

Highlight Sydhavn

A User Participation and Social Innovation Project

User Participation and Social Innovation

MSc Service Systems Design

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Project Group

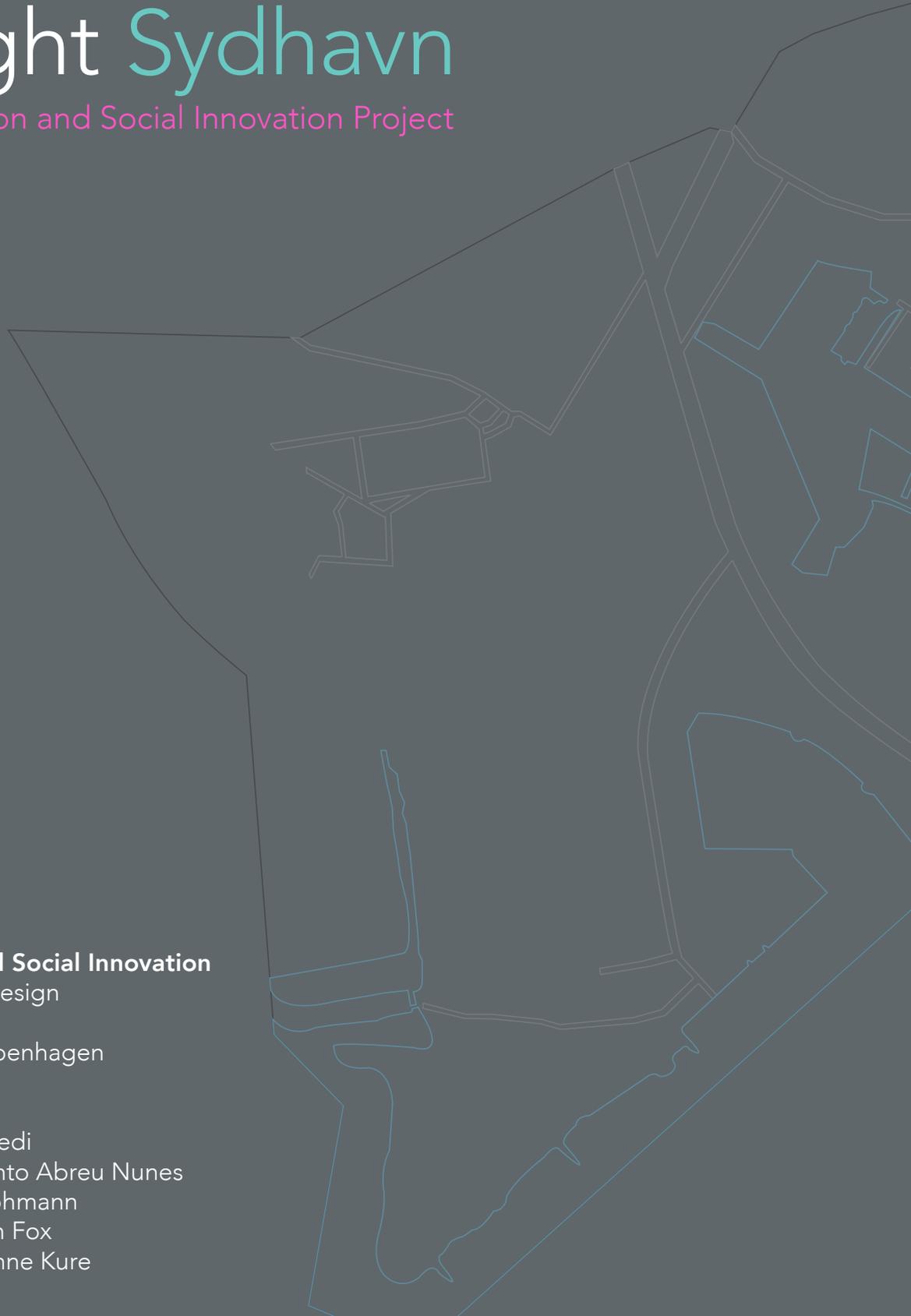
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INTRODUCTION	3
APPROACH TO THE BRIEF	4
Exploration of Sydhavn	4
First Impressions of the Assignment	5
IDEATION	6
People as Bridge	6
Initial Idea - Sydhavnfest	6
DESIGN GAME	7
Planning of the Game	7
Game Description	7
Game Playing	9
Outcomes & Findings	9
Reflection on the Game	10
THE CONCEPT	11
Clarification	11
Highlight Sydhavn	11
Precedents	13
Risks & Limitations	14
CONCLUSION	15
REFERENCES	16
ILLUSTRATIONS	16
APPENDIX	17

