

# WE FEEL SAFE UNSAFE

AN EXPLORATION OF PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES WITH A  
GENDER PERSPECTIVE TO ENCOURAGE URBAN SAFETY.

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**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of safety for women has been widely recognized as one of the key aspects of equal and socially inclusive cities. Many cities have already contributed and promoted work for safer cities, however, this is an evolving issue that continues to require extensive development work, especially considering women's perspectives. This entails recognizing that these urban safety issues do not affect all women equally, but rather are a construct of many factors that depend on the social affiliation and characteristics of the individual. This thesis thus aims to answer the question: How and in what ways can spatial planning with a gender perspective encourage the feeling of safety for all?

This is explored by examining existing spatial approaches to safety and by conducting a case study in the district Biskopsgården in Gothenburg. Through various conversations and observations during night walks and community meetings, it was feasible to focus on women's perceptions, experiences, and needs. Furthermore, by conducting an analysis of the different actors in the area and the work already done for safety, it was possible to identify the general focus of the safety debate in the area, what is missing and how spatial planners could contribute to it.

The methods show that current efforts to promote safety focus on the crime prevention and the behavioral patterns of assailants, which severely restricts residents access to urban resources and thus has a profound impact on women and other marginalized groups. Furthermore, the strategies used to prevent crime often have the opposite effect and rather contribute to making people less safe. The question arises as to what planners can focus on beyond what is being done today to productively engage in the safety debate. As a result, the thesis expresses that safety needs to be considered in a broader context with interrelated factors such as access to services and the fulfillment of basic human needs. For spatial planners, this means engaging at the local level and treating residents as experts in order to develop effective strategies that do not exacerbate their sense of feeling unsafe. Combined with aspects of existing planning approaches, this can give direction towards safer and more inclusive cities.

*Keywords: women, intersectionality, urban safety, fear, spatial planning*



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the topic and foci of this thesis. It provides a brief summary of the background and presents the purpose and objectives of this work. Along with the research questions, it includes a brief summary of the contents of each chapter and gives an overview of the methods used in this thesis and its overall process.



**BACKGROUND**

Modern European Cities were largely designed by men and for men, generating urban designs, which exclude the needs of women and their access to economic and social development. As urban researcher Vania Ceccato argues "we are continuing building and designing cities that follow patriarchal norms of behavior, which do not consider the needs and the rights of women and other specific groups of our society". (Ceccato, 2018)

Various feminist theorists in the 1970s began to analyze those gender gaps within the urban environment. Yet, despite many enlightening analyses and critiques, gender inequalities remain. Thus, urban planners and architects today must challenge these norms and design with incorporating gender into planning. Including a gender perspective into urban planning when dealing with the matter of safety is particularly important. This is not only because of the differences in women's and men's perception of the urban environment but also in regard to differences of perception among women themselves. (Ceccato and Dyme ń, 2012, p. 311)

Comprehensive research that investigates women's experiences regarding safety in the city shows that women regularly report greater fear in the urban sphere than men do. In this context, it is important to emphasize that feelings of unsafety primarily affect women and minority groups, such as members of the LGBTQ+ community, who have the least access to resources that can ensure their safety. (Day, 2011, p. 155; Fileborn, 2021, p. 37)

When you feel unsafe, you naturally start to avoid the places where you feel discomfort, however, if you cannot avoid them, you have to live in constant fear and endangerment. This in retrospect affects women's access to the city, which limits their ability to benefit from the opportunities that cities have to offer and results in discriminatory exclusion. (Visakha, 2021, p. 11)

David Harvey argues that the right to the city goes beyond the individual liberty to access of urban resources, he states it as "a right to change ourselves by changing the city". The right to the city is thus a collective right that not only enables everyone to use and access what already exists within the urban sphere, but also gives the right to create or re-create what is needed to meet everyone's needs. (Harvey, 2008, p. 23)

Various research and theories have already explored the matter of safety when it comes to urban design and designing for safety, which resulted in a variety of planning principles, guidelines and tools that are already in use today. Although they prove to be effective in some cases, they can also have negative consequences and lead to social exclusion. (Shehayeb, 2008, p. 111)  
What is often missing in these approaches is the recognition of the different perceptions and experiences of women, girls and other minorities in the urban environment and the differences among themselves, but also the lack of recognition of the fact that safety is influenced by many factors. (TramLab, 2020)

Safety is a human right, a human need and as urban researcher Kristen Day argues "safety involves feeling welcome and accepted in a setting". (Day, 2011, p. 155) According to urbanist Jane Jacobs, "the bedrock attribute of a successful city is that people need to feel personally safe and secure on the street among strangers", which illustrates that in designing a safer urban environment we need to include the individual perspectives and perceptions of different people in our design process. (Jacobs, 1961, p. 30)

Making cities and human settlements safe is one of the main aims reflected in Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda. (UN-Habitat, 2020) As architects and urban planners, we must therefore advocate for safe, healthy, inclusive and secure environments in cities and settlements so that all people can live, work and participate in urban life without fear of violence and intimidation, by taking into account the perspectives of women, girls and other marginalized groups.

**PURPOSE AND AIM**

This thesis aims to explore how urban design, incorporating a gender perspective, can promote a sense of safety in the urban realm. It also aims to question aspects of the general safety debate, and highlight aspects that seem to be overlooked but are important to take into account for the actual promotion of safety in urban planning.

By exploring a particular site and reflecting critically, the thesis aims to encourage spatial planners to not only incorporate a gender perspective into the planning approach, but also to productively engage in the safety debate, and thereby promote a safer environment for all.

This work is directed to the various planners who deal with spatial issues. Thus, in this thesis, the term spatial planner is used as a general term that refers to urban planners, urban designers, architects, and other professionals who deal with the built environment.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

→ **RQ1:**

How and in what ways can spatial planning with a gender perspective encourage the feeling of safety for all?

→ **RQ2:**

What can planners focus on beyond what is being done today to productively engage in the safety debate?

## DELIMITATIONS

This thesis recognizes that the issue of safety is related to much broader and more complex societal problems that are not addressed in detail in this work.

Safety is a complex issue that is a construct of societal structures and institutional responses. It is therefore also an issue that cannot be solved, but rather encouraged, and requires the participation and collaboration of a wide range of actors. This thesis therefore outlines and reflects on the prospects from a spatial planning perspective, recognizing that these concerns are also a matter of, and require, policy and larger institutional change.

## FRAMEWORK

The first chapter, *Introduction*, explains the background of this master thesis. It describes the main objectives and purpose, as well as the theory and methods on which the thesis is based on. It also provides an insight of the overall process of the thesis.

The second chapter, *Women, safety and urban space*, illustrates the foundation and thus describes the background of this thesis in more detail. This chapter critically reflects on how the urban environment has been planned without taking into account women's everyday experiences and the impact it has on their access to the urban sphere, by drawing on theories from the field of feminist urban planning. It then addresses the universal issue of safety and how fear affects women's behavior and their access to urban resources.

The third chapter, *Safety approaches in urban design*, examines various safety discourses in urban planning. It presents the historical context and the theories on which the approaches are based on. Through the research, two main directions could be highlighted, both of them based on Jane Jacobs' theories, which can be used to understand and analyze the main foci in today's safety discourses. In addition, this chapter critically reflects on how the topic of gender is brought into this discourse and how it influences today's safety debate.

Chapter 4, *Case study, Biskopsgården* provides an overview of the district's background. This is followed by a description of the researcher's position, describing the case study process and how it defined the specific methods used in the work. This is followed by a more detailed description of these methods used to study the area. The chapter then presents the research findings, which include women's experiences and stories, their perceptions of safety, and the work already being done for safety in the area.

The fifth chapter *Suggestions*, draws on the research findings to reflect on the general role of the spatial planner and how and with what focus planners can promote safety. Based on the results, suggestions are presented as to what can be done in Biskopsgården to meet the identified needs in order to encourage safety. Finally, a vision is drawn from the findings that should reflect the perspectives and needs of residents in the area and critically review the current focus of the safety strategy in the area.

Chapter 6 *Conclusion*, summarizes the findings of the literature studies and the case study, emphasizing their salient aspects. This is followed by a response to the research questions of this thesis.

## METHODS AND PROCESS

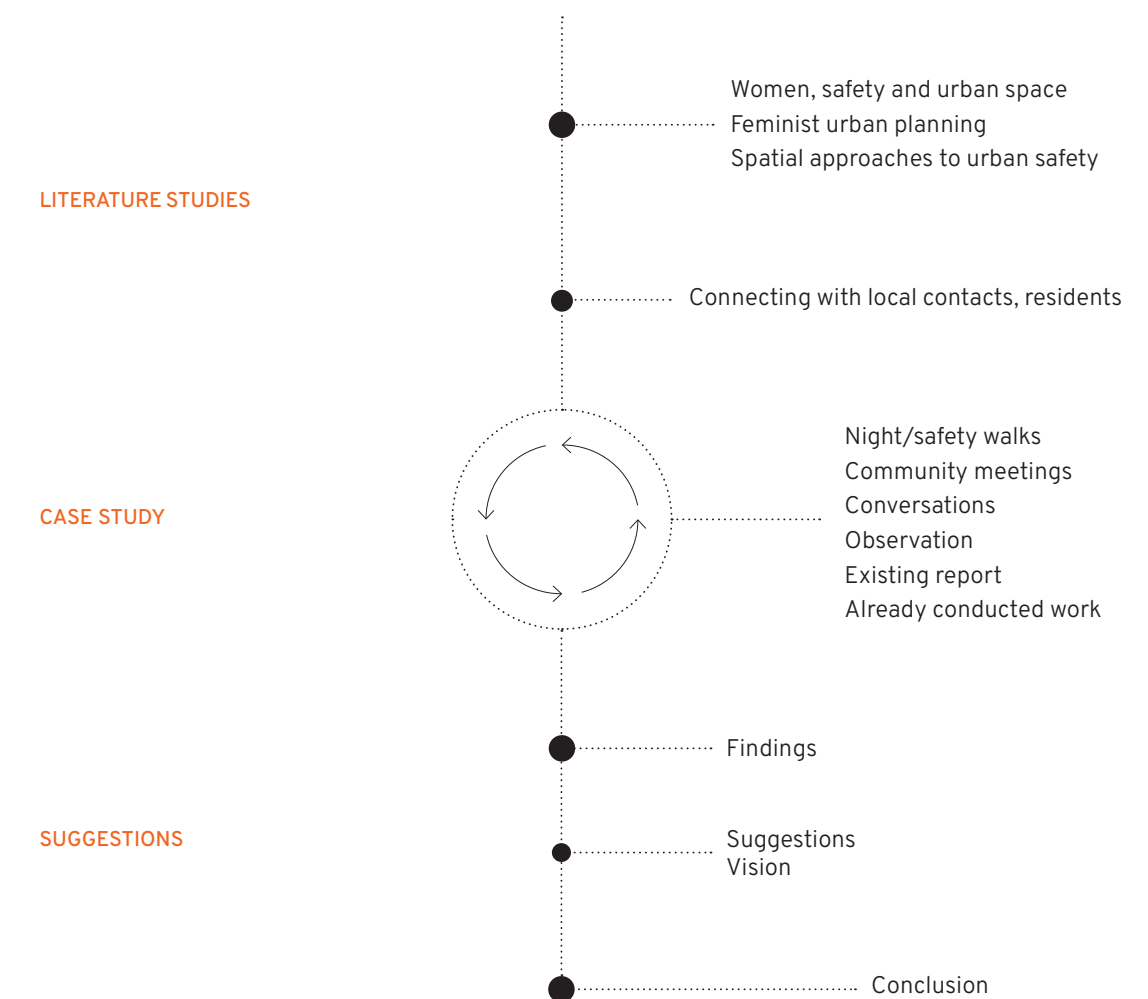
The master thesis is developed using two main methods:

### → Literature Studies:

Comprises the exploration and analysis of feminist theory and its relationship to safety and urban space, providing the foundation for the positioning, the approach, and background of the research. The study and exploration of existing theories and related existing spatial approaches used today formed the basis for positioning and the approach as a spatial planner and provided direction for certain key aspects and foci.

### → Case study:

Includes the analysis of a specific area (Biskopsgården) conducted using a combination of methods, which are described in more detail in Chapter 4. The methods that were defined in the area include participation in safety/night walks, participation in community meetings and its resulting conversations and observations, analysis of the actors in the area and the work that is already being done for safety and the analysis of an existing report. The objective was to understand the different experiences and perceptions of women's safety in the area and to evaluate what their needs are and what could be done from a planner's perspective to encourage safety.



## KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

### **Feminist urban planning**

*Feminist urban planning* is a critical planning approach that aims to consider the needs of different groups in urban space and its further development. Using this perspective means focusing primarily on women, girls, and other marginalized groups and their experiences in the context of urban planning. (Visakha, 2021, p. 33) The thesis also describes this concept with the use of a gender perspective in the planning approach.

### **Intersectionality**

According to the *Oxford dictionary of English*, *Intersectionality* is defined as: "The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise." (Stevenson, 2010)

### **Urban safety**

*Urban Safety* describes "the extent to which a city's inhabitants are able to live, work and participate in urban life without fear of bodily harm or intimidation. It should be viewed as a complex set of ever-changing and interconnected problems related to: physical built environment, socioeconomic practices, systems (governmental, service provision, environmental)" (Roberts, 2018)

### **Physical aspects and spatial conditions**

When this work addresses *physical aspects and spatial conditions*, it refers to conditions such as lighting, maintenance, clear visibility, accessibility, among other factors.

### **Spatial planner**

In this thesis, the term *spatial planner* is used as a common notion to refer to a variety of planners who deal with spatial concerns. The term thereby includes architects, urban planners, urban designers, and other professionals concerned with the built environment.

## 2. WOMEN, SAFETY AND URBAN SPACE

This chapter outlines the inequalities that women face in urban space and addresses the need for the concept of intersectionality in a spatial planning approach. In addition, the chapter covers the concept of safety and safety in urban space. Finally, it illustrates how the perception of fear reinforces existing inequalities and thereby influence women's behavioral patterns and access to the city.

Cities are full of barriers that exclude women both culturally and physically. Many designs of public spaces, buildings, transportation systems, neighborhoods and housing adversely affect women's everyday life. Additionally various laws, regulations, informal practices, cultural attitudes and a lack of awareness and education create conditions, which reinforce an unequal position of women in the built environment. (Weisman, 1999, p. 2)

Modern cities have been planned so that the various functions of our lives, such as homes, stores, factories and offices, are located in separate areas. A segregation that affects women more than men, because our lives have never been so neatly divided between different areas of work and household as those of men. It was also extremely unusual for the architect to consider the needs and comments of the client who would actually be using the buildings. This lack of consideration is evident at all levels of decision-making, from the design of kitchens in public housing or public buildings that are made inaccessible to people with strollers or wheelchairs, to the entire relationship between home, workplace, and other facilities, which may affect women more than men. It is apparent that women's perspectives have not been included in the planning processes. (Matrix Organization, 1984, pp. 3-4)

As more and more married women joined the paid labor force in the 1950s, reproduction work, remained socially expected to be taken care of by employed mothers. Being employed and responsible for domestic work makes it impossible for women to improve their status both economically and in the home. (Hayden, 1980, p. 176) As Hayden states "Women cannot improve their status in the home unless their overall economic position in society is altered; women cannot improve their status in the paid labor force unless their domestic responsibilities are altered." (Hayden, 1980, p. 176) This has formed a problem which requires a solution that overcomes the traditional divisions between household and market economy, the private dwelling and the workplace.

In order to understand how urban space affects different residents, it might be useful to draw on the concept of the different spheres of activities that meet their needs in the city and determine people's daily lives. The activities are generated in a specific area (neighborhood, city, region) and at different times. The different spheres include:

The **productive sphere**, which includes paid economic activities.

The **reproductive sphere** unpaid labor/domestic work which includes personal and family care and other domestic tasks which include general housekeeping and cleaning, food preparation and washing.

The **personal sphere**, includes activities for the personal and intellectual development of each individual and can be developed through leisure, sports, social life etc.

The **political sphere**, which includes activities related to political participation, community formation, and other actions essential to democratic procedures. (Ciocoletto and Collectiu Punt6, 2014, p. 2)

In practice, all activities and domains are interrelated, and the person's gender and associated social roles play an important role in determining the types of activities the person performs on a daily basis. A person who takes care of other people will develop a more complex everyday life because of a greater number of activities than people who only takes care of themselves. These inequalities become visible in the use of space.

If a person is only engaged in the productive sphere, which corresponds to the traditional male gender role, their mobility pattern within the city is linear, as it involves only a linear route from home to work or another activity. However, when a person is active in two spheres such as the productive and reproductive spheres, which corresponds to the traditional female gender role, their movement becomes more complex and polygonal due to the multiple, different responsibilities.

