From Fear to Feast:

Architecture as a Tool Against Xenophobia

08-11-2024

Research Plan

Research Plan
Yanal Haj Khalaf Allah – 5295114

AR3AP100 **Public Building** Graduation Studio
AR3A010 **Research Plan** (2024/25 Q1) - AR3A010+2024+1

Content

Abstract

This research aims to investigate the impact of architectural design on xenophobia within public spaces. Amid rising right-wing movements around the globe and stringent migration policies, this study seeks to explore how public spaces can foster social cohesion and inclusivity. By defining xenophobia and analyzing its manifestations in the public realm, this research will identify spatial characteristics that encourage social interactions among diverse cultural groups. A key strategy explored will be food-centered initiatives, including community kitchens, as they offer opportunities for cultural exchange and social bonding. Through case studies and resident interviews, the study will propose inclusive design principles for a new public condenser in Bispebjerg, ultimately contributing to the discourse on xenophobia and social inclusiveness in contemporary societies.

Keywords

Dicrimination Xenophobia, Public Space, Social Cohesion, Food-Centered Design, Cultural Diversity, Migration, Community Kitchen, Architectural Strategies, Inclusivity, Gentrification

Research Introduction

Denmark is known for having one of the strictest migration policies in Europe (Admin-Euro, 2022). Recently, right-wing parties have been on the rise in many countries, particularly across Europe (Sandrin, 2020). The Netherlands has followed this trend, with some Dutch officials expressing a desire to model their migration and asylum policies after Denmark's approach (Bremer,2024). However, whether Denmark is the right example to follow remains questionable. Danish officials, including the prime minister, have occasionally voiced a desire for Denmark to accept 'zero' asylum seekers (Strzyyska, 2022). This reflects deeper issues, as Denmark has implemented several controversial policies that target individuals based on their origin and background, such as the notorious 'ghetto plan,' which exclusively targets on non-western immigrant communities, sometimes imposing collective punishment on them (Brøbech, 2020). According to a survey conducted by the European council on integration, 12% of the participants that were all from non-Western backgrounds leaving in Denmark have been victims of hate crimes, with bystanders rarely intervening. 84% of them have reported experiencing discrimination based on their background, and individuals with visible identifiers—such as cultural attire, headscarves or beards—face a heightened risk of prejudice and discrimination. Coping with this, 55% of these individuals have changed their appearance in public space and some have changed their names. Moreover, 38% have contemplated leaving Denmark due to its 'hostile' environment (European Commission, 2020).

These statistics underscore the significant social challenges faced by ethnic minorities in Denmark, particularly by the non-western middle eastern immigrant communities. These trends have profound implications for public spaces and social cohesion. In an era where social media and globalization connect people more than ever, we are paradoxically witnessing a rise in post-globalism and xenophobia. These forces are reshaping societies and their physical environments as many 'ghetto blocks', mostly homes for non-western immigrant communities, are being demolished, and their residents displaced (O'Sullivan, 2020).

Within this discourse, public spaces and architecture play a crucial role, as they are the place where people from different backgrounds interact and learn from one another. The design, the function and condition of these spaces are essential in shaping these relationships. Beyond governmental policies, thoughtful archi-

tectural design has the potential to create anti-xenophobic, inclusive spaces. This challenge is especially relevant in Bispebjerg, the neighborhood where the public condenser will be built. Known for its diversity and for hosting a large non-western immigrant community, Bispebjerg is also marginalized and undergoing gentrification, making it a critical site for addressing these issues (Nielsen et al., 2016).

Research Objectives

This research aims to explore the notion of xenophobia in the public realm, investigating the extents to which public space can address xenophobia in today's diverse societies. Using the case of Bispebjerg in Denmark, this research focuses on diverse, marginalized and gentrified neighborhood. Thus, the research question can be formulated as:

How can architectural design strategies in public spaces address xenophobia in culturally diverse and marginalized neighborhoods?

To answer this question, it can be broken down into different sub-themes and corresponding sub-questions. First, the notion of xenophobia should be defined within academic discourse. A first sub-question could be formulated as:

How can Xenophobia be described within academic discourse?

Following the investigating of theories on this notion, the next step is to investigate how xenophobia manifests itself in the public realm. This could be explored by answering the question:

What are the key spatial and architectural features that influence social interactions in (culturally diverse) public spaces?

Subsequently, after identifying characteristics that hinder social interaction and exclude people, the next step could involve investigating methods that address these deficiencies and eliminate them. Investigating these methods can be done through answering the following question:

How have architectural strategies been used to foster inclusivity and reduce social tension in marginalized neighborhoods?

Ultimately, answering these questions, should provide design principles that could be implemented to address xenophobia and design an anti-xenophobic and inclusive public condenser, thereby contributing to the greater discourse on social cohesion in today's diverse societies.

