spaces through self-organisation can therefore be connected to the ideas of space presented by Lefebvre, where space is considered to be something that is created through appropriation and social interactions (Olsson, 2008) (see *3.1.2 Henri Lefebvre and relational space*). According to this perspective, social activities are not only something that occur in a space, but also a defining part of the space itself. Since the activities are considered part of the space, so are also the actors. In this context, the planner becomes one of many actors that contributes to defining

the space, rather than a neutral party (Boonstra et.al., 2011).

Self-organisation is thereby a phenomenon that can be associated with a view on space so complex that it is almost impossible to organise. Therefore, no actor can entirely control the dynamics that emerge as consequences of actions, but all actors are instead seen as one out of many actors affecting the dynamics as a whole (Boonstra et.al., 2011).

INCLUDING CITIZENS

Self-organisation can also be seen as a response to the participatory or collaborative methods often used in traditional planning (see *2.1.2 Depending on stakeholders*). According to Boonstra and Boelens, participatory planning only allows for citizens to participate within an agenda already set by the government, which does not correspond to the increasingly complex and heterogenous dynamics of society. They mean that although the intentions from planners can be considered noble, they often tend to disregard initiatives that arise from civil society if they do not correspond to the aims already set out in the official plans (Boonstra et.al., 2011).

In contrast to this, planning that aims to incorporate self-organisation in its practice has to work on including initiatives that arise from citizens. The main contrast that incorporating self-organisation in planning has to other kinds of inclusive planning, is that at least the starting initiative always comes from the actors themselves. This is in contrast to traditional planning where initiative is usually something set out by official planners, only opening up for citizens when this is already done (Boonstra et.al., 2011). Allowing for more informal activities and opening up the possibilities for citizens to influence the urban development through self-organised initiatives can create great opportunities for development in shrinking communities (Hollander et. al., 2009, Li et al, 2016). However, the possibility of self-organised initiatives depends on context and is determined by both individual and structural conditions of each shrinking community (Li et al, 2016).

VACANT LAND

Vacant land in shrinking communities have increasingly become a focus within the self-organisation discourse because of its capability to convert abandoned land into vibrant public spaces through gardening, ecological regeneration, art and cultural experiments, etc. (Audirac, 2018) and thereby contributing to adding values to the community through its new uses. Because of the self-governing approach to the space and its maintenance, cost of public maintenance can be lowered and at the same time give the space a new image (ibid.). However, critics argue that this trend risks justifying less public responsibility and that these self-organised initiatives might be used for city marketing (Bradley, 2015). There is a risk of these movements of becoming victims

of their own success when giving spaces new symbolic value through interventions, which land-owners then wish to convert into a commercial value. This might in turn lead to eviction, intents to integrate the initiatives into the leisure economy (Audirac, 2018) or increased prices in the community (Bradley, 2015).

There is a risk of planners intending to use self-organised initiatives as tools to regenerate growth, particularly in shrinking communities, by supplying land for in-between uses of vacant space with the wish that this will ultimately raise the economic value and generate growth (Audirac, 2018). However, overcoming the unwillingness of accepting shrinkage and truly opening up for approaches such as self-organisation (Hollander et. al., 2009), might open up for new opportunities for urban development in shrinking communities (Hollander et. al., 2009, Li et al, 2016). There has always been a tension between formal and informal development within urban planning, where informal processes often have been more successful than formal ones in reusing vacant space. In old industrial nations in the North, development is more about repurposing already existing urban space, rather than expanding it further. In this context, it is both necessary and useful to look to these informal processes and use them to analyse the formal structures and open up for these methods in urban development (Oswalt et. al., 2013).

3.2.2 TEMPORARY USE OF INTERIM SPACES
Temporary uses are activities that are planned in a way that they need, or obtain qualities from, impermanence (Colomb, 2012; Cunningham Sabot et al., 2018). These interventions are often carried out through self-organising initiatives with small budgets (Colomb, 2012), often created by people whose needs are not included in or neglected by traditional planning driven by growth, on sites that are considered unsound from a financial perspective (Oswalt et. al., 2013). These temporary spaces often become characterised by the "tension between their actual use value (as publicly accessible spaces for social, artistic and cultural experimentation) and their potential commercial value" (Colomb, 2012: 138). These tensions are connected to the increased value of land that is possible through development (Rydin, 2013) and the tension this can create between owner and non-owner groups concerning social versus economic values (Campbell, 1996; Foglesong, 1986; see *2.1 Urban planning and the ideal of growth*).

Even though single temporary interventions are indeed temporary, the phenomenon itself is becoming a more enduring trend (Ferreri, 2015). Temporary uses have existed in old industrial regions during a long period of time, but since the early 2000s there has been an increase in temporary uses (Oswalt et. al., 2013; Ferreri, 2015) and they have begun to be advertised as an experimental and low-cost approach with the ability to combine the development agenda of urban

planning with the people's wish for alternative spaces outside of the growth paradigm (Ferreri, 2015). This new trend can be related to the current knowledge-based economy and its more flexible and dynamic characteristics in comparison to previous economies, a development which is also reflected in the urban space. The slower processes of architecture and planning have created a space for practices such as temporary use (Oswalt et. al., 2013), which offer a site-specific way of bringing people together in the interim between developments, often with the aspiration to influence political change (Ferreri, 2015).

OPEN-ENDEDNESS

One of the main concerns with temporary uses lies in the potentially differing views and aims between users and authorities. Usually, temporary uses are given space by municipalities in the wait for a possibility to establish a more traditional growth-oriented development, sometimes without considering the timeframe of the temporary use (Ferreri, 2015). Including temporary urbanism in official planning requires the questioning of some of the core notions in traditional planning, such as the setting of end goals that the planning then aims to work towards e.g. traditional master planning. With temporary uses this process has to become reversed, defining the current needs and leave the end result undefined (Oswalt et. al., 2013; Altrock et al., 2015).

For this, the term *interim space* could be used to address spaces used for temporary interventions (Colomb, 2012). This expression facilitates a relational, dynamic and open-ended approach to space and opens up for different and unexpected possibilities for its future use and purpose (Colomb, 2012, Cunningham Sabot et al., 2018). The term interim is associated with a fluidity of time, that moves away from the idea of temporary uses as something that exist in-between developments (Colomb, 2012) and thereby approaching the open-endedness as a value in itself.

In many places, municipalities have begun to open up to this approach and started to integrate it into urban planning. However, it is common that this is done in a way where the concept of temporary uses is misunderstood and instead used for the municipality and private investors as a way to nourish their growth-oriented interests (Oswalt et. al., 2013). This is usually done by integrating temporary uses in attempts to create a creative economy, disregarding both temporary uses that are not centred around commercial creative activities (that are instead often focused on creating social stability) and also disregarding the non-profit philosophy that often lies behind the temporary uses (ibid.).

INCLUDING CITIZENS

Incorporating temporary uses into official planning also requires another approach to the involvement of citizens. This approach differs a lot from traditional collaborative and participatory

planning approaches, since it allows citizens not only to give opinions on already worked out plans, but also to directly change their own living environments (Oswalt et. al., 2013, Altrock et al., 2015). This can be a particularly useful aspect to integrate into planning in shrinking communities, where planning challenges often revolve around a lack of interest and involvement in traditional collaboration rather than conflicting interests over how space should be used (Altrock et al., 2015).

By this, temporary uses work with stakeholders in a different way than traditional planning, opening up for the general public to participate and not only high-income groups in the community (see *2.1.2 Depending on stakeholders*). An important aspect for this to work is the access to cheap, or free space, where these temporary uses can establish themselves (Oswalt et. al., 2013), for example vacant land.

VACANT LAND

Vacant space has commonly been considered a negative symptom of economic crisis and global recession and something that hinders a municipality from attracting new investors and consumers. When temporary urbanism started to enter the mainstream of urban planning in the early 2000s, one of its greatest appeals was its capacity to occupy underused sites with its experimental interventions and designs. With this, temporary urbanism has increasingly been viewed by planners and architects as a tool for regenerating the value of vacant space, often with the ultimate goal of future developments that will regenerate growth (Ferreri, 2015).

In Germany, temporary use of space has become one of the main planning approaches for shrinking communities, in German known by the term *Zwischennutzung* (translated into temporary use or interim use). The concept allows temporary uses on vacant land, whilst maintaining the possibility to build on the land in the future and without having to change ownership or make changes in planning documents. However, the outcome of this strategy depends highly on the perception of shrinkage that lies behind it. Originally within this approach, shrinkage has not been viewed as a negative phenomenon that needs to be reversed and the temporary uses were therefore focused on the needs of local citizens (Cunningham Sabot et al., 2018). But with planning aiming to regenerate growth, temporary uses have often rather become a way to secure economic value of vacant land in the wait for new building developments and thereby it has also lost its function as a tool for including citizens in the development of the urban landscape. With this growth-oriented approach, the targeted group changed from focusing on needs and wishes of local citizens to targeting international visitors and artists. Additionally, this has led to more control regarding what kind of temporary uses that occupy the vacant space (ibid.).

For temporary use to function as a tool in shrinking communities, vacant land should be defined as interim space and considered relational and open-ended. Since future population numbers and economic development are hard to predict in shrinking communities, it is relevant to view both the shrinking and space as processes and to focus on adaptability as a key concept (Cunningham Sabot et al., 2018). Adapting to a relational view on space, and thereby theoretically redefining how space and time relate to one another, can provide a new way of visioning temporary uses as an open-ended approach to vacant or interim spaces in future planning (Ferreri, 2015). Allowing for temporary uses in these spaces might also be a way to secure that vacant land contributes to the quality of life in a community (Rydin, 2013).

On the following pages, three different examples of urban movements/phenomena that use self-organisation and/or temporality are presented in brief.

3.2.3 DIY URBANISM

DIY (do-it yourself) urbanism is a movement where local citizens, individuals or small groups, solve urban issues, that the municipality will or cannot solve, themselves by designing, constructing and installing unofficial design solutions in public spaces (Bradley, 2015; Finn, 2014). The interventions tend to be small-scale and temporary, aiming to improve both the social and physical environment through cheap and quick measures (Bradley, 2015; Fabian et al, 2015).

DIY urbanism arises from the *right to the city movement*, coined by Lefebvre in the 1960s and further discussed by Harvey in the context of urban social movements (Fabian et al, 2015) and it can be seen as a part of a greater discussion on public space; what it should provide and how, and to what extent, citizens can be included in shaping it (Bradley, 2015; Finn, 2014). Through its interventionist character the movement's actions contribute to the discussion about conflict arising from different stakeholders having distinct visions for the urban space, for example they can discuss if the right to the city should be based on inhabitancy rather than authority such as money, the law or property possession (Fabian et al, 2015).

DIY urbanism often mirror financial or political crisis (Bradley, 2015; Finn, 2014) and part of its essence is to rebel against public planning through acting on their own, stretching boundaries and changing the use of spaces. Even though DIY interventions are unauthorised, and authorities might consider them to cause problems with i.e. safety, they could also provide municipalities with input and ideas and be a possibility for developing new ways of public participation (Finn, 2014). Although increasingly working to integrate different temporary initiatives (Oswalt et. al., 2013), current urban planning leaves little occasion for DIY urbanism, since focus usually rather lies on relationships between the public sector and private market actors. Therefore, there is a shortage of models to incorporate or learn from DIY initiatives in public planning and planners still face the challenge of balancing these initiatives against public regulations to find ways to work with them (Finn, 2014).

Citizens involved in DIY urbanism are usually people that are engaged in their local communities and willing to dedicate themselves to improve it, which is what planners are usually looking for in public participation. There is a great opportunity in finding ways to engage and empower citizen initiatives where the municipality can contribute by providing structure. Municipalities could also include engaged citizens by soliciting solutions to problems or in the design process of temporary or experimental interventions (Finn, 2014).

EXAMPLE

There are many examples of how DIY urbanism can take shape in the public space, such as installing home-built street furniture or painting of bicycle lanes and crosswalks (Fabian et al, 2015, Finn, 2014). One example of how this has been used in a smaller former industrial town can be seen in the example of Todmorden in the United Kingdom. Here, local citizens have started a project where edible crops are planted throughout the town with the intention to spread knowledge about food in relation to health and how it can be grown, as well as strengthening the community (Källblad, 2015).

Another example is the former airport Tempelhof in Berlin, where citizen can apply for grass plots from the city, that they are then able to use for temporary non-commercial DIY activities. For example, many of the plots are being used as allotment gardens. This is a project that is taking place in the meantime whilst decisions are being made about what will happen to the space in the future, as an alternative to leave it un-used (Källblad, 2015).

3.2.4 COMMONING AND URBAN COMMONS

Commoning can be defined as practices that produce and manage collective resources and spaces in the urban landscape (Gatti et al., 2018), thereby appropriating spaces and converting them into something new. These spaces and initiatives are often referred to as urban commons and can be seen as a reaction to the commercialisation of public space (Bradley, 2015), that speak of a search for alternative ways of using the urban space that goes beyond the influence of public authority and market forces to a self-defining approach where the people using the space are also those defining and shaping it together in accordance with a common vision (Gruber et al., 2018, Bradley, 2015). The interventions are often temporary, and some urban commons also use an open-source philosophy where inventions are shared openly for anyone to use and replicate (Bradley, 2015). In contrast to public space that carries an identity set by the public authorities, urban commons tend "to be constantly redefined: common space happens and is shaped through collective action." (Gruber et al., 2018: 4)

The concept of urban commons originates from the notion of natural resource commons, for example oceans and forests, used by local people to extract resources such as wood and fish. Natural commons are usually connected to Hardin's work on the "tragedy of the commons", which points out the great risk overuse of common resources when there is no official control and also claiming that the only ways to use the resources with care are through either privatisation or governmental control. Ostrom presents a contradicting perspective, claiming that local and self-organised groups can successfully govern commons provided that clear rules, a defined group and conflict-resolution tools are established (Borch et al., 2015, Bradley, 2015). Different kinds of self-organised groups that govern common resources can be found all around the world in different forms and urban commons have become another example of this. Originally responding to the privatisation of public spaces and resources, urban commons have introduced the concept of commons, traditionally applied to physical resources in rural environments, to the urban context (Bradley, 2015).

Urban commons tend to occur in times of economic crisis, employing a self-governing approach to urban spaces. Even though urban commons cannot replace the role of long-term public planning, it could be used by planners to meet needs of citizens in times of little public capital and resources for urban planning and public spaces. It can also be seen as way to make underused spaces active and focus on the social process rather than on the physical product. Single urban commons might not be able to challenge the way of growth-led planning; however, it can be seen as one part in a bigger political movement looking for change and new approaches (Bradley, 2015).

EXAMPLE

The urban common garden of *NeuLand* in Cologne started with the engagement of 150 people planting flowers on a vacant plot to voice political dissent for land-speculations and to emphasize the possibility for temporary uses on the plot. It later developed into an urban common gardening project, arranging activities such as workshops and garden festivals. The gardening project is open to anyone and attracting citizens from different backgrounds but is also managed by an association started for the purpose. Being explicitly political, *NeuLand* can be seen as a practical voicing of the right to the city and democratic governance through gardening an urban common (Follmann et al., 2015).

Another example of urban commons are the spaces arising in Dublin, providing space for activities such as creative workshops, exhibitions, film screenings and discussions in highly commercialised areas, attracting a diversity of people and applying alternative forms for ownership and decision-making. Although arising from a social and cultural dissatisfaction and as a reaction of increased privatisation of the urban space, these urban commons are often political in an implicit way (Bresnihan et al., 2014).