As part of the User Participation and Social Innovation course at Aalborg University, Master students of the interdisciplinary study 'Service Systems Design' were asked to design a concept aiming at 'bridging' the neighbourhoods within the Sydhavn borough of Copenhagen.

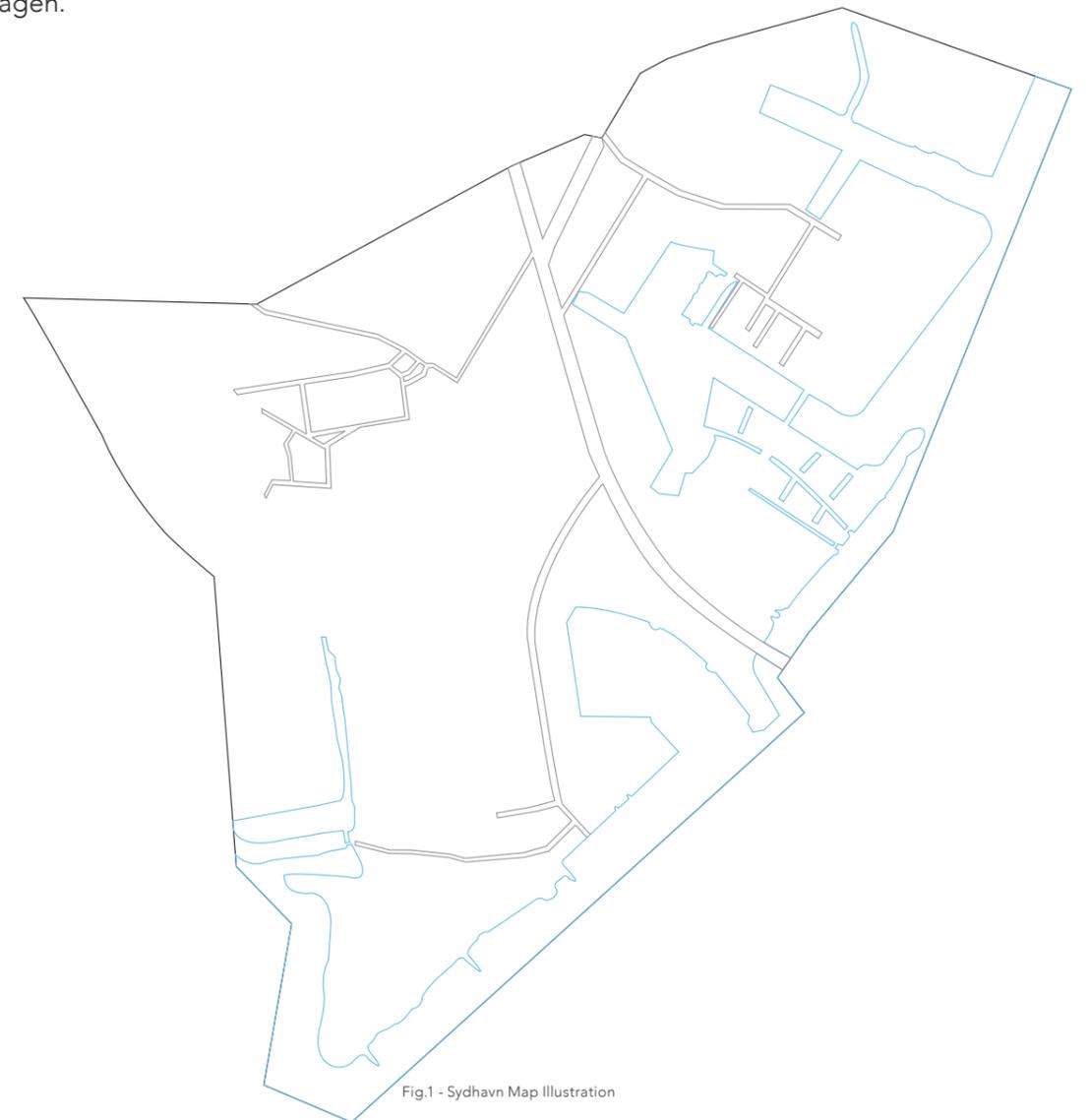


Fig.1 - Sydhavn Map Illustration

This essay outlines the steps taken during the design process, and is written for professionals who are interested in the renewal project in Sydhavn. It further aims to inspire and provoke new actions in the project and introduces as well as explains a concept formed on the basis of what was explored during the lectures.

Exploration of Sydhavn

On Tuesday 1 March 2016, the group ventured into the Western area of Sydhavn to explore and observe (Blomberg, J. et al, 2003) the nature, qualities, and characteristics of the area. During the excursion, Sydhavn was found to be a divided place. As the area was explored, many examples what could be defined as 'old and new' were spotted, and the group developed an impression of Sydhavn as being an area of quick change and contrasting values. Three places in particular caught the groups' attention during the excursion.

1. Sydhavnsgade



Fig.2 - Photo of Sydhavnsgade

Sydhavnsgade is considered by some as being one of the biggest urban barriers in the area. On the West side of the street lies the vast majority of old buildings in the neighbourhood, as well as a number of old industrial buildings. Whereas on the East side there is much urban regeneration taking place, and many new buildings have been developed around the waterside within the last decade. There are plans to create a new Metro connection between Sluseholmen and Mozart Plads within the next ten years, and so the group set out to conceive and design a metaphorical bridge in the area.

2. Tippen



Fig.3 - Photo of Tippen