Methodology

In addition to reviewing relevant literature, this research will analyze case studies where similar design principles have been applied. To better fit the context of this study, the focus will be narrowed, as social cohesion and inclusivity are broad topics. One of the key case studies is BIBLIOTEKET Rentemestervej and BIBLI-OTEKET Tingbjerg, both of which were visited during the excursion. The community kitchen of Terras da Costa and other similar projects will also be analyzed. Furthermore, several interviews with residents have already been conducted and will be included in the research.

Theoretical framework

The notion
(Xenophobia within academic discourse)

Xenophobia is commonly defined as a dislike or fear of foreigners or particular groups. However, Hervik (2015b) notes that in the last two decades, its meaning has evolved in social sciences. It should now be understood not only as a fear of outsiders but also as a form of hatred directed towards them (Hervik, 2015).

There are different theories that describe causes and origins of xenophobia. For instance, Peterie and Neil (2019) argues that this notion is inherently rooted in our nature as tribal "groupish" individuals competing for limited resources. Although today's modern economies are not zero-sum games, our psychology has nevertheless evolved in a way that tends to view strangers as competitors. Peterie and Neil (2019) also present that idea that xenophobia is nothing less than covered racism, using culture difference and national security as a fake cover, as these concerns seem more rational, to exclude certain individuals.

The space
(Key spatial and architectural features influencing social interactions)

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (Lovecraft, 1927).

The unknown is a product of limited interaction, which is in turn is a product of separation and segregation (Pattee & Lovecraft, 1946). In this regard it is important to realize that segregation goes beyond the physical space. When people are segregated physically, they are also separated mentally whereas the "us vs. them" mentality is fostered (The Segregated City – A Nordic Overview, 2019; *Lovecraft, 1927*). According to the Nordic Council of Ministers (2019) segregation remains an actual problem in Nordic cities, including Copenhagen. This has led to the creation of autonomous and gentrified communities with a corresponding public realm (Tulumello, 2015; The Segregated City - A Nordic Overview | Integration Norden, 2019). Breaking this structured gentrification is a good step in realizing social cohesion, however this should not be realized by assimilating different cultures (such as requiring foreign children to attend 25 hours of classes focused on Danish values) (O'Sullivan, 2020), but rather by understanding and tolerating different cultures (Coello, 2010).

A considerable amount of literature has explored design principles aimed to address inclusivity and foster social interaction. Notable work includes Ray Oldenburg's "Third Place", "Design for Inclusivity: A Practical Guide to Accessible, Innovative, and User-Centered Design" by Roger Coleman and "The Inclusive City: Design Solutions for Buildings, Neighborhoods, and Urban Spaces" by Susan Goltsman and Daniel Iacofano. These sources will be reviewed in order to distill relevant design principles to be ultimately implemented when designing the public condenser.

8

The strategies

(Architectural strategies for inclusivity in marginalized neighborhoods?)

Across different literature many architectural strategies have been investigated and proven to be effective addressing both inclusivity and social cohesion. One prominent strategy that this research aims to focus on is food-centered strategies. Community kitchens and food-centered initiatives have been proven very successful fostering social cohesion and inclusivity. By creating opportunities for cultural exchange and interaction across diverse groups, this strategy is vital targeting xenophobia. This impact is visible in a study done in Lebanon to investigate how the social connection between Syrian refugees and the host community can be strengthened amid rising xenophobic and hatred attitudes towards Syrian refuges. The study shows that community kitchens can serve as promising social welfare and public health strategies to alleviate food insecurity and enhance social cohesion among refugees and impoverished host communities in Lebanon (Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Food-centered strategies hold particular relevance in the case of Bispebjerg. Both the host Danish community and the immigrant communities have deep-rooted traditions in food-centered activities and feasts. According to Mainland en Batey (2018), Viking feasts were not merely occasions for indulgence; they played a crucial role in strengthening community bonds and honoring the gods. Major feasts celebrated seasonal transitions and significant events, such as victories in battle or successful harvests. Similarly, Stephenson (2013) notes that Middle Eastern and Arab hospitality, deeply embedded in the so-called "Abrahamic legacy," places food at its cornerstone, playing a pivotal role in hospitality rituals across the Arab and Middle Eastern world. Besides governmental policies, literally building on this commonality, the public condenser with food-centered activities could bridge the host community and the immigrant community, strengthening societal bonds and moving people from fear to feast.

Expected results

The research aims to provide:

- In-depth understanding of Xenophobia, both etymologically and its mani festation in the public realm.

- Spatial architectural characteristics that influence social interactions (lay out and materiality).

- Research on a food-centered architectural strategy to be Applied in Bis peberg's Public condenser.

Ultimately, contributing to the general discourse of xenophobia and social inclu-siveness in today's diverse society.