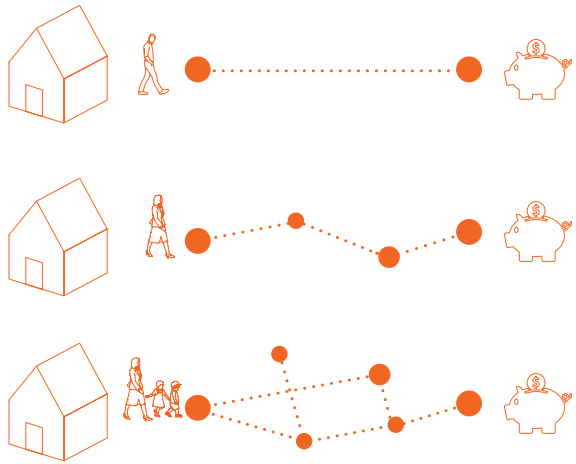
This pattern of movement, which describes a series of short trips around town, such as leaving home, taking children to day-care, shopping for groceries, going to work, and returning home, is often referred to as "trip-chaining". This highlights some of the differences and inequalities in the use of urban space and how they relate to social norms and a person's gender. (Ciocoletto and Collectiu Punt6, 2014)

In the second feminist movement of the 1970s, feminists primarily criticized the built environment as the product of patriarchal domination resulting from the division of labor between the sexes, which under capitalism had historically become a "public sphere" of production and a "private sphere" of reproduction. (Kuhnert et al., 2021, pp. 1-3) According to Carole Patemen, this dichotomy between the public and the private is the central critique of nearly two centuries of feminist literature and ultimately what the feminist movement is all about. (Benn and Gaus, 1983; Pateman, 1987, p. 281)

One of the texts that describes feminist visions of that time that is still widely cited is the article: "What would a non-sexist city be like?" which was written by the architect and urban historian Dolores Hayden. In her paper she draws a vision on how a just city could look like and how the associated gender division of labor, dependencies and conventions can be dismantled by developing collective infrastructures for reproductive activities. (Kuhnert et al., 2021, pp. 1-3)

In the 1980s, there were numerous feminist demands in the field of architecture and urban planning. These included the politicization of housing and the consideration of women's needs in the planning of living spaces and on an urban planning scale, the recognition of everyday activities, a mix of uses and more offers of a spatial concentration of family-oriented infrastructure, a reduction of areas with a low sense of safety in public space, and a change from a car-oriented city to a city of short distances. (Kuhnert et al., 2021, pp. 1-3)

Many of these demands and themes of feminist critics are still relevant today. Thus, when planning processes and assumptions continue to be based on outdated social norms rooted in paternalistic gender roles, the result are exclusionary, hostile cities. Hence, incorporating women's perspectives into urban planning and design will not only lead to more inclusive cities, but will also challenge social norms and alter women's overall role in the city. Thus this thesis follows a gender approach to architecture and urban design.



## ► Safety and violence against women

When working with a gender approach to architecture and urban design, it is critical to address the issue of violence against women and girls. The way it is addressed and the understanding of safety that underlies institutional responses are important factors in mediating the gender approach to the city. (Visakha, 2021, p. 10)

According to the European Union and Agency for fundamental rights in Europe "One in three women (33%) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since she was 15 years old." (European Union and Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015, p. 21).

Women are victims of crime both in the public and private sphere. However, the primary association of women's fear within public spaces hides the fact that women are more likely to be victimized in private and domestic settings. (e.g. Gordon and Riger 1989; Valentine 1992 in Day, 2011) Yet, research shows that women are more fearful in public than in private spaces. (Ceccato and Nalla, 2020) According to Gill Valentine, this is the result of the traditional gendered division of space, where women have learned that they do not belong in public spaces and that these are reserved exclusively for men. The home is perceived as the place where a woman belongs and where she can feel safe. (Valentine, 1989)

The lack of safety or perception of safety in urban spaces significantly affects women's use of the city. Women's fear of crime is often much greater than the actual possibility of violence. However, the cost of this perception of fear is extremely high and has a significant impact on women's access to the city and the resources provided by the city. (Visakha, 2021, p. 22)

Thus, this thesis focuses on women's perceptions of safety and how they influence women's access to urban space. As mentioned earlier this thesis follows a gender approach to architecture and urban design and is guided by feminist urban planning. Feminist urban planning is a critical planning approach that aims to consider the needs of different groups in urban space and its further development. Working with this perspective means focusing primarily on women, girls, and other marginalized groups and their experiences in the context of urban planning. When doing this, it is critical to apply an intersectional lens. (Visakha, 2021, p. 33)

The concept of intersectionality and why it is important to apply it in the context of urban safety will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

## INTERSECTIONALITY

The perception of safety depends on a variety of factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, income, etc., and are the result of an interplay of individual characteristics. In terms of access to the city, fear and low security particularly affect women, who have the least access to resources to ensure their safety. (Day, 2011, p. 150)

Feminist researchers increasingly recognized that the views and experiences of white middle-class women that dominated the women's movement in the 1980s did not reflect the diverse experiences among women themselves. (Day, 2011, pp. 150–151) Regardless of the nature of one's individual characteristics, studies and research in the past have treated these aspects of an individual's social identity as distinct and different. Thus, it is essential to consider the concept of intersectionality in future safety debates. (Ceccato and Nalla, 2020, p. 267)

The concept of intersectionality refers to the interconnectedness and interdependence of various forms of social oppression, which include gender inequality and sexism, as well as racialization or racism and discrimination based on social origin. This notion of multiple discrimination, referring to "race, class, and gender", was taken up by the Black feminist movement as early as the 1950s until it was more widely recognized in the 1970s and defined as intersectionality in the late 1980s. (Kuhnert et al., 2021, pp. 1–3)

Since then intersectionality has been used in feminist research on fear of crime to examine how different aspects of social identity interact in different ways to determine the nature and geography of fear. (e.g. Day, 1999; Pain, 2001 in Day, 2011, p. 268)

According to authors Nicole Kalms and Gene Bawden, an approach that focuses on using a methodology with an intersectional and diverse lens will have an impact on the gendered experiences of women, girls, and non-binary people. Thus, applying a gender perspective to one's design process requires the inclusion of intersectional aspects. (Kalms and Bawden, 2021, p. 104)

Recent studies in the field of urban planning and design show that working with a gender perspective and the concept of intersectionality in creating an equal city not only increases the safety of women in a city but improves safety for all. (Berry, 2021, p. 1)

To understand the low perception of safety and how it impacts women's access to the city and its interrelationships, the following chapter examines the concept of safety and its facets, as well as the relationship between this perception of safety and the physical and social conditions of the environment.

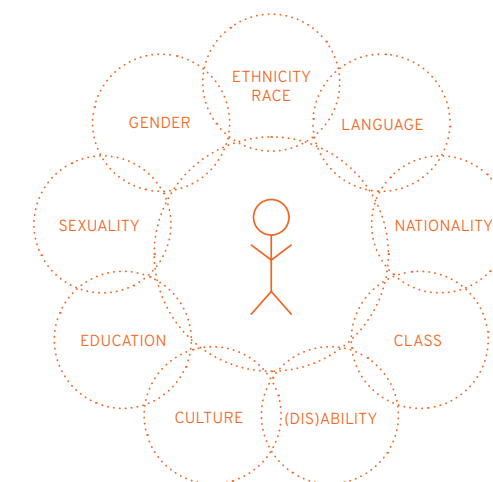


Illustration.  
INTERSECTIONALITY  
DIAGRAM  
(illustrated by author)



THE CONCEPT OF SAFETY

The concept of safety can be defined differently in various contexts. Abraham Maslow has defined safety as a basic human need. The Maslow's pyramid of needs shows the layers of basic human needs and their relationship to each other. A need can only be fulfilled when the lowest need is satisfied. Here safety is a secondary need. Safety requires factors such as: personal security, employment, resources, health, property, and freedom from fear to fulfill this human need. This illustrates that feeling safe and being safe depends on many other factors and is a construct of aspects rather than a unifying factor. (Maslow, 1954)

According to UN habitat the notion of safety has two different dimensions the *actual* and the *perceived*. The actual dimension refers to the risk of becoming a victim, and the perceived dimension refers to people's perception of insecurity through the lens of fear and anxiety. (UN-Habitat, 2020, p. 10)

There are different ways in which people of different demographics perceive safety, which is highly dependent on individual characteristics and the characteristics of the environment. There are a variety of measures or factors associated with this dimension, such as sense of belonging, right to inhabit a place, social cohesion, access to services, or feeling accepted and welcome in an environment. This thesis aims to focus on these aspects.

It is important to differentiate between perception of safety and perception of risk or fear, since they are commonly used within the literature mentioned in this thesis. According to Joshua C. Hinkle there is little consent between these concepts in terms of definitions and measurements taken in research, which ultimately leads to different results. (Hinkle, 2014) Perceptions of safety and perceptions of fear are two different concepts. Safety, as mentioned earlier, refers to a basic human need, whereas fear is one of the six basic emotions which is why the perception of fear is more instinctive than the recognition of feeling safe. (Ekman, 1992) Fear of crime is not a uniform thing, but rather an experience or series of experiences that are highly individual. (Lee, 2009) Regardless of their different understandings there are various factors that correlate both concepts such as: gender, age, socio-economic status, prior victimization, ethnicity, media, neighborhood factors, lack of neighborhood cohesion, specific locations and global insecurity.

Hence, in order to fully understand the factors and correlations it is important to consider both the perception of safety and the perception of fear within this thesis.



2. MASLOW'S PYRAMID OF NEEDS (adapted from Maslow (1954))

SAFETY IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

The notion of safety in an urban context is critical to achieve urban (long-term) sustainability. The feeling of safety in a neighborhood or urban environment is a crucial aspect of, for example, social sustainability. Factors such as the earlier mentioned sense of belonging, social cohesion, or a feeling of being accepted in an environment can only be achieved through the fulfilment of basic human needs, which is a primary criterion before any positive social activity can take place in the urban environment. (Dempsey et al., 2011)

To feel safe in urban space, one must be able to live free from danger, but also have the possibility to move freely, which is essential for a sense of belonging in the public realm. (UN-Habitat, 2020, p. 12) Yet, as noted earlier, this ability is often denied to women, girls, and people who identify across the spectrum of gender and sexuality in countries around the world. (Berry, 2021, p. 1)

It has been shown that due to segregation, economic inequality, gender inequality, and the loss of positive social cohesion, crime and violence rates have increased in cities around the world, leading to urban space being perceived as unsafe and insecure. (Moser, 2012, p. 437)

Safety is one of the most crucial aspects of public space. A low perception of safety in a space has a strong impact on the use and accessibility of the public realm. Research shows that various

environmental aspects can influence the safety of public places, however it is one's perception of safety that plays an important role in making a place seem safe or unsafe to people. (Costamagna, Lind and Stjernström, 2019, p. 136) Thus, the way cities are planned and designed has a major effect on the safety of its users. (Ceccato, 2016)

The access and right of individuals to safe public spaces is highly contingent on the norms and structures of society and policy, and whether they encourage or restrict moving freely without barriers or feeling unsafe. Thus, the perception of feeling unsafe or the risk of being victimized are not just a matter of age and gender, but rather the result of a confluence of a variety of characteristics. (Ceccato and Nalla, 2020, p. 6)

This suggests a need to address the perceptions of safety among people with limited access to resources in order to make urban spaces safer. According to urban researcher Carolyn Whitzman focusing on excluded groups may result in safer cities for all. She thereby notes, that for cities to be empowering, safer, more secure urban design must be linked to three rights associated with public space: the right to social encounter, the right to be recognized as a distinct group with different needs and resources, and the right to community or better access to community resources. (Fincher and Iveson, 2008 in Whitzman, 2011, p. 671)

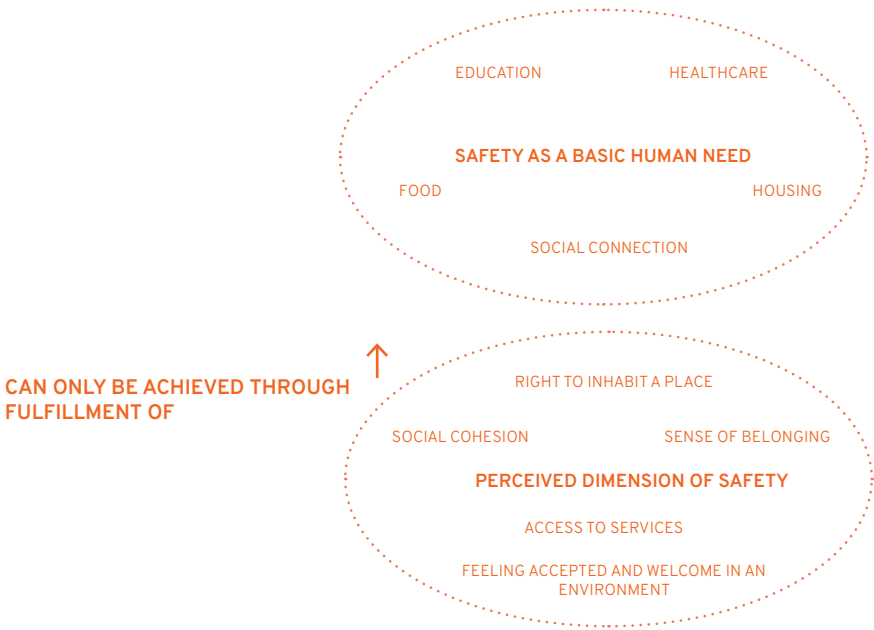


Illustration. SAFETY DIAGRAM (illustrated by author)

Extensive research has already highlighted the differences between women and men in terms of perceptions of fear and low security, and their impact. The results of these reports show that women experience and feel more fear than men in urban areas. Women's fear in urban settings is related to many factors, including previous victimization, women's feelings of physical weakness, warnings about women's vulnerability, and especially women's fear of sexual assault. (e.g. Gordon and Riger 1989 in Day, 2011)

In the 1980s and 1990s, studies and surveys of fear of crime and violence cited cities, night-time, and strangers as major factors that trigger threat and fear in women. The data collected also showed that women are more likely to experience violence in private spaces, such as the home and workplace, from people they know than in public spaces. Whereas men are more often victims of crime and violence in public spaces, such as assaults or robberies. Yet women consistently report being afraid of strangers in public spaces. Rather than deeper analyzing this disparity it was labelled the "paradox of women's fear" and women's feelings were described as "irrational" and "unexplained". (Kern, 2020, p. 144)

When viewed from a feminist perspective that takes into account women's individual views and experiences, one might not reach such conclusions. As Carolyn Whitzman notes, women fear rape the most and men fear robbery the most. While robbery is a bad thing that can happen to you, rape is even worse. (Whitzman, 2019, p. 92) One aspect that is not brought to the forefront in these surveys, and which refutes the labelling, is that sexual violence creates a heightened sense of fear and that women who have already experienced assault are likely to have an increased fear of future assault. Moreover, violence against women is highly underreported, which obscures the actual extent of the assaults. Another aspect to consider are experiences like catcalling or sexual harassment that happen to women on an everyday basis. These experiences not only lead to greater fear, but also cause women to feel objectified and sexualized and that they simply do not belong in certain spaces. (Kern, 2020, p. 146)

These social norms shape women's behavior throughout their lives about where they should not be, especially when they are alone or out at night, or else they risk being harassed or assaulted. Such social structures make women feel that they are responsible for any harm that might happen to them. (Gardiner 1989; 1994 in Day, 2011, p. 154)

Other factors that increase fear and are important to highlight are reports in the news media, on television and in the movies, or negative experiences and stories from people around you. If we consider all these factors, we can definitely conclude that women's fear is quite rational. (Whitzman, 2019, p. 146)

In her book *The Feminist City* Leslie Kern asks the question: "Why is fear so deeply embedded, socially and culturally?" (Kern, 2020, p. 147) Feminist researchers state that "fear functions as a form of social control over women's use of urban environments". (e.g. Deegan 1987; Valentine 1989 in Day, 2011, p. 154) Thus the low perception of safety affects women's daily lives, limiting their personal freedom and access to public and private spaces in the city associated with employment, health, education, political institutions, and recreational opportunities. (Moser, 2012, p. 437)

All these factors and aspects contribute to the perpetuation of a heteropatriarchal capitalist system, that benefits men as a group and continues to bind women to the private space of the home, responsible for domestic labor within the nuclear family. (Kern, 2020, p. 148)

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Various studies show that women change their behavior or use other tactics to deal with fear of crime in the urban realm. EU study found that "four out of 10 women (40 %) avoid public places where there are no other people around, and a similar percentage (37 %) deliberately avoid taking certain streets or going to certain areas for fear of being physically or sexually assaulted." (European Union and Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015, p. 139)

Here it is important to repeat that, women with fewer financial, educational, personal resources, etc., are reported to feel the most unsafe and are the ones that tend to change and adapt the way they move in urban spaces the most. As Margaret Gordon and Stephanie Riger write, women often curtail necessary activities in their daily lives for fear of crime, such as staying home at night, which has real consequences from an economic perspective. It prevents them from e.g., attending evening classes which would lead to more education and higher paying jobs. Taking jobs or job offers that might have increased their income, going grocery shopping at night, visiting friends, or socializing. Many women isolate themselves in their own homes to protect themselves. (Gordon and Riger, 1991, pp. 16–17; Kern, 2020, p. 150)

Some might not have access to affordable housing if it's located in an unsafe area, whereas some women might not even have the possibility or chance to choose a safer residential area. Many women are taking different or longer walking routes home or getting off at distant public transport stops to ensure to be alone. (Kern, 2020, pp. 150–151) However, in some cases, fear becomes a primary motivation to take action and engage in or initiate activities that make it more difficult for crime and victimization to occur and rather empowers women to claim their space. (Jackson and Gray, 2010; Ceccato and Nalla, 2020, p. 269)

Vania Ceccato and Mahesh K. Nalla in their Book *Crime and Fear in Public Places* (2020) draw to the concept of *functional* and *dysfunctional fear* from Jackson and Gray (2009). Functional fear is the condition that causes someone to take precautions and engage in activities that reduce their fear and risk of victimization. With dysfunctional fear, on the other hand, the fear has a negative impact, so much so that the fear limits the quality of life, for example, by limiting mobility or avoiding public spaces.

