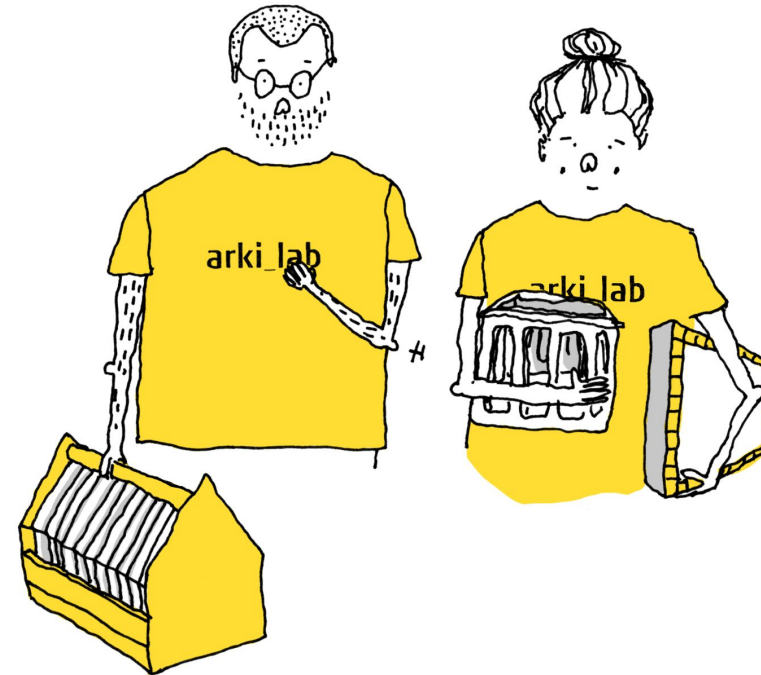# Vig's hjerte (The Heart of Vig)

A connecting path system for better health, play and a safer city / Vig City, Denmark

arki_lab
Designing Cities With People

Content

1. Introduction

In this assessment report, we have reflected upon the overall project process of general citizen engagement carried out in Vig, but highlighted the part of the process especially focussed on children, caregivers and young people through the Proximity of Care framework, as well as the part of the design proposal (The Heart of Vig) envisioning a solution which accommodates a focus on ECD for a better urban environment and development.

Short summary

The site chosen for the assignment is Vig in Denmark, a small city in the countryside of Zealand. Arki_lab developed an area renewal program throughout the autumn of 2021 in close collaboration with the city community, including children and young. Some of the main challenges relevant for the future development are presented here through the PoC framework dimensions.

For *health,* the city is badly connected to its surrounding nature and landscape making experiences, exercise and recreation in nature inaccessible for children and young. The hard traffic infrastructure dominates and creates physical barriers for soft traffic and especially children's mobility.

For *protection,* heavy car traffic roads with few crossings create a division between the school and the city centre and station, and creates unsafe situations for children and young, as well as limits their opportunities for active movement, play and sense of independence and security.

For *stimulation,* too few walking paths connect to each other or to opportunities for play and exercise in the city. There is a lack of walkable routes and stimulating outside areas for caretakers, children and young to experience.

For *support,* creating a well-connected path-system throughout the town and landscape with opportunities for play and mobility in an ECD perspective can pose a challenge with regards to gathering adequate funding as well as cooperating between actors and land-owners can be challenging.

2. Methodology

In this chapter, the methods used in the citizen engagement process of the overall project in Vig are explained as well as how the PoC approach and framework was then used to reflect upon the process and future design of "The Heart of Vig".

Stakeholder overview

The stakeholders of Vig were found during desk-based research as well as through the engagement process in the local community.

Municipality (Authority)
Odsherred Municipality is responsible for setting the direction for the urban development, as well as they are part of planning, greenlighting events and evaluating on the citizen engagement.

Hjertestier (National initiative)
A national fund which supports expanding outdoor routes and path systems across Denmark to incite movement and exercise. As part of the project, they can support economically as well as by communicating the project to the public.

Skønhed og Skrald (Local association)
"Beauty and trash" is an association in Vig working with multiple activities and projects on site to improve and create new green spaces, walking routes, nature experiences and so forth. They have a strong contact to both children and institutions in the area.

Vig school
The school in Vig plays an important part in establishing contact to and activating both children, young, caregivers and families.

Vig Kindergarten
The Kindergarten in Vig plays an important part in establishing contact to and activating both children, caregivers and families.

Daycares (private and public)
The Kindergarten in Vig plays an important part in establishing contact to and activating both children, caregivers and families. They also already use the existing spaces, and have great insight in the existing and wished for spaces.

Vig festival
Vig Festival is a recurring event every summer, which attracts many people and are invested in developing Vig in terms of public transport, recreational space and so on. The festival has an interest in creating safer and better connections across Holbækvej main road.

Stakeholder overview

Vig familieby (Local association)
A local association engaging many volunteers in the town, and supporting activities and development for Vig with a family-friendly focus.

Tuskemarkedet (Second hand market)
A popular second hand market happening throughout the seasons drawing many visitors to Vig. The market has good contact to the local society and the market place lies in a strategically important nature area with a playground and a Bog closeby.