3.2.5 EXPERIMENTAL PLANNING IN REAL-WORLD-LABORATORIES

Urban living labs are a direct form of experimental interventions that aim to find ways of a more sustainable urban future (Bulkeley et al., 2016) and can be included under the broader term real-world-laboratories, a concept created for learning from experiments in real time (Menny et al., 2018). Urban living labs aim to open up for cooperation between different actors and inclusion of people into the entire experimental processes and also to find site-specific solutions for different elements in the urban environment, such as buildings, open spaces, infrastructures and consumption. They can be seen as a part of a bigger movement to change urban governance, since it seeks ways to govern through experimental approaches (Bulkeley et al., 2016).

Urban living labs provide the opportunity to test ideas and innovations in real and specific urban environments, where they can later be sustained by the networks of people created in the laboratory process. Successful experiments can potentially be replicated in other parts of the urban landscape, although it is not always clear to what extent this is possible (Bulkeley et al., 2016). User involvement is fundamental for the laboratory concept and its potential success and capacity of transformation. However, maximum user participation, defined as *co-creation*, might not be the best option in all steps of the process. Rather, a varying level of user involvement in different stages is desirable for a transformative outcome. Urban living labs can be organised both as top-down and bottom-up initiatives, where the later have higher likeliness to have high levels of user involvement (Menny et al., 2018). It is important to include users from early on in the process, so that they have the opportunity to "shape the process rather than just respond to it." (ibid.: 69).

Like other forms of experimental approaches, this method is interventionist with the intention to learn through process, which also means that the results are not predetermined. The design of urban living labs varies but can be concluded as three main types: *strategic*, often funded by government, *civic*, with municipalities or universities as the main actors, or *organic*, led by organisations and civil society. These three types approach the method in different ways, which also means distinct outcomes. It is common that civic initiatives focus on economic growth, whilst organic initiatives focus on local needs and desires (Bulkeley et al., 2016).

Since shrinkage is often a painful experience for many citizens, the IBA (see example on the following page) has worked with methods for active public participation in the cities as a way to reduce the sense of loss and frustration experienced within the population. The participatory measures have also highlighted heterogeneity in the communities as a quality (Akbar, 2005). Urban living labs could offer an opportunity to find methods for approaching challenges faced in shrinking communities, such as ways the reclaim vacant space. This can be done through using ideas presented by the IBA and applying them to other shrinking context and then possibly

create networks of living labs in many different shrinking communities. This network could be a way of creating experiences that will allow for wider conclusions on how to approach challenges in shrinking communities (Schilling, 2008).

EXAMPLE

An example of how this concept has been used in shrinking communities is the IBA (The International Building Exhibition Urban Redevelopment Saxony-Anhalt 2010) that took place in the German state Saxony-Anhalt up until 2010 and defined itself as an urban laboratory. The aim of the IBA was to investigate methods to handle shrinking cities and to modify political, environmental and architectural approaches and routines for urban planning. The IBA handled shrinking cities on three different levels: local city level by analysing the whole city at once, regional networks of exchanging experiences and open up for cooperation and international exchange of experiences. The idea was that the lessons learned within IBA, could then be applied to other areas experiencing declining population (Akbar, 2005).

Based on ten principles, such as *Urban redevelopment concerns us all, Structural change represents an opportunity for urban planning* and *The form of the city is changing*,(IBA, 2005: 134-36), the IBA urban laboratory took place in 15 towns and each town chose themes for their work in the project such as, the town of Staßfurt that experimented through the theme of how much centre a town needs, to develop their empty and contaminated town centre by abandoning the traditional idea of what a centre is. The town Stendal, located in the sparsely populated region Altmark, investigated the theme "a central city with a rural environment" (Krems, 2005). The town Aschersleben chose a theme that addresses the large number of vacant plots in its inner city by experimenting with planned interim uses of the urban space (Krems, 2005). This was done through creating a drive-thru gallery that was constructed by architects and performers who helped to set up canvas-covered steel constructions on the vacant plots, which local artist were then invited to use. This project also experimented with socio-spatial process and contributed to involving citizens in the planning process and was seen to further inspire other interim uses, such as a garden show and other exhibitions, in the area (Altrock et al., 2015).

3.2.6 CONCLUDING REFLECTION

The alternative approaches presented above are to varying extent related to each other through execution and common values, such as open-endedness and the focus on social process. They use different methods to effect change in the urban landscape, with both implicit and explicit political motivations. They all experiment with alternative collaborative methods of governing that are integrated in the planning system to varying degrees. Another common factor is the conception of space as relational, focusing on the social space and the process of creating it. This conception also applies a view of development of space and the urban landscape as open-ended, where focus once again lies on the process rather than on a specific end-product.

As mentioned above, many of these approaches create tensions with current planning systems and growth-oriented development goals. However, they can also offer an opportunity for developing public space in shrinking communities if successful ways of integrating the approaches into the planning system are found without compromising the needs of the movements. The perception of both the shrinkage process and space are likely to determine the outcome, where renouncing the aspiration of regenerating growth opens up the possibility for new opportunities for public space.

3.3 REVIEWING ALTERNATIVES: BUILDING AN ANALYTICAL CONCEPT

The dominating discourse within urban planning and architecture is highly influenced by capitalism and neoliberal politics, which has led to a market-oriented planning system that is depending on growth for urban development. At the same time, shrinking communities exist all over the world and applying growth-dependent planning strategies as a way to attempt to re-establishing growth is usually an unsuccessful approach for these communities. Instead shrinking communities might offer the opportunity to find new planning approaches and reimagine visions of the urban landscape, beyond growth dependence and with the possibility to develop more sustainable methods for development.

In the previous section, alternative approaches to urban development that could offer opportunities for public space in shrinking communities have been presented. Based on the concluding reflection of the examples of alternative approaches and in triangulation with the theoretical perspectives, three themes were identified as important notions that distinguish these movements from growth led-planning approaches. The three themes identified are presented below and will be used in the analysis of the case study to investigate current planning practice and identify potentials that these alternative approaches might offer.

1. COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

In conventional planning, participatory or collaborative methods are often used to involve stakeholders and citizens in the planning process. However, this approach has received criticism for not being able to attract diverse groups of participants, giving some stakeholders more power over the process and not being open for bottom-up initiatives etc. In alternative approaches to planning, other kinds of participation are tested with the intention to find better ways to include citizens and to make use of ideas coming from the bottom-up. In some approaches citizens self-organise outside the planning system to solve problems that they experience in their local area through cooperative production and management. In shrinking communities, successful ways of including the population in the urban development could be a means to decrease the sensation of decline and to find new uses for abandoned spaces through experimental approaches to governance.

In the analysis this theme will include:
o Review how citizen participation is included in planning documents
o Identify what traces of self-organised initiatives can be found in the public space
o Reflect upon further potentials for collaborative governance in Sollefteå

2. TEMPORALITY AS OPPORTUNITY

In conventional planning aims and goals for urban development are usually set out and defined beforehand and interventions are often viewed as permanent. When applying a relational view on space, focus lies on the process rather than outcome which creates an open-ended outlook on the use of the space. Further, some alternative approaches embrace temporary use, with activities and interventions that profit from temporality. In shrinking communities, outcomes and future conditions can be hard to predict, therefore it is particularly relevant to consider process and adaptability in planning public spaces.

In the analysis this theme will include:
o Identify the occurrence of temporary uses in the public space
o Review the stance on temporary and permanent interventions in planning documents
o Review the stance on open-endedness in planning documents
o Reflect upon the potentials for open-ended approaches and temporary uses in Sollefteå

3. PUBLIC SPACE AS RELATIONAL QUALITY

Whilst wishing to create vibrant public spaces for meetings, conventional planning often focuses on the physical environment of the public space. In relational approaches often applied by alternative movements, space is seen as a process defined by the social activities taking place in the space and not only by its physical characteristics. Understanding and allowing social and cultural dynamics in public space, offers the opportunity to work with immaterial aspects of the space. This might be useful in shrinking communities, where resources for fulfilling changes in the physical environment are often lacking.

**In the analysis this theme will include:**
o Review the focus on physical space compared to the social space in planning documents
o Reflect upon the experienced public space in regards of sense of appropriation and social aspects
o Reflect upon the potentials for developing social public space in Sollefteå through a relational approach

FACADE OF BUILDING IN HÅGESTA, SOLLEFTEÅ (WRIGHT, 2018)

4. METHODOLOGY
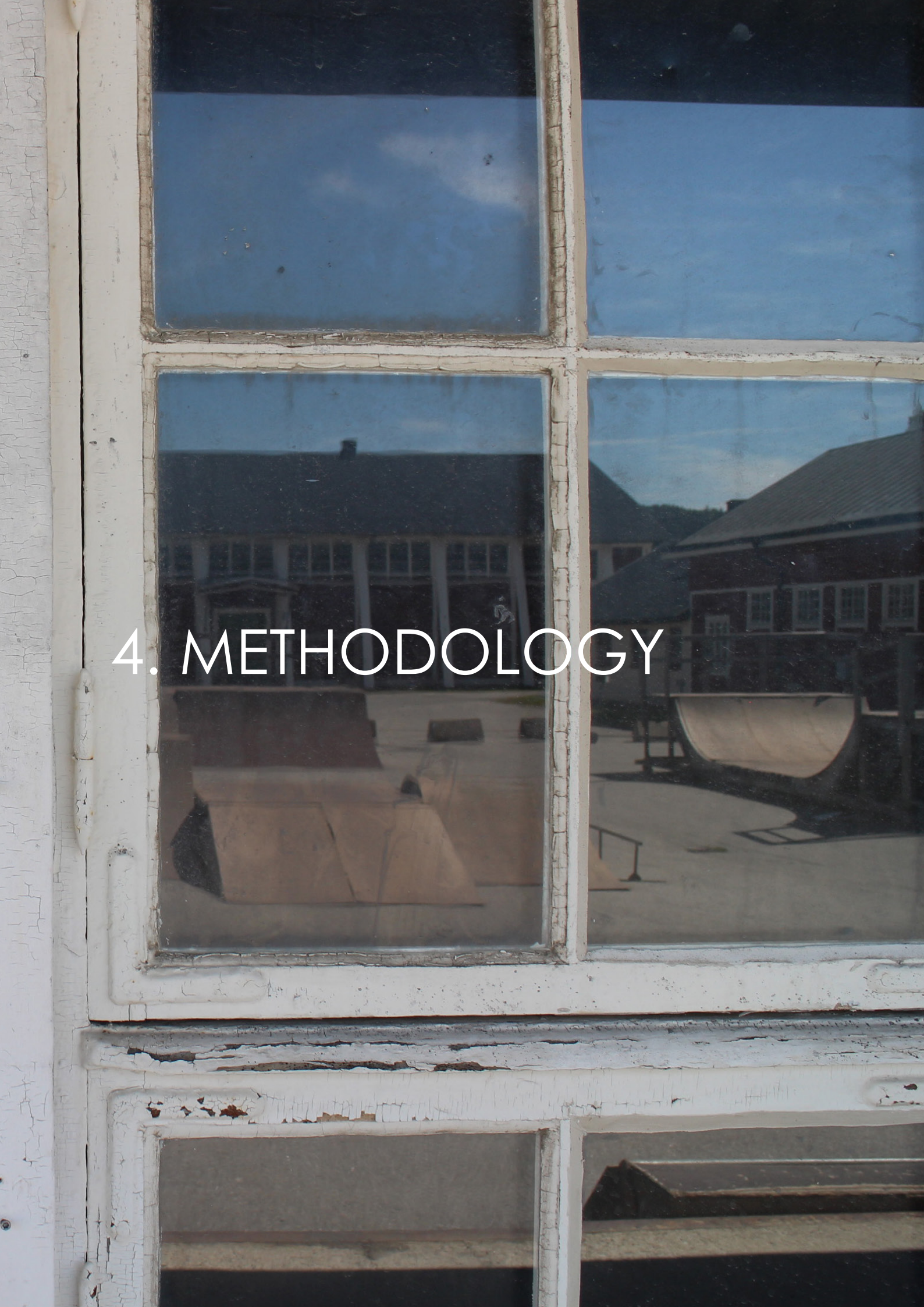
4.1 CASE STUDY AS A METHOD

4.1.1 CHOICE OF METHOD

This thesis sets out to investigate public space in shrinking communities in Sweden through a case study of Sollefteå municipality. Public space is discussed from a relational perspective, where social activity and process are important components in the definition of space and both shrinkage and space can be seen as dynamic and complex phenomena. Therefore, a case study approach has been chosen as the overall method since it provides context-based knowledge that is particularly useful when dealing with complex social and human perspectives. Using case study as a method offers a possibility to come close to real-life situations, which can provide a more nuanced idea of the topic in comparison to what can be achieved using solely theoretical knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Further, gathering context-based knowledge is motivated when the context is believed to be highly interlinked with the phenomenon studied (Yin, 1994). A case study has the capacity to capture complexity and contradiction through its element of narrative. With this, the result might be ambiguous and diverse, but at the same time the case study itself can also be regarded as a conclusion (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The case study approach allows for the triangulation of both theoretical and empirical data, that provides an opportunity to establish nuanced conclusions that also recognise the complexity and dynamics of the questions investigated.

For the case study a single case, Sollefteå, has been selected with a presumption that this might be a fairly typical case for the context. The reasons for this presumption are further elaborated in the section *1.3 Selecting the case: Sollefteå*.

4.1.2 STRUCTURE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The case study is structured as a two-step analysis, where in the first step an analytical concept has been developed based on the theoretical framework, which is then used in a second step to analyse the data collected in the case of Sollefteå. This analytical concept is based on three different themes; *collaborative governance, temporality as opportunity* and *public space as relational quality* and the last part of the case study is also structured according to these themes. Whilst the first research question is primarily addressed in the theoretical framework, the two later research questions are addressed through an analytical description of the public space and the planning of the public space, in combination with the use of the analytical concept to identify opportunities.
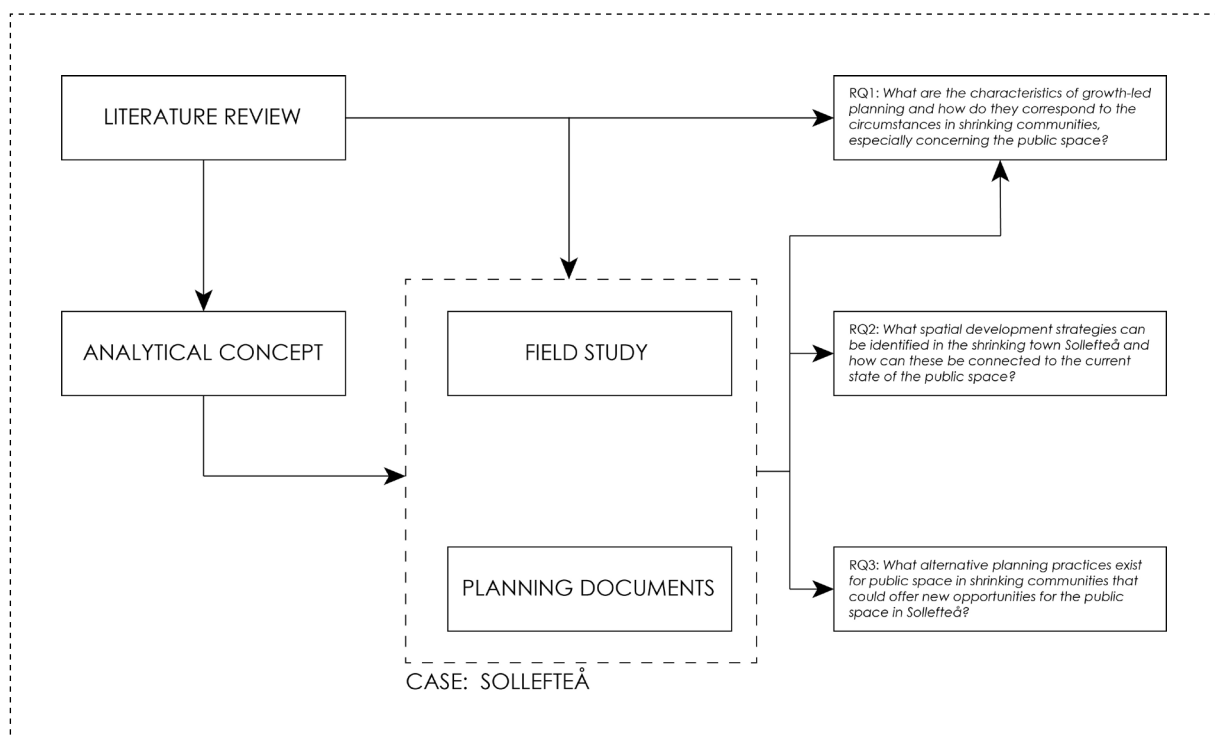
Fig. 4: Diagram of the thesis methodology (Wright, 2018).