Ceccato and Nalla mention here that in some cases, like place-time avoidance, it can be viewed positively and can be classified as functional fear. (Ceccato and Nalla, 2020, p. 24,269)

Fear in regard to actual violence and gendered social effects of fear have led many women to push back in various ways. Feminist movements initiated protests to fight for the rights of women and other marginalized groups and to reclaim urban space. Likewise, actors from various fields, including urban planners, architects, feminist geographers, etc., have made some progress in encouraging safer cities. Within urban design, changes have been made to improve lighting, create better sight lines in public spaces, and create easily navigable routes to neighborhoods and commercial areas. Some cities place great emphasis on the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV), emergency call boxes, or alarm buttons to make urban areas safer and reduce crime. These hi-tech devices are also used extensively to combat the problem of harassment and assault on public transport. In Japan, cities set up separate train compartments for women, children, handicapped people and caregivers at certain times of the day. However, all of these tactics are debateable as they do not require behavioral change, but rather exclude women. Moreover, it is questionable whether they can promote safety or reduce fears. (Kern, 2020, pp. 153–154)

To make cities safer, many crime prevention strategies aim at control and containment. Cities often use simple strategies such as security cameras, anti-homeless spikes, car locks, or other technologies, as these paternal surveillance approaches are often a culturally normative response to insecurity. However, such measures do not necessarily make a space safer and may actually have the opposite effect. These strategies restrict and focus on individual behavior rather than making the environment more welcoming or pleasant and focusing on the people who are affected. (Myers, 2020)

It is visible that there are already several directions towards different safety discourses, but whether it focuses on the right elements is questionable. The following chapter will take a closer look at the different safety discourses within spatial planning and possible other discourses.

# 3. SAFETY APPROACHES IN URBAN DESIGN

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the physical conditions of the environment can have a great impact on the perception of safety. This chapter will look more closely on the historical context of spatial planning for safety, the theoretical context and the resulting spatial planning approaches that aim to design a safer environment.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Historically there have been various responses to the rise of crime and against fear within spatial planning. According to Nan Ellin, notions of fear and a low sense of security have existed since the early days of settlements, and the association with urbanism went hand in hand with the need to protect oneself. She also notes that fear is related to changes in social structures and ideals. The transition from ancient to modern times marks a significant societal change, as it was accompanied by changes in the social and power structure, from feudalism to capitalism, but also by a new perception of the world and thus new causes of fear. These social and structural changes had significant effects on space, especially on the spatial division within the home, such as the dichotomy between public and private spheres mentioned earlier. (Ellin and Blakely, 1997, p. 13)

Modernism imagined a harmonious, ideal and homogenous society, turned its back on history and looked to the future with certainty by reconceptualizing cities and creating new utopian visions. Through the new technological opportunities, one could create ideal and orderly cities in which it was possible to live well, in contrast to the historical city. The English "Garden cities of tomorrow" (1902) by the urban planner Ebenezer

Howard or the French "The radiant city" 1935) by Le Corbusier are well known examples that represent these visions. As these modernist architectural projects failed, the idea and the quest for the good city continued, but with added fears and less certainty for the future. (Berglund-Snodgrass, 2016, p. 79)

Throughout late modernity the various architectural and urban planning responses and new visions to the many more uncertainties in society focused on creating secure and stable cities that could withstand and manage rapid societal change. This new idea of the future city was discussed according to different types of logics, which were either defined by *identity* and *tradition* or *surveillance* and *control*. The logic of *identity* and *tradition* can be linked to the architectural movements of *neo-rationalism* and *regionalism*, which were characterised by making our environment seem familiar and by the desire to reduce the sense of estrangement in the city and to create a sense of spatial and communal belonging. (Berglund-Snodgrass, 2016, p. 79)

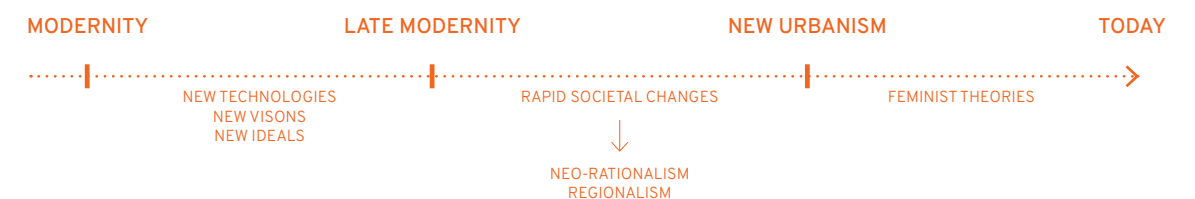


illustration.  
SAFETY APPROACHES TIMELINE  
(illustrated by author)



## THEORETICAL CONTEXT

### ► Jane Jacobs

Jane Jacob's book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* is, as she herself describes it, an "attack on current urban planning and reconstruction." The criticism is particularly directed against modern spatial planning, which generates feelings of fear and insecurity in the city. Instead, she emphasized ideas of high density cities with mixed use, low rise residential neighborhoods that allowed for *eyes on the street* (natural surveillance) enabling residents to watch their own neighborhood. She argued that this form of informal surveillance is the primary safety mechanism that can reduce crime and promote a sense of security in any street or public space. (Jacobs, 1961)

In the text "Safe Cities", the author Carolyn Whitzman writes about two streams of thought and direction on urban design and planning for safe cities that emerged in the late modern period, both of which can be traced back to Jane Jacobs theories. The first stream is very closely associated with writers such as Oscar Newman and Alice Coleman, who emphasize the idea of how design and maintenance of the built environment can control crime by restricting access to or improving surveillance of certain places. The second line of

thought emphasized Jacobs' arguments on land use and social mix in both low- and high-income areas, and the importance of treating an area's residents as experts in developing new solutions. Many of these ideas have been taken up by a generation of feminist theorists and writers on urban space. (Whitzman, 2011, p. 663)

As mentioned above Jacobs argued for informal social control instead of police as a primary safety mechanism within the urban realm. "A well-used city street is apt to be a safe street. A deserted city street is apt to be unsafe." (Jacobs, 1961, p. 34) Hence having a variety of mixed uses layed out within a street will encourage the use of space. Another quality that contributes to this informal surveillance is when shop and restaurant windows along the streets and homes are planned to have a good view of the street or public space. The third quality that a street must have in order to generate safety is a clear distinction between public and private space, a clear sense of symbolic ownership, because as Jacobs notes, public and private cannot merge in a city the way they do in suburbs. (Jacobs, 1961, p. 35)

### ► Long established approaches

Oscar Newman's "defensible spaces" approach later focused on this specific property in his work, which focused on high-crime social housing in the USA. As part of his research, he used crime records and resident surveys to analyze the specific problem areas within a neighborhood. Newman identified places with low direct visibility as places perceived as most dangerous and feared, such as corridors with sharp turns, fire escapes, laundry rooms, remote basements, circumstantial outdoor paths framed by tall bushes, among others. Spaces like parks that did not show clear ownership and were not assigned to any of the residents were also avoided. Therefore, he proposed to define territories in space more clearly by dividing large public spaces into smaller zones and assigning them to residents. (Whitzman, 2011, pp. 665–666)

In general Newman's approach suggested that a safer city can be achieved by identifying certain features within the physical environment and then making physical changes and using electronic technology such as CCTV.

In the UK, Alice Coleman's approach, which, as mentioned above, is closely linked to Oscar Newman's approach to creating safe cities, focuses on the fact that the physical appearance of the environment is highly responsible for the commission of crime and "uncivilised behavior". She blames modern building, which she calls "modern problem settlements", as the main trigger for "aberrations in civilised behavior". By this she means littering, graffiti, vandalism, pollution and family breakdown. This, according to Coleman, ultimately leads to children being taken into care as well as crime, a higher perception of fear, anxiety and physical and mental disorders that would be largely avoidable in a more socially stable environment or more traditional housing. (Coleman, 1985, pp. 2–3)

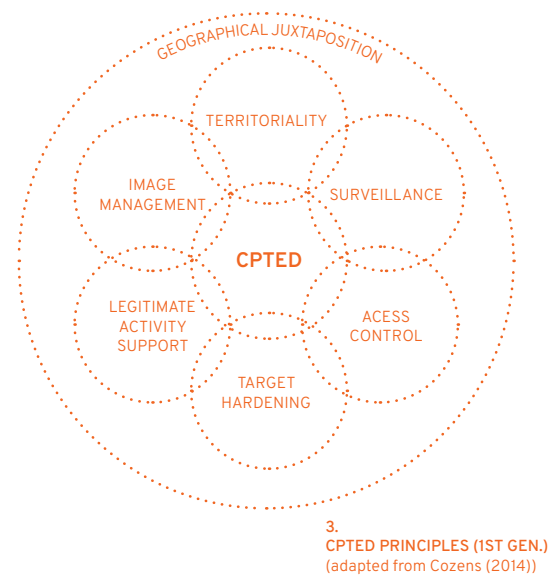
Coleman's recommendations here were that "no more flats [public housing] should be built", and that existing flats should be modified in their worst design features. For these interim modifications she suggested fencing of communal gardens and instead turning them into individual, private gardens. Other suggestions included smaller block sizes and limiting the number of dwellings per entrance by subdividing larger buildings and separating blocks of flats from each other to make them autonomous, with no interconnection between neighbouring residential buildings except by street. (Coleman, 1985, pp. 171, 177)

Other approaches used for crime reduction are linked to the *broken windows theory* by George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson. (Kelling and Wilson, 1982) It is closely related to situational crime prevention. The theory states that minor signs of disorder in a neighborhood, such as graffiti, vandalism, public drunkenness and especially begging, when left uncontrolled, will show intentional offenders that residents are not responding to misbehavior in the neighborhood, leading to more serious crimes in the area. (Whitzman, 2011, p. 667)

The neighborhood may also lack the social cohesion needed to hinder crime. According to Gill Valentine, socially integrated neighborhoods create self-help groups and support, which generally help to reduce an individual's fear of crime as they become more confident in dealing with potential risks. On this basis, people living in a neighborhood with limited social cohesion and signs of physical incivilities are assumed to be more fearful. Although according to research this is questionable, since findings show the presence of strong social bonds in a run-down neighborhood, whereas gated communities showcase weak social bonds. (Valentine, G. (1990) in Ceccato and Nalla, 2020, p. 269)

## ► Crime prevention through environmental design

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is probably one of the best known and most widely used approaches to urban planning in terms of security and provides a set of further explicit design rules. They were introduced by the criminologist C. Ray Jeffrey and emerged almost simultaneously with the aforementioned theory of defensible space by Oscar Newman, which at the time had clear similarities with CPTED and soon became the basis of further developed CPTED. Its design rules can also be traced back to theories of Jane Jacobs, such as the importance of informal surveillance in public space. (Cozens and Love, 2015) The CPTED is based on seven key strategies that work in combination with each other:



- **Territorial reinforcement** is intended to promote a sense of ownership and possession among legitimate users of space. Territorial reinforcement includes generating symbolic barriers and real barriers, that define private, semiprivate and public space.
- **Surveillance** can be achieved through informal, natural surveillance. Alternatively, it can also be achieved through formal or organized surveillance (police and security services) and mechanical/electronic surveillance strategies (street lighting, closed - circuit television [CCTV])
- **Image/Space management** is intended to enhance a positive image and routine maintenance of the built environment to ensure the continued effective functioning of the physical environment.
- **Access control** is used to deny access to potential targets by reducing the opportunity for crime by creating a higher perception of risk for the offenders. There is informal/natural and formal/organized access control (e.g. security personnel) or mechanical access control (e.g. locks, bolts)
- **Legitimate activity support** uses design and signage to encourage acceptable behavior in the use of public spaces and to move "unsafe" activities to "safe" places.

- **Target hardening** concentrates on denying or restricting access to a crime target through the application of physical barriers such as fences, gates, security doors and locks

- **Geographical juxtaposition** is the ability of surrounding spaces to influence the security of surrounding spaces and vice versa.

The overall idea is that the environment can be planned to reduce the likelihood of crime occurring, which can be achieved by promoting surveillance, clear territorial boundaries and reducing areas of conflict by controlling outsider access. (Jeffery, 1971; Newman, 1972)

CPTED has been regularly redefined with concepts and theories, including those of Alice Coleman and Kelling and Wilson's broken windows theory. First generation CPTED strategies were criticized for framing the individual as a passive agent of the environment and completely ignoring the social construction of the physical environment, which are essential to the construction of fear. (Pain, 2000, p. 272)

Although there is consensus that these strategies can be effective and reduce crime and the fear of crime in certain communities, the use of this approach has often led to social exclusion, as exemplified by gated communities. (Shehayeb, 2008, p. 111)

Critics claimed that when translated into policies, they promoted exclusionary public spaces and thus intensified the increasing socio-economic polarization in cities. (Mitchell, 2003; Kohn, 2004). For instance, the broken windows theory, has led to anti-begging regulations and other mechanisms designed to exclude certain groups, such as the homeless or mentally ill, from public spaces. (Mitchell, 2003)

In the 1990s a second generation CPTED has been developed, with the idea to implement a social dimension to it, in response to various critics who argued that CPTED neglected social factors and instead focused only on the physical factors of the environment. The second generation CPTED attempted to include anti-segregation measures and active community participation (Cozens and Love, 2015, p. 3,5,13)

Gerda Wekerle, however points out that CPTED tends to ignore a central aspect of Jane Jacob's argument about the relationship between urban design and crime. Namely, the importance of fear of crime. Their programmes tend to focus initially on crimes and against property and crime rates and thereby ignore crimes against persons. (Wekerle, 2000, p. 46)

The CPTED measures thus, continue to be criticized, by only focusing on crime conducted by strangers in public spaces, instead of focusing on women's perception of fear and its wider societal causes. (Ceccato and Dymén, 2012, p. 315) The CPTED relies on the idea that if safety improvements in physical space are made the perception of fear will decrease. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, safety is much more complex and depends to a large extent on the individual emotions and characteristics as well as the social and political interrelations that structure both the physical environment and the everyday lives of the people involved. (Kern, 2020, p.156) Women's perception of feeling unsafe cannot be eradicated only by eliminating environmental deficiencies. (Koskela and Pain 2000 in Pain, 2000, p. 372)

CPTED also take little account of the fact that women and girls, depending on race, class, and other factors, experience public spaces very differently than men and boys. As CPTED is also explicitly about preventing crime, many behaviors that fall under sexual harassment are not treated or classified as crimes, even though they have a profound impact on women's perceptions, vulnerabilities, and behaviors. (TramLab, 2020, pp. 13-14)

According to Whitzman the work of Newman and Coleman blended right into the neoliberal urban planning that was on the rise in the 1980s. Increasingly residents of social housing were socially, economically and politically excluded. (Whitzman, 2011, p. 666) Blaming increasing social polarization and increasing crime on poor modernist design became an environmental excuse to build less social housing and demolish estates without providing affordable replacement for housing. (Murie, 1997)

These issues are still very relevant today, and the resulting fear of displacement or increased marginalization in the context of gentrification processes is hardly considered in safety debates. The use of safety in neoliberal planning does not serve to create an actual safer environment for everyone. As a result, it might make some people feel safer, however not equally distributed by gender, class, ethnicity, religion or citizenship lines. Rather, it is the increasing inequalities and the low sense of safety of the least privileged groups, which tend to be migrants, older women, single parents and young adults. Carina Listerborn notes that not only the argument of safety, but also "women" and "women's fear of sexual violence" are being used now as arguments for urban renewal projects, which is generating more differences than advocating for radical equality. (Listerborn, 2016, p. 12)

The second stream of thought can also be linked to theories and ideas of Jane Jacobs. Many of her ideas, such as land use and social mixing in low and high income areas as well as the importance of treating residents as experts in finding development solutions, have been taken up

► Safer cities approach

One approach that has evolved from these ideas is the *Safer Cities* approach, an approach to urban safety that promotes partnerships between national governments, cities, neighborhoods and citizens. In contrast to the CPTED approach or the situational crime prevention approach, it takes into account the perspective of potential victims or people with a low sense of safety, instead of looking at places through the eyes of potential offenders. (Whitzman, 2011, p. 668) The focus is on managing and preventing crime in the community and improving design. Thereby, the fear of crime is considered to be as important as the crime rate, as it influences people's behavior and the overall quality of life in the city. (Wekerle and Whitzman, 1995, p. 13) Some aspects that the approach focuses on are similar to those of CPTED, such as lighting, informal surveillance, mixed land use, poorly maintained land. However, this approach focuses on empowering the users of space and recognizes that women want to be autonomous and not dependent actors in urban space. It also aims to raise awareness of the problem of violence and how to deal with it positively at the local level. (Whitzman, 2011, p. 668)

According to Wekerle and Whitzmen, there have been urban projects in the USA and Canada that could be described as Safer Cities projects, but not at the national level. However, the Safer Cities initiatives implemented in Europe and the UK can provide examples of what is possible when implemented at national level. In the Netherlands in 1985, funds were distributed to local governments and used for projects that focused on preventing youth crime in the form of education, job creation, self-defense for girls and women, as well as equipping city center shops with hardware and community support to combat property crime. However, the focus of this Safer Cities approach was on preventing crime in cities

by a whole generation of feminist writers on urban space. Their approach to safety in spatial planning was guided by an emphasis on empowerment and inclusion, especially with a focus on women, and was later extended to other marginalized and excluded groups. (Whitzman, 2011, p. 663)

through adequate information, surveys and a mix of design and community-enhancing improvements in housing estates, transport systems and city centers. Many of the cities that participated in this approach focused on women's perceptions of lack of safety and took their design suggestions into account. (Wekerle and Whitzman, 1995, pp. 6–7)