Unesco Global Geopark Odsherred (Nature reserves and local landscape history)
The nature park is big asset in Odsherred Municipality, regarding communication of the historic, local landscape, possibly creating a bigger interest for designing a path system usable by visitors as well as locals.

.**Friluftsrådet** (Outdoor activity council)
The council can aid in the process of creating a well-functioning path system as well as with communicating the project afterwards.

Movia (Company operating local trains and busses)
Movia is a great asset and collaborator with regards to developing the area around the station as well as at the heavily trafficked Holbæk road. They are important in communication, as a partner and possibly able to help seek funding or aid economically for the project.
They are also important as they have data on users, especially busy times etc. - information which could be helpful in the design process.

Playful engagement

Arki_nopoly
Check it out here: https://www.arkilab.dk/tools-2/arki_nopoly-analog/
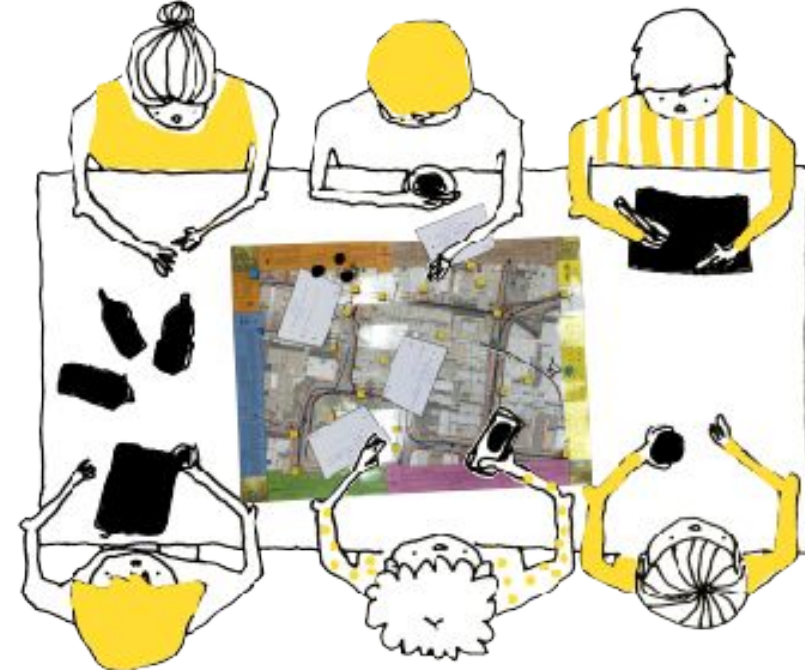
Arki_nopoly is arki_lab's analog gamification tool enabling new and playful ways for children and young to actively reflect on challenges and potentials in their urban surroundings.
The school children in Vig used arki_nopoly to point to their individual experiences, problems and possible solutions in Vig.

The workshop was carried out in the city centre of Vig, to help concretize reflections and analysis. Through the game, the children had the opportunity to vocalize and visualize their thoughts and at all times relate them to specific places in the city, by drawing on the board and placing dice. Working with the boardgame, they also came up with possible solutions by turning challenges into possibilities.

The children playing the game problematized noise and traffic on the main street in the city centre and risks when crossing roads and streets. They generally wished for better access to more green areas, more possibilities for play and better, safer connections across the city.

The qualitative data collected was from two school grades.

Left side photo: arki_nopoly workshop with children in Vig City, 2021

Left side photo: workshop with children in Vig City, 2021

Digital engagement

ArkiCity
Check it out here: https://www.arkilab.dk/tools-2/arkicity/

ArkiCity is arkilab's digital tool for envisioning change and dreams for the urban environment. The school students used the app to create collages of their everyday surroundings with design elements. We used the collages to understand the needs and wishes of the young citizens and users of Vig. The app was part of the broader outreach and engagement for children and caregivers in Vig, designed to be flexible, enabling teachers to structure and plan the activity.
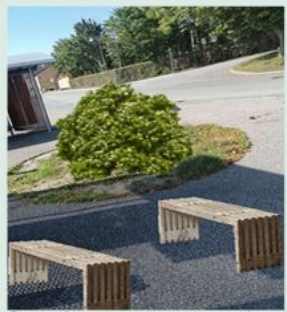
Upskilling through urban analysis for school children
Through digital teaching material, the school students had to learn, understand and apply urban analysis of Vig. This upskilling process enabled them to actively participate and become in engaged in the development and change of their urban environment and surroundings, and is a way to better include their opinions and actual data at a higher stakeholder city scale.

The children focused on specific spaces where they felt unsafe, and spaces they liked, and through ArkiCity they changed some of the places they didn't like into dream spaces. This data was used to inform the first design proposal for "The Heart of Vig".

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ArkiCity

ArkiCity Collage examples from Vig

Green hangout space at station

Swimmingpool

More trees and hangout zones in the main street

Flowers, plants and nice benches at the station

More places for young and children to buy food

More green and places to stay at the station

More activities, places to stay and play in nature

Better opportunities for recreation in nature for young

Lighting, flowers and places to stay at the station

More markets in the city centre

More nature and possibilities to stay in nature around the city

A café for the young with affordable food and drinks

More wayfinding and recycling bins in and around the city

Online surveys
Online surveys were used to create baseline measurements in the broad population of Vig and to collect data from school students.