The diagram contains the following elements:

- LITERATURE REVIEW
- ANALYTICAL CONCEPT
- FIELD STUDY
- PLANNING DOCUMENTS
- CASE: SOLLEFTEÅ

RQ1: *What are the characteristics of growth-led planning and how do they correspond to the circumstances in shrinking communities, especially concerning the public space?*

RQ2: *What spatial development strategies can be identified in the shrinking town Sollefteå and how can these be connected to the current state of the public space?*

RQ3: *What alternative planning practices exist for public space in shrinking communities that could offer new opportunities for the public space in Sollefteå?*

4.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This thesis is conducted as a case study and to gather information about the case and its context, three data collection methods are used: literature review, field study observations and review of municipal planning documents. Additionally, some media sources are used that provide further context. Together, the information gathered combine official data, both theoretical and related to the case, and experience-based data collected during the field study. Through the triangulation of theoretical knowledge and empirical data collection an understanding of the shrinkage context is created, whilst also observing the details of the specific case and by this a nuanced idea of the investigated matter can be obtained (Laursen, 2009).

4.2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to set a context for the case study and provide a base for the analysis and discussion, a literature review of four relevant knowledge-fields has been conducted and is elaborated in part *2. Theoretical framework part 1* and *3. Theoretical framework part 2*. Based on the literature review, an analytical concept has been developed and used to analyse the case of Sollefteå. Below the four thematic fields are introduced in brief.

1. PUBLIC SPACE

This theme intends to provide an understanding of the importance of public space, how to define it and different components that are important for the perception of a vibrant and functioning public space. This is done by exploring the concept *public domain* defined by Hajer and Reijndorp and a relational view of public space inspired by Lefebvre.

2. GROWTH IDEALS IN URBAN PLANNING

The theme of growth ideals is explored to provide a background and understanding of the dominating discourse in current urban planning in relation to the topic. This theme includes the study of the perspective provided by critical urban theory and the criticism it holds against the current planning system in relation to growth. This is done to gain a general understanding of how growth and planning are interlinked and to regard this aspect of the overall context in which the planning of public space in shrinking communities takes place.

3. SHRINKING COMMUNITIES

The literature review of shrinking communities intends to provide knowledge on the dynamics of shrinkage and growth within the urban landscapes, how these two phenomena are connected and on what consequences shrinkage can have on the planning and development of a shrinking community.

4. ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

This theme aims to gather information about some alternative urban movements that have their focus outside of the growth discourse and which might offer valuable input for planning of public spaces in shrinking communities. With this literature, some core aspects of the alternatives are identified and used in the analysis of the public space in the case study.

4.2.2 REVIEW OF PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND MEDIA REFERENCES

Planning documents, such as the comprehensive plans for Sollefteå municipality and Sollefteå town, have been reviewed to gather information about formal planning practice and strategies for public space in the municipality and also to provide an historical background of the development of Sollefteå. Further, some media references have been used when looking at some of the consequences that the shrinkage has had in Sollefteå and how this has affected the community.

DOCUMENTS STUDIED

*Sollefteå municipality's comprehensive plan part 1-3.*This document provides information on the overall plan for development of the municipality for the years 2017-2030. The comprehensive plan is divided into three separate documents: *1. standpoints, 2. prerequisites for planning* and *3. Consequences*, where each one highlights these specific aspects of the planning and development in the municipality.

Thematical comprehensive plan for Sollefteå town. This document is from 2005 and was reviewed in 2015 and gives more detailed information about development visions and plans for the seat town Sollefteå.

Programme for development of Sollefteå town centre 2003-2009. This document contains an analysis of and concrete development plans for the public space in the town centre of Sollefteå. Some of the plans in the document have been carried out, whilst some remain unrealised. The above documents also refer to the analysis of the public space presented in this document when presenting development plans.

Programme for restoration of Sollefteå Stadspark. This document is a proposal for renewal of the central park of Sollefteå from 2008 by the architectural firm Tyréns. Some of the proposed changes in this programme have been realised, whilst other parts remain unchanged. This document also provides information on some historical aspects of the public space in Sollefteå. Together with the programme for Sollefteå town centre it gives information of concrete development plans, which can be compared to the actual public space in 2018 and thereby provide information about

the ability to realise plans during the past decade.

In addition to these documents some analytical and guideline documents have also been included. The data gathered from planning documents have then been analysed together with the findings of the field study, using the analytical concept constructed based on the theoretical framework.

4.2.3 FIELD STUDY OBSERVATIONS

The objective of the field study has been to observe both the current condition of selected public spaces in Sollefteå as well as to document an experience of the spaces. To do this, autoethnographic observation notes have been combined with photography as methods for data collection. The public spaces studied during the field study are located in the town centre of Sollefteå, as well as in the areas of the former military regiments. The town centre was chosen because of its central and important role for the town and the regiments since these are areas that are undergoing major change due to the closing of the military activities.

OBSERVATION NOTES

The experience of the public space will be recorded through observation notes, a data collection method used in autoethnography. Autoethnography is based on self-observations and through this method the researcher's own actions and thoughts are documented to represent a subjective experience of the site at the specific time of the field study (Chang et. al., 2012). Through a first-person perspective, autoethnography aims to analyse and interpret cultural aspects, inevitably also including the researcher's own experience that is in turn affected by social constructs (Lawaczeck Körner, 2016).

In the doctoral thesis *Walking Along Wandering Off and Going Astray – A Critical Normativity Approach to Walking as a Situated Architectural Experience*, Lawaczeck Körner uses autoethnography to study the experience of architecture and spatiality whilst walking. She claims that the method allows for an exposure of the subjective perspective used by architects when describing and working with space and that this perspective is important since the narrative of experience is central both in the analysis and design of architectural environments. She states that "subjectivity is a complex influencing force, which should not be reduced to personal opinions. Neither should it be acknowledged as a truth or unquestionable fact. However, most of the time – within the practice of architecture – it is not methodologically positioned" (Lawaczeck Körner, 2016: 31). By exposing the subjectivity and making it a present part of the analysis, providing the possibility to reflect upon the subjectivity of experience and how this is used within architecture. Reworking

and critically reviewing the initial observation notes using theory converts them into new knowledge that can be useful in a wider sense than just personal (ibid.).

In this thesis, public space is analysed in the context of shrinking communities using an analytical concept influenced by a relational view on space. According to this definition of space, the human activity and experience are part of the space and social and cultural aspects are regarded as important to the space, just as physical aspects (Knierbein et al., 2015). In this analysis, the experience of the space is needed in addition to the data provided by planning documents and the autoethnographic method has allowed for a way to gather experience-based data whilst also exposing the subjectivity in experience.

PHOTOGRAPHY
The main purpose of the photography has been to document the public spaces and their current dynamics during the time of the field study. Photographs, just like the observation notes, can be regarded as subjective and momentary representations of the public spaces rather than objective documentation, explained by Treib in the article *Photographic Landscapes: Time Stilled, Place Transposed*. He defines three main aspects of representation of landscapes through photography as: reconstruction, time and place and displacement. The first aspect, reconstruction, highlights the way that the chosen frame of photograph influences the perception of the space represented. Inevitably, a selection of what to include and what to exclude in the photograph has to be made at the same time as the rectangular format of the photograph itself distorts the perception of the space (Treib, 2008).

The second aspect, time and space, regards the fact that the photograph is taken at a specific point in time, making it possible to capture a specific moment in time that has already passed. The chosen moment of photographing effects the perception of space through aspects such as colour and light. The third aspect, displacement, discusses the fact that photographs only have the ability to capture visual aspects of the landscape. Unable to capture impressions related to other senses, a photograph does not have the ability to fully represent the experience of a space and therefore it might give an impression that differs from the experience of being in the space. As a result of these three aspects, a photograph has the ability both of capturing and representing a momentary experience of a space, but also the ability to give a false impression of it when regarded as something passively created without regarding the subjectivity of the photographer (Treib, 2008).

REALISATION
The photographs and observation notes have been gathered whilst walking around Sollefteå

town, making spontaneous stops to sit down to write or to observe a space further. The route walked, and the public spaces visited was somewhat predefined before the field study, but allowing deviation guided by the public spaces and their dynamics and the spontaneous curiosity provoked by the spaces. Allowing for deviation between the redecided route and the actual route carried out opens up for discovery that can provide new knowledge of the space both on-site and when revising the data (Diedrich et al., 2014). In this case, this open-ended approach has provided the opportunity to analyse the public space in a way that is open to the relational perception of space as something in constant change, interrelated and based of the experience of the people within the space, rather than something that can be predefined based on solely physical aspects or planning documents (Knierbein et al., 2015).

The notes were originally written in Swedish and have been translated to English after the field study. During the translation process some parts of the notes have been further expanded or reorganised, to increase the comprehensibility of the text. The field study was conducted during daytime, between 10.00-16.00 approximately, on two weekdays in June 2018.

Nipan

Town centre

Hågesta

Fig. 6: Approximate planned and actual routes Nipan (Wright, 2018).
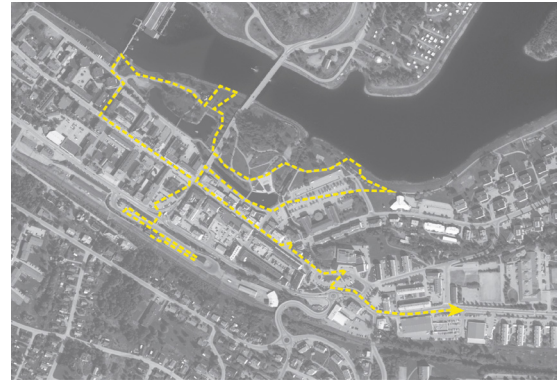

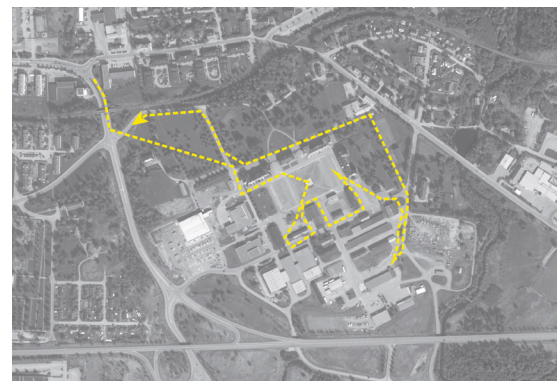Fig. 7: Approximate planned and actual routes town centre (Wright, 2018).

Fig. 8: Approximate planned and actual routes Hågesta (Wright, 2018).

HOTEL APPELBERG SEEN FROM THE TOWN PARK, SOLLEFTEÅ (WRIGHT, 2018)

5. THE CASE: SOLLEFTEÅ

5.1 GROWTH AND SHRINKAGE IN SOLLEFTEÅ

To start the analysis, a historical review of the development of Sollefteå municipality and the greater Ådalen region is presented below. By providing this historical context of how growth and shrinkage both have taken place throughout the region's history it is shown how this has been connected to both industrialisation and later also lost job opportunities through both deindustrialisation and increased efficiency in the remaining industries which in turn has led to outmigration in favour of greater urban areas, a common pattern for depopulated areas in Northern Europe (see *2.2.1 Definitions and reasons for shrinkage*). For geographic locations of the places mentioned in this section, see figure 9 and 10.

After this, the analysis will continue with an evaluation of how the municipality views itself in relation to shrinkage and growth in the section *5.2 The view on being a shrinking municipality*, since this was identified in the theoretical framework as a key aspect for the outcome of urban planning and development in shrinking communities. This is followed by the section *5.3 The planning of public space*, where strategies for and the current conditions of public space are identified and thereby addressing the second research question of the thesis. The case study is then concluded with the section *5.4 Opportunity for Sollefteå*, in which the third research question is addressed by looking at the potential for alternative approaches for public space in Sollefteå by using the analytical concept (as presented in the section *3.3 Reviewing alternatives: building an analytical concept*).

5.1.1 THE INDUSTRIAL ERA OF ÅDALEN

Ådalen is a name commonly used for the area located around the lower part of the river Ångermanälven. The area does not have an official boundary and the conception of what is included in the area has been different at different times (Mårald, 2008). The most inclusive description of Ådalen includes Härnösand, Kramfors and Sollefteå municipalities, that is, the area around the river between the coast and Junsele. It is also common to speak about Ådalen referring only to the more southern parts of the area (af Geijerstam, 2008). The name Ådalen, which refers to the location by the river and its valleys, can be seen as a reflection of its importance in the landscape. Historically, the river has linked the different parts of the area to each other and even linked the area as a whole to other places around the world (af Geijerstam, 2008). The area is used here to give a better context to the historical background of Sollefteå, since a lot of important events regard the area as a whole.