In the UK, national funds were similarly distributed to local projects in England, Scotland and Ireland. The municipalities took different approaches, which led to different results. From physical security for homes, businesses and public buildings, to approaches aimed at encouraging victims of racial harassment to report and offering support, to funding "safe women's transport", companies improving playgrounds in public housing estates and employing counsellors to work with abused women. (Wekerle and Whitzman, 1995, p. 7)

Toronto, for example, focused its approach on municipal strategies to prevent violence against women, which led the city and its departments to develop urban safety initiatives. These initiatives included laws to improve safety in car parks, new measures to improve safety in parks, renewing streetlights and pedestrian walkways, new studies on safety problems in urban housing projects and much more. All these changes have had an impact on safety in the urban environment of the city, especially in public spaces, in addition to raising the issue of civility. Besides the physical changes, the focus was also on social promotion. For example, the health department developed a workplace education programme focusing on assault of women, and the city developed a new sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention programme and offered free self-defense courses for women. They also strengthened community action by funding community groups that developed resources to help break the cycle of

violence against women. Through these initiatives, funding and access to resources, the City of Toronto is not only demonstrating how a crime prevention strategy can have a positive impact but is also creating public awareness that citizens can take action and take preventive measures against crime. Safe cities approaches can therefore promote better use of public facilities and help strengthen communities. (Wekerle and Whitzman, 1995, p. 9)

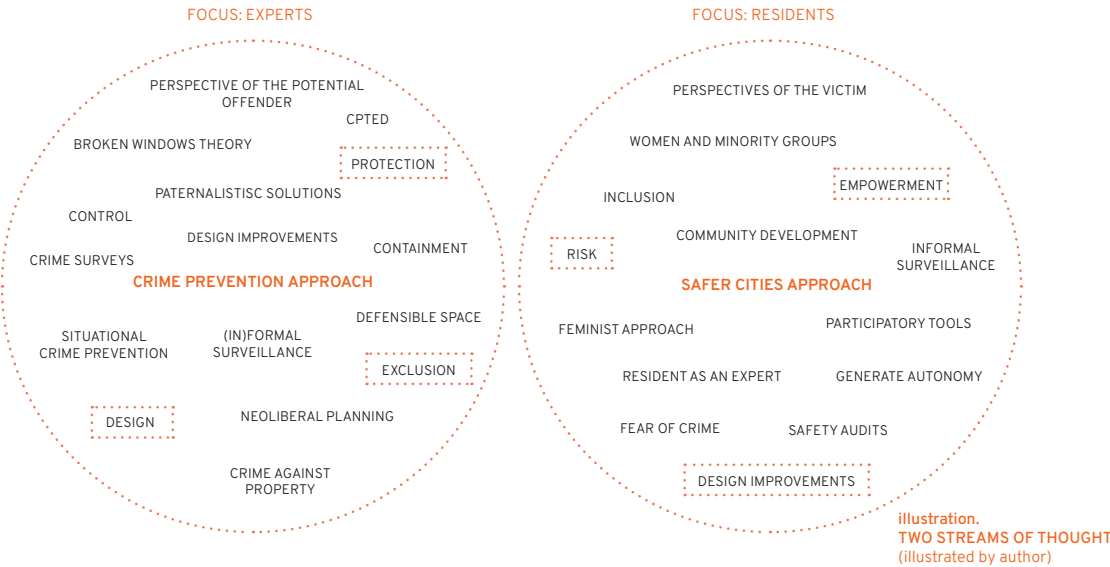
This movement has led to the development of many tools such as the women's *Safety Audit*. The safety audit was developed by the Toronto group METRAC (Metro Toronto Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children) (METRAC 1989) in Canada. It is a participatory tool that aims to identify unsafe spaces within the local urban environment and then proposes improvements based on the experiences of the female users of space in order to make the urban environment safer. (Whitzman, 2011, p. 668)

In several cities, the use of safety audits led to concrete design changes, but also to a sense of empowerment, which may be due to the fact that decision-makers participated in the safety audits as active listeners and that resources and funding were available. (WICI, 2008) Especially in low-income areas, safety audits and other participatory planning tools led to innovative results and helped to highlight concerns about the built environment and social services. (Whitzman, 2011, p. 663) The key aspect of the safer cities concept is that the developed solutions are custom designed to local problems. It treats communities and citizens as the

experts in the urban sphere in their everyday life and takes their perceptions and suggestions into account. Safe Cities programme suggests that the ideal city provides a framework in which citizens can develop collective solutions. The focus is on the needs of those who are most vulnerable, not only women, but also older people, people from different ethnic groups, people with disabilities and people with low incomes. (Wekerle and Whitzman, 1995, p. 11,13)

According to Whitzman there are three aspects that need to be taken into account to develop secure cities. First, making public spaces safer and more accessible to marginalized groups both directly through listening to the result of safety audits or indirectly through policy advocacy. Secondly, the aspect of developing "safe spaces" within a neighborhood which helps improve autonomy and resilience. They involve neighborhood centers, refuges, job creation programs, where people can come and seek help or raise other concerns. The third way of developing secure cities is to bring out the very private issues which are usually hidden, like family violence and make them public issues. (Whitzman, 2007, pp. 2728–2729)

Consequently, it can be emphasized that the development of safer cities must go beyond crime prevention and protection and control strategies. Increasing safety, in fact, also means improving the autonomy and accessibility of the public realm and urban resources for city dwellers, with an emphasis on those who have the least access.



## ► Feminist principles

Researcher Visakha points to a number of key principles of feminist urban planning that have been developed throughout the years that concretize and illustrate how spatial planners could promote some of the previously mentioned and other aspects to develop safer cities. The emphasis is on incorporating women's experiences, empowering them, and improving their autonomy in using the city.

**The compact city and mixed-use neighborhoods** that address the patriarchal gender roles that result in domestic responsibilities and care work being assigned to women, resulting in them having to perform a variety of tasks at home and at work. The compact city therefore recognizes the everyday life activities within the different activity spheres (p.14) and aims to plan mixed uses such as workplace, housing, childcare, essential services and recreational spaces in close proximity within walking distance.

**Pedestrian-oriented street design**, which refers to a long-standing concern of feminist urban planners that city streets are often built for cars and not for people. Feminists also pointed out that wide streets designed for cars and the absence of pedestrian traffic or street vendors lead to unsafe streets for women. In addition, streets that are not pedestrian or bicycle friendly lead to a city that is highly reliant on motorized transport and the necessary ownership of cars, which disadvantages women, children, and urban poor.

**Public provision of infrastructure and amenities.** Researcher Sneha Visakha notes that women generally have fewer financial resources and therefore belong to the urban poor, and their situation is exacerbated by the dual condition of poverty and gender. Moreover, they can be excluded based on class, religion, disability, etc., which can make it extremely difficult for them to access economic and social development opportunities in their daily lives. Consequently, women's safety depends on the public provision and maintenance of urban infrastructure to which they must have access. Visakha broadly lists the following essential needs and services:

### → **Physical infrastructure:**

Well-lit streets, maintenance, accessible sidewalks, free and 24/7 public restrooms with gender-neutral options, accessible parks at all times, provision of benches (public furniture).

### → **Social infrastructure:**

Community centers/housing, accessible emergency shelters, public childcare facilities, educational/skill development centers.

### → **Mobility infrastructure:**

Non-motorized transportation (pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure), free or low-cost public transportation. Public transport service that provides adequate frequency and connectivity, well-maintained public transport stops.

### → **Institutional infrastructure:**

Public hospitals, reproductive health facilities, mental health facilities, legal aid centers, etc. (Visakha, 2021, pp. 34–35)

In the past years, there were an increasing number of initiatives on the topic of women's safety and inclusion in cities all over the world. The general discussion has expanded from focusing on safety and crime prevention to recognising that gender is linked to other identities and marginalization and creates exclusion in complex ways. While the starting point continues to be women's safety, the broader notion of gender integration has been used not only to address violence and fear, but also to get institutions to address the principle of inclusion. (Viswanath, 2012, p. 75,76)

## ► Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is one well known approach that emerged with the rise of the concepts of "gender" and "gender inequality" and addresses the issues of safety, access and agency in the urban sphere. It is an approach that assesses the impact of laws, policies, programmes and planning for both women and men and takes into account their experiences and concerns as an integral dimension to assure equal access to and benefits from the city. (Berry, 2021, p. 2)

In 1997, gender mainstreaming was adopted by the United Nations as the approach to promote gender equality and is to be applied in all plans, policies and programmes. Soon, governments and non-governmental organizations followed in adopting it as a tool for mainstreaming gender concerns in sectors ranging from health to transport. It was perceived as a transformative process to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. (Lacey et al., 2012, p. 145)

Gender mainstreaming has the potential to identify and make visible the different needs and priorities of women and men, and can eliminate gender bias in policies, programmes and budgets by placing gender equality at the center of policymaking. When used effectively, it can challenge institutionalised norms and practices and give direction to effective and targeted policy and planning. (Tiessen, 2007 in Lacey et al., 2012, p. 145)

With gender mainstreaming becoming a commonly used approach to planning safe and inclusive cities, both planners and practitioners have begun to develop various tools and strategies to

put the tenets into practice. Tools such as GIAs (Gender Impact Analysis), gender budgeting, the aforementioned safety audits and *exploratory walks* became important tools for this approach. (Lacey et al., 2012, p. 146) Exploratory walks are walks led by and involving women to gain a better understanding of and empower women's perceptions of safety in urban areas. This method focuses on developing safety strategies through partnerships between grassroots organizations, communities, and municipalities by involving women in the planning process. The walk aims to strengthen the sense of safety and belonging and explore women's experiences and suggestions for improving urban space. (Visakha, 2021, p. 36)

Despite the great potential and positive examples, there are problems with the approach of gender mainstreaming. It is not always well understood, and both planners and practitioners have difficulty putting its principles into practice. Most strategies lead to technocratic outcomes rather than transformative solutions. (Meer, 2005) Other critics claim that gender mainstreaming has failed because it is rarely implemented, and when it is implemented, women's interests, needs and priorities become subordinate to those of a community as a whole, neutralising the overall gender mainstreaming agenda. Furthermore, this approach treats women and men as one homogeneous group, which can lead to disregarding the more nuanced understanding of women's lives in general and the differences between women themselves. Thus, this illustrates the need for an intersectional point of view. (Lacey et al., 2012, p. 148)



# 4. CASE STUDY, BISKOPSGÅRDEN

The following chapter describes the case study conducted in Biskopsgården and especially in its northern part Norra Biskopsgården, as according to Gothenburg's Master Plan this is a neighborhood with a lack of adequate services. (Översiktsplan för Göteborg, 2021) In addition, the area has become known for its crime in recent years and is therefore generally perceived as unsafe by Gothenburg residents. (Göteborg stad, 2022) The chapter begins with an overview to the background of the district, followed by the role of the researcher describing the individual process and how the methods were determined. It then continues with a description of the methods and ends with the analysis of the area and the findings.

## BACKGROUND

### ► History

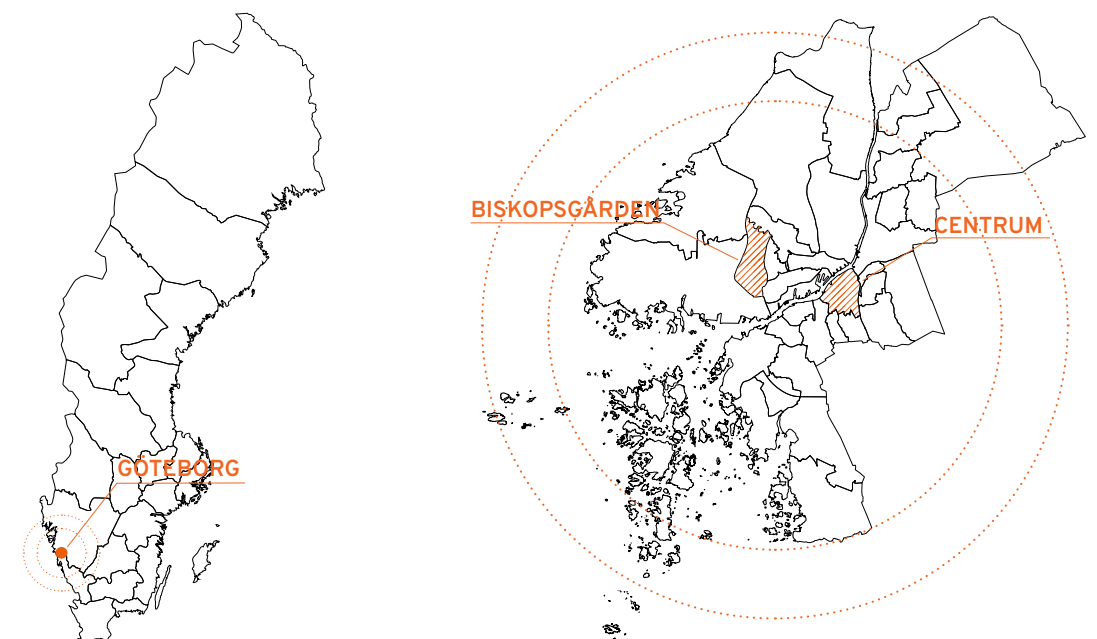
Biskopsgården is a district on Hisingen in Gothenburg, which was developed between 1956 and 1960. Its construction was part of the Swedish public housing project (svenska folkhemsbygget), which aimed, among other things, to eliminate the housing shortage in the then rapidly growing city of Gothenburg. (Freundberg, 1968, pp. 252–253)

In the past, Hisingen was primarily a location for Gothenburg's industry and not a residential area. In 1957, there was a great housing shortage, as about 15500 people had no dwelling. In response to this and the general population growth, new housing was built on the Hisingen side of Gothenburg. According to the Biskopsgården Strategic Plan of 2009-2020, Biskopsgården then, was one of the first modern suburbs of Gothenburg. Many people of Swedish nationality with professions such as city councilors, authors, and professors moved from their then dark, outmoded houses in the inner city without bathrooms or other amenities to these newly built apartments that promised better living conditions. A total of 7000 apartments were built for about 25000 people. (Walter Lundborg AB, 1958, p. 28,29; Göteborg stad, 2009, p. 15)

The new settlement was promoted through a housing exhibition called "Boplats 58". It was developed to create better conditions and easier connections to the city center and to enable coexistence between the periphery and the city. (Walter Lundborg AB, 1958, p. 9) All new residential buildings were built in prefabricated modular construction which makes Biskopsgården what it is today - a mixture of traditionally built houses and modular constructed housing. (Walter Lundborg AB, 1958, p. 29)

In the exhibition, Biskopsgården is described as a "fringe town" which is why good transport links were an important element in its design. At that time it was estimated that the tram takes about 23 minutes from the Central Station to the end of Norra Biskopsgården, today it takes about 15 minutes. (Walter Lundborg AB, 1958, p. 29,31) At the same time, walkability and cyclability between different public services and public spaces was promoted without having to cross motorized roads. (Lindgren, Peter and Reuter Metelius, 2014, p. 398) To this day, work is being done on improving both motorized and non motorized transport links to make the neighborhood an inclusive part of the city. (Översiktsplan för Göteborg, 2021, p. 59)

illustration.  
MAPS GOTHENBURG,  
BISKOPSGÅRDEN  
(illustrated by author)





CONTINUE WITH "BACKGROUND"

According to Biskopsgården's strategic plan, due to environmental issues such as the odors from the nearby oil refineries and the worn appearance of the cheap facade materials used to construct the buildings, many people who originally lived in the area moved away from the neighborhood. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, a lot of families from the rest of Sweden moved into the district as they found work in the shipyards and industry. (Göteborg stad, 2009, p. 15)

From the 1970s, Biskopsgården became a neighborhood with high unemployment. The closure of the shipyards in the 1970s and 1980s meant that many shipyard workers in the neighborhood became unemployed and a large proportion of them never returned to work. During this time, sick leave and early retirement rates increased sharply. In the 1980s and 1990s,

## ► Today

These days, Biskopsgården is a neighborhood that in recent years has become known primarily for its lack of safety and crime. Its positive qualities are hardly highlighted. (Göteborg stad, 2022) The district has over 30,000 inhabitants and is an area that is strongly affected by increasing socio-economic inequality, especially in its northern part, known as Norra Biskopsgården. (Myhre and Atlestad, 2021)

Norra Biskopsgården is one of the "primärområden" (primary areas), among Södra Biskopsgården, Länsmansgården, Svartedalen and Jättsten in Biskopsgården and of these is the most multicultural. 87% of the residents here have an immigrant background, compared to 37% in the city of Gothenburg as a whole. Of the foreign-born residents, the largest groups are from Somalia, other parts of Africa, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, former Yugoslavia, Poland, Iraq, Iran, Syria, India, and Finland. (Göteborgs stadsledningskontor, 2021) The general life expectancy is about eight years lower than the average in Gothenburg. Overcrowding and unemployment rates are high, sickness rates are high and the average income in Norra Biskopsgården is barely two-thirds of the Gothenburg income. The level of education is also lower in the district. For example, 79% of women

Biskopsgården changed from a neighborhood inhabited mainly by Swedish shipyard and industrial workers to one characterized by extensive refugee migration. Refugees from Southern Europe, the Middle East and Africa settled in the area and made Biskopsgården the multicultural district it is today. (Göteborg stad, 2009, p. 15)