Towards the South of the Sydhavn area there are some open green spaces. While many of these green spaces seem to have received extensive landscaping, Tippen has been preserved in a more natural state. The area exists as a local project to connect people with nature, and maintenance of the area relies on local volunteer groups. During the visit to the area, the group did not see much activity happening in this location. However, it could be argued that the lack of human activity is what gives Tippen its natural quality. The group would be interested in exploring what happens in the natural space throughout the year, and to see how the volunteer association functions.

3. Mozart Plads



Fig.4 - Photo of Mozarts Plads

On visiting Mozart Plads, the group found out that not all people accept the urban features installed in this shared public space. Several instances were found of what could be considered as anti-social behaviour – for example, graffiti that has been written across a recreation feature for children. An observer might consider such acts of vandalism as being an outlet for certain residents to express their own identity. The group considered it interesting to uncover more about this history of this square, and to see whether it would be possible to challenge younger generations to contribute in a more constructive manner to the use of the space.

First Impressions of the Assignment

In order to get a better idea on how to approach the problem, the group asked questions such as: in what ways can people from different social classes and backgrounds become connected; are people's perceptions likely to cause a stumbling block in the design process; and what do the people of Sydhavn generally have in common? From these questions the group developed an initial idea with the purpose of 'bridging' both the old and new area within the borough.

People as Bridge

The challenge set out by this assignment was to 'bridge' (or connect) the old Sydhavn neighbourhood in the West with the new neighbourhood in the East of Sydhavn. Aside from the obvious physical divide of the Sydhavnsgrønde highway, the challenge could fundamentally be taken as addressing the social divide between the communities that exist within Sydhavnen. With this in mind, the energy and motivation for the concept would be sourced from enthusiastic, well-meaning members of the Sydhavn community, who would act as the 'bridges' between others.

Initial Idea - Sydhavnfest

Sydhavnfest – an event where children lead their parents into new areas.