During the last four centuries Ådalen has gone through many changes, both economically, culturally and in the actual landscape (Mårald, 2008, af Geijerstam, 2008). In the 16th century, forestry industries started to establish in the area and in the 17th century several iron industries were started. However, the changes were slow and by 1845, 87% of the population in Västernorrland

Legend:
- Västernorrland region
- Ådalen

Map labels:
- Sollefteå municipality
- Kramfors municipality
- Härnösand municipality
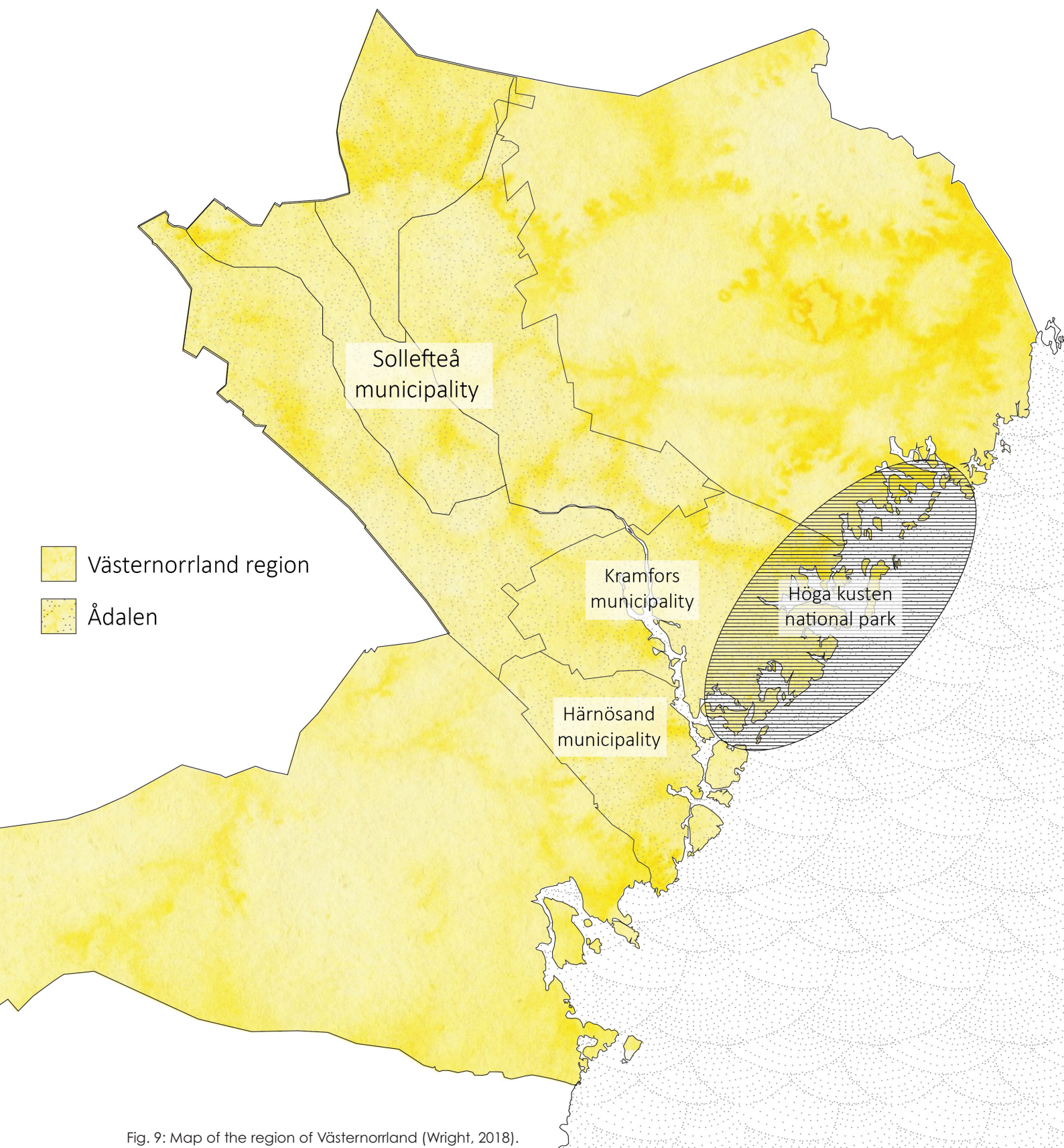- Höga kusten national park

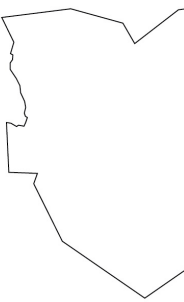Fig. 9: Map of the region of Västernorrland (Wright, 2018).

still worked in agriculture (af Geijerstam, 2008). With start in the 1850s Ådalen went through dramatic and rapid changes with industrialisation, that also lead to a rapidly increasing population in the whole area (Mårald, 2008). Further, the area saw great economic growth as a result of the expanding export of goods to other countries (af Geijerstam, 2008). But the industrialisation of the area also meant increased exploitation of natural resources, which lead to considerable changes in the landscape. These changes were caused by the forestry industry, with clearings, float ways on the rivers, sawmills and pulp mills, and later caused by the expansion of hydroelectric power. This period of growth was later followed by a time with closing of industries and population decline (Mårald, 2008), starting with the closing of sawmills after the First World War and thereafter the closing of pulp mills from the 1960s and onwards (af Geijerstam, 2008).

Since the 1990s the possibility of attracting tourists to Ådalen has become the new hope of the region, which was further amplified when the national park along the coastline, Höga kusten, was added to the UNESCO world heritage list. Although this might have positive effects on the area, it can also be connected to the increasing competition between areas and the need for regional branding as a consequence of globalisation (Mårald, 2008), dynamics that were explained in the second part of this thesis (*2. Theoretical framework part 1*) as related to growth-centred development approaches and politics.

CHANGING IDENTITY

The perception of the area and the identity of its inhabitants have been changing over time due to the varying conditions described above. During the mid 19th century, when the forestry industry was on the rise and its practice was visible throughout the landscape, both in the forest, on the riverbanks and in the river itself, the forestry was highly connected to the cultural identity of the area. Along with the increased efficiency of the industry, this identity has partly been lost and is now mainly regarded as a part of history, even though current forestry continues to affect the landscape in the area (Mårald, 2008). As previously mentioned, the Ådalen identity has also been strongly connected to the river landscape. However, the construction of hydroelectric power stations during the 1950s changed this landscape radically, something that caused strong reactions from the population at the time (Mårald, 2008). In 1953, geologist Gunnar Beskow wrote a text about how natural variations in the river had disappeared and how he considered the landscape was paying the price for capital expansion and economic growth. Because of the river being such a dominant part of the landscape and connected to the area's identity, the changes caused by the expansion of hydroelectric power also destroyed parts of this identity (Beskow, 1953).

The identity of Ådalen has later been influenced by the many artists choosing to live in the area, also depicting it in their work. A lot of artists have found interest in the old industrial areas and
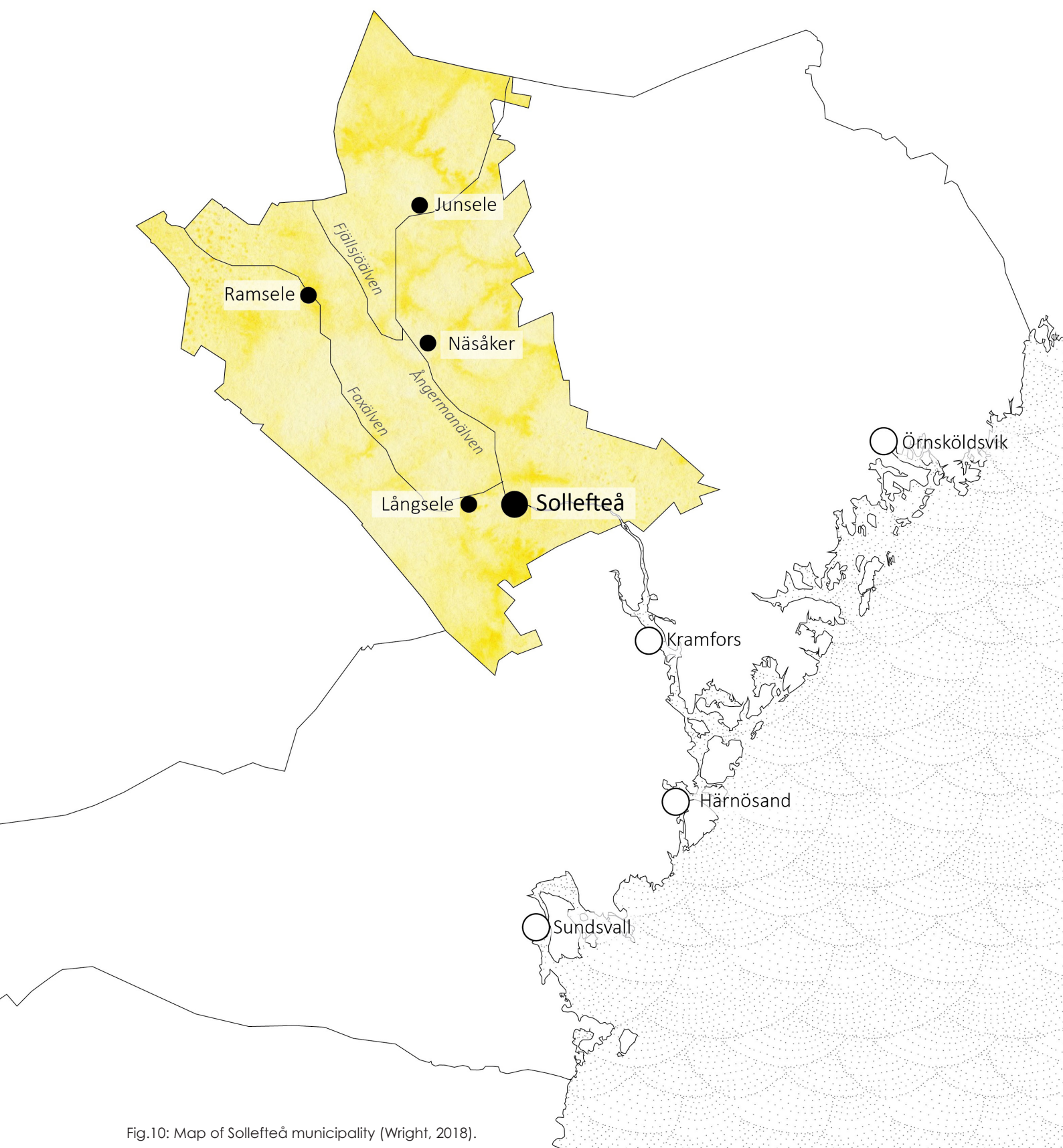
Fig.10: Map of Sollefteå municipality (Wright, 2018).

Labels on map:
Junsele
Ramsele
Näsåker
Fjällsjöälven
Ångermanälven
Faxälven
Långsele
Sollefteå
Örnsköldsvik
Kramfors
Härnösand
Sundsvall

have used them for site specific art and installations (Mårald, 2008), which can be seen as an example of how vacant spaces created by shrinkage are and can be used and repurposed in alternative ways (see 3.2 *Alternative approaches for public space*). This has helped change the partly negative associations that the old industrial landscape has had for a lot of people and opened up for seeing new opportunities that the industrial heritage can bring (Mårald, 2008). Despite the importance that the industry has had, the industrial heritage is hardly visible in large parts of the landscape.

Since the perception of a landscape and its history can be regarded as subjective, it is relevant to reflect on how the past should be highlighted in the landscape in the future, especially in an area like Ådalen, where the landscape's historical heritage has not been consciously represented, (af Geijerstam, 2008).

5.1.2 THE SHAPING OF SOLLEFTEÅ

There are many findings, such as rock carvings, showing that people have lived in the area where Sollefteå municipality is now located for thousands of years. The town of Sollefteå is located by the lowest natural stream in the river and was used for trading during the middle ages, since ships had to unload their goods here because of the stream. In the beginning of the 17th century, yearly markets were established at the stream and one of these continued to be one of the most important markets in Norrland up until the end of the 19th century (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b).

Just as in the rest of Ådalen, the forestry industry grew increasingly important in the area that today is Sollefteå municipality. The good supply of wood made it possible to create coal for iron production and made the area important for the arms industries during the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1837, the first military activities were established in the area and 1898 and 1911 the regiments T3 and I21 were opened. These came to be of great importance for the development of Sollefteå (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b).

With the 19th century the main use of the area's timber changed, from being coal production and the new dominating activity became the floating of timber to the saw mills further down the river, which continued to be an important industry throughout the first part of the 20th century. However, with the construction of the 16 hydroelectric power stations located in the Sollefteå part of Ångermanälven and its tributary rivers Faxälven and Fjällsjöälven the possibilities to travel on the rivers changed drastically. Still, the construction of hydroelectric power led to further growth and during the construction period of the power stations between 1944 and the late 1960s Sollefteå municipality had its highest ever number of inhabitants, approximately 39 000 (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b).

Since then, both hydroelectric and forestry industries continue to be of great significance to the area, however, due to the increased industrial efficiency they now employ far less people than they once did. In 1994 and 2000 the military regiments closed, causing a further loss of job opportunities. Sollefteå municipality has had a decreasing population almost constantly since the late 1950s and the decrease has affected the western part of the municipality in particular. Throughout the whole municipality the average age has gone up drastically (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b), a common occurrence in shrinking communities (Laursen, 2008; Oswalt et. al., 2013; see *2.2.1 Definitions and reasons for shrinkage*) and in 2017 the municipality had approximately 19 800 inhabitants (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b), which is roughly half the number of inhabitants compared to the 1950s.

In the late 20th century, whilst a lot of other industries were closing down, the public sector was still growing. However, in later years growth within the public sector has decreased and some public institutions have now moved from the area, such as the railway company (SJ) (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b) and in early 2017, both the maternity ward and the emergency surgery unit at the Sollefteå hospital closed due to financial issues (SVT, 2018). Currently, the public economy in both the municipality and the region is stretched and it is therefore unlikely for the public sector to provide new jobs within the near future. Instead, the municipality is hoping for the private sector to generate growth and new job opportunities (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b).

5.2 THE VIEW ON BEING A SHRINKING MUNICIPALITY

In this section, the general conception of Sollefteå municipality in relation to shrinkage and growth is presented based on what is communicated in planning documents. This is done through looking at some aspects that have been identified as important in the theoretical framework, such as the level of relational view on the landscape and the shrinkage as well as how shrinkage has affected planning and urban development and the level of willingness to except the shrinking conditions.

5.2.1 THE VIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE

Sollefteå identifies as an overall rural municipality and since the municipality has a vast areal in relation to the number of inhabitants, it has a very low average population number of 4 inhabitants/km2. The population structure of Sollefteå municipality is highly influenced by the industries that have been present in the area during the 20th century. Therefore, the majority of the population can be found in localities and villages located along the rivers, a reflection of their historical importance, and more than half of the population live in the southeast area around Sollefteå town and Långsele, also located by the rivers. Approximately 62% of the population live in the seat town or in localities, whilst the rest live in rural locations. This has created a structure where the municipality has a comparatively large number of small villages (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b).

In the comprehensive plan it is stated that the division between urban and rural is clear in the municipality and that no further discussion is needed concerning this matter. The view is that the town and the localities are to be considered urban, whilst the rest of the municipality is considered rural (Sollefteå kommun 2017b). This view differs a lot from the landscape urbanism perspective presented earlier in this thesis (see *2.2.4 Shrinking communities as a part of the urban landscape*) where the whole landscape is viewed as an urban pattern, consisting of many different local realities. It is said that this perspective is more useful for shrinking communities than classical divisions such as urban and rural, often used in conventional planning, since it creates a more relational and flexible view of the landscape. As stated in the previous section, growth and shrinkage have not occurred evenly throughout the municipality and these dynamics therefore cannot really be captured through categories such as urban and rural. For example, it was stated that western parts of Sollefteå municipality have been more affected by shrinkage than eastern parts and this uneven pattern can also be seen when looking at land usage.

In Sollefteå municipality, forestry occupies 76% of the total municipal area, whilst only 2% of the land is used for agriculture. The agricultural development in the municipality has gone from many small farms to a few bigger, and these still have an increasing need for land around their

farms whilst farm land is being abandoned in other parts of the municipality (Sollefteå kommun 2017b). This shows how the rural realities are distinct in different parts of the municipality and also it shows an example of how elements or areas of growth can occur in some places in an overall shrinking context (Laursen, 2008). Appling this relational view of the landscape represented by landscape urbanism, helps the understanding of the complex dynamics that make up the situation in the municipality. It opens up to see the diversity that lies beyond clear-cut definitions such as urban and rural and also opens up to see the complex pattern of shrinkage and growth that exists within any landscape, even shrinking ones, without oversimplifying it.

This overall relational view of the landscape becomes important later in the thesis, when looking at the opportunities for the public space in Sollefteå through alternative approaches (see *5.4 Opportunity for Sollefteå*), since it holds the potential to connect space and process and thereby recognising dynamics, complexity and ever-changing conditions of space (Knierbein et al., 2015; see *3.1.2 Henri Lefebvre and relational space*), which is relevant for the urban environment in shrinking communities (Sandercock, 1998).

5.2.2 STRUGGLE TO KEEP UP WITH PLANNING
In the planning documents from Sollefteå municipality it is clear that the planning department has been struggling with a lack of resources for a long time, which has also affected the planning routines. As a consequence of this, the municipality has not been able to renew the comprehensive plan and try its relevance according to Swedish legislation. However, the municipality finally approved a new comprehensive plan in 2017 that replaced the old plan from 1990. During the time since the old plan was approved in 1990, planning in Sollefteå has mostly concerned acute measures, such as the building of a new bridge, a new railway crossing through the municipality and the closing of the military regiments. With the closing of the regiments the need for a more general planning of the town became clear and this started the creation of a thematic comprehensive plan for the town of Sollefteå in 2000. This plan was delayed and approved first in 2005, and later renewed in 2015 (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). As stated previously in the thesis (see *3.2 Alternative approaches for public space*), one of the main challenges for urban planning in shrinking communities is the lack of financial resources, which often affect the possibility for the municipality to find new strategies for planning, a phenomenon that explains the situation that Sollefteå has been in during the last 30 years.