Open citizen meetings and events
Events for the citizens were held at different times in the process, firstly to kick off the process and create awareness for the broad population, and then to engage and inform at different stages of the process to follow up on citizen opinions and ideas.

Community stakeholder workshops
The important stakeholders of Vig took part in workshops and meetings, to share their ideas and inputs for the general community of Vig. This created a strong foundation for future development and communication between the local stakeholders and the municipal planners at the higher stakeholder scale.

Data treatment
The data from all types of engagement was collected and treated relating to six different themes, and the inputs for themes *Movement/Play/Hangouts* (71% of inputs from young) and *Nature/Recreation* (65% of inputs from young) were heavily dominated by inputs from children and young, showing a clear need for improving the opportunities for play, recreation and movement for the vulnerable population.

Left Side photo: citizen workshop in Vig, 2021

Proximity of Care approach

The PoC approach was applied to the project to understand and practice the f**our dimensions,** their individual **goals** and how to work with the **three primary scales of urban interaction.**

The diagram was used to map the main themes and issues addressed through the project process and in the early design suggestion by arki_lab, as well as to map the subjects either not relevant for the context or not touched upon through the process.

The diagram enabled a general overview of the project scope and themes, as well as points of possible improvement.
Generally, both the neighbourhood scale and the city scale were activated well through the engagement process, where the household scale could be a point of improvement.

3. Site profile

A brief description and overview of the site.

Administrative boundary

Vig city lies within the administrative boundaries of Odsherred municipality with a collective area of 355,3 square meters. The municipality holds 32.881 inhabitants.
The municipality is the administrative power in the city, but there are also local stakeholders and associations influencing the development of the city.
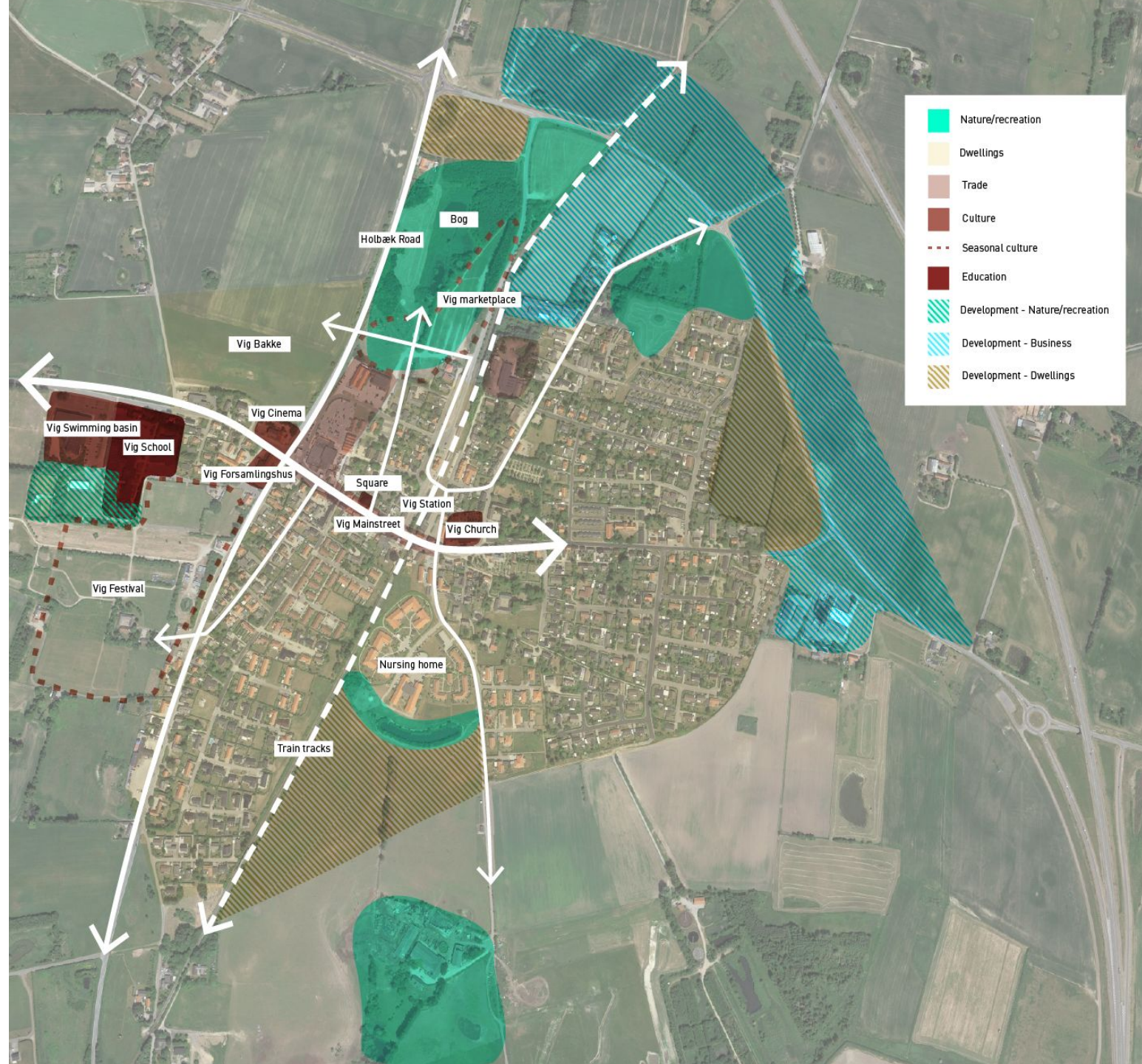
Site overview

Vig is a small station city placed in the municipality of Odsherred, Denmark. The city lies centrally in the rolly landscape of the Unesco Global Geopark Odsherred.