There is a notable disparity between the West and East (old and new) areas of Sydhavn. These differences can be measured economically, for example by noting the cost of living in each area. It can often be observed that such disparity can produce separation between people – those with different economic backgrounds might stereotype and hold negative feelings towards each other. When considering which commonalities exist between people in Sydhavn, it can be said that there are many families with children in the area. The majority of these children attend schools alongside peers who come from varying backgrounds, and who have different cultures and beliefs. However, it can often be seen that children possess fewer inhibitions and reservations, when compared to adults.

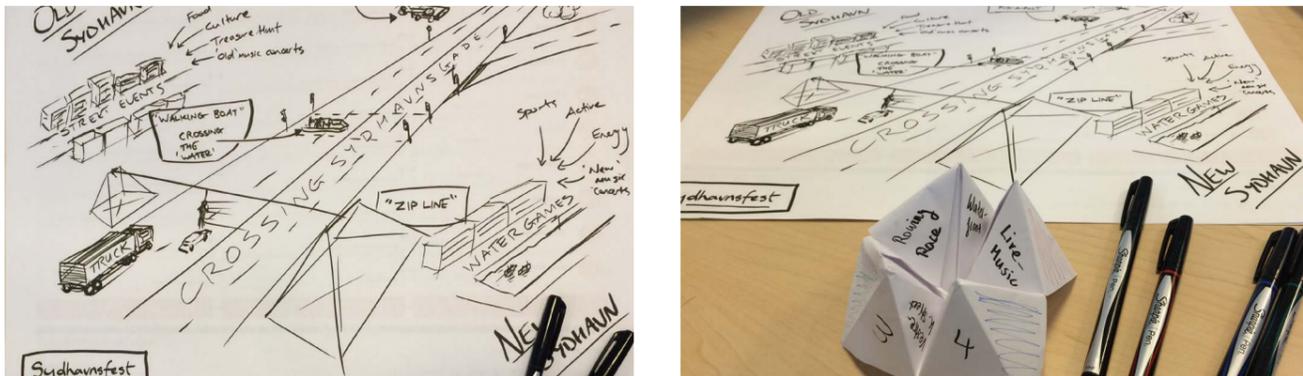


Fig.5 - Sydhavnfest Sketches

This concept would aim to overcome feelings of separation and isolation between communities in Sydhavn through an event that is primarily aimed towards children. By first creating a space for children to energetically and enthusiastically participate and explore, it can be imagined how adults (parents) might then be brought together from across the borough. In terms of how to design and plan for such an event, it would be ideal to involve children at a very early stage. This could be done through visiting schools and working with teachers to request children to generate wild ideas about what could be possible in their neighbourhoods – one example of a top-level question which could open a design discussion with children could be: "What if Sydhavn were a theme park?".

Planning of the Game

In course of the lecture about Design Games with Søsler Brodersen, the group was given a framework to use when facilitating design games. The group developed the structure of the game through asking the following questions:

- What is the aim of the game?
- Who are the players in the game?
- Where should the game take place?
- Which materials are needed to play the game?
- How should the game be facilitated?
- How will the game be documented/formalised?

While discussing these questions, the group were able to clarify how the game might work. It was decided that the intention for playing the Sydhavn Fortune Teller game was to generate feedback on whether the residents of Sydhavn would be interested in hosting events in their area, as which types of events these could be. Furthermore, the game was supposed to investigate whether players could think creatively, and determine the level of interest to which they might like to host events themselves. Since the primary target group for the event was defined as families with children, the game was also made for the purpose of playing with this target group.

The questions about the facilitation helped clarify that all group members should have certain roles while playing the game with participants. For this reason it was decided that, for every round of playing the game, there should be one person to facilitate the dialogue with participants and another one who presents and moves the fortune teller. A third person would take notes about what was being said. To reduce the risk of participants feeling overwhelmed by too many people surrounding them asking questions, the other two group members would keep their distance, taking photographs and observing. The group would rotate the roles to allow each member to practice collecting information through the game.

Game Description

The project group invented a game based with the intention to 'play' with both adults and children. The intention was to invent a game that both attracted the curiosity of children, as well as invoke a sense of nostalgia among adult participants. Considering this, the fortune teller game was revisited.