Through the process that has taken place during these years, the municipality has come to realise that comprehensive planning of the built environment is needed for the development of Sollefteå, both the town and the municipality as a whole. The new comprehensive plan presents the

municipality's plan for the period 2017-2030 and is based on planning material from the period after 1990 including analytical material developed for this purpose (Sollefteå kommun 2017a). In the next section, the perspective chosen as a starting point for future development is investigated more closely.

5.2.3 THE UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT DECLINE

One of the most important factors for successful planning in shrinking communities, is to base the plans and strategies in the actual current situation, in comparison to basing it on aims of growth (see *2.2.3 Shrinking communities and urban planning*). In the comprehensive plan from 2017 there are various signs that this might not be the approach taken by Sollefteå municipality and that they are instead continuing on a path of growth-led planning focused on hopes of regenerating economic and population growth as the path for development.

One example of this is how the municipality focus their plan around the quest for socially, economically and ecologically sustainable growth, which they illustrate in form of a pyramid where the ecological part is the foundation and the economic part is the top (Sollefteå kommun 2017a. In the section *2.1.3 The aim for prosperity and sustainability* it is explained how this is a common aim within growth-led planning even though built in contradiction makes it near impossible for planners to actually achieve, for example the environmental aspect where economic growth often contradicts the aim for environmental sustainability (Harvey, 2010; Campbell 1996).

With this aim of growth that provides social, economic and ecological sustainability, the overall plan of the municipality is to facilitate the expansion of industries, primarily within the fields of nature tourism, sustainable energy and digital industries (Sollefteå kommun 2017a). The municipality aims to attract these new businesses through marketing the potential of the local landscape, both its beauty, its quietness and its large accessible land areal (Sollefteå kommun 2017b). Besides this, the municipality also wants to attract a number of small companies within a variety of other sectors to create diversity (Sollefteå kommun 2017c) and they want to encourage existing companies to grow further (Sollefteå kommun 2017b). The aim of all this is to reduce unemployment and at the same time increase population numbers and the number of tourists in the region (more on this in the next section).

However, no real strategy is proposed for how this growth is going to be accomplished. In fact, one of the main critiques presented by the county administrative board during the process of making the comprehensive plan was the gap between plans and visions and the lack of explanations of how these visions would be realised (Länsstyrelsen Västernorrland, 2017). Another

critique was the lack of descriptions of how the built environment should be maintained, used and developed (ibid.). It can be noted that large parts of the strategy presented in the documents focus on marketing the area for private investors in order to accomplish growth and development. This could possibly mean that a failure to attract private investors could lead to difficulties in carrying out some of these plans set out in the comprehensive plan.

The plans are related to the physical environment through the pointing out of various areas of development where new businesses should ideally be located. The general intention is that new commercial businesses should be located in the town centre, where various empty shop fronts and buildings can be found today, whilst other new industries should be located in areas such as the old regiment areas. The importance of not creating new commercial areas that can cause further vacancy in the town centre through increased competition is also emphasised in the plan (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). This indicates that the striving for new private investments is not only connected to the need to find a solution for the stretched economic situation in the municipality, but also to the issue of addressing problems in the physical environment relating to the vacant space that exists in these areas today. By this, the importance of having long-term and sustainable approaches for how this development should be carried out becomes visible in the context of built environment and public space.

AIMING TO INCREASE POPULATION

The municipality is striving for an increased population because they consider it to be the most important force to create new employment and in the long-term, they also believe it would create possibilities for expanding the public sector service. Even though the comprehensive plan is aiming for growth, it is also assumed that the municipality's population numbers will be more or less unchanged in 2030, with approximately 20 000 inhabitants (Sollefteå kommun 2017c). However, the prognosis from Statistics Sweden reports an expected continuing population decline for Sollefteå up until the year 2024. The municipality includes this prognosis in an analysis issued in the process of writing the new comprehensive plan, but states clearly that the information does not represent the view and aim of the municipality (Sollefteå kommun, 2015b). The reasons for this stance are not motivated further than this and lack arguments as to why the municipal aim would be more realistic.

As many other shrinking municipalities, Sollefteå sees immigration from other countries as an opportunity to attract new inhabitants (Sollefteå kommun 2017b) and between 2013-2016 the population in Sollefteå grew with approximately 200 inhabitants because of immigration (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2017). However, it has proved to be hard to get asylum seekers to stay in these municipalities after the asylum process is completed (Sollefteå kommun 2017b), meaning that

population increase through immigration often becomes temporary.

These ideas of population growth are also reflected in the plans for the built environment. Up until 2014 there were more vacant apartments than needed (Sollefteå kommun 2017c) and previously approximately 300 apartments had been demolished to adjust the town to its shrinking population and to create more stability in the supply and demand (Sollefteå kommun, 2015b). However, from 2014 this started to change so that the demand became higher than the supply, first in Sollefteå town and later in the localities (Sollefteå kommun 2017c). A reason for the increased need for new apartments is the changing needs of the population due to the increasing average age (Sollefteå kommun, 2015b) and the change in demand also occurred at the same time as the population increase due to immigration. Based on this the municipality now identifies a need to build 100 new apartments before 2027 (Sollefteå kommun 2017c), which can be compared with the 4 new houses and 2 new apartments that were built in the municipality between 2012-2016 (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2017). Based on the documents where these plans are presented, it is evident that the plans are also to some extent influenced by the wish for an increased population and to be prepared for this in terms of housing. Another potentially underlying aspect of these plans might be a wish to increase land value, which is common within growth-led planning since this is considered a way to increase values in society and also is considered to have the potential to generate further growth (Rydin, 2013: see *2.1.1 Economic growth as a driving force*).

The approach taken for these development plans is based on densification, where new planned housing primarily will be built in between existing buildings to strengthen the overall built structure. The comprehensive plan points out various different areas where new buildings could be constructed all over Sollefteå town (Sollefteå kommun 2017a). One aim is that this future densification should be planned in a way where it is not carried out at the expense of the public space or the accessibility of parks and green areas (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). This approach is probably influenced by current general trends within architecture and urban planning but can also be compared to the notions presented in the section *2.2.3 Shrinking communities and urban planning* about how development in shrinking communities needs to focus on the existing built structures and how to develop these, rather than on planning in entirely new areas. Even though the building of new housing is not a way to address already existing vacant properties, the fact that it is being planned within the existing town structure might offer some new values to these already existing areas.

5.2.4 CONCLUDING REFLECTION

In the section above it becomes clear that the planning of Sollefteå still depart from an idea of reversing shrinkage and regenerating growth to some extent, even though they have experienced shrinkage for the major part of the last 50 years. However, it can also be seen that even within this shrinkage some growth can also be identified and that the understanding of the overall landscape can therefore benefit of an inclusive and relational point of view. In their striving for growth the municipality has identified potentials in the characteristics of the landscape and current trends and therefore decided to primarily work for an expansion of nature tourism, sustainable energy and digital industries. These are mainly based on the potentials of the more rural settings of the municipality and even though successful expansion of these industries could have positive effects on the overall conditions in the municipality, they are not really a direct way to address the more urban parts of the landscape and the challenges faced in these environments relating to the urban space.

Looking to the urban environment the approach is rather based on attracting other kinds of businesses as well as the construction of new housing. However, the municipality has had several problems to carry out planning in the past due to lacking resources and this might be an indication that this conventional approach to planning has not been entirely successful in the municipality during this time. Therefore, it becomes relevant to reflect upon what the municipality might benefit from adapting other alternative approaches as have been done in other shrinking communities (see *3.2 Alternative approaches for public space*).

5.3 THE PLANNING OF PUBLIC SPACE

In this section, the public space of Sollefteå town is analysed by looking at how it is treated in planning documents and also by looking at the actual space through the results of the field study. For this, public spaces in the town centre and the old regiments have been selected as particular examples. These areas were primarily chosen because of the focus they are given in planning documents and thereby their importance in the future development of the town. Throughout this section, observation notes in italic font and selected photographs (see *4. Methodology*) are presented in boxes. These are extracts of the findings from the field study and are part of the data that has been collected and used for the case study.

5.3.1 TOWN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE

Town planning in Sollefteå started in the late 19th century with the building of the central bridge and railway station. Large parts of the town had previously burnt down in 1874 and this first town plan created in the 1880s, containing many regulations to prevent future fires, was based on a grid system set around the locations of the station and the bridge. The plan also set the location for Storgatan, which has been the main street since (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a).

The town started to grow rapidly first in 1939, which happened as a consequence of the increased military activity of the time. This meant that the old town limits were expanded in all directions through the construction of new areas, consisting of mostly single-family houses. Even when the population growth started to turn, the town's physical structure continued to grow due to new higher living standards. The expansion continued up until the 1980s and the built structure created by the development of the previous decades can be compared to annual rings, where the newest areas are located furthest from the town centre. The closing of the T3 regiment in the late 1990s created a new need to approach the area in town planning and with this came a shift, from focusing on the planning of new areas to instead focus more on urban renewal (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). The municipality has since then continued to have this focus on improving existing areas, both with the planning of new buildings and improvements of the public space (Sollefteå kommun, 2017a).

The prioritised areas for improvements in the existing built environment are Sollefteå town and the four localities (Sollefteå kommun, 2017a) and some particular interventions for improving the environment in these areas are mentioned throughout the plans. These include better accessibility for disabled (Sollefteå kommun, 2017a), better information systems in the nearby nature areas, developing winter qualities in the public space (Sollefteå kommun, 2017c), better access to river banks and maintaining as well as developing green spaces (Sollefteå kommun, 2004). In the following sections, the three focus areas of the field study will be addressed separately.

5.3.2 THE TOWN CENTRE

Sollefteå town centre is located on the south side of the river, in between the river bank and the railway further south. Some of the main public spaces within the centre are the main pedestrian street (Storgatan), the main square, a smaller square (Orrtorget), the central park (Stadsparken) and the train and bus station. During the 1990s, the increased number of vacant shops and vacant land left by demolitions, created an environment where the town centre came to be considered to be in crisis. Since then, the centre has been perceived by many as deserted or lacking activity and changes carried out to improve the physical environment have not been able to regenerate the feeling of an active and vibrant town centre (Sollefteå kommun, 2004).

This is however the aim set out by the municipality in different planning documents. The main aim of development in the town centre is to make it into a vibrant environment for meetings and social activities. They hope that this, in combination with the construction of new buildings, will attract both new businesses and inhabitants (Sollefteå kommun, 2017c). The vibrancy desired is supposedly created by attracting people to spend time in the public spaces, through attractions such as shops and activities. Even though social aspects of space are mentioned as an important aim in several of the municipality's planning documents, specific strategies to achieve this are never presented. Instead, the documents mainly focus on presenting plans and visions for changes in the physical environment.

THE STATION AND THE MAIN SQUARE

The railway station in Sollefteå was built in 1886 and designed by the chief architect of the Swedish rail company. The station was built according to the ideals of the time, which included the placement of a square and park in front of the entrance to the station and the town centre was shaped around the location chosen for the station (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). The station is located right in the town centre, clearly visible from the main street since it is located higher than the rest of the centre. Today the railway station lies more or less abandoned. Trains with passenger traffic decreased over time and drew to a close in the early 2000s, however some goods traffic still pass through Sollefteå. The station building still functions as a waiting area for passengers travelling from the neighbouring bus station, however the area is stripped from all signs of being a station (such as signs with travelling information) and parts of the station building are nailed shut, contributing to a slight feeling of abandonment.

Next to the railway station lies the bus station, which consists of a large open space with nine different platforms. Two shelters for waiting are placed one at each end of the large open space where the buses stop and the indoor waiting area in the railway station lies even further away. As there are only a maximum of a few buses leaving each hour and since the number of passengers
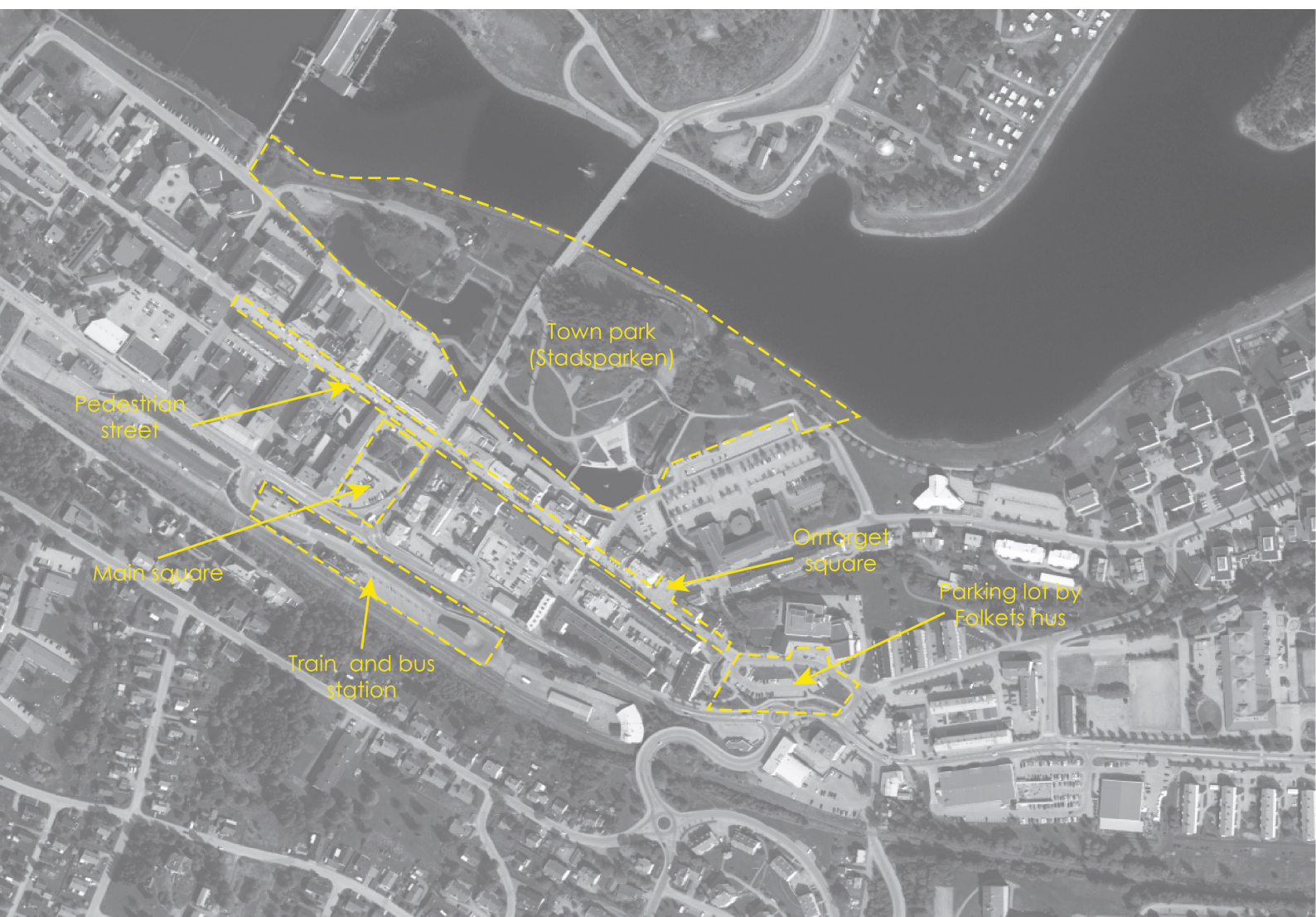
Fig. 11: Map of places in the town centre (Wright, 2018).