The city has historically and physically developed with the arrival of the train station, but car infrastructure now plays a big role in the current layout of the urban structure, presenting some challenges for the general cohesiveness of the city infrastructure. This affects the everyday use of the town for all inhabitants and visitors, but especially poses challenges for children, caregivers and young people with limited access to cars and who are vulnerable in the urban environment.

The analysis of the site, both through desk research and citizen engagement, shows a city with a strong community but also a fragmented urban fabric where the car infrastructure physically slices the city, making it less accessible for vulnerable users such as children and young adults.

Nature/recreation
Dwellings
Trade
Culture
Seasonal culture
Education
Development - Nature/recreation
Development - Business
Development - Dwellings

Bog
Holbæk Road
Vig marketplace
Vig Bakke
Vig Cinema
Vig Swimming basin
Vig School
Vig Forsamlingshus
Square
Vig Station
Vig Mainstreet
Vig Church
Vig Festival
Nursing home
Train tracks

Demography

Vig town currently holds 1.700 inhabitants.
It has not been possible to find detailed additional data about age, gender and income, as most public data available is for the whole municipality and not for the smaller population in towns.

Through meetings and citizen engagement, the general impression is, that most inhabitants are part of the danish middle class or lower income citizens.
There is a population of seniors as well as families with children and young adults.

Vig is growing in size, as new housing areas are being built or planned, so the population will likely grow throughout the coming years.

Socioeconomic conditions

The citizens of Vig town generally have a high living standard and access to the necessary resources - Clean and free drinking water, sanitation, grocery shops, housing, education, public transport by train and bus as well as private cars. Therefore, the challenges of Vig should be seen within this context. The challenges in focus relate to the physical urban structure of the city, which could be improved to better the conditions of the citizens.

The urban fabric consists of older and at times run down houses in the town centre, and traditional danish detached houses. The town holds a school and multiple daycare facilities, as well as families with children, making it of great importance to work with bettering their conditions for healthy living and stimulating everyday life in the town.

4. Key challenges & opportunities

A description of the key challenges identified through the four dimensions of the PoC approach and the goals of the project qualified and identified by the citizen engagement process and validated through the PoC approach.

Challenges are followed by a description of the key opportunities described through an existing design suggestion arki_lab gave for Vig in the Area Renewal Program.

The design proposal is a connected path system that gives new opportunities for movement, recreation and safety for many of the citizens.
Through the PoC approach and in the light of ECD, a great focus is placed on providing new opportunities for small children, caregivers and young adults in the urban environment.

Challenge **Health**

Challenge 1: Missing connectivity between public spaces, playgrounds and green areas, creating poor opportunities for vulnerable users to use and move in the urban space and surrounding landscape.

Challenge 2: Limited options for disposing or recycling waste and missing communication and learning about waste as a resource.

Challenge 3: Few public and accessible green areas for children and missing lighting throughout the darker and cold seasons. Missing public toilet in outdoor areas as well as missing focus on maintenance models for both sanitation and green areas.
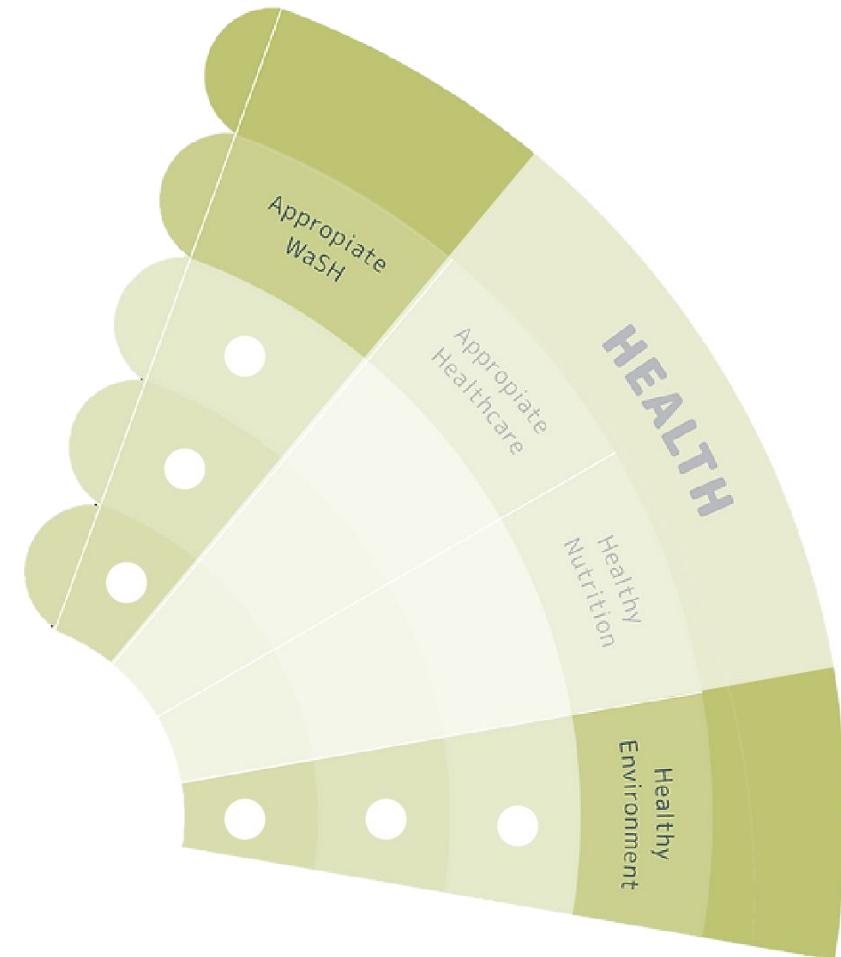
Goals/Factors