All the earlier mentioned factors have shaped the district and contributed to the negative perception of Biskopsgården and the impression that it is not pleasant to live there. Although the environmental impact has now completely disappeared and it is a neighborhood in the middle of greenery, with many apartments with good views, well-maintained buildings and good public transport connections. (Göteborg stad, 2009, p. 15)

have not completed upper secondary education, compared with 19% in Gothenburg as a whole. The proportion of single parents is almost twice as high as the average in Gothenburg. (Göteborgs stadsledningskontor, 2021; Myhre and Atlestad, 2021)

Biskopsgården is one of the neighborhoods that the police describe as an *especially vulnerable area*. This means that it is "characterized by social issues and a criminal presence which has led to a widespread disinclination to participate in the judicial process and difficulties for the police to fulfil their mission". An especially vulnerable area is "a geographically defined area characterized by low socioeconomic status and where criminals impact the local community." The City of Gothenburg's action plan is to ensure that no area in Gothenburg is vulnerable by the year 2025. (The Local, 2019)

The delegation against segregation shows in its annual report 2021 that the segregation in Sweden has increased sharply since the 1990s. (Delegationen mot segregation, 2021) The reason for this is the development of the *million housing program* between 1965 and 1974, which was developed during the extreme housing shortage in Sweden and caused the current socioeconomic

segregation of housing. In this context, research points to two crises that contributed to this: the 1974 oil crisis and the economic crisis of the 1990s. The oil crisis and the resulting drop in housing prices allowed the middle class to move out of million program apartments and into single-family housing areas. During the economic crisis in the 1990s, many refugees moved into the empty apartments of the million housing program. This reinforced both socioeconomic and ethnic segregation. It also meant that segregation brought with it a spatial division between center and periphery. (Andersson, Hogdal and Bråmås, 2007; Delegationen mot segregation, 2021, pp. 35–36)

## ► Vision for the future

According to Gothenburg's Master Plan, the city can be divided geographically into Innerstaden (inner city), Mellanstaden (middle city) and Ytterstaden (outer city). Each geographical area has different conditions for development. The inner city and middle city together form a contiguous urban area. The further development plans of the city will mainly take place in the interconnected area of the city center and the middle city. (Översiktsplan för Göteborg, 2021, p. 21)

Centrala Hisingen is the middle city, which includes the district Biskopsgården among other areas such as Backa and Brunnsbo. Biskopsgården is planned around local squares and has good public transport connections. Gothenburg's 2021 master plan notes that it sees good potential for densifying Centrala Hisingen with around 16,000 to 18,000 dwellings, more than half of which can be built in Biskopsgården and Länsmansgården. They state that more residential and commercial units need to be created in Biskopsgården to increase the social mix and safety of the area. They also note that a major investment will make it possible to refurbish places that are in need of maintenance, and to clarify entrances of the districts, increase safety and enhance the attractiveness of the area. (Översiktsplan för Göteborg, 2021, pp. 58–59)

The city of Gothenburg claims to focus on reducing segregation, but according to Biblioteksbladet, much has gone in the wrong direction since the 1990s. The large Norra Biskopsgården library has been closed, as well as two leisure centers and the Folkets hus in Biskopsgården. There is a shortage of meeting places and spaces for associations and activities. If anything, the closure of such services reinforces segregation. According to Randi Myhre and Atlestad Ingrid, the development, lack of resources and the current situation are in clear contrast to everything the city says, it stands for and invests in. However, the impact of cooperation between residents, associations, NGO's, volunteers and businesses has already achieved great things and make great things happen daily. In the meantime, for example, a new small library was opened at Friskvåderstorget in Biskopsgården, which residents and recent investigations said was an urgent need. (Myhre and Atlestad, 2021)

The masterplan states that several areas are well supplied with grocery stores but lack other essential services. The residents of Biskopsgården need to be closer to services of all kinds such as preschools, schools, nursing homes, sports grounds, playgrounds and meeting places in form of inviting squares and parks. It also states that libraries play an important role as a meeting place for all residents and must therefore be carefully placed. In Norra Biskopsgården there are proposals for a large multifunctional facility that could fulfil important functions. (Översiktsplan för Göteborg, 2021, p. 59)

The City of Gothenburg proclaims the vision that Biskopsgården can be developed into a "Trädgårdsstad", a garden city with more detached housing and a greater variety of rental types as well as a better connection to the rest of Gothenburg. This resonates closely with urban planner Ebenezer Howard's idea of the Garden Cities of Tomorrow and its principles of social mixing, a mix of affordable housing types, strong community engagement, and walkable neighborhoods among others. (Howard and Osborn, 1974) The overall goal is for Biskopsgården to become a safe and lively neighborhood with good transport connections, green spaces and a good mix of housing types. (Göteborg stad, 2022)

In the study of the selected district, different methods were used to investigate the area in regard to women's perception of safety and the safety concerns addressed in this thesis. The study was conducted by participating in so-called safety/night walks along with community meetings, personal conversations, complemented by concrete observations, interviews with affected women from a recent report, and the knowledge gained from the literature studies in Chapters 2 and 3.

► Position as a researcher

The overall process very much defined the used methods in this thesis. The aim from the beginning was to find out and research women's perceptions and experiences in this area. In order to get in contact with the residents and the locally responsible, it started by both emailing workers from city offices and contacting groups and forums on Facebook, that were either associations or people that could be identified as workers in the area. Many of these emails and messages remained unanswered. The few that responded led to different people and actors and potential contacts. One answer eventually led to a very helpful source, namely a contact with a project leader from the non-governmental organization "Biblioteksvännerna i Biskopsgården" (Library friends in Biskopsgården). It is an organization working closely with the library, that organizes activities for everyone in the area and aims to strengthen the community of the district and make it a better place. One of the project leaders, Randi Myhre, invited me to a community breakfast attended by many of the local stakeholders to connect with local people and make contacts to get more information about women's perceptions of the area. This was the first opportunity to gain locally related information about the district. On one hand, many of them were very open, friendly and helpful, however, on the other hand, it was quite difficult to make connections and gather information for this research.

I started the research rather clueless and assumed that it would be uncomplicated to find out about women's experiences and perspectives. During this meeting I was able to meet some people, in particular a woman who is an active resident of the area and was kind enough to give me her contact information. We stayed in contact during this time and had several phone conversations. Randi Myhre invited myself to other activities, such as a night walk, which will be described later, that provided further findings. It is important to emphasize that in the course of the process and the carrying out of the methods, my perception shifted, which had an influence on the further development of the methods used.

The methods used helped to better understand the neighborhood itself, the women's perception of safety and the measures already taken to make the area safer. All methods were conducted exclusively from the perspective of women, infused with the concept of intersectionality. By highlighting women's different experiences and perceptions of safety related to various forms of social oppression, with a focus on those with the least access to the city.

During the first night walk we encountered a group of women who were also doing a night walk at that time. As I was alone for a moment, I wanted to reach out to them and ask a few questions, so I introduced myself. I started the conversation in Swedish and they asked me where I was from and where I lived. I tried to explain why I am here and what I am intending to do, but the communication did not work well. There was a language barrier that made it difficult for us to understand each other and our intentions. This very moment and other aspects of the situation made me think that I was making them feel unsafe because I was a stranger and understandably there was a sense of mistrust. I was aware of my position and privileges from the beginning, but this moment helped me recognize it even more. I felt like an intruder in their home and felt foolish for expecting people to take time for me to find out more for this particular exploration. It made me also realize that finding out and understanding people's perceptions would be more difficult than I initially expected.

It thus changed the direction of the methods and defined more informal meetings and observations as a main source for my findings. Instead of conducting formal interviews with a group of women, I took every opportunity to participate in actions such as community meetings and other gatherings that were already organized by local actors and would normally take place. This allowed for more informal conversations, gatherings and observing information about the community, how the residents themselves felt, their needs, and the work and focus they were doing in the area itself without asking too much of them. By integrating these existing activities, the work already done, and their learning processes into the method and looking at it from the perspective of this work, new insights could be gained. In the weeks that followed, several opportunities arose to pursue this approach. Throughout this integrative process the methods described on the next pages could be defined.



photograph.  
CONTACT FLYERS  
(photograph taken by author)

METHODS

► Main actors and already applied work for safety

Through the conducted methods in combination with further individual research, it was possible to find out what has already been done to promote safety and who the specific actors are that carry out this work in the area. The research ranges from national influences to influences by the city and its local actors. It aims to draw an overall view of the many stakeholders that are involved and the work that is already applied.

The method made it possible to define the general focus of the safety strategy in the area, to gain a general understanding of the plans and works in the area, and to identify what urban planners and architects can contribute.



► Report: "Hur förbättrar vi levnadsvillkoren i Biskopsgården?"

The research is drawing information from a report of Biskopsgården, which included several interviews specifically with women's and girls' groups in 2021.

The report includes 53 group interviews of 28 associations in Biskopsgården two of which are with a group of women and one of them with a group of girls. The people questioned in these interviews are all residents and workers in Biskopsgården. The main question the report sought to ask is "How do we improve living conditions in Biskopsgården?". Responses to this and the following sub-questions included important aspects such as what it is

like to live and work in the area, what changes and developments they would like to see, and what is needed to achieve these changes. It also provided important insights into perceptions and experiences related to the safety of women and girls and their ideas on how to make Biskopsgården a better neighborhood. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021)



The report provided an essential addition to the case study by giving direct insight into the various personal perspectives of female residents, the importance of their community, their own efforts to make a difference, and the needs they had already identified themselves.

► Community meetings

The former mentioned NGO Biblioteksvännerna i Biskopsgården organizes regular community meetings every first Wednesday of the month in the form of breakfasts with residents, NGOs and public servants. With the aim of promoting the exchange of information, contact, and cooperation between residents, associations, and other stakeholders in the district. The association also organizes other meetings in the form of discussions, workshops, and coffee meetings during the month. In this way, information can be disseminated, and the community strengthened.

As part of the method, I participated in three of these breakfasts in February, March and April 2022, observing and listening to the exchanges and discussions, but also taking notes and reaching out to the participants.

I was also able to participate in one of the workshops in the end of February, on how to make fault reports about streets, squares and parks. The purpose of the workshop was to communicate how to report racist graffiti, trash, broken streetlights, or other deficiencies in the physical environment so they can be removed or changed.



It was possible to have several conversations and make observations, by attending the community meetings. In general, attending the community meetings made it easier to understand the different stakeholders and community dynamics in this neighborhood. It allowed to discover and identify different themes and aspects that can be highlighted for the general research.

► Conversations



I was able to have multiple conversations that impacted the findings of this thesis. By talking, listening, asking questions, and reflecting, it was possible to gather information in a more informal and perceptive way. During conversations, as mentioned earlier, I realized that more formal conversations in the form of interviews with women would not be my primary source of data due to language barriers and requests for time. Informal conversations at community meetings, on the phone, on night walks and on other occasions, therefore, became a helpful tool given the fact that I came as an outsider.

I was able to have many conversations with women who live in the area and with representatives of different stakeholders within the area, such as one of the project leaders of Biblioteksvännerna i Biskopsgården, Randi Myhre. As mentioned earlier I was able to meet a woman at the community meeting who tried to help me connect with other women in the area. She is a young mother from

Somalia who has been living in Sweden for several years now. I had a few phone conversations with her where I was able to listen to and understand her perspective and experiences. Prior to conducting my research I disclosed my intentions and use of information to all participants. In this work, with the exception of Randi Myhre, the women with whom I was able to have conversations are referred to anonymously and described to what extent they described and defined themselves. Quotations highlighted orange in the text are taken from informal conversations and are not associated with the narrator to protect the speaker's identity.

The method allowed for insights to be gained from a personal perspective. The opportunity to listen to many stories, perspectives, and needs was helpful in gaining a different idea on the various views and understandings of the personal sense of safety. All conversations took place within the framework of all the methods and are divided according to the type of method in which they took place.

► Safety or night walks



A relevant method to determine perceptions of safety and the current work for more safety in the area is the so-called *safety* or *night walk*. It is similar to the feminist tool of *exploratory walks* (P.31). A safety walk differs depending on the intention of the user and can promote both *actual* and *perceived* safety (P.18). It is a method that can focus on developing prevention strategies and aims to involve local grassroots organizations, communities and city councils. It can also be used to empower different groups to use urban space and participate in safety issues. In a safety walk, a group of people walk through the area and systematically take inventory from a safety point of view. The idea is that those who live and work in the area are considered experts who report on their experiences and knowledge. The process involves developing proposals and solutions to the problems identified. (Brå, 2020)

In Biskopsgården the safety walk tool is used by several actors in the area. Some are organized by "Bo Bra i Biskopsgården" under the leadership of the implementing housing company, involving many actors, such as Socialförvaltningen Hisingen, Trygg i Hisingen, Trafikkontoret, Park och Natur, the police and the residents themselves. The focus of this conducted night walk is to identify and obtain information about potential features of the physical environment, such as: dark spaces that need more light, graffiti that needs to be removed or trees that need to be removed to create better visibility, generally unsafe places for everyone, litter, broken or non-functioning things, etc., to create a safer and more pleasant neighborhood.





CONTINUE WITH "SAFETY OR NIGHT WALKS"

According to the catalogue *Föreningar i Biskopsgården*, many other night walks are conducted by local associations in Biskopsgården. In contrast to the safety walks mentioned above, the main aim of these night walks is based on the idea of parents and other adults to bring safety from their homes to the streets where young people stay so that they can feel safe outside. "Aktiva Mammor" an active mum's association for example conduct night walks in order to make everyone in the neighborhood feel safe to go outside at night. They want to create safety for young people that feel unsafe and excluded. Many other associations conduct night walks in addition to other activities they offer. Removing litter and hateful graffiti is often part of these night walks, as associations have realized that this is faster than reporting and waiting a long time for change. After the walk an inventory will be carried out to report faults and other experiences during the night walk. However, the main objective of the night walks is, to empower the residents of the area to use the urban space and to generate a feeling of safety within the public sphere. (Josoph et al., 2021, p. 21) According to Randi Myhre, in order to promote night walks in the region, the municipality grants a small financial support to the associations that carry out night walks and provide a report afterwards.

For this research I was able to join one safety walk and two night walks. The first conducted night walk was run by the NGO Biblioteksvännerna i Biskopsgården, which is part of the local associations in Biskopsgården. The night walk group contained of Randi Myhre and two residents, an older man born outside of Sweden and a young mother born in Somalia. The night walk took place in February 2022 from 6:00p.m. to 9:00 p.m. during a snowstorm. The route we chose to walk led from Vårväderstorget to Länsmanstorget.

The safety walk was conducted by the housing company "Bostads AB Poseidon" one of the daughter companies of "Framtidenskoncernen" in cooperation with "Bo Bra i Biskopsgården" (Live well in Biskopsgården). We were a group of around twelve walkers. Here the safety walk group contained of residents, workers of Poseidon and their safety hosts, representatives of Socialförvaltningen Hisingen, Trygg i Hisingen, Park och Natur and the Police. The walk was conducted in early March 2022 from 6:00p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the northeastern part of Biskopsgården, the main Svartedalen area, and passed through Bymolnsgatan, Norra Fjädermolnsgatan, Södra Fjädermolnsgatan and Bernards grand.

The third night walk was with the "Odlarföreningen i Biskopsgården" (Urban farming association in Biskopsgården), which works near Vårväderstorget in a small park within a residential area. We were a small group of three people: Randi Myhre, a young single mother who was born in Turkey and has been living in Biskopsgården for some time, and myself. The night walk took place in March 2022 from 6:00p.m. to 9:00p.m. and we walked from Vårväderstorget to Friskväderstorget.

The safety/night walks made it possible to analyze both physical and social aspects. They allowed for many casual conversations and stories that were site-specific, as different places evoke different memories. The walks also provided an opportunity to engage in conversation with non-participants as one meets people in the neighborhood during the walk. In addition, when the walks are conducted more than once, they help to understand the place itself and the perception of safety involving a combination of physical and social aspects.