After discussing how the game would be played, and which options should appear on the game piece, the group created a quick paper prototype. The decision was made to include four different locations within the Sydhavn area. To select these places, the group created a customised map of Sydhavn to identify a variety of points which represented different categories. A link to this online map is provided in the Appendix.

The four selected areas were: the Waterfront, which represents the new area of Sydhavn around Sluseholmen; Mozarts Plads, which stands as the heart of the old area; Tippen, as an option to represent natural green spaces in and around Sydhavn; and Karens Minde, which offers both cultural and family-friendly characteristics. To attract people's attention and make the game more attractive for participation, sketches of the four locations were created and placed on the outside of the game object.



Fig.6 - Design Game Creation

The inside of the game is then revealed in two 'randomised' steps – after selecting a location from the pictures on the outside of the game piece, players would then choose two numbers from the panels inside the game piece. This choice offered players a certain level of random interaction with the game. Once the choices were made, an activity description was revealed from underneath one of the panels. The player was then asked to combine this activity with their choice of location, and to reflect on whether the combination is possible. Offering players the opportunity to choose their own path created a chance and surprise factor in the game (Brandt, E. 2006). This game aspect helps to spark creativity by inviting players to think about which locations could support specific activities. Deciding to offer participants a fixed choice of a location in the first step was thought to allow them to feel more confident in playing the game, as they feel familiar with their location choice. This decision also allowed the group to enter a conversation with the player about how the people of Sydhavn might become better connected.



Fig.7 - Design Game

Game Playing

On a Saturday morning in April, the group staged the game outside the main entrance to Karens Minde Kulturhus. Following a hesitant start, the group were quickly able to build the confidence required to approach people, inviting them to play the game. The majority of people approached by the group were willing to spare five minutes of their time to play the game. The participants were asked to combine the chosen place with the randomly chosen activity and tell the group about already existing events or possible events they would like to see under this topic. The playing location was changed once, from Karens Minde to a public square at Hammelstrupvej, to allow for a wider variety of game participants. By the end of the morning the group had played with eleven different participants.



Fig.8 - Game Playing

Outcomes & Findings

The group were able to summarise the outcomes from the design game in two quotes:

"I like living in Sydhavn, but there are not enough public spaces where people can gather."

Some participants stated that at the Waterfront there are not enough public spaces for people to gather. They explained that it is unlikely that people will enjoy hosting a BBQ or similar activities outside, and that there was a perceived lack of restaurants or cafes in the area.

Throughout the staging activity, the group found that people were generally positive about Sydhavn. This suggested to the project group that since there are people who appreciate and feel proud of a particular area, they might have an interest in showing other people their favorite spots. This would suggest that there are people in Sydhavn who would support the idea of an event for highlighting and showcasing areas of the neighbourhood to others.

“Events around Sydhavn would be nice, but they should take place with respect to the area.”

The residents of Sydhavn are interested in activities around the area, but they stipulate that they should take place with respect to the area. Residents living in the old Sydhavn area value the nature of Tippen, and so do not want to destroy it for events. Instead, they suggested that events could be created that involve the nature, for example a ‘farmers market’ where locals could sell locally produced, natural products, possibly sourced or grown at Tippen. Some participants also suggested that if there was a farmers market at Karens Minde, then it should centre around the animals and sell some natural produce, such as cheese created from the sheep’s milk.

Reflection on the Game

The findings gave the project group the impression that people would generally be open to events around Sydhavn and that there is potential that they would be interested in hosting events themselves and use their creativity to organize them. Furthermore, the overall impression of people being proud of their area fuels the idea of an event which gives people the opportunity to introduce and present ‘their Sydhavn’ to others.

Considering the facilitation of the design game, the group were able to reflect on the approach taken in creating the design game. The manner in which the questions were asked were found to make it difficult for people to answer. It would have been better to have prepared a set of secondary questions with which to help people understand what was being asked. Such additional questions could therefore help to spark the conversation and better stimulate the imagination of players. Concerning the factor of time, the group conducted the game under the assumption that people do not have time to talk, and so the games were rushed. This meant that people were unable to process the questions, and felt hurried into providing an answer. Should a slower approach be made, players might be able to go more into depth with their answers.

The majority of the game was conducted in one location: Karens Minde Kulturhus. The group were able to identify a bias when people selected a location: the Kulturhus location was selected the most by the people who were asked at that location. On the contrary, none of the participants at the Kulturhus selected Mozarts Plads, and so the group had to make the quick decision to switch location in an attempt to find people who would select Mozart Plads. The group reflected that there may have been a broader sample of results should the game have been played in multiple locations across Sydhavn. However, on a more positive note, the group were able to note how the game attracted the attention of passers by, due to its striking visual appeal.

Clarification

At first, the group conducted a brainstorming session on the topic of the assignment. The session helped bring about several possible ideas that could act as a starting point for further exploration with users. Following this session, the group determined that in order to involve the users of Sydhavn, it would be necessary to conduct a design game with the intention of discovering the needs and desires of the users of Sydhavn.

The benefits of using this approach were seen as being a way of learning about the desires of the target group, as well to better understanding the potential impact of the changes that being suggested. In choosing to follow this approach, it was possible to generate more concrete ideas that could be applied in Sydhavn with the aim of bridging the old and new part of the region.

After staging the design game, the group attended a lecture on the subject of Participatory Design. A student group conducted a workshop which featured a goal of facilitating group discussions on the different roles that actors take when a project is being executed (Björgvinsson, E. et al 2010). From this workshop, the group were able to understand the importance of taking into consideration multiple points of view from different users. Thinking about the roles of each user gave the group insight into how to form a more concrete concept proposal. Out of this workshop the group developed a concept to help connect the different, and diverse, communities in Sydhavn through the use of light as a tool to communicate invitations.

Highlight Sydhavn

On one particular night, likely during the Spring or Autumn seasons, the area of Sydhavn would hold a multi-event celebration across the borough. The aim of this special event is to encourage users of Sydhavn to traverse and explore the area, discovering new routes and locations.

A street-party atmosphere to all ‘users’ of Sydhavn will be invited to attend, as well as given the opportunity to contribute to the event. Local events are planned to be held by communities of people living (permanently or temporary) in Sydhavn or by shop owners. Events would not need to be publicised – in fact, digital promotion might even be discouraged! – as the event will feature the use of large-scale vertical spotlights that project beacons of light into the night sky. Wherever is a light beacon, there is a particular event. Beacons may feature the use of coloured light, to indicate the nature of the event (e.g. music, food, culture, activity etc.). The events that will be held can be diverse and each event is created by the ‘people of Sydhavn’. It can be a club, an institution, a group of friends or colleagues, local businesses, students from the university, and so on. The multi-event celebration is intended to be created by the

people, and for the people of Sydhavn – as well as for curious visitors. People attracted by the light and exploring one side to the other are themselves bridging the discrepancies that are currently present in the area. It could be also the case that the beacons of light design virtually bridges, in form of a rainbow/light bridge from opposite sides of Sydhavnsgade, highlighting furthermore the demand of merging two separate situations yet belonging to the same urban context. There are multiple reasons as to why beacons of light would be suitable for this concept. For one reason, the event is intended to 'highlight' Sydhavn – a part of the city which is not held in high esteem by the citizens of Copenhagen, nor its own residents. It is therefore of interest to direct people's attention towards an area where an interesting event or opportunity is taking place. By using beacons of light, people's curiosity will be stimulated, prompting them to action and inviting them to explore what is happening in the area. The beacons of light can also act as reference points to guide people through the borough Sydhavn. One particular feature of the concept is in causing people to refrain from using maps or navigational devices. Instead they should be encouraged to 'chase the lights' and find their own path through the borough, discovering new spaces and people on their way. By choosing to frame the concept as a way to highlight the area, people would be encouraged to present their favorite spots in the Sydhavn, so to invite others to explore and experience something new. This is how the group intends to bridge the people of Sydhavn, by way of promoting new experiences and stronger community relationships between users.



Fig.9 - Sydhavn Laser-cut Board

At its centre, the concept is based on the belief that each resident of Sydhavn should be presented with opportunities to explore the area in which they are living. In general, people can be hesitant to actively seek out places which have yet to be visited. By choosing to reveal and highlight places which feature welcoming activities, residents might then be more aware of when events are occurring, and so go out and explore the borough by heading towards the lights in the night sky. This intention is that this would grab people's attention and cause them to feel curious about what is going on in neighbourhoods where they otherwise would not venture. Economically, it would also give opportunities for business owners to host their own special events, to promote themselves and advertise what they can offer as a service to people.

Precedents

Events showcasing lights and light performances have gained high recognition and interest in the last decade, especially in cities like Lyon's 'Fête des Lumières', Berlin's 'Lichterfest' and Tokyo's 'Hikari no Saiten', where such events became yearly festivals to look forward to during wintertime. The common concept that lays beneath these major events is to transform the city through lights, in order for people to enjoy the city from a different perspective, especially considering the time of the year, which is not normally seen as suitable for hosting social events. Having these successful events as an example, 'Highlighting Sydhavn' aims to be a reference for its residents and for the people living and visiting Copenhagen to explore Sydhavn area with different eyes, guided by curiosity and willingness to explore the area.

1. Lyon Light Festival 2011



Fig.10 - Lyon Light Festival 2011

2. Berlin Light Festival 2015



Fig.11 - Berlin Light Festival 2015

3. Tokyo Winter Light Festival 2014

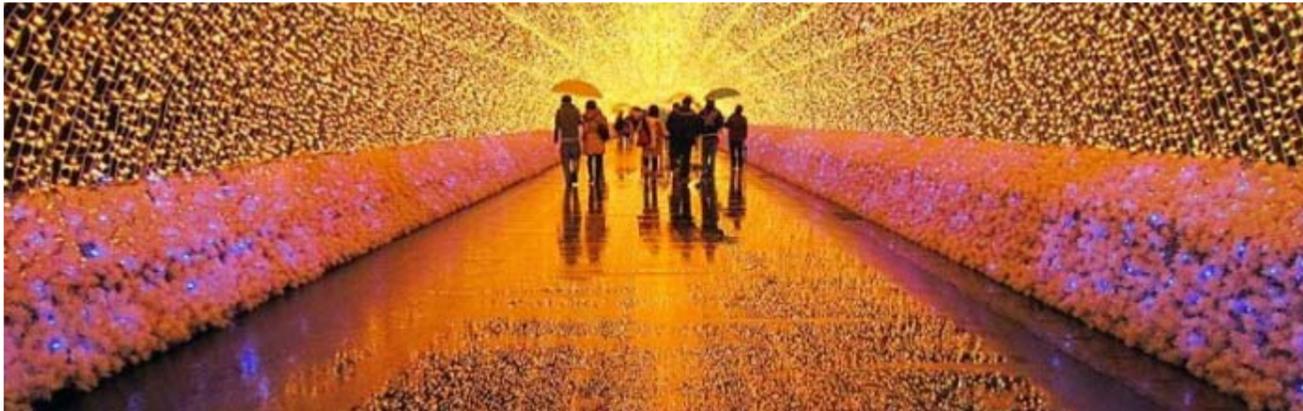


Fig.12 - Tokyo Winter Light Festival 2014

Risks & Limitations

Spotlights would require darkness, and so events would be season-dependent. It is important at this point to consider positive and negative aspects in this regard and then evaluate different alternatives to make the concept work in light of those considerations. Since darkness is a fundamental aspect in order for the spotlights to work effectively, the event would ideally be hosted during winter time, when nighttime arrives earlier in the day. Should that be the case, it would also open an interesting opportunity to hold social events in winter, which is typically a time of year where people have an increased reluctance to host such gatherings. To guarantee warm places for visitors and to assure the happening of performances without being weather dependant, the majority of events might be hosted indoors. This would require some considerable planning, not least in booking locations availability and the requirement of active community members with a shared vision to connect and welcome people from all backgrounds. In addition, Sydhavn would stand out for hosting events in a period of the year normally considered as uninteresting by the majority, therefore enhancing the appeal to explore the area and the era under other circumstances.

At the same time, it is important to consider other alternatives, in case the circumstances would not encounter favour in hosting the event during winter. If it would be the case to execute the concept during daylight hours or in summer, it could be the case to replace the spotlights - which are best suited for use under the night sky - with inflatable, colourful balloons in each location. These balloons (if positioned high enough in the sky, and given suitable weather conditions) could form colourful, friendly, and fun beacons for residents, users, and visitors of Sydhavn, being able to capture visitors' attention as much as for the beacons of light.

To begin with, this concept would work best if paired with existing events in Sydhavn. Throughout the year there are many events taking place at various venues across the borough, and so this concept could be seen as a natural extension of what already exists. The owners of the lighting equipment could partner with existing local events, offering them the opportunity to hire (at low or zero-cost) a spotlight to announce their presence in the area.

Choosing to involve the users of Sydhavn throughout the design process should, in theory, create a strong concept that would be well suited to the desires of the people. There will no doubt be many difficulties in planning and executing this concept. However, with clear enough explanation, and through working with especially enthusiastic people in the borough, this concept would seem to be a viable approach towards creating a bridge in the borough of Sydhavn.

Going a step further than this, once people become aware of the significance of the lights, it can be expected that people from other borough across Copenhagen will become aware of the uniqueness of the event, and of the area of Sydhavn itself. This could be a way to invoke a special quality for the area – giving Sydhavn its own unique identity, atmosphere, and environment.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig.1 - Sydhavn Map Illustration

Fig.2 - Photo of Sydhavngade

Fig.3 - Photo of Tippen

Fig.4 - Photo of Mozarts Plads

Fig.5 - Sydhavnfest Sketches

Fig.6 - Design Game Creation

Fig.7 - Design Game

Fig.8 - Game Playing

Fig.9 - Sydhavn Lasercut Board

Fig.10 - Lyon Light Festival 2011
[Image] At: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/photo/images/attachement/jpg/site1/2011212/0023ae606e6610500b7716.jpg> (Accessed on 19.04.2016).

Fig.11 - Berlin Light Festival 2015
[Image] At: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/VSptPOhaCpU/maxresdefault.jpg> (Accessed on 19.04.2016).

Fig.12 - Tokyo Winter Light Festival 2014
[Image] At: <http://www.theworldfestival.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/nabano-no-sato-tunnel-of-light-japan-720x320.jpg> (Accessed on 19.04.2016).

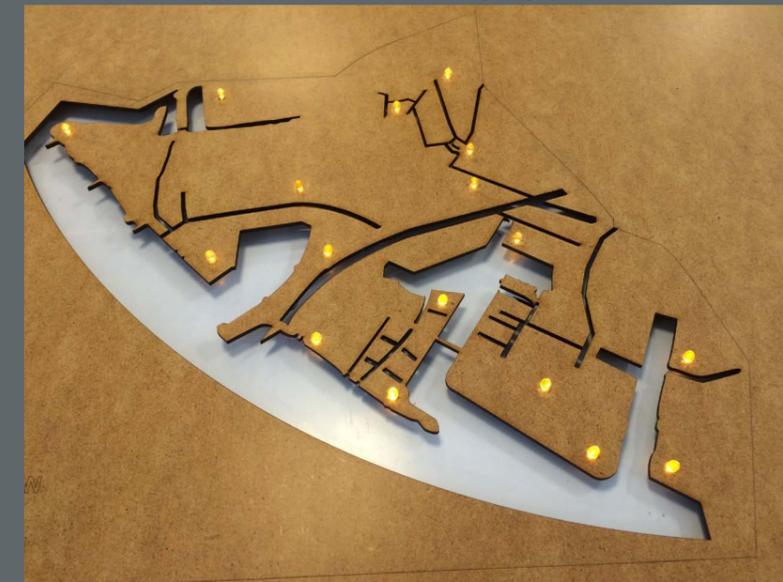
APPENDIX

UPSI Map of Sydhavn

Link: <https://goo.gl/oF2Cb2>

Highlight Sydhavn Board

Lasercut Prototype to illustrate the highlights distributed over the Sydhavn area



Sydhavn Fortune Teller

Exploratory Design Game for the Sydhavn Area