1.1.3. Reliable, accessible and affordable solid waste disposal and management services

1.2.3. Policy mechanisms and community measures to promote child-and caregivers focused healthy habits and support programmes

1.4.1. Policy measures and community mechanisms to ensure healthy air quality

1.4.3. Sufficient coverage of well-maintained trees and green spaces

Opportunity **Health**

There lies a great potential in connecting the town centre with the surrounding landscape, to get a better connection between the urban, dwellings and nature.

This could be realised through using existing walkways, paths, important nodes in the city such as the station and recreational areas to each other, and by expanding the existing network with better and safer opportunities for soft traffic.

The design idea (The Heart of Vig) taps into a national incentive (Hjertestier) which funds path system projects all around Denmark to improve general health and promote movement and exercise outside and in people's immediate surroundings.

The path system would create new opportunities for more vulnerable user groups in the city such as caregivers, small children and young adults. A safe path system would create new possibilities to move around in a more independent way.

The path system should focus on having sufficient lighting, public restroom opportunities, drinking water supply, recycling bins and adequate maintenance of the green areas.

Right Side Illustration: concept visualisations for the Area Renewal Program, arki_lab

Focus on visible connections and wayfinding across different types of streets, paths etc.

Communication and places to stay throughout the route.

Challenge **Protection**

Challenge 1: Hard traffic separating the public urban and green areas, making it harder for soft traffic and vulnerable users to access possibilities for play and movement.

Challenge 2: Missing lighting is a problem on paths, crossing and in public spaces.

Challenge 3: Possibly missing clear zones and edges that are easily understood and readable by children, to heighten safety around roads, the bog, public and private areas etc.
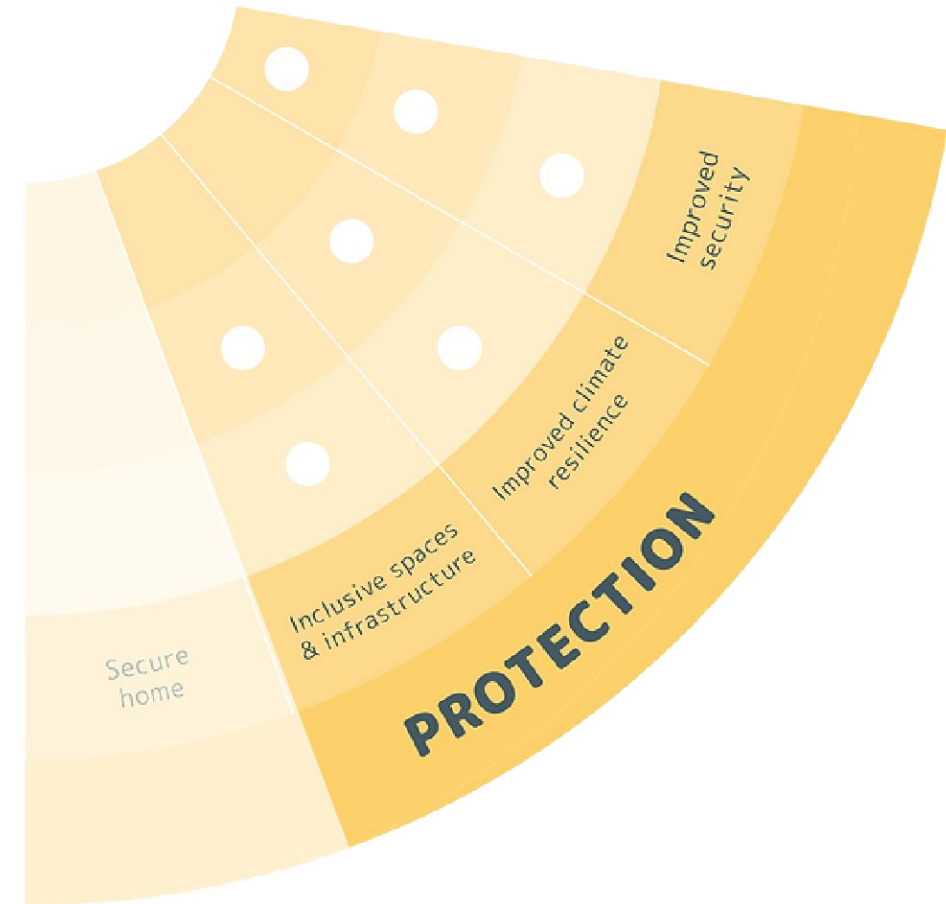
Goals/Factors