# 1.

Night walk

**When:**  
February 18th 2020, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

**Where:**  
Primärområden: Södra Biskopsgården,  
Norra Biskopsgården, Länsmansgården

**From:** Vårväderstorget  
**To:** Länsmanstorget

# 2.

Safety walk

**When:**  
March 2nd 2022, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

**Where:**  
Primärområden: Svartedalen

**Streets:** Bymolnsgatan, Norra  
Fjädermolnsgatan, Södra  
Fjädermolnsgatan, Bernards gränd

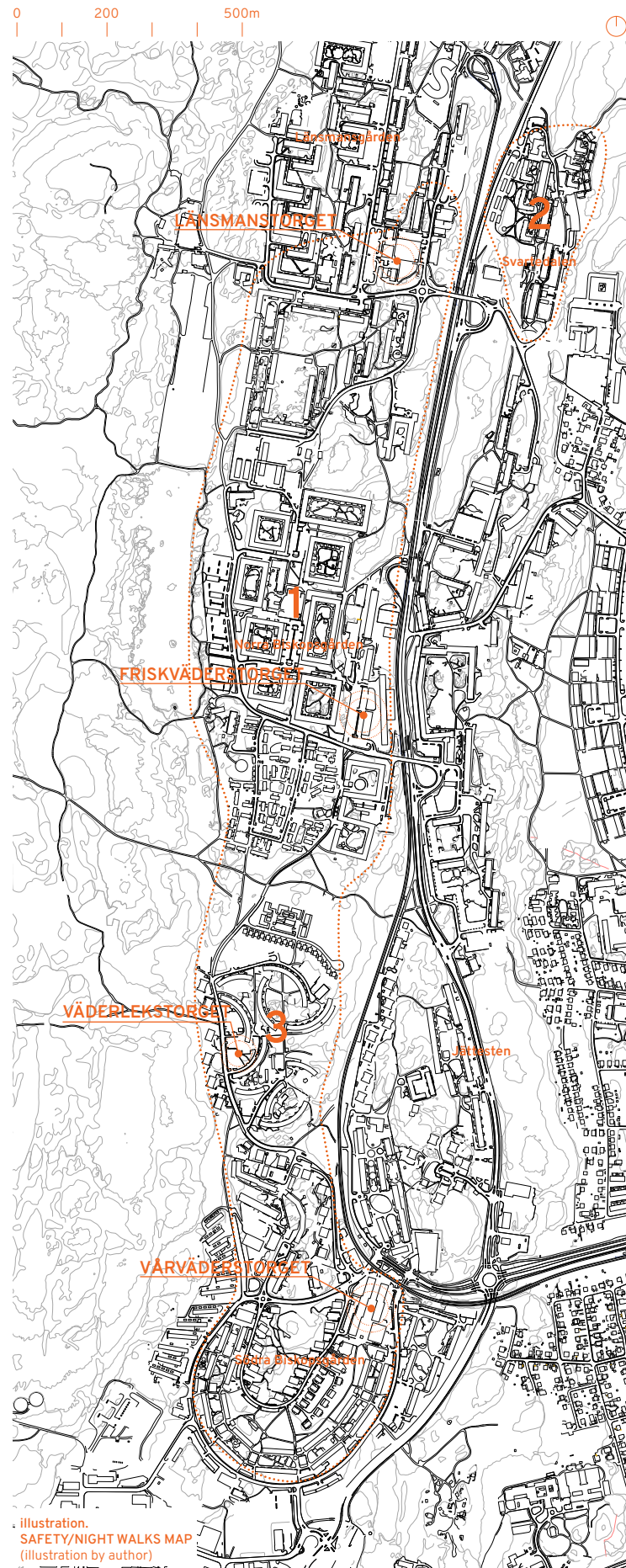
# 3.

Night walk

**When:**  
March 26th 2022, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

**Where:**  
Primärområden: Södra Biskopsgården,  
Norra Biskopsgården

**From:** Vårväderstorget  
**To:** Friskväderstorget



RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following section will illustrate the findings of the conducted methods. It will begin by providing an overview of the work already being done and the many actors that are helping to create a safer neighborhood.

Followed by a collection of stories, perspectives, and experiences structured by the tensions identified in the study. All of the tensions listed have to do with the core tension of feeling safe on the one hand and unsafe on the other, which emphasizes its complex nature.

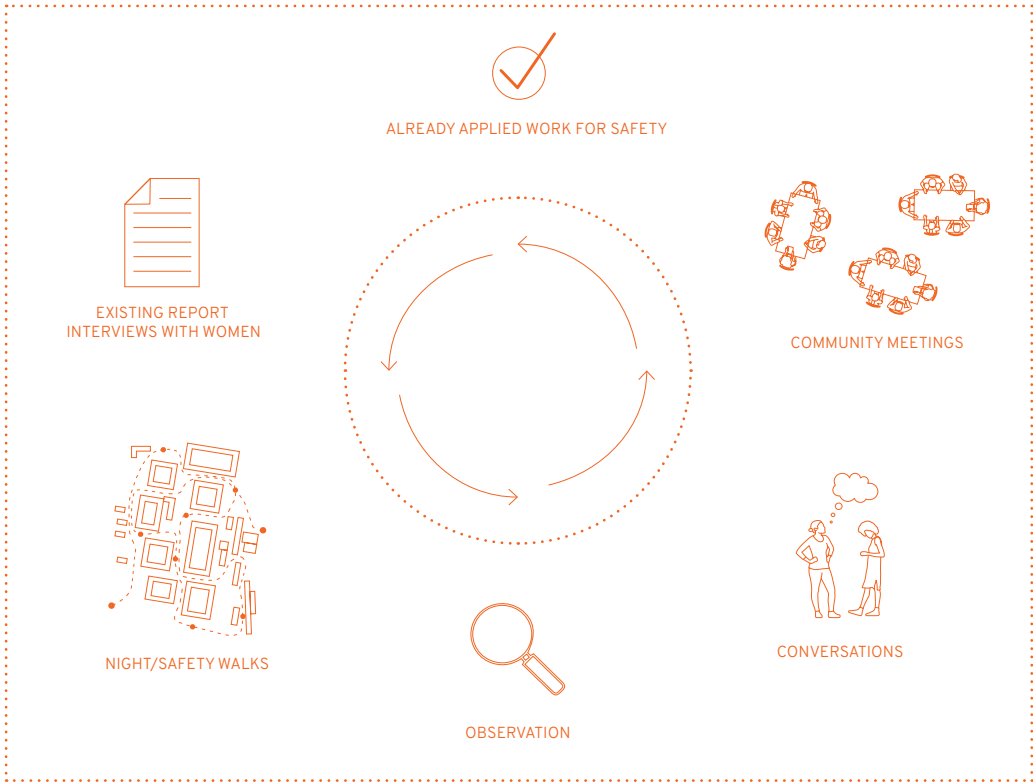


illustration.  
METHODS CASE STUDY  
(illustration by author)

► Main actors and already applied work for safety

There are a variety of actors who are contributing to create a safer Biskopsgården. The overall safety strategy involves the national, regional, and local levels. However, the national level places more emphasis on addressing safety issues at the local level. The city of Gothenburg's model for a safer city is called "Trygg i Göteborg" (Safe in Gothenburg) and is based on cooperation between the Socialförvaltningen (district social administration) of a given area and the police. In Biskopsgården the cooperation is named "Trygg i Hisingen" (Safe in Hisingen) which involves the "Polisen Hisingen" and "Socialförvaltningen Hisingen" that work together to prevent new recruitment to criminal groups. (Göteborg stad)

A report from Trygg i Hisingen on "Preventing and hindering new recruitment to criminal groups" describes the work and the promises of the cooperation. It outlines for example, that the police will continue their high presence by patrolling unsafe and particularly crime-prone locations at certain times of the day. It also states the promise to increase the cooperation with social services by, among other things, increasing the number of police incident reports to stop the recruitment of young people into criminal networks. In addition they promise a targeted approach to crime by continuing to combat drug trafficking, illegal weapons, and serious crime. (Trygg i Hisingen, 2021)

Socialförvaltningen Hisingen promises to work with the police by identifying young people at risk of crime based on concerns expressed by the police. Furthermore, they will continue and strengthen their work for young people at risk of crime with their internal organization "Resursenheten Unga", which offers support to young people between the ages of 12 and 25. (Trygg i Hisingen, 2021)

According to a representative of Socialförvaltningen Hisingen, so-called "Invånarguider" (resident guides) have also been hired. These are people who help translate and share information in the languages spoken in Biskopsgården about important news and activities for other residents. Only people who live in Biskopsgården themselves are hired.

Another organization within Socialförvaltningen Hisingen besides Trygg i Hisingen is "Bo Bra i Biskopsgården" (Live well in Biskopsgården). Bo Bra i Biskopsgården is an organization that cooperates with Socialförvaltningen Hisingen and the housing companies: Bostads AB Poseidon, Balder, Willhem AB, Göteborg Lokaler and Göteborg stads Bostadsaktiebolag. The organization was born out of a common interest in working for a safer and more attractive Biskopsgården and, according to Gothenburg city's website, is a driving force in Biskopsgården. Their goal is to work together with the people who live and work in the area to create a safe and attractive neighborhood. Bo Bra focuses, among other things on social and physical aspects as well as the local environment, creating meeting places, supporting the associations and conducting safety walks with the residents and other stakeholders in the neighborhood. (Göteborg stad)

A conversation with a representative from the Socialförvaltningen Hisingen in response to the research topic stated, that the focus on women and the idea of creating more spaces for women and girls is always in the "back of their head", but not formally stated anywhere.

Both Socialförvaltningen Hisingen and the Polisen Hisingen try to build a better relationship with the young residents through various activities. The goal is to create better trust and relationship between the governmental authorities and young people. This is part of the strategy to prevent new recruitment for criminal groups in the future. (Trygg i Hisingen, 2021)

Among the important local actors is the formerly mentioned NGO Biblioteksvännerna i Biskopsgården (Library Friends Biskopsgården), an organization that works in cooperation with the Library and other actors in the area. It organizes a public breakfast every first Wednesday of the month at the activity hall "Sjumilahallen" for everyone who lives and works in Biskopsgården. This promotes information exchange, contacts and cooperation between residents, associations and other actors in the district. In addition, they organize many other activities in the area that among other things promote the engagement and collaboration between community organizations and residents. (Trygg i Hisingen, 2021)







CONTINUE WITH "MAIN ACTORS AND ALREADY APPLIED WORK FOR SAFETY"

The library in Biskopsgården offers activities for children and young people, but also helps with studies. It provides studying support for adults and helps to learn the Swedish language. The library organizes language cafés for practicing English and Swedish and helps with contacts to authorities and cultural institutions in the city. (Trygg i Hisingen, 2021)

Housing companys such as Göteborg stads Bostadsaktiebolaget provide a local presence outside through safety hosts. They hire a development manager responsible for safety and crime prevention issues and launch a job creation program to improve immigrants' chances in the labor market. The housing company Göteborg Lokaler is contributing by promising to maintain its property seven days a week, employing patrolling

safety hosts who have special training, and security certification of their property. (Trygg i Hisingen, 2021)

During safety walk by Bostad's AB Poseidon, it was found that they have also employed safety hosts to walk around the area to promote and generate a general sense of safety. They work every evening from 3:00p.m. to 11:00p.m. One of the safety hosts mentioned that the housing company has now expanded its group of safety hosts as they have been well received by the residents.

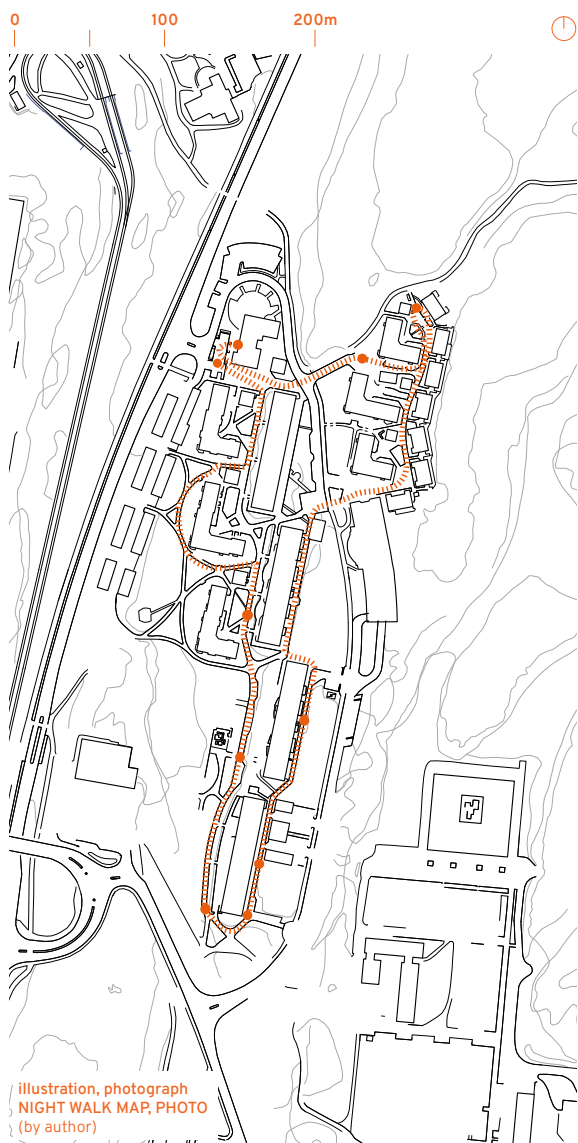
Sjumilaskolan, the school in the north of Biskopsgården, has established safety teams that provide, among other things, help with homework and counseling when needed, activities during breaks and mindfulness exercises for the whole class, and aggression replacement training. (Trygg i Hisingen, 2021)

## 2.

**When:**  
March 2nd 2022, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

**Where:**  
Primärområden: Svartedalen

**Streets:** Bymolnsgatan, Norra  
Fjädermolnsgatan, Södra  
Fjädermolnsgatan, Bernards gränd



illustration, photograph  
NIGHT WALK MAP, PHOTO  
(by author)



According to the catalogue *Föreningar i Biskopsgården* there are over 60 associations, run by many residents themselves in Biskopsgården. They are an essential part of the local actors as they strengthen and promote the community in Biskopsgården. The associations work in the areas of sports, politics, integration, care and culture, among others, and involve all age groups. They provide important meeting places, various activities for all, give opportunities and create social cohesion. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021)

Based on the findings it can be stated that the measures already taken to increase safety in the area include: safety surveys, a high police presence, various collaborations between stakeholders, safety and night walks, safety guards, safety hosts walking around the area to make residents feel safe, the creation of employment opportunities, community meetings and the development of activities for all age groups.

One mentionable, more specific project was carried out as part of the initiative "Tryggt och Jämnt". In 2008, the Swedish government initiated the project to combat men's violence against women. (Boverket, 2020) The aim was to strengthen safety and gender equality in the urban environment. A number of projects were implemented by municipalities, counties, councils and others. The National Housing Authority, in collaboration with district councils, was tasked with implementing this project, working on knowledge building, method development, regional seminars, and support for community initiatives and other projects. (Boverket, 2020)

According to a web article of *Svensk Byggtjänst*, one of the projects was carried out in Norra Biskopsgården under the name "olika lika" (different equal). The project is described as a lighting project and involved a landscape architect, an architect responsible for the lighting and a so-called safety group. Through a participatory process and night walks with women and young girls, appropriate actions were identified. According to the web article these measures, resulted in significant improvements and a safer outdoor environment in Biskopsgården.

The measures mainly involved removing vegetation to create clear sightlines, installing lighting on sidewalks, streets and Friskvåderstorget, and changing the surface in the tunnels to make them easier to clean from vandalism. Friskvåderstorget was apparently made car-free, but did not stay that way. Furthermore a playground and seating areas were installed. (Juell-Skielse, 2012)

To promote social sustainability, the article also mentions the then newly built activity hall Sjumilahallen, which formed a new activity place for the residents, as there was a lack of meeting places in Biskopsgården where people of all ages were welcome. In addition, security measures have been increased, e.g., surveillance cameras at several locations in Norra Biskopsgården and an increased police presence on site. (Juell-Skielse, 2012)

During the process of the research, it was possible to identify many other actors and their contributions to the safety strategy in the area, focusing on different issues with a focus on social or physical aspects within the district. Much is already being done to make the area safer, but the many actors and collaborations lead to an unclear understanding of the overall safety strategy. The overall focus of the strategy appears to be on crime prevention and preventing the recruitment of new members to criminal groups, although some actors focus on strengthening the social aspects. An earlier project involving architects and planners as mediators seems to have focused on the perception of women in the strategy for a safer urban space, but this is only vaguely evident today. The map on the following pages is intended to provide an overall overview of the various actors and influences that could be identified and showcases the complexity of the overall system.





► Key tension safe/unsafe

Throughout the study, a common tension could be identified, namely the tension of feeling safe on one hand and unsafe on the other. It highlights the complexity of the concept of safety, the factors interlinking, and the wide divergence of what it means to feel safe. The diagram down below indicates factors that influence the perception of safety.

This tension between feeling safe and feeling unsafe can often be interrelated or are the result of other tensions which will be further highlighted in the next sections. The research findings are presented as tensions related to reputation, institutions, opportunities, and actual needs as a concatenation of narratives and learning from all methods. The following section highlights the factors from the diagram that can be derived from the tensions.

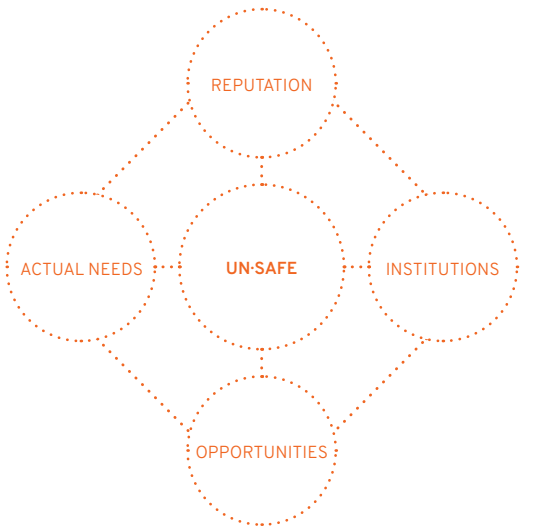


illustration.  
TENSIONS DIAGRAM  
(illustrated by author)

4.  
FACTORS INFLUENCING THE  
PERCEPTION OF SAFETY  
(adapted and expanded by author  
from Tramlab (2020) p.9 and Yavuz  
and Welch (2010) p.2495)

DESERTED no people/potential allies, lack of informal oversight		ACCESS TO SERVICES, RESOURCES		
BYSTANDER INACTION		POOR LIGHTING	KNOWLEDGE OF A PLACE	
INSTITUTIONS	PERSONAL NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES	LACK OF MAINTANANCE	OVERALL DESIGN inviting, variety of user activity	HEARSAY
UNPREDICTABLE PEOPLE	OTHER ATTRIBUTES age, disabilities, ethnicity, income, sexuality, etc.	ACCESSABILITY	TIME OF THE DAY	NEG. EXPERIENCES from friends or relatives
OTHER PEOPLE	GENDER being a women=high risk of victimization	ENTRAPMENT	ACCESSABILITY public transport, non-motorized transportation	TELEVISION AND MOVIES
	INDIVIDUAL	SPATIAL CONDITIONS	PUBLIC REALM	STORIES

► Tension around reputation

The tension around reputation refers to the general image painted by the media about Biskopsgården. It relates to current and past criminal acts, people's narratives, and other parties descriptions and how they have a great impact on the residents' sense of safety and how outsiders perceive it.