Pedestrian street

Town park (Stadsparken)

Main square

Orrtorget square

Train and bus station

Parking lot by Folkets hus

is not very high, the large space can be considered over dimensioned which also creates a certain feeling of desertedness. This feeling is further strengthened by defects in the physical environment such as broken pavement, adornments and fencing.

Below the station area lies the square that was built together with the station in accordance with the ideals of the time. The square was originally used for markets and events and in the early 1900s a park was planted here. The space was later converted to a bus station and currently is mainly used as a parking lot (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a), except for the most northern part where a small green area is located.

Both the municipality and region are working for a political decision to restore the railway and to reopen passenger traffic in order to better connect the municipality to bigger towns located within the region and also other parts of Sweden. Therefore, they wish to preserve the station and its surroundings (Sollefteå kommun, 2017a). Currently, no date for when a reopening could occur can be found and none of the studied documents present any visions for how the station and its surroundings could be used during the time up until this possible reopening. The thematical comprehensive plan, as well as the municipal web page, speak about the historical importance of both the station building and the surrounding area including the square. Still, the station lies more or less deserted waiting for a possibility to resume its former use and the square has been converted to a space appropriated mainly by cars. None of the spaces seem to maintain their importance as social spaces as described in the documents.

THE PEDESTRIAN STREET

As previously mentioned, the location of the main street Storgatan was decided in the first town plan in the late 19th century (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). Almost a century later, a proposition to make Storgatan into a pedestrian street was introduced in the 1970s and carried out in 1984. When the new bridge was opened in 2003 there was a further decrease of traffic in the area, since this meant that it is no longer necessary to pass the river on the old central bridge (which meant having to cross the pedestrian street to access the bridge). Most of the town's shops are located along Storgatan, as well as cafes, the library and museum. There are also a number of vacant shops along the street and a few buildings seem entirely empty. Around the small square Orrtorget that lies along the pedestrian street several vacant shops can be found. Some of these have been converted for other uses, like the new municipal culture centre opened in 2017 that organises cultural activities for children and adults as well as exhibitions (Sollefteå kommun, 2018) and one shop that seemed to be used for activities by some kind of association.

I approach the railway station. The door is unlocked so I enter. The first thing I see is that the little shop is closed. I look through the window to the shop and I see the magazine rack. It has a hand-written sign telling the customers that you may not read the magazines, you have to buy them. The station has one main waiting area which is stripped of anything reminding you that trains used to pass through here and the exit to the platform is closed off with a bunch of random items. A bench is placed in front of the exit.

In the waiting area a girl and a boy are playing guitar and singing. They seem to be travellers because they carry a lot of luggage. A man that is talking loudly on the phone is sitting on a bench just by the toilets. I pull the toilet door and it opens. I feel surprised that the toilet is both open and very clean.

I go to sit down on a bench in between the man and the travellers. It strikes me that everyone besides me are making a lot of noise. I exit the station. Outside I can see an old sign left behind by the railway company. I walk around the station to the platform. All the tracks are overgrown except for one and the platform is covered in shattered glass. I try to imagine what the station used to be like before the railway was closed.

Fig. 12: Field study findings from the station and main square (Wright, 2018).

The bus station is located just by the old railway station. I walk around a bit and then decide to have a seat on a wobbly bench in a waiting shelter. The bus station is large, it has platforms named from A–I spread out over a large asphalt space. I look at the notice board and note that only a few busses leave every hour and wonder why they made this space so big? The two shelters are placed a bit further away, on either side of the platforms, so you cannot really wait for the bus on the platform.

There are quite a few people waiting now and I think that maybe I perceive this area as deserted only because the space is too big for its function. Buss 215 arrives to the station that is its final stop. It is the bus I had really planned to take here, but now it arrives empty. I wonder if the people waiting are going with the next bus. If so many of them will have waited for more than 45 minutes.

The railway and bus stations are located a bit higher than the town centre. I walk down the stairs that are crooked and the home to quite a few weeds and arrive at the town square. It looks new and carefully maintained, but it is more of a parking lot than a square. I look at the buildings around the square, quite a few of them are old and beautiful. But some of them are in bad condition. In the corner closest to the station a whole office building is empty and on the other side of the square an empty shop has an advert about opening a kiosk there hanging in the window.

Furthest from the station there is a mini-park and an open space occupied by some market stands. The only ones using the park are some men drinking beer on a bench.

I enter what I believe is Stadsparken, the central park of the town. The first thing I see is a parking lot. Besides a couple with a baby in a pram, I am the only one here. After a few minutes a man walking with walking sticks passes me. I walk past the park hostel, but I cannot see any people there either. I decide to leave the path and walk down towards the river, I want to look closer at the big statue that stands in the middle of the river by the bridge. There is someone fishing on the other side of the river. I feel a bit uncomfortable since this part of the park feels a bit deserted and a man drinking beer by the bridge pillar is looking towards me. I decide to continue walking to another part of the park.

Further along there is more people about, children playing and people walking their dogs. A group of people are playing boules and a bit further away I can see another group sitting on some benches drinking beer. I notice the little brook passing through the park. It looks very nice. A couple are having their lunch on a park bench next to the park stage, the stage area feels very empty since no one is using it.

It feels like a nice summer day and the sun is out. I walk towards the river and I take a seat in the grass, although there is some trash in the grass. Glitter and leftovers from some party someone has had here, maybe. I look around and I see the old regiment buildings on the other side of the river, the camping and nature. The park continues in a green area with a path along the river which people are using to take a walk. Alone or with their dogs. Behind me is a huge parking lot outside of the municipal building. I wonder if there are more cars in the parking lot than people working in the municipality.

Fig. 13: Field study findings from the park and pedestrian street (Wright, 2018).

I walk along the main pedestrian street. Several shops are empty or in bad condition. A man comes up to me and asks me where he can find a pizza restaurant. I tell him that I do not know, and he continues on to ask two other people. He does not seem to trust the answer he got from the first person. In one of the older buildings there is a café with outdoor seating. It seems very popular and I think that this might be the busiest place I have seen in the town up until now. Some of the people in the outdoor seating give the impression of being regulars and are speaking with the staff. Others seem like tourists; one group are speaking German.

I continue past the square and along the street. In this part of the street there are more people of all ages. I reflect upon how the empty shop windows effect my impression of the street, that it feels somewhat deserted even though there are a lot of people around. The pharmacy and Systembolaget seem to be the most popular shops. I pass the library, that is located in what must be one of the town's most elegant buildings. From the main street you can access the museum, but to enter the library you have to find the small entrance on one of the side streets. It seems strange to me that the entrance is so hidden. In one of the old shops a group of young men seem to have started an association. The window is covered by curtains, but from what I can see it looks like they are playing pool.

I walk up towards Folkets hus. There is a café in the building and in the outdoor seating areas groups of women are drinking coffee. Looking from a distance it seems almost as a view from an old post card. The space in front of the building gives the impression that it should be some kind of square, a public space. But really it is another neatly maintained parking lot. I wonder if all these well-kept parking lots I see are just a way to guarantee that someone is using the public spaces? I continue along Storgatan, that is no longer a pedestrian street. I pass the relatively new Coop building and the garden shop. In between the two shops there is a big parking lot. I think that if shops are supposed to attract people to the public spaces, then why is there only space for cars outside of the shops?

According to the municipality, the pedestrian street is appreciated by the inhabitants even though many have voiced wishes for the street to be more vibrant and active. After stating this the municipality simply concludes that for this to happen the inhabitants have to spend more time in the city centre (Sollefteå kommun, 2004). No further argumentation about how the municipality could contribute to working towards this is mentioned. Similar to the wishes of the inhabitants, the municipal vision for Storgatan is for it to be an attractive environment, both for shopping and for passing time with non-commercial activities. However, when reading other documents to find strategies for how to achieve this, the only trace found is the previously mentioned aim to attract more shops and businesses to the centre. In the document *Program för ett trevligare centrum i Sollefteå 2003-2009* only specific improvements of the physical environment are suggested, such as better lighting, more greenery and more seating opportunities. It is also stated that the stretched municipal economy means that realising these improvements will take a long time (Sollefteå kommun, 2004) (some of them are still not realised at the time of writing this thesis) and the question of how to make the street and the centre as a whole more active and populated by visitors is left unanswered.

STADSPARKEN

The town park of Sollefteå is situated in the town centre on the south side of the river. It consists of designed as well as natural elements, such as one of the characteristic steep sandy riverbanks that is located in the park. The park was known as Badhusparken between 1893-1901, since it used to be the location of the towns public bathing facilities and got its current name Stadsparken in 1901 (Tyréns AB, 2008).

Various different functions are located in the park, such as playground, boule area and a stage. A restoration proposal for the park was made in 2008 and since then some of the proposed changes have also been realised. One main objective of the restoration was to create different spaces within the park to allow for a variety of activities for inhabitants of all ages (Tyréns AB, 2008). This wish for more opportunities for different activities in the park is something that has come up in the public participation processes (Sollefteå kommun, 2010). However, in the thematical comprehensive plan the municipality once again propose to revise how the park is used and maintained, the goal being to develop the park as a space for events, a social space and a space for recreation and rest. Some of these suggestions also take the seasonal changes into account, proposing to make possible for winter activities such as ice skating and a winter barbeque area (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a).

It is clear from planning documents that there is a great wish to activate the town park throughout the year and thereby also activate part of the town centre because of its central location.

However, the proposal and attempts all revolve around organised activities or programmed spaces (such as playground and stage). There is no real mention of how to involve citizens in activating the park or reflections on how these spaces will remain active when organised activities are not taking place.

5.3.3 THE FORMER REGIMENT AREAS

As previously stated, the development of Sollefteå has been highly influenced by the establishment of military activity in the town which helped trigger its growth and later its shrinkage when closing down and moving from the municipality. The military activity has been located to two areas, Nipan (formerly regiment T3) in the north west and Hågesta (formerly regiment I21) in the south east. The closing of the regiments was the start of a new way of planning in Sollefteå that started to focus more on developing existing areas, rather than building entirely new ones. Therefore, the regiment areas have also played an important role in the development of urban planning in Sollefteå.

Since their closing, the plan for these two old regiments has been to attract industries and service sector companies to establish in these areas (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b). Both of the areas have a number of characteristic military buildings with large open spaces in between them, which can be regarded as positive features that make them flexible and suitable for a variety of future uses. Another aim has been to better integrate these previously isolated areas into the urban fabric. Like for the town centre, the aims for these neighbourhoods are highly dependent on attracting private investors to occupy the currently vacant properties and spaces. Besides the locating of public institutions in some buildings, ways of activating the public space without relying on market forces are not mentioned in the planning documents.

NIPAN

Nipan is located on the north side of the river bank and because of its high position on a hill, the characteristic yellow military buildings of the area are visible from the town centre. The neighbourhood is also connected to the town centre by the central bridge, which lies a few minutes' walk downhill from the area. The municipality's overall plan for Nipan is to integrate it in the town through locating private businesses and public institutions to the area. They also wish to be able to build housing in the area, since this is currently missing (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). Examples of businesses currently existing in the area are a hotel, the post office, an elementary school and a hydroelectric power company.

Today the public space in the area consists of a lot of open spaces, with grounds covered pri-
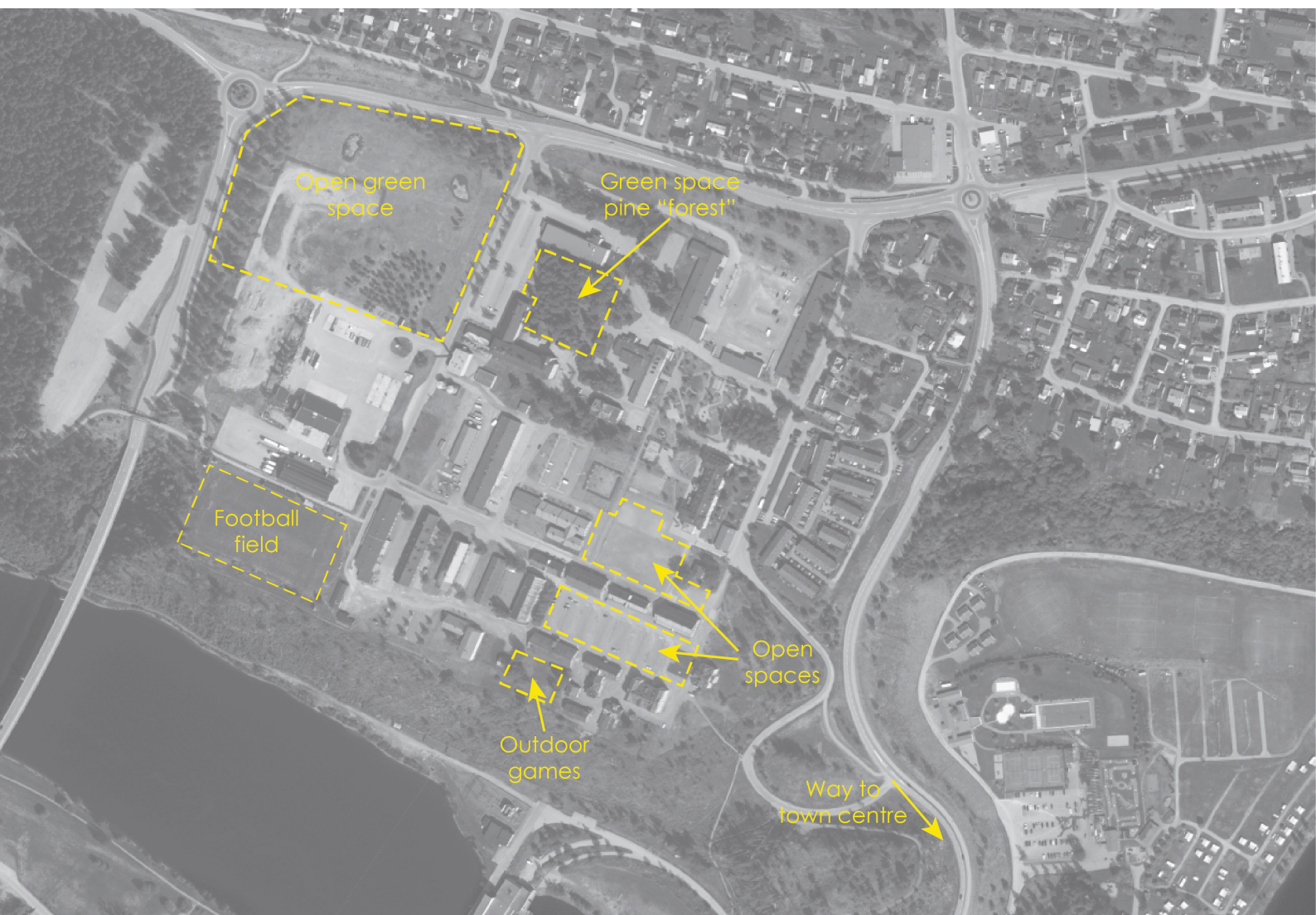
Fig. 14: Map of places in the Nipan area (Wright, 2018).

marily in gravel. These spaces are used both as parking lots, sports fields or are left empty. In the south end of the area, next to the steep slope leading down to the river, some greener areas can be found that also offer a great view over the town and the landscape. In the far north west of the area lies a large open green space and a bit further east a space covered in grown up pine trees can be found. The municipality's aim for the neighbourhood's public space is to create an attractive outdoor environment, with more greenery and plants and also a clear entrance to the area. The main strategy presented to achieve this is to sell as much land as possible to private investors (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). This statement does not include any information on what kind of investors this might be and what kind of public spaces that these investors would be able to provide for the general population.

A number of outdoor activities can be seen throughout the area, such as sports fields, outdoor chess and ping-pong (in connection to the municipal centre for adult education) and playgrounds that lie in connection to the school.