2.2.1. Provision of safe public and green spaces connected through safe routes

2.2.2. Provision of safe and child-sensitive infrastructure and facilities

2.4.2. Mechanisms for enhanced security in public spaces

2.4.3. Mechanisms for enhanced security in roads and public transportation
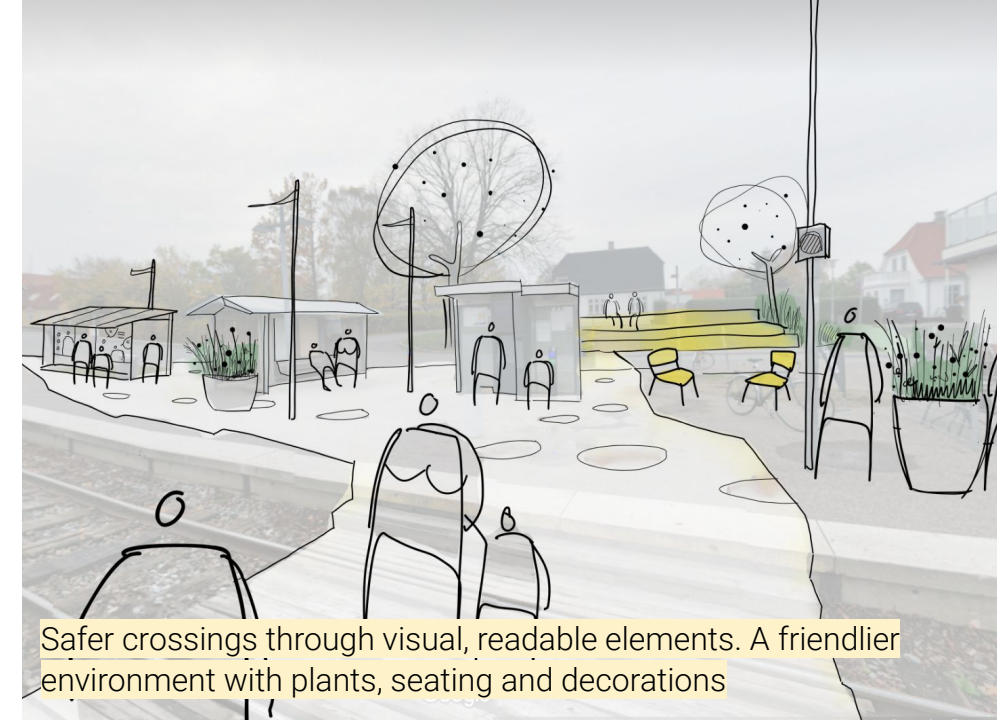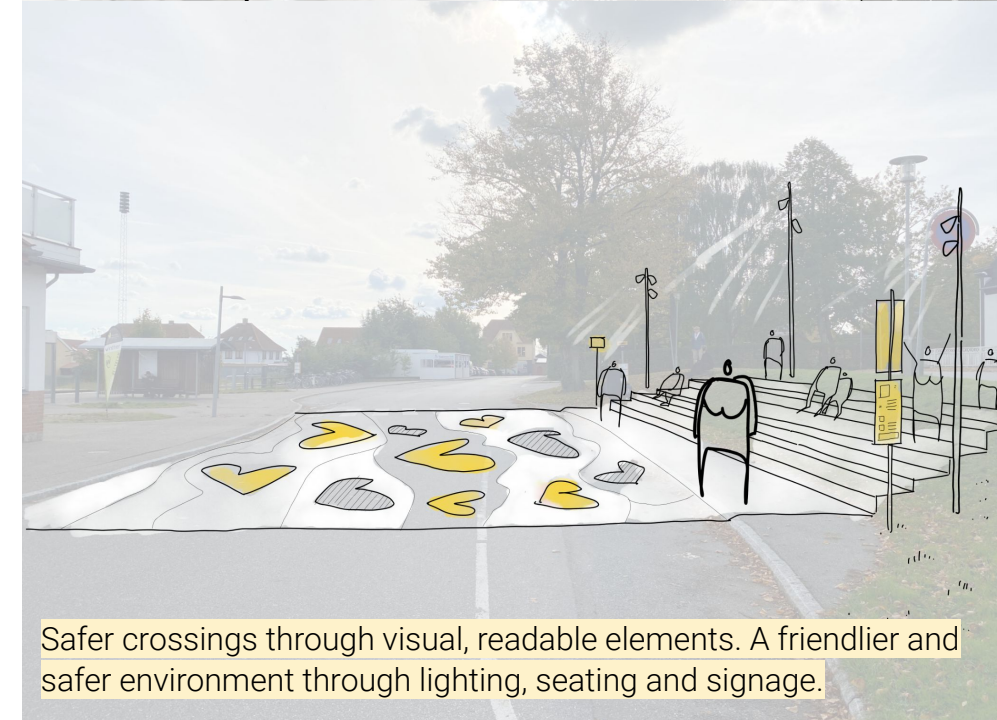
Opportunity **Protection**

The opportunities in the built environment especially revolve around improved safety for the soft traffic in the city. This could be in the shape of clearly marked crossings, visual elements such as markings, signage or lighting that creates a safer environment for children and caregivers moving around via safe routes.