From observations at the first community meeting I attended, it could be highlighted that many residents feel that there is too little talk about the positive things in and about Biskopsgården. Their aim is to get people to talk more positively about the good conditions one finds in the area, such as the community, that the area is surrounded by nature and the fact that it is very close to the city but has little noise and traffic. Overall, the residents wish that there was much more talk about solutions and the good qualities in the area instead of the problems.

"I love everything about  
Biskopsgården, you don't feel like  
an outsider, you feel at home."

The report from 2021 that included multiple interviews with women and girls from local associations, makes clear that the questioned women share a lot of love for Biskopsgården and its multiculturality. They say that being able to meet people with the same culture and background makes them feel home and gives them a sense of belonging. However, the women also emphasized that the qualities of Biskopsgården are hardly highlighted. They argue that the bad reputation that the media spreads can cause people from outside the neighborhood to be afraid of them and the area. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021, p. 92) This in turn can lead to them being fearful of being feared.

Media reports predominantly cast Biskopsgården in a negative light and make outsiders think that it is even more dangerous than it actually is. It raises the question of whether, from an outsider's perspective, one might feel even more unsafe than someone who lives in the neighborhood. People who do not know the district only know the negative and scary reports from the media and therefore have a bad perception of the area.

This is also reflected by the girls interviewed in the report. They point out that the many negative reports about gang crime negatively affect many young people because their names and addresses are used in the media, even if they are only suspects. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021, pp. 50–51) As a result, this can often lead to prejudice among people who do not live or work in the district. This can create fear of being feared and general preconceptions among the residents of Biskopsgården.

From the phone conversations with the young mother from Somalia and the night walks, many residents confirmed that they feel safe in the area, although they do or describe things that indicate they feel unsafe in some way. The results suggest that this may be to protect the area's reputation and prevent it from being further damaged by slander. On the other side, they may feel safe because of the strong social ties they have in the area. This highlights the complexity of the perception of safety and its interrelated factors.

For example, the young mother I was able to have phone conversations with expresses that she feels very safe in Biskopsgården. She thinks that people have a phobia of the district because of its reputation. She says she often goes shopping in the evening and when she is with friends late at night, they walk each other home. Here one can interpret and refer to chapter 2, that the act of walking each other home together is a change in behavior from the effect of fear.

She also shared a story that happened 5 to 7 years ago when she picked up her children from kindergarten in the afternoon. When they were on their way home, a masked man on a motorbike stopped near her and shot into the air several times. She immediately grabbed her four children and carried them into a shop. She said that nothing happened and that they just wanted to scare people. When asked if this did not scare her and made her feel unsafe, she said no, as she is from Somalia, she is not really afraid of such things. The mother explained that only her children were scared, yet she remembers the story quite clearly and expressed through the narrative the fear for her children that she had at that moment.



However, the young mother stressed that the residents of Biskopsgården would rather say that other places like Hammarkullen are more dangerous, because everyone has a different perception of the areas that they live in. The woman shared that when she worked outside of Biskopsgården, the residents there were always anxious for her when she said she lived in Biskopsgården because they thought it was an unsafe part of town. She emphasized that it is, of course, a safe place in Sweden and said, "We just have fewer resources. You have all the resources and do not give us anything."

The tension of feeling safe or unsafe could also be observed during the safety/night walks. For example, during the safety walk with Bostads AB Poseidon and Bo Bra i Biskopsgården, at the beginning, when all participants introduced themselves, an elderly woman who lives in this part of Biskopsgården immediately expressed that she feels very safe in this part of the area. Nevertheless, the woman participates in the safety walks to help make the area safer. Here it is important to emphasize once again the differences and the complexity in the understanding of safety itself.

Although the focus of this paper is on the women's perspective, a man's perspective is also included to illustrate the tension this section is trying to communicate and the differences in men's and women's perceptions of safety. The perspective emerged from a conversation during the first night walk. An older man who has lived in Biskopsgården for a long time shared his opinion, saying that no one here is afraid and that only the people who come to Biskopsgården are afraid. His reasons are the bad reputation in the media, racism and different religious beliefs and the resulting hatred.

The third night walk showcased that the poor reputation also affects the residents own perception of safety, as was evident from a conversation with a young woman who has lived in Biskopsgården for a longer period of time. She explained that there is simply too much going on in the area that she lives in and that she feels unsafe with her daughter. She therefore wants to move away from Biskopsgården.

She recounted two incidents that were widely reported in the media and had an impact on the overall image of the district. According to Göteborg Posten, in June 2021, a police officer was shot to death in the open street in southern Biskopsgården, near Vårväderstorget. Policemen were on patrol in the streets, talking to pedestrians and residents for general surveillance purposes. The policeman was shot in a so-called drive-by attack. (Vasell et al., 2021) The second incident she mentioned was a shooting at a restaurant on Vårväderstorget in March 2015. Göteborg Posten reported that masked men stormed into a restaurant that evening, opened fire and killed two people. A number of people were injured. (Piauger, 2019)

**"Not even the police can protect us here."**

The conversation showed that residents remember the incidents and reports so well that it impacts their sense of safety to the point that they feel unsafe enough to want to move away, which could cause them to lose important social ties. However, even though the young woman feels unsafe she also says that she has to be brave and go out anyway. She notes, she can't just sit at home and miss out on social interaction and other opportunities.

The above findings make it clear that solely the bad qualities of the area are highlighted by the media and other parties, which affects the reputation of the district and thus the perception of safety of residents and outsiders. It also showcases the overall tension between feeling safe or unsafe and the correlating factors that influence these feelings. Regardless of whether residents feel unsafe or safe, there are several fears that could be identified namely the fear of being feared, the fear for the children and the fear for loosing social ties.



### ► Tension around the institutions

Through the tension around institutions the research aims to illustrate the responses and ideas, or lack thereof, for providing safer neighborhoods on the part of institutions. It aims to showcase the perception of residents around responses and work of the institutions and how it influences them and their perception of safety.

At the workshop I was able to attend in February, a young woman who was born in Somalia shared that she feels safe at different times of the day. She notes: "Sometimes it feels like they forgot about us, because they don't do anything." She goes on to say that something needs to be done about it, such as providing numerous activities that get people out of crime and keep them from falling into crime.

The women in the report say, that the fear of crime in the neighborhood is very relevant, as shootings and explosions are common in the area. Similar to the young women at the workshop, they say that they feel safe in public spaces, although at the same time the incidents that occur make them feel unsafe. Even if there is increased presence of the police, it makes them feel conflicted and that crime could happen any time. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021, p. 92)

This would confirm the critique on paternalistic safety approaches mentioned in chapter 2, which often do not make spaces safer but rather have the opposite effect. As these strategies tend to restrict and focus on individual behavior and the crime itself instead of the needs and perception of the one that are affected by these incidents.

The group of girls that was interviewed noted that if you have to be constantly afraid that something might happen, you always feel unsafe outside. They also mentioned that this makes them feel like they live in a segregated area, which makes them have the sense of being outsiders, as they think this would never happen in a more established area. The girls stated that if crime could be prevented it would not only make the community safer but also create a sense of belonging for everyone, make everyone feel home and it would enable them to go out without their parents being worried. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021, pp. 50–51)

The findings make it evident that residents themselves have a strong desire to make a difference in the community, to create a positive image, and to empower people so that everyone can feel safe and welcome. One of the reasons for this is that they often feel that otherwise nothing will change.

In a conversation with Randi Myhre a point emerged that in certain meetings with neighborhood actors, residents who want to make a difference, be representative, get involved, are not included.

The fact that they are not included and feel like they are forgotten shows the importance of considering the perspectives and needs of the people who live and work in the area. By treating residents as experts, as in the safer cities approach mentioned in Chapter 3, architects and urban planners can highlight their needs and develop solutions that fit those needs.

Through conversations during the first night walk, it also became apparent that Sjumilahallen, was partly closed after a young man was shot nearby in 2015. The result was the loss of an important meeting place for activities and clubs that promotes social cohesion. This can also lead to the isolation of marginalized groups in particular, as they have no place to meet and engage in other activities. It suggests that the focus on creating a safer area is mainly on crime itself, and that these crime prevention strategies in turn have a negative impact on the residents themselves.



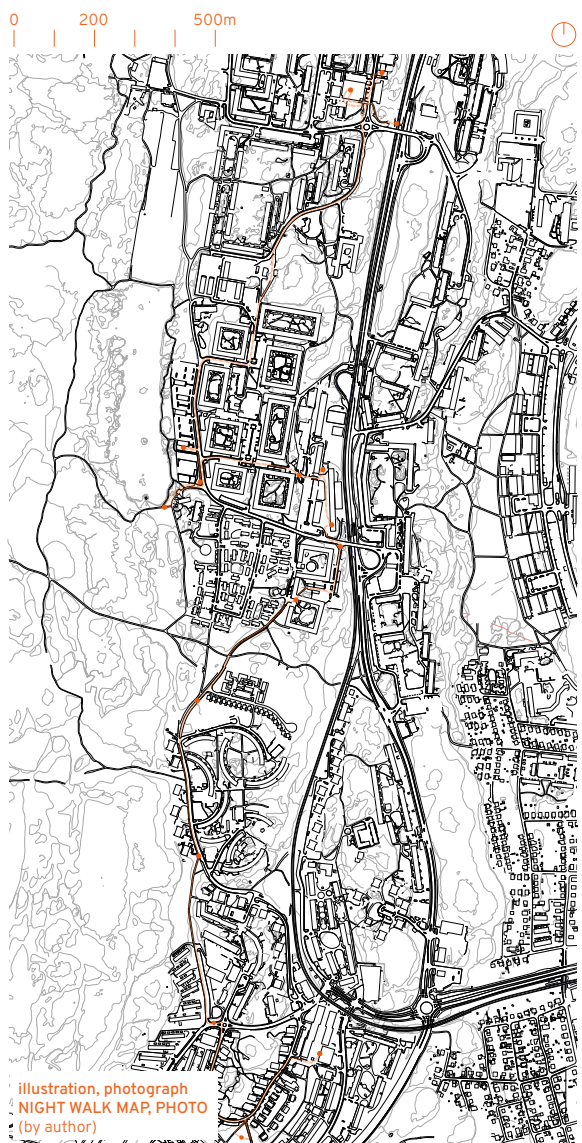




CONTINUE WITH "TENSION AROUND INSTITUTIONS"

During the walk, there were also comments about the plans for the further development of Biskopsgården into a Trädgårdsstad. The vision raises concerns that the potential use of neoliberal planning methods, supported by poor media coverage, could lead to gentrification. This would result in the loss of affordable housing as new housing would be built that residents could no longer afford. This situation could also lead to the additional fear of not having a home or losing the home and, moreover, the community. As a family or single parent, these fears are compounded by fears for the safety of their children.

The results indicate that there is a general impression that nothing or too little is being done. The paternalistic strategies used, such as more police patrols and the closure of places where activities are taking place, also suggest that the focus is mainly on crime prevention rather than on the impact it has on residents. Residents want to take action themselves and make their opinions known, but the research shows that these opinions are not listened to much and are rarely voiced. Here, again, several fears could be identified such as the fear of crime, the fear of not having or losing home in combination with the fear of losing the community.



1.

**When:**  
February 18th 2020, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

**Where:**  
Primärområden: Södra Biskopsgården,  
Norra Biskopsgården, Länsmansgården

**From:** Vårväderstorget  
**To:** Länsmanstorget



## ► Tension around opportunities

Based on the reputational and institutional tensions described in the last sections, it can be inferred that the incidents, the media coverage, and safety strategy can limit or affect residents' access to city resources and services. These tensions can have a great influence on their opportunities.

From the report it can be highlighted that the fear of crime and the fear of being attacked keeps the women from going out after 8:00p.m. because something could always happen to them. This fear makes them even think of moving out of the neighborhood, which in turn would make them lose the social ties they have in the district. The women say that the multiculturalism at least, gives them a sense of safety, because as immigrants they can feel that they belong and are not different. Here the fear of crime is closely connected with the fear of not being able to be part of a group or the fear of not having a home. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021, p. 92)

The fact about women restricting their access during nighttime also came up in a conversation with Randi Myhre and other workshop participants. When we talked about main types of fear, a woman revealed that her main fears are the fear to be attacked, the fear of rape and the fear of crime. These are fears that cause her not to go out in the evening after 8:00p.m. She is also worried that her daughter might be attacked or become a victim of some form of violence. This illustrates the additional fear for her children, which can restrict the children's access to opportunities.

A young woman who we met on the first night walk shared a very personal experience that made one realize that there is not only the fear of crime rather than there are many other fears that build on each other, such as the fact that many people are waiting for confirmation of their residence permit. This is a foundational fear combined with the fears of not being accepted, not having a home, of losing the community or the fear of poverty. It highlights the overall fear of not belonging.

As outlined in the section "Tensions around institutions", important meeting places such as the Sjumilahallen were partly closed, resulting in the loss of important meeting places for residents and the opportunities they opened.

In a phone conversation with the young mother from Somalia who I met at the first community meeting, she talked about the opportunities these activity spaces gave them. She shared how she met with a group of other mothers from around the world to cook together during her maternity leave a few years ago. They were able to meet in an activity room with a kitchen. The group shared the cost of ingredients and cooked dishes from different countries together and sold them. People liked the idea so much that they formed an association which enabled them to receive money from the community. The group had a lot of fun, a great team spirit and was able to support each other in everyday activities. For example, while some of them cooked, the other mothers were able to pick up all the children from the schools and kindergarten. Through this initiative, they gained popularity and a good income, which enabled them to take up new opportunities, such as finding a job, getting an education or taking exams. Due to the new opportunities, the group somehow dissolved, which is why they no longer exist today. Here it can also be pointed out that the women had formed a safe community for themselves, which they lost due to the new opportunities that were offered to them.

In the phone conversation the young mother explained, that today many meeting and activity places that would make such things possible are missing. She brought up the incident at Sjumilahallen mentioned earlier, which she says was an important meeting place for Biskopsgården until someone was shot there. She said that a group from Albania cooked food there among many other activities that took place. She emphasized how this helped the general integration a lot. The mother said that it has become really difficult now because it is only used for activities from other districts and is only available to residents one day a month for community meetings. The woman went on to say that this is their place and that women in this area really want to have their own space.

**"Meeting spaces are missing.  
Going out and having a little  
chit-chat and then coming home  
makes you feel really good."**



CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE



It is important to highlight that these crimes affect the whole district, the residents and their access to certain services. In Biskopsgården, according to the police in Hisingen, 175 out of 30000 inhabitants belong to gangs. (Bornemann, 2021) In a conversation, Randi Myhre mentioned, that this small number of people affects the whole area and its inhabitants. It is reflected in the closure of activity and meeting spaces or the restricted access to certain services. She explained the example of "Meröppet", a library service that allows people to use the library outside of opening hours for use of computers, workstations, and other services, a service that is not available in Biskopsgården due to crime but is much needed.

In another conversation with Randi Myhre at the workshop, on the question of whether women have access to important services, she answered that the main problem is, that many do not know what kind of services are available as they often have no access to the information due to language barriers. The discussion also revealed that during the pandemic the restricted access to important services caused major problems. The lack of access to information can have a great impact on their opportunities and therefore their general access to the city. The access to information is also a point that could be highlighted during the first night walk, as Randi Myhre showed that there is a lack of opportunities to disseminate information, for example in the form of information boards. The lack of information or the lack of access to information can trigger additional fears. This particularly affects people who speak a different language.



Through participation at three monthly community meetings, it became clear that they are one of the most important formats for giving access and sharing information about important news, events and all communal, educational and recreational activities in the area. In addition, the resident guides mentioned earlier who are employed in the area resonate well and have been very helpful in providing better access to information.

In regard to the findings of this section, it can be noted that there are many fears resulting from both the crime incidents and before mentioned tensions, which have an influence on women's behavior and access to public space. At the same time, the crimes cause activity and meeting spaces to be closed, limiting their access to opportunities, social interaction, contacts and information. This underscores the general need for social and institutional infrastructure services that were described in Chapter 3 that could help to promoting a safer neighborhood. In this section several fears could be identified such as the fear of crime, the fear of being attacked, the fear of rape, the fear of not being accepted, the fear of not having a home, the fear of not having access to opportunities and the fear of losing the community.



photograph.  
COMMUNITY MEETING  
(photograph taken by author)

## ► Tension around actual needs

From the aforementioned findings it can already be deduced that there is a tension that could be identified in all the methods in relation to space and how there is a need of spaces that serve the community to meet and hold activities. However, it makes one question whether the focus is on the right elements and on the area's actual needs. This section discusses the tensions that could be identified in relation to actual needs.

The safety and night walks conducted, were an important tool to analyze both the physical and social aspects of the environment, however the difference between the safety walks themselves should be highlighted. As mentioned in the description of the methods, the first and third night walks differ from the second safety walk in the way they are conducted, in their goal and in the outcome.

Overall, the second safety walk that was initiated by Bo Bra i Biskopsgården revealed that the primary focus is on aspects such as maintenance, lighting, clear sightlines, unsafe vehicular traffic, general accessibility, potential entrapment areas, barriers, or other needs within the site that try to be identified. During the night walk, some of these aspects could be detected. They concerned aspects such as lack of lighting, maintenance of certain areas, incorrect parking and unclear sightlines through vegetation.