HÅGESTA
Hågesta is located at the very end of Storgatan (the part of the street that is not the pedestrian and shopping part) on a hill that lies slightly higher than the surrounding landscape and therefore there are scenic views of the mountains from many parts of the area. Since the military left the area in 2000, some of the old military buildings have been converted for other uses such as a high school, one building has been converted into apartments (however some of the apartments seem to be empty) and some other buildings are used by industries and companies. A big supermarket also resides in the area. Still there are several buildings that are left vacant and a lot of open spaces that are primarily used for parking or are left unused.

Whilst aiming to attract industries to the area, the municipality also has the goal to develop it into a vibrant neighbourhood consisting of housing, commercial and light industries as well as other activities (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). In the comprehensive plan one goal is to investigate the possibilities to develop areas for sports, recreation and associations in the area in the future (Sollefteå kommun, 2017a), that could possibly be a way to address and develop both physical and social aspects of the public space in Hågesta.

Another aim is to make Hågesta more integrated with the other parts of the town (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). As it is now, the area can be perceived a bit cut off from the rest of the town. In the north lies the old regiment park which at the same time as it is an important green area for the neighbourhood, also creates a distance between the more central parts of the town and Hågesta. Another factor can be the large roads connecting Hågesta to the centre, which are more

I walk up the hill leading from the bridge over the river to the neighbourhood Nipan and as I follow the road I see the characteristic yellow buildings from a distance. I pass two women walking in the other direction, they smile at me. The first buildings I approach are a school to the right and a smaller abandoned house on the left. Even though it is school holidays and no children about, I think to myself that it seems like a nice place for a school. I look around and I see big open gravel pitches. Some of them are used as parking lots and others are empty. On the buildings further away towards the river I see company names on the facades, outside these buildings I see some people and even more cars.

As I walk around some smaller groups of people pass me, they are all adults but still they seem like students. Outside of one of the buildings I see a huge chess game, a ping-pong table and some benches where more people are sitting. It seems like maybe this is the school where the groups where coming from. At the far end of the neighbourhood there is a great view over the river and most of the city. The neighbourhood feels half-empty but still beautiful. The big open spaces allow my imagination to fill them with imaginary content, they seem to be spaces with a lot of possibilities.

When leaving the area, I pass the roundabout just outside the area. Around it there is a supermarket, a petrol station, food stand, an apartment building and parking lots. It feels like this should have been a public space instead of a traffic zone.

Fig. 15: Field study findings from Nipan (Wright, 2018).

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I enter Hågesta through a shortcut, a path created in the grass. When walking here from the town centre I have had the feeling that I am walking a road leading me away from something. It does not feel that this road has the intention to lead me to anywhere in particular. The shortcut takes me to the neighbourhood park. It gives a pleasant impression, with its rows of large trees and inviting lawns. There does not seem to be much to do in this park, the only trace of activity I can see is the frisbee golf equipment spread out across the lawn.

I walk up towards the old regiment buildings and the first building I approach has been converted into school. Next to the school is the entrance to the area, the old gates are open for anyone to enter. The former guard house is still here, even though it is now nailed closed it still gives an impression of entering an area where not everyone is welcome. Upon entering I find myself in a huge open space, surrounded by big yellow stone buildings, of which one has been converted to an apartment building with new balconies. The open space consists of lawns and parking lots. In the part closest to the apartment building a new space has been created, a great concrete circle in the middle of the lawn surrounded by many concrete benches. In the middle of the circle is a flower installation that seems too small for the scale of the circle. I wonder who this was created for and who will use it? There are no trees, no shade, just a huge space and I feel very exposed sitting of one of the benches in the circle. When I leave a gull attacks me.

Fig. 17: Field study findings from Hågesta (Wright, 2018).

I walk towards a space in between some abandoned red wooden buildings at the other end of the big open space. Here I find a skateboard park, looks like DIY to me but I do not know enough about skateboarding to really tell. Even though no one is there the space feels used, appropriated by someone. I think that at last, I find a space that is appropriated by something other than cars. A little bit further away they are building a new street with pavements for pedestrians, the builders are having their break in the shade of one of the buildings. It has to be the first street in the area that is renovated, and it feels a little out of place. I wonder why they chose to redo this street first, and will they change the other streets as well?

Next to the apartment building there is a restaurant, some potential guests are standing outside and by the kitchen entrance the staff are smoking. A bit further away there is a preschool and some mothers are arriving to pick up their children. This part of the area is starting to feel more industrial and looking ahead it only seems to get more industrial the further you go.
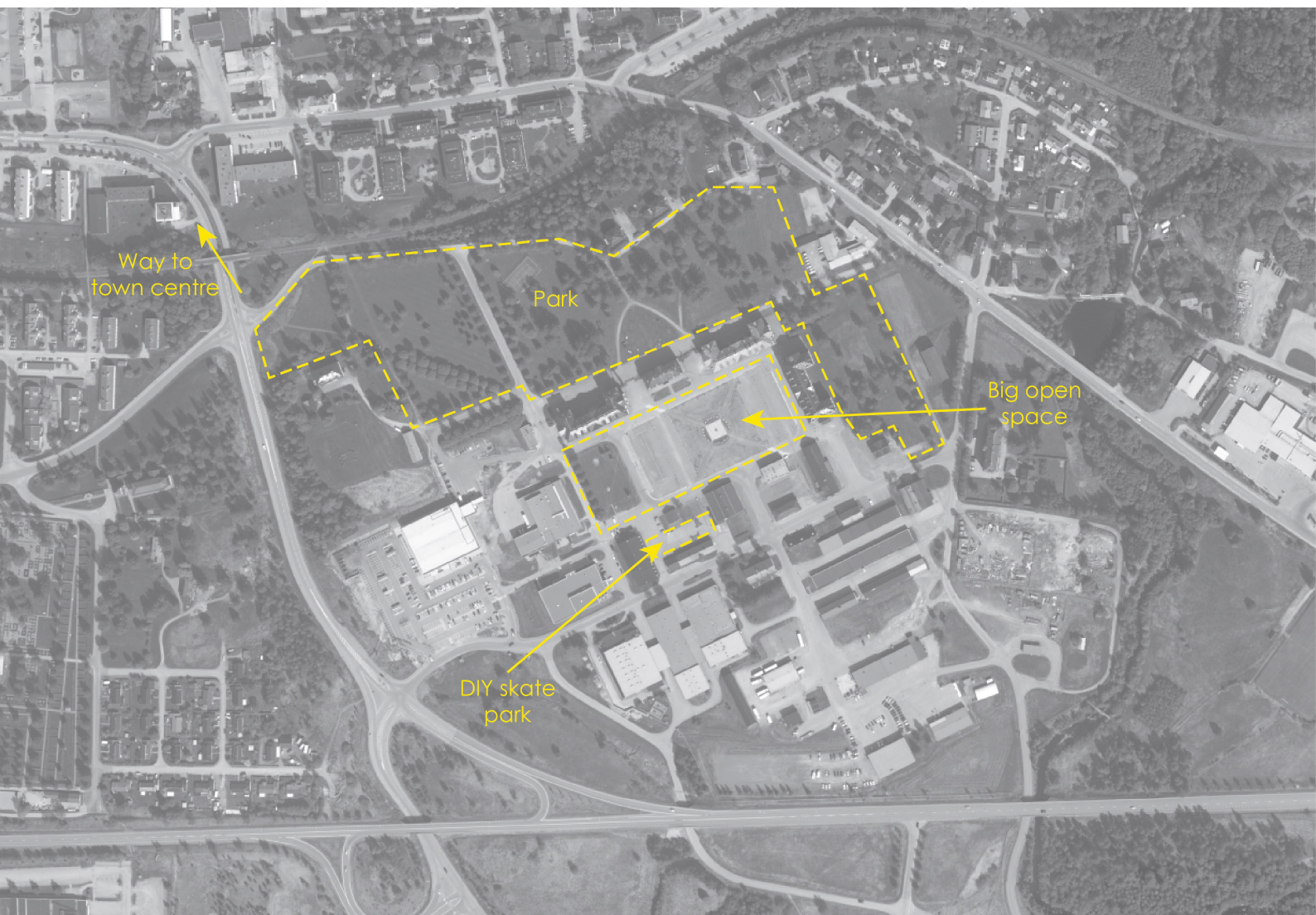

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Fig. 16: Map of places in the Hågesta area (Wright, 2018).

designed for travelling by car than walking.

Throughout Hågesta, some of the streets and open spaces are currently being converted into more conventional streets and squares. Currently, most public space in both Nipan and Hågesta consists of gravel grounds without pavements or bicycle lanes, which is now being changed in this area by constructing pavements and streets of more fixed ground materials. On the large open space, the single largest space in the area, a large concrete circle surrounded by a large number of benches in the same material has been constructed. The intended use of this space is somewhat unclear, if it is meant to be used by students at the nearby school or by people passing. Generally, Hågesta lacks sites for, or traces of, activities in the public spaces. The only trace is a DIY skate park, located in between some vacant buildings just by the side of the big open space.

5.3.4 CONCLUDING REFLECTION
The overall picture presented by the planning documents tell of a struggle to activate the public space at the same time as physical changes are taking longer time than desired due to the financial situation. Attempts to address the lack of activity and vibrancy are mainly focused on planned or commercial activities, rather than to try to actually involve citizens in the process of improving the social aspects of public space. Further, some problems with vacancy exist in the municipality that might contribute further to the feeling of lack of activity in these spaces.

Even though strategies presented often include the attracting of investors, some other attempts to activate the space can be identifies, such as the new cultural institution and the willingness to include associations in the development of Hågesta. In the next section, opportunities offered by alternative approaches will be reflected upon through the context of Sollefteå.

5.4 OPPORTUNITY FOR SOLLEFTEÅ

In the previous sections, the relation to shrinkage and the public space in Sollefteå has been presented through looking at the historical context, general aims and visions formulated by the municipality in different planning documents and the current conditions and visions for the actual public space. Based on this it can be said that Sollefteå is a town and municipality that has been experiencing shrinkage and population decline for a long period of time, which has also affected its economic resources, the supply of public services and the possibilities to develop the public space in conventional ways.

Despite this long history of shrinkage, the municipal planning documents still contain a lot of elements that indicate a continuing strive for growth and also embedding it in their plans by counting on private investors in the development of a number of important spaces, creating a kind of growth-dependence. Comparing this to the information in the opening text to the section *3.2 Alternative approaches for public space*, it can be concluded that this approach taken by Sollefteå municipality is common for shrinking communities. In this section, it is also stated that the outcome of development of public space in shrinking communities depends greatly on the perception of growth and shrinking that lies behind the development and that an acceptance of the shrinking reality can open up for new development approaches that can have positive impacts on the public space in these communities.

In this section the findings about the public space in Sollefteå are further analysed with the help of the *analytical concept* that can be found in the section *3.3 Reviewing alternatives: building an analytical concept*. This analytic concept identifies some core principles of approaches that can be used when departing from an acceptance of the current situation rather than a desire of growth. The objective of this is to identify possible opportunities that this perspective might be able to offer the development of public space in Sollefteå.

5.4.1 COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE
The first principle from the analytical concept investigates the municipality's approach to governance and their openness to including bottom-up initiatives and experimental ways of inclusive planning. This could be done in many different ways, but one example of provided in the theoretical framework is assigning plots for DIY and self-governing uses on vacant land (Källblad, 2015).

In documents from Sollefteå municipality, the importance of active associations and the involvement of citizens for the development of the community is highlighted (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b). However, the inclusion of citizens primarily takes place through citizen consultations where the

population are given the opportunity to give feedback on municipal plans for the urban environment (Sollefteå kommun, 2017c). This kind of consultation occurs in an early stage and is not demanded in Swedish legislation but can be seen as a formal participation process.

Even though the municipality speaks about this kind of participation in positive terms, it can also be seen that this has been cut back when resources have been low, for example in the process of developing the thematical comprehensive plan (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). In a document from 2010, based on answers collected through a questionnaire that was sent out to the population, less than 50% felt that they had the opportunity to influence the development of Sollefteå and most of the people who responded that they felt they could influence the development also believed that the possibility to do this could be improved further (Sollefteå kommun, 2010). In the same questionnaire as many as 70% claimed that they would or maybe would participate more in the development of the urban environment if there were more forums to do so (ibid.).

In the later process of developing the new comprehensive plan, consultations were carried out and approximately 600 citizens and businesses participated in giving input to the setting of the long-term goals and the vision for Sollefteå 2030. In the comprehensive plan it is claimed that the ideas received from these consultations have been incorporated (Sollefteå kommun, 2017a), however, it is not evident exactly which parts of the plan that are based on ideas received from the population.

Very few signs of alternative governance, self-organisation or the inclusion of bottom-up initiatives have been found in the planning documents or in the public space. The only real example found within the limits of the case study has been the skate park at Hågesta. Taking that the municipality is struggling with the feeling of desertion in public spaces, due to the number of vacant spaces and the lack of activity, at the same time as many citizens would participate more in the development of the urban environment if given the opportunity, alternative methods for collaborative governance and appropriation of spaces as well as methods to include self-organised initiatives in the planning of public spaces could open up for new opportunities for Sollefteå. Instead of cutting back on the opportunities for citizens to influence the urban space when resources are lacking, increased collaboration with the population might open up for ways to activate the public space with little means (Audirac, 2018).

5.4.2 TEMPORALITY AS OPPORTUNITY
The second principle from the analytical concept is about temporary use of the urban space and the potentials that this might offer for shrinking communities for the activation of vacant space.

This approach includes both giving space for activities and uses that need or profit from temporality, as well as a perspective that is more focused on the process rather than the final outcome.

In Sollefteå today, both vacant open spaces and vacant buildings and shop fronts exist and affect the impression of the public space. To a large extent, these spaces lie vacant in the hope of attracting new businesses that can occupy them. Different temporary uses, for example urban gardens, creative workshops or temporary art projects (see *3.2 Alternative approaches for public space*), could offer qualities to these public spaces in the meantime. For example, the railway station area that lies more or less deserted in the political process of reopening passenger traffic on the railway (Sollefteå kommun, 2017c) at an unknown time in the future, could be activated during this time through temporary uses and activities.

Another example is vacant open spaces or shops, that could be defined as interim spaces and used for temporary initiatives and thereby also open up for an open-ended process, where outcomes of temporary uses can help decide what is to be next for these spaces. This in contrast to an approach where the use is decided beforehand and thereafter the space is left vacant in the process of attracting actors or investments to develop the site (Colomb, 2012, Cunningham Sabot et al., 2018).

In Sollefteå municipality's planning documents few indications of temporary uses or open-ended processes can be found. An exception is the plans for temporary activities in the town park during winter time. Sollefteå is located in the north part of Sweden and therefore the winter season is long. Temporary activities, such as a winter barbeque area, are therefore suggested as ways to activate this public space during the winter season (Sollefteå kommun, 2015a). Temporary uses might offer opportunities to activate vacant space in Sollefteå as have been seen in other shrinking communities mentioned in the examples provided in the theoretical framework. This approach also needs to be considered together with collaborative governance, since these two approaches are interlinked. This since, the integration of temporary uses requires an approach that allows citizens not only to give opinions on already worked out plans, but also to directly change their own living environments (Oswalt et. al., 2013, Altrock et al., 2015).

5.4.3 PUBLIC SPACE AS RELATIONAL QUALITY

The third principle from the analytical concept is about social space and how this can be approached through a relational perspective. Through this perspective immaterial aspects, such as the social and cultural, can be addressed when shifting the focus from being mainly on physical aspects and functions to instead focus more on the social process.

When looking at Sollefteå's planning documents, it is evident that the focus when discussing public space and its development, lies mostly on improvements in the physical environment. Insights on lacking social qualities in the public space are at times addressed and wishes to create more socially vibrant environments are often stated, but without presenting any strategies for how this could be improved. In the programme for development of the town centre it is even insinuated that the responsibility for improving the social space lies primarily in the hands of the population. However, focusing on improvement of social qualities, rather than just physical ones, is highlighted as important for the outcome and the potential to create good social spaces (Hajer et al., 2001) and in the examples provided from other shrinking contexts it can be seen that this approach has had successful outcomes, for example in the IBA urban laboratory where socio-spatial process was in focus.