By visually marking the links between the different paths, walkways and recreational areas, the overall connectivity and accessibility of the city could be improved.

Safe crossings benefit the whole city and community, as an obvious side-effect to focusing ECD and PoC in the urban environment.

Right Side Illustration: concept visualisations for the Area Renewal Program, arki_lab

Safer crossings through visual, readable elements. A friendlier environment with plants, seating and decorations

Safer crossings through visual, readable elements. A friendlier and safer environment through lighting, seating and signage.

Challenge **Stimulation**

Challenge 1: Missing communication and wayfinding in eye-height with smaller children as the audience and target group.

Challenge 2: Missing play areas that stimulate senses and fit the abilities of small children.

Challenge 3: Missing safe crossings on roads, by public transport etc. and wayfinding as a cohesive element through the town.
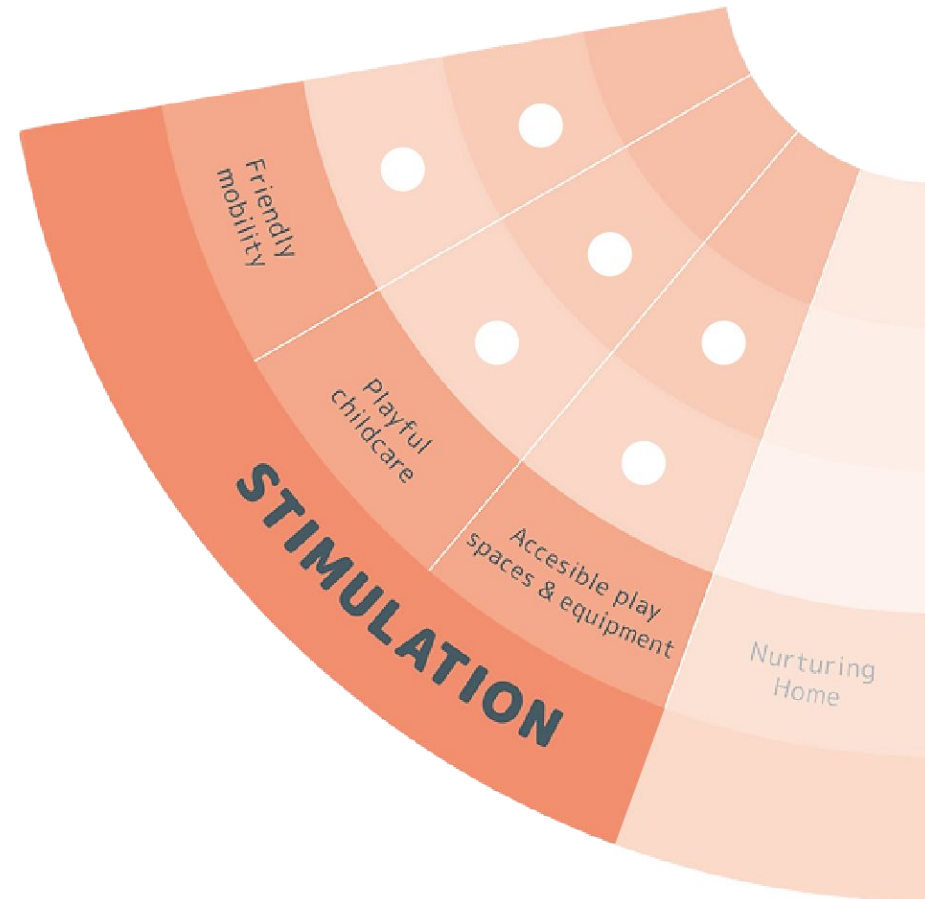
Goals/Factors

3.2.1. Presence of accessible and stimulating public spaces, green areas, and play spaces (indoor and outdoor)

3.2.2. Public spaces, green areas, and play spaces have a high play value with age-appropriate equipment and space for caregivers and children interaction

3.2.3. Provision of quality events and activities in public space for spontaneity and interaction

3.4.1. Presence of child- and caregiver-friendly public transportation options by safe roads encouraging active mobility

Opportunity **Stimulation**

To better the conditions for stimulation in Vig, there should be a greater focus on communicating in eye-height with small children. Good public spaces should not only be thought of in terms of how adults experience and enjoy them.
Working with this dimension would mean a further engagement with a narrow focus on establishing contact to and collaborating with smaller children and their caregivers.

Playgrounds and public spaces should hold elements suitable for smaller children to best stimulate their development.