According to the housing company, after each safety walk conducted with the initiative Bo Bra, a report on the findings is prepared. The report is then to be discussed later with the parties that participated in the walk and the parties that are affected by the changes so that further modifications can be made. However, in a conversation with a representative of Socialförvaltningen Hisingen, it becomes clear that the identified changes that are then implemented depend very much on the owners. It is therefore important to acknowledge that it often happens that proposals for changes are suggested but not realized because the owners do not consider them necessary or the budget for changes is not available.

In contrast, the other two safety walks conducted with the associations of Biskopsgården aim to empower the residents and create a sense of

safety through their own presence. This is because these night walks were initiated by the residents themselves. They also use the time during walks to remove graffiti or trash when possible and not necessary to be reported, as residents and local actors in the area know how long it can take for it to be removed.

The conduction of the first night walk with Biblioteksvännerna i Biskopsgården has shown that racist graffiti in public places in the neighborhood is almost a daily occurrence. In this context, it is important to emphasize that such graffiti can cause much more fear among Muslim women than among men, as they are much more vulnerable to assault than men are, simply because of the display of the hijab. (Listerborn, 2016, pp. 9-10)

During the workshop in a conversation with Randi Myhre, she explained that the public areas most affected by low perception of safety are the main squares: Friskvåderstorget, Vårvåderstorget and Länsmanstorget especially when shops are closed, and streets are dark. These are also the areas where police patrol the most at certain times of the day. When asked if the presence of the police made the women feel safer or less safe, she responded that they feel both. Similar to the findings mentioned earlier they feel safer with the police, but their presence also gives them the feeling that something bad could happen at any moment.

From conversations at the night walk it became apparent that the committed crimes by Friskvåderstorget have also led to the installment of more CCTV. To ensure that the CCTV has clear sightlines, many trees had to be removed, which affected the overall design of the square and will need to be considered in future designs. This in turn affects the overall usage and atmosphere of the public square.

In the phone conversation with the young mother from Somalia, when talking about the surveillance cameras at Friskvåderstorget, she said that she doesn't even notice them or know that they are there. However she also mentioned that sometimes she feels that surveillance cameras are everywhere, between schools, between houses and other buildings. The mother described that







CONTINUE WITH "TENSION AROUND ACTUAL NEEDS"

it feels very strange because sometimes when something happens, no one comes and there is only speculation about what happened. Here, another tension could be recognized, as she says the CCTV does not bother her, yet she thinks they are everywhere.

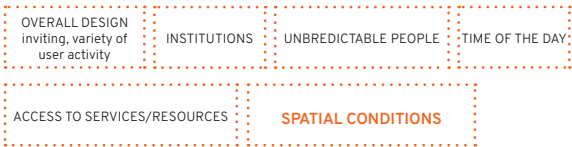
During the conversation with Randi Myhre at the workshop, she started to share a story about the Biskopsgården Library at Vårväderstorget. Some time ago there was an incident with a group of young people and threats with a knife. Around that time, an exhibition was opened in the library with a group of knitters. Not wanting to leave their handmade objects unattended, they decided to just stay there and knit while the exhibition took place. The young people, out of interest started to approach them and built a connection with the knitters. Randi Myhre points out that the time when this exhibition was held were the calmest weeks in a long time. The new presence generated a positive atmosphere and had a positive effect on the behavior of the young individuals. Thus, the mere fact that something is happening that attracts different types of people, that there is something going on, and that there is a constant presence keeps the place active and calm and ensures that many people come and stay at different times of the day.

The above-mentioned story can be supported by another example from an observation during the third night walk. As we arrived at Friskväderstorget before 8:00p.m., many people were still out on the square. We spent some time in the library at Friskväderstorget. When we left again to clean up the area around the square, it was just after 8:00p.m. The square was completely empty, as it had already become dark outside and the supermarket and other stores in the area had already closed.

After the cleanup, we returned to the square around 9:00p.m. Friskväderstorget had some life again. One of the associations called "meeting plays", an art and theater organization, did a performance on the square by using light and poetry. The performance reactivated the previously empty, unused Friskväderstorget. It brought many people back to the square, which, according to the results, is usually avoided at this time of day and perceived as unsafe.

These stories illustrate that informal surveillance cannot be achieved simply by placing commercial spaces in a square. Rather, it needs additional spaces with activities that encourage people to linger and invite different types of people which can lead to informal surveillance and provide a sense of safety. It highlights the need that emerged from a conversation at the third night walk with the young mother and Randi Myhre. Namely, the need to take back the streets, as there is a male-dominated presence on the streets and squares. Thus, it can be emphasized that there is a great need to bring all types of people to the squares and public spaces.

This section outlines how some of the safety work in the area focuses on residents' opinions and perceptions of safety, and how changing physical aspects could help them feel safer. However, the findings indicate that these aspect often cannot be changed due to various reasons. Furthermore the section showcases how the use of paternalistic approaches creates a tension, as they affect residents' perception of safety and the quality, design, and use of public spaces, raising questions about whether these are the right solutions to address actual needs. The stories at the end demonstrate how focusing on residents' needs and use of public space could positively impact residents' sense of safety. In this section the fear of hate, racism, and non-acceptance could be identified.



► Reflection

Many of these identified tensions are not primarily about safety issues themselves, but about broader issues related to community, gentrification, and social stigma. It is therefore important to recognize that these issues have a crucial impact on one's perception of safety. Throughout the research the differences in women's perceptions of safety and resulting fears, as well as their impact on women's access to urban space, could be identified. The above-mentioned fears affect the behavioral patterns of residents and, consequently, their everyday life activities, thus it is important to acknowledge and emphasize them in order to find appropriate solutions for the area.

To recognize these and understand that there are more fears than the fear of crime, one can stress the importance of using an intersectional lens. From the findings, it becomes clear that there are many different factors that influence these tensions. However, the results indicate that the area appears to address only a few of these factors, such as unpredictable people and spatial conditions.



3.

**When:**  
March 26th 2022, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

**Where:**  
Primärområden: Södra Biskopsgården,  
Norra Biskopsgården

**From:** Vårväderstorget  
**To:** Friskväderstorget



# 5. SUGGESTIONS

This section looks at the role of spatial planners and how and with what focus they could productively engage in the safety debate. Furthermore, it outlines the needs that could be identified in the area and suggests what spatial planners could do in relation to the findings. In addition, a vision is drawn of what the square Friskvåderstorget could look like if the focus of the approach were to be on fulfilling the perspectives of the residents, in comparison to its current appearance.

## THE ROLE OF THE SPATIAL PLANNER

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the term spatial planner is used to address the variety of planners who deal with spatial issues. When referring to spatial planners in this work, it includes architects, urban planners, urban designers, and other professionals who deal with the built environment.

What can planners do to encourage and make cities safer? What role do they have in the safety debate and how can they productively engage? This section aims to reflect on these questions by considering the planning approaches today and the findings from the case study.

As for the role of spatial planners in a more general sense, Carolyn Whitzman, for example, points to the direct influence that planners have on the design of the city. A planner, regardless of whether he or she works for a private or government entity, helps create public and private urban spaces. While the responsibility for funding certain services may rest in other hands, planners can work to ensure that accessible and affordable space is provided in new and existing neighborhoods. Although, crime cannot simply be prevented by design, there is evidence that it can affect both the opportunities for crime and the opportunities for successful defense. (Whitzman, 2019, pp. 93, 95)

Planning for a safer environment also requires recognizing that postwar development trends have contributed much to making cities more unsafe. One can hereby point at trends such as the extreme separation of land use typically found in suburban neighborhood plans, with its border of main roads, shopping plazas with huge parking lots, industrial parks, high rise housing and single-family houses placed around a school surrounded by large playing fields. These aspects of the built environment make informal surveillance by shopkeepers and passersby, or getting to know neighbors by loitering on porches or sidewalks, impossible. (Whitzman, 2019, p. 94)

From the case study, it is unclear at what stage architects and designers are usually brought in. The research suggests that they are brought in only at a stage when an area's needs and opportunities have already been identified and the type of project to be implemented in an area has already been

defined. To then promote safety on a particular project, a set of guidelines are often used that focus on physical aspects and protection strategies to make a space safer but ignore that safety issues are related to much broader, more complex problems. It also ignores the impact and effect it can have on the residents. Lack of time and cost considerations often lead to the use of such approaches.

From Chapter 3, it can be seen that key strategies from the CPTED and the physical aspects that support those strategies, such as enclosed and isolated areas, unclear visibility, and poor lighting and maintenance, can potentially provide opportunities for criminal behavior. However, if one returns to Jane Jacob's idea of eyes on the street as a form of informal surveillance as a primary safety mechanism, these design aspects need to be combined with knowledge of the behavior patterns of residents and those who commit crimes in the neighborhood. Hereby the presence of people who would intervene if they perceived criminal activity is an important social factor that can deter criminals. This presence of people can in turn be influenced by design characteristics. (Jacobs, 1961; Whitzman, 2007, pp. 93–94)

The CPTED approach as discussed earlier, often focuses only on crimes against property, crime rates and the offenders and thereby relies on professional experts like the police or criminologists. (Whitzman, 2019, p. 667,668) This focus could also be identified in the safety strategy of Biskopsgården. However, rather than focusing only on crime, planners should address the resulting fear of crime, which is a key aspect of Jacobs' idea of informal surveillance. This means focusing on the people affected by crime, with particular attention to differences in fear between men and women and among other urban minorities. (Wekerle, 2000, p. 46)

**"Whether you look at urban safety from the perspective of the potential victim or the assailant, from the perspective of what people want or what seems to work, you find the complex interaction of social control and opportunity reduction, and a need to promote both together."**

(Whitzman, 2019, p. 95)



The research thus highlights what is missing in the safety approach, namely that there is a need for planners to focus on and engage with the residents of an area and treat them as experts. Regardless of the phase in which planners are involved, this is a critical aspect of the spatial planner's role. Treating the residents as experts is a concept developed by Jane Jacobs and later taken up by other planners, such as the Safer Cities approaches mentioned in Chapter 3. With the idea of drawing on their own experiences and those of their clients, so that everyday experiences rather than abstract concepts become the primary source of material for design. (Franck, 2000, p. 299)

From a planner's perspective, treating residents as experts by analyzing their behavior patterns and everyday experiences thus requires local engagement. Instead of working with already identified needs, preconceived ideas and quick fix design solutions, one needs to engage with the residents and actors of the area. Only by doing this

it is possible to understand residents' daily lives, identify their fears and needs, determine what is missing, and find appropriate solutions.

Jane Jacobs highlighted the importance of everyday life experiences as she showed how they have been ignored by popular large-scale, single-use urban renewal developments. Her intention was to mediate everyday experiences and the ways in which the built environment can enhance and support those experiences. (Franck, 2000, p. 299)

For example, by identifying everyday experiences and needs and recognizing the connection between categories and space, one can create an environment that allows proximity to essential services and better accessibility. (Franck, 2000, pp. 298–299) Doing this can have a positive impact on certain factors that influence perception of safety, such as access to services and opportunities, social cohesion, or feeling welcome and accepted in an environment.

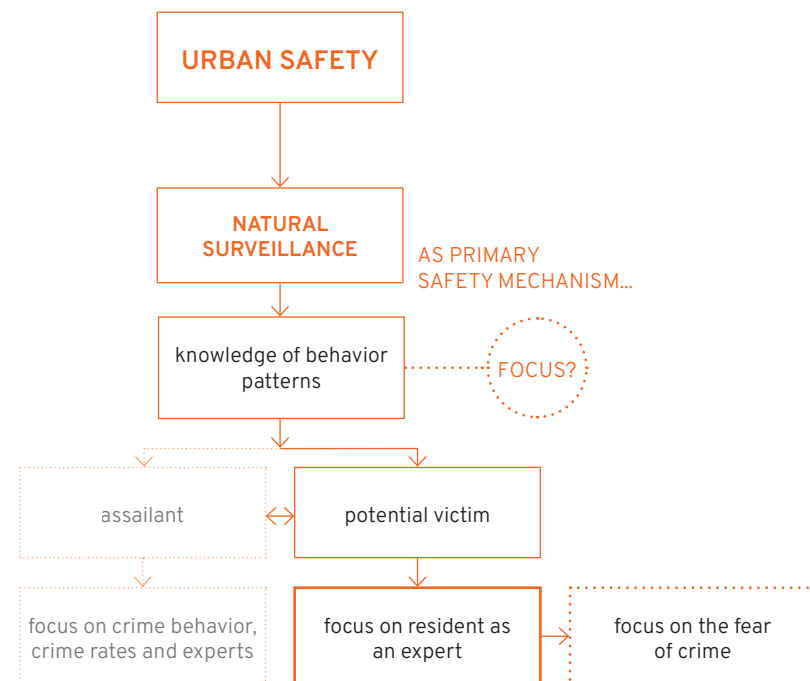


illustration.  
URBAN SAFETY FOCUS DIAGRAM  
(illustrated by author)

## ► Local engagement

### So how can planners get involved locally? What should one focus on to productively engage?

First of all, it must be emphasized that safety does not only mean being protected from violent crime. Safety must be considered in a larger context, such as fulfilling basic human needs, having the sense of belonging, being part of a community and having the feeling of being accepted and welcomed in an environment. There are also a variety of interrelated factors that influence the perception of safety. This must be acknowledged by planners as these needs can be influenced by aspects of physical, social, mobile, and institutional infrastructure mentioned in chapter 3.

From the results of the case study, it can be determined that next to the fear of crime there are several interrelated types of fears that build on each other. These fears must be recognized in order to plan an appropriate strategy for safety. If these fears are not addressed in the process design improvements could intensify those fears and have a negative effect on residents in an area. In this context, this work also highlights the need for planning to take into account, in particular, the perspectives and experiences of women and minority groups who have the least access to urban resources because, as Carina Listerborn notes, they have fears that are often excluded, invisible, or unrecognized. (Listerborn, 2016, p. 12) It is critical to therefore apply an intersectional lens in a planning approach for safety.

A good way to engage as a planner, according to the findings, is to participate, where possible, in local activities that would be happening anyway, and to observe, have conversations, and strive to understand residents' perspectives. This is a caring and helpful way to find out information and stories, while valuing their time and not asking too much of them. This can be crucial because when you come as an outsider, language barriers or other reasons can often lead to uncertainty about intentions. This approach also leads to the planner stepping back and naturally putting the resident in an expert position. At the same time, the case study has shown that by doing this it can put one in situations where it is impossible to ignore the tensions, feelings and precarities that exist in an area. These are crucial to realize the actual needs in an area for further improvements.

In the scope of this work it was possible to participate in night walks, a method that in this case was initiated by the residents or local actors themselves. From an architects' or urban planners' point of view, night walks are a good way to analyze both the physical and social aspects of the neighborhood and their interconnectedness. If they are not already established in the neighborhood, there is an opportunity to introduce these walks as a tool in an area. As they help to connect with residents, empower them, value their opinions, break down hierarchies, and hear stories that have a physical relation to the spaces or come up through memories during the walk.

It is important to emphasize that there is a critical difference in the way these walks are conducted as there is the risk of focusing only on the physical aspects, which could be perceived as unsafe such as not enough lighting or not clear sightlines. To avoid this risk, it would be good to conduct several night walks in the same environment at different time periods. To analyze the physical aspects in more detail, the conducted safety/night walks could be followed up by other methods such as safety audits. (P.29)

To truly engage and understand the area, it is important to communicate that you care, and to formulate tools and methods that are appropriate to what residents are comfortable with. To respect their expertise, it is also crucial to come without preconceived knowledge and opinions. The main aim should be to empower the residents, as according to Whitzman this could then also lead to long term, more complex changes. (Wekerle, 2000, p. 48)

When at the meetings, ask about the barriers they are facing and what they think is missing, because one cannot design solutions for something one has never seen, never been confronted with, or does not know about. In addition, ask about what makes them feel safe and about stories in the area. How can design improvements positively impact their needs? These are key aspects in designing for safer environments, rather than assuming that a set of guidelines will solve the problems.







CONTINUE WITH "LOCAL ENGAGEMENT"

As the experiences of daily life and the behavioral patterns of residents are largely context-based, this gives rise to the aspect that design solutions must always be contextual and tailored to local problems, which is a key aspect of the safer cities concept mentioned earlier. This point is also reflected in the findings of the case study. It emphasizes that in each locality, there are different perceptions of safety, different tensions and needs, spatial conditions and opportunities. In this context, it is also critical to understand and analyze the work already done for safety, to acknowledge the overall system, and to understand how architects and urban planners can contribute and collaborate.

Since there is no easy, quick, top-down solution, another important aspect to recognize as an architect and urban planner is that planning for safety takes time. Time and financial reasons as mentioned earlier, are often the catalyst for relying on a set of guidelines, quick fix solutions, and experts encouraging paternalistic safety strategies. The problems of cities, neighborhoods and buildings are much more complex, and this must be acknowledged. Simple design solutions to one problem can therefore create another problem and often have a negative impact on the safety of its users. Thus, planning for safety also requires an awareness of time and the complexity of the overall system. (Wekerle and Whitzman, 1995, pp. 17, 18)

From the results it can be drawn that there is a need to have awareness for change within this system. As an example one can refer to the project Tryggt och Jämmt mentioned in the results. Since this project was a one-time government initiative, the findings suggest that there was no need to revisit and re-evaluate the location and the results of the project. Today, one of the improvements mentioned, namely the new activity hall Sjumilahallen, as shown in the findings, is partly closed to local agents in Biskopsgården, reviving problems and needs identified by the project at that time. Thus, there is a great need for follow-ups and revisions of projects in order