In the case study, it has not been possible to fully investigate the social space and actors within this space due to the timeframe of the thesis. However, social activities such as groups of people passing time on benches, outside a locale or playing some kind of sports or games have been observed, as well as tourists passing through the town. These interactions were mainly observed in the park and on the pedestrian street. However, it was also observed that many public spaces where used as parking lots, something that might contradict the aim to increase the number of people who choose to move through the town by foot or bicycle (Sollefteå kommun, 2017c). These spaces do not really provide for dwelling, spaces where people can pass time and social processes can occur. This at the same time as strategies to attract more people to public spaces presented in the planning documents often seem to revolve around attracting commercial activities to visit, even though they also focus on planned activities like sports to some extent.

As previously stated, development plans presented in planning documents often focus on the physical environment. This provides for renovations that are often costly and take many years to realise due to the stretched economy of the municipality. It has also been stated above that these improvements tend not to have the desired outcome on the social space that is desired from many within the population, such as a greater feeling of activity in the town. Shifting the focus to also include social processes in the urban environment could offer opportunities for Sollefteå to improve the atmosphere in the town and decrease the sense of desertion. Looking at the concept *public domain* could be one way of doing this, a concept that revolves around the idea that public space becomes inviting when frequently used by one or many groups that thereby appropriate the public space, since positive experiences of public space require the possibility to observe social situations created by other people (Hajer et al., 2001; Sandercock, 1998; *see 3.1.3 The public domain*). In combination with the other principles above, an increased focus on social space might help to activate spaces that would otherwise continue to be underused.

FACADE OF BUILDING IN NIPAN, SOLLEFTEÅ (WRIGHT, 2018)

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate public space in shrinking communities and how the development of these spaces is affected by common growth ideals that exist within urban planning. Another aim has been to look at alternative approaches to urban development that are based on other ideals to see what these approaches might offer public spaces within shrinking contexts. The idea was to investigate these questions in a Swedish context through a case study. Sollefteå was chosen as the site of the case study with the preconception that this would be a relatively ordinary Swedish shrinking town, that did not have any outstanding experiences with alternative approaches for public space.

These aims were then approached through the three research questions of the thesis, repeated here below together with short reflections on how these have been approached and the outcome of this. The work with the thesis was conducted as a two-step analysis, where the first step consisted of the context provided by answering the first research, which laid the ground for developing the analytical concept. The second step was then made up by the two later research questions that were answered with the help of the context and concept created in the first step and additional data on the case.

What are the characteristics of growth-led planning and how do they correspond to the circumstances in shrinking communities, especially concerning the public space?

The first research question was mainly addressed in the theoretical framework where a variety of different authors and perspectives were presented, of which some have connections to fields such as critical urban theory, landscape urbanism and the right to the city movement. Common for many of the sources used is the relational view of space that they advocate, often based on ideas that can be found in the work of Lefebvre. Although unanticipated from the start, this relational perspective became a bridge between the different topics investigated in the thesis and a common notion that unite the perspectives on public space, shrinking communities and alternative development approaches that are presented in the theoretical framework (see more on this below).

Based on the literature used it is clear that a growth-dependence has become embedded in conventional planning concurrently with the rise of liberal market politics (Taylor, 2000). This growth-dependence has created a planning system that is driven by the possibility to increase economic value of the urban space, which has also led to less opportunity for planners to carry out changes in the urban environment without the involvement of private investors and stakeholders (Rydin, 2013). This becomes a democratic problem since it gives stakeholders with

financial resources a lot of power over the urban development and it is further problematic in a shrinking context where growth-dependence is likely to prevent planners from carrying out urban development when there is an absence of private investors that can generate economic growth (ibid.).

Even though shrinkage is a common phenomenon that has existed for a long time, acceptance and willingness to leave ideas of growth behind are generally low (Pallagst, 2008, Oswalt et. al. 2006). Shrinking communities therefore often continue to approach development through conventional, growth-dependent, urban planning (Hollander et. al., 2009; Oswalt et. al. 2013). This approach commonly creates a variety of problems, such as vacant urban space, social inequity (Oswalt et. al. 2013) and feelings of loss and frustration within the population connected to the shrinkage (Akbar, 2005). Therefore, it is particularly important for shrinking communities to question these conventional approaches (Pallagst, 2008, Laursen, 2008) and instead find new approaches to planning that go beyond growth-dependence (Hollander et. al., 2009).

This potential that lies in finding new approaches that do not rely on growth also have relevance in growing contexts (Hollander et. al., 2009) when considering the sustainability issues that lie in striving for eternal growth, where the ever-increasing pressure that continuous growth puts on natural resources makes it is inevitable to reach the limits of what the ecological system can handle (Harvey, 2010). This over consumption of resources and its implications on the environment are creating environmental problems and social injustice in the present, whilst it is eating away the opportunities for prosperity in the future (Jackson, 2009). Taking this into consideration, addressing urban planning in shrinking communities offers a unique opportunity to re-envision urban development and find new approaches that are truly sustainable and not relying on eternal growth (Hollander et. al., 2009).

The focus on public space is important because of the functions that these spaces have in society. Public space is a necessary component in all attempts of urban transformation because of its function as an arena of change, providing the opportunity to address challenges and problems in society (Madanipour et al., 2013). Also, the shaping of society is highly reflected in the shaping of its public spaces (Hajer et al., 2001), therefore the focus on public space and its challenges in a shrinking context can provide insights to the context in more general terms. Approaching the question from the perspective of public space also offers the opportunity to consider the role of the landscape architect in the context of shrinkage and growth.

What spatial development strategies can be identified in the shrinking town Sollefteå and how can these be connected to the current state of the public space?

The second research question was mainly approached through the study of planning documents, own observations in the field and conclusions from the theoretical framework and the analytical concept (described further below in connection to the third research question). The intention behind doing a case study for the thesis has been to gain concrete, context-based experiences that can be triangulated and compared to the general discussion provided by the theoretical framework, and also to get further insights to the Swedish context in relation to shrinkage.

Looking at Sollefteå, the results presented in the case study indicate that the municipality can be considered an example of the dynamics described above, where planning is approached through a conventional perspective where the shrinkage has still not been fully accepted and growth continues to be a dominating notion and aim in planning documents. Despite having a more than 50-year history of shrinkage (Sollefteå kommun, 2017b) particular planning approaches adapted to address and handle this development cannot be found in the documents. At the same time problems concerning vacancy, difficulty to carry out plans and challenges in creating attractive social spaces can be identified, implying that the growth-oriented approach is not fully working as a way of urban development.

This approach can be identified when looking at strategies for ways to activate the urban space in order to counteract these problems, of which many strategies presented in the planning documents revolve around economic growth and attracting private investments. However, some attempts to activate space move beyond a striving for growth, such as the creation of a new cultural institution in a formerly vacant building, the aim to introduce temporary seasonal activities in public spaces and intending to improve the conditions for recreation and sports in the outdoor environment. The long-term stability and impact of these efforts remain unknown, but the overall findings from the case study illustrates the presence of issues raised in the theoretical framework concerning shrinkage and growth. This fact points to the relevance of finding alternative approaches for planning also in the Swedish shrinking context, as a way to look for truly sustainable solutions for development of the public space in these communities.

What alternative planning practices exist for public space in shrinking communities that could offer new opportunities for the public space in Sollefteå?

The theoretical framework is concluded with the construction of an analytical concept, divided into three different principles (collaborative governance, temporality as opportunity and public space as relational quality) that were identified as important in the context of acknowledging the existence of and potential for alternative approaches in the shrinking context. This tool was then used as a lens to analyse the occurrence of and the opportunities for alternative notions and what these would hypothetically be able to contribute to the development of public space in Sollefteå. Thereby, the analytical concept has been used to approach both the second and the third research question, in combination with data from the field study and planning documents as well as the theoretical framework.

One important notion that has been repeated throughout the thesis is the fact that the outcome of planning and development in shrinking communities is depending on the perception of shrinkage that lies behind it, both for conventional and alternative approaches (Cunningham Sabot et al., 2018). In this context, the most useful way to view shrinkage is to look at it as an aspect of growth, as two realities that exist simultaneously and that are part of the same cycle of shrinkage and growth (Pallagst, 2008, Laursen, 2008; Oswalt et. al., 2013). From this perspective, shrinkage becomes a variation of the urban, rather than just a negative phenomenon that needs to be reversed (Laursen, 2008). This view of shrinkage and growth is connected to a relational view of the landscape, that focus on process through a heterogenous and open-ended world view in which shrinkage can be acknowledged and accepted since both strengths and weaknesses are embraced as part of a complex entity (Corner, 2003). This is useful when looking at shrinking communities, since it does not depart from any general solution of how to intervene in the urban space, but instead explores the existing dynamics to find suggestions to site-specific approaches for planning (Laursen, 2008).

When looking into the particular context of public space, this relational perspective was also found to be emphasised as important in various different references. Based in the work of Lefebvre, the application of a relational perspective to the public space connects the physical space and social process by recognising that the public space is constantly changed and produced over time by the people that act within the space (Knierbein et al., 2015). Public space in shrinking communities faces different challenges than public space in growing contexts, where the challenges in the shrinking context often relate to lost activity and liveliness rather than conflicts between competing interests (Altrock et al., 2015). Therefore, the focus on social space that the relation perspective offers can be identified as relevant in the shrinking context, since this can

provide tools to address challenges relating to activity rather than just focusing on the physical environment and design.

The relational perspective is sometimes partly neglected and regarded as solely theoretical concepts within traditional urban planning and architecture. However, this view of space is already used by alternative movements and grassroots (Lindholm, 2011; Knierbein et al., 2015), which motivates the relevance of looking at these movements in the planning of public space in shrinking contexts.

In the thesis, the two alternative concepts self-organisation and temporary use have been investigated because of the relational focus on process and dynamics that they offer. This was then put in concrete form through looking at three movements/phenomena that make use of these concepts in regards of open-endedness, governance and approaching social dynamics. Through looking at examples of how these have been approached in other shrinking contexts, positive development that these alternatives have offered in regard to activating public space in shrinking communities has been identified.

In reviewing these alternatives, some challenges in introducing these alternatives have also been identified. One potential challenge is the fact that planning in shrinking communities often have to cope with an increasingly low confidence in public development and its possibilities to improve the quality of life for its citizens, leading to a lack of interest in these questions amongst the population (Altrock et al., 2015). This might be a challenge since many of the alternatives are based on citizens engaging in the urban development. However, it can also be seen in some of the examples that the introduction of one alternative intervention, led to more similar interventions and activities initiated by local citizens. Another potential challenge lies in successfully integrating these approaches and movements into public planning without compromising their nature. For this, the view of shrinkage that lies behind planning is once again important, since conventional and growth-dependent ideas risk to use these movements as a way of increasing economic value of sites in order to be able to continue with growth-led planning (Cunningham Sabot et al., 2018). However, an overall relational view on shrinkage might offer a perspective where this integration is possible (Ferreri, 2015).

The results from the second research question indicate the relevance for alternative approaches also in the Swedish context and in Sollefteå, since dynamics explained in the theoretical framework can also be found in the case study. When applying the analytical concept to the context of Sollefteå, hypothetical opportunities for addressing challenges faced in regard to vacancy and activating public spaces can be found.

It is important to once again note that this thesis concerns the topic of public space in shrinking communities and how this potential challenge can be approached by landscape architects and in urban planning. Shrinkage is a complex issue that affects many different aspects of communities and municipalities. The argumentations, results and conclusion of this thesis should therefore not be interpreted as an attempt to address all issues and challenges that shrinkage might lead to. However, public space can reflect various societal aspects and issues (Hajer et al., 2001) and the reflection upon its challenges in shrinking communities might therefore also have relevance for shrinkage in general. Public space can hold many qualities that contribute to the possibility to experience a good quality of life for the inhabitants in any community (Rydin, 2013, Madanipour et al., 2013.). Finding successful approaches for the development of public space in shrinking communities can therefore be considered an important aspect of giving the people that wish to continue living in shrinking communities an opportunity to do so.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF METHOD

This thesis has been conducted as a case study, where field studies have been combined with the analysis of planning documents and with an analytical concept that has been developed through the theoretical framework.

The data collection methods used during the field study, photography and autoethnographic observation notes, are both methods that create subjective representations of the landscape studied (Treib, 2008, Lawaczeck Körner, 2016). The data collected through the field study is therefore to be considered subjective and to an extent based on decisions made during the field study and the experience of the space as lived by the author and thereby also influenced by previous personal experiences and knowledge. The intention has been to expose this subjectivity, primarily through the use of observation notes, but also through the argumentation about these choices in the methodology part of the thesis. It is also worth to point out that the overall description of experience of the space in this thesis is based on a combination of the subjective experiences from the field study, the municipal point of view as described in documents and information about citizen experience as described by the municipality in these documents. If other methods to investigate this had been chosen, such as interviews in field, the results might have been somewhat different. Hopefully, the attempt to expose the subjectivity that always exist when speaking about experience and when representing a space contributes to a transparency that allows for reflection upon this.

The public spaces investigated in the case study where chosen from a combination of information provided in planning documents and the authors prior knowledge of the town. A rough plan of what spaces that would be seen and what route to walk was made before the field studies, but also allowing for deviation from this predefined plan if found necessary. Being allowed to deviate from the predefined route, opened up for a possibility to interact and be inspired by the landscape in a way that has made it possible to find spaces and aspects of the space that could not have been found otherwise.

A large part of the case study is based on different planning documents from Sollefteå municipality. The way in which to find information about the planning in Sollefteå were discussed through the working process and landed in this approach. Many of the documents used are relatively new and have been published during the last three years and are therefore expected to be able to give a fairly accurate idea of the current planning in Sollefteå. Many of the documents also provide information and reflections about the past. However, the documents also give a limited view on the planning situation. It is possible that another approach, such as interviews with architects and planners within the municipality or other relevant actors, would have created a somewhat different view on the planning situation. Even though it would have been desirable

to have a diverse view of the current situation, that could have been expanded through the additional input from interviews, the timeframe of this thesis made this hard to achieve. Therefore, the methodological decision to primarily use planning documents as a source of information on this was made.

However, the different data collection methods have allowed for various perspectives within the results of the case study. Through the triangulation of theoretical information from the theoretical framework and the empirical data from the case study an understanding of shrinkage both in general and in the specific case have been presented in the thesis. This has also made it possible to compare the results from the specific case with the theoretical knowledge from other cases, as done in the previous section.

6.3 FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

As a conclusion of this thesis some further questions on the topic can be identified as interesting for further investigation. The thesis has ended in conclusions of the importance of relational perspectives on planning and space in shrinking communities. It would be interesting to further look at how this perspective can be successfully integrated and used in the Swedish context of shrinking communities and what this might offer.

For the case study, the focus has been to review the current condition of public space in connection to the shrinking context as well as hypothetical opportunities that the alternative approaches might offer. It would have been interesting to further investigate the social space of the site to gain more insight to this and connect it to the physical space and potentials. It would also be relevant to actually try to apply these approaches and see how they can be integrated and used in the given context.

Further, it would be interesting to look at other shrinking municipalities in Sweden in relation to public space to gain further insights both to current conditions and planning approaches as well as opportunities to find new strategies.

ÅNGERMANÄLVEN SEEN FROM THE TOWN PARK, SOLLEFTEÅ (WRIGHT, 2018)

7. REFERENCES

7.1 LIST OF FIGURES

All photos and images in the thesis are made by Hannah Wright, 2018.

7.2 LIST OF REFERENCES

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