There lies a potential in wayfinding as a playful element, not only in the more traditional sense of words and information on signs, but with readable symbols, objects and illustrations readable by small children.

Right Side Illustration: concept visualisations for the Area Renewal Program, arki_lab

Stimulating places to play and stay, platforms, mega swings and flagpoles to mark and create a space with an identity.

A safer and greener main street in the city, with a main square visually and physically separated from the car road.
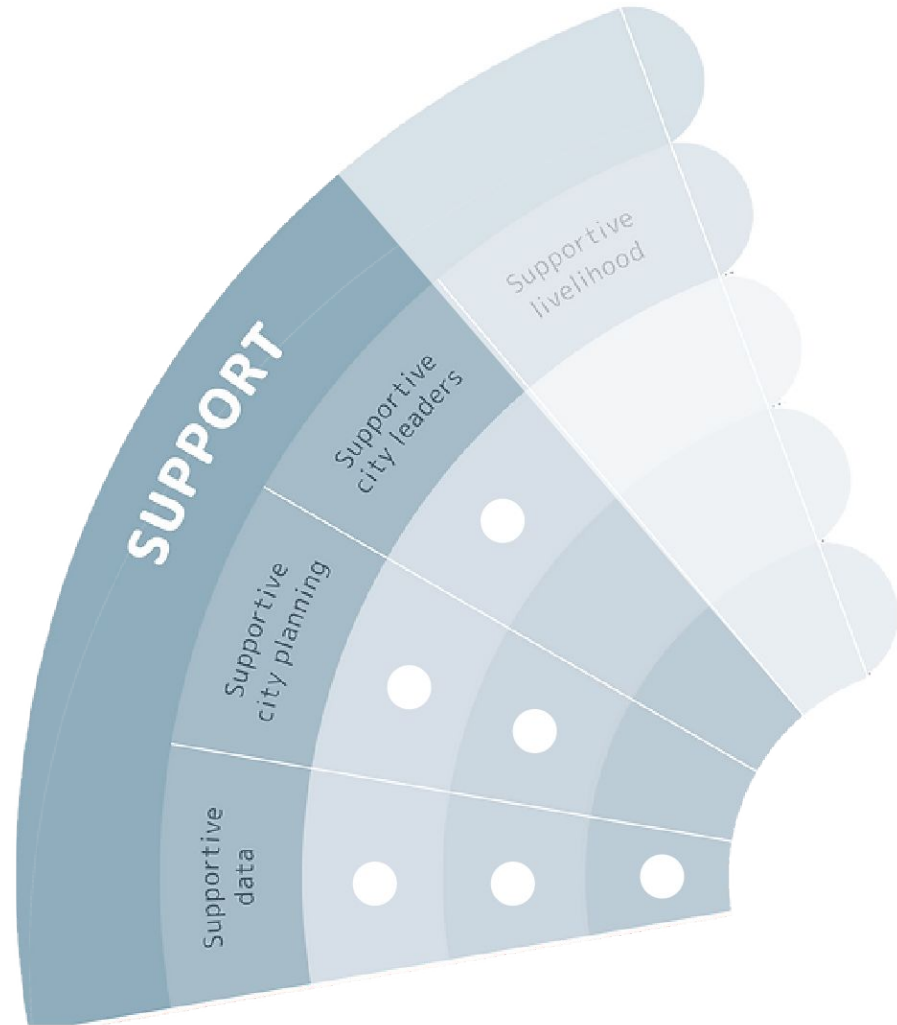
Challenge **Support**

Challenge 1: Missing focus on ECD in Vig at authority level - Formalized focus.

Challenge 2: Challenging to reach families and get them involved to participate in citizen engagement processes

Challenge 3: Missing focus on communicating ECD in the urban environment, specifically at the city scale

Goals/Factors

4.1.3. Presence of effective civil society organisations and key stakeholders focusing on ECD

4.2.2. Participation of caregivers, children and pregnant women in decision-making and planning

4.4.2. ECD and caregivers-focused communications and advocacy campaigns

SUPPORT

Supportive livelihood

Supportive city leaders

Supportive city planning

Supportive data

Opportunity **Support**

The municipality of Odsherred has a focus on citizen engagement in the urban development, but there is a great opportunity in bringing ECD on the table as a new layer of engagement and urban design. ECD and the PoC programme has the potential to deepen the existing development in the municipality, as well as to bring new perspectives and methods into play.

To successfully involve smaller children and caregivers, a different approach is needed to reach the families. These can at present be harder to reach and engage. The methodology and approach used by arki_lab could be adjusted to fit a younger targetgroup.

Right Side photo: Kick-off event in Vig city centre, 2021

5. A few reflections

Through applying the PoC approach and framework to the existing design idea, we were able to add a new layer to the project and get new insights to how the project could become more inclusive and support the overall ECD agenda.

This gave us new ways to think about child-friendly elements, especially through focusing on communicating in eye-height with children, caregivers and young adults and creating safe environments, crossings and understandable communication and wayfinding.

The PoC framework is a great tool to include important perspectives and methods when working towards a ECD based urban development. The framework is elastic and leaves room for scalability, but that also makes it a bit complex and it demands a certain level of experience and practice to implement and understand fully.

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