Appendix 1

Source: https://cards.algoreducation.com/en/content/CwTCQ-3i/viking-feasts-norse-culture

Viking feasts were integral to Norse culture, serving as grand communal celebrations with social, political, and religious significance. These gatherings often lasted several days and were marked by an abundance of food, drink, and entertainment (Mainland en Batey, 2018).

Appendix 2

Source: https://cards.algoreducation.com/en/content/CwTCQ-3i/viking-feasts-norse-culture

Food holds a central role in Arabic Middle Eastern culture, serving as a symbol of hospitality, community, and tradition. Sharing meals is a deeply rooted practice that fosters social connections and strengthens familial and communal bonds. From everyday gatherings to significant celebrations, food is often at the heart of hospitality rituals, reflecting generosity and cultural heritage (Stephenson, 2013).

Literature

Admin-Euro. (2022, November 1). Could the current strict Danish migration policy serve as an example for the EU, or does it undermine a common EU migration approach? *Edinburgh Europa Institute.* https://europa.sps.ed.ac.uk/2022/01/19/could-the-current-strict-danish-migration-policy-serve-as-an-example-for-the-eu-or-does-it-undermine-a-common-eu-migration-approach/

Bremer, F. (2024, September 24). Minister Faber bezoekt Denemarken: streng migratiebeleid houdt vluchtelingen buiten de deur. *RTL Nieuws & Entertainment.* https://www.rtl.nl/nieuws/artikel/5472122/strengste-migratiebeleid-van-europa-wat-minister-faber-van-denemarken-kan

Brøbech, R. L. (2020). The 2018 Ghetto Plan: The political problematization of ethnic minorities living in deprived residential areas in Denmark. *Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet.* https://muep.mau.se/handle/2043/32302

Coello, L. (2010). 1. The choice in policies: Assimilation, Integration and Multiculturalism. In *Amsterdam University Press eBooks* (pp. 15–20). https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048521500-002

Coleman, R., Clarkson, J., Dong, H., & Cassim, J. (2007). *Design for Inclusivity: A Practical Guide to Accessible, Innovative and User-Centred Design.* http://publications.eng.cam.ac.uk/324750/

European Commission. (2020, November 18). *Denmark: Experiences of ethnic discrimination.* European Commission. https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/denmark-experiences-ethnic-discrimination_en

Hervik, P. (2015). Xenophobia and nativism. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 796–801).

Ibrahim, N., Honein-AbouHaidar, G., & Jomaa, L. (2019). Perceived impact of community kitchens on the food security of Syrian refugees and kitchen workers in Lebanon: Qualitative evidence in a displacement context. *PLOS ONE*, 14(1), e0210814. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0210814

Lovecraft, H. P. (1927). *Supernatural horror in literature.*

Mainland, I., & Batey, C. (2018). The nature of the feast: Commensality and the politics of consumption in Viking Age and Early Medieval Northern Europe. *World Archaeology*, 50(5), 781–803. https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2019.1578260

Oldenburg, R. (2001). *Celebrating the Third Place: Inspiring Stories about the "Great Good Places" at the Heart of Our Communities.* https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA54752127

O'Sullivan, F. (2020, March 12). How Denmark's "ghetto list" is ripping apart migrant communities. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/11/how-denmarks-ghetto-list-is-ripping-apart-migrant-communities

Nielsen, R. S., Beckman, A. W., Blach, V. E. M., & Andersen, H. T. (2016). *DIVERCITIES: Dealing with Urban Diversity: The case of Copenhagen. Aalborg University's Research Portal*. https://vbn.aau.dk/en/publications/divercities-dealing-with-urban-diversity-the-case-of-copenhagen

Pattee, F. L., & Lovecraft, H. P. (1946). Supernatural horror in literature. *American Literature*, 18(2), 175. https://doi.org/10.2307/2920881

Peterie, M., & Neil, D. (2019). Xenophobia towards asylum seekers: A survey of social theories. *Journal of Sociology*, 56(1), 23–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783319882526

Sandrin, P. (2020). The rise of right-wing populism in Europe: A psychoanalytical contribution. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 227–239). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54895-7_14

Stephenson, M. L. (2013). Deciphering 'Islamic hospitality': Developments, challenges and opportunities. *Tourism Management*, 40, 155–164. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.05.002

Strzyyska, W. (2022, October 19). 'Zero asylum seekers': Denmark forces refugees to return to Syria. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/25/zero-asylum-seekers-denmark-forces-refugees-to-return-to-syria

The Segregated City – A Nordic overview. (2019). Nordic Council of Ministers. https://doi.org/10.6027/Nord2019-007

Thompson, C. (2009). The inclusive city: Design solutions for buildings, neighborhoods, and urban spaces, edited by Susan Goltsman and Daniel Lacofano. *Landscape Architecture*, 99(7), 108. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6590111

Tulumello, S. (2015). From "Spaces of Fear" to "Fearscapes". *Space and Culture*, 18(3), 257–272. https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331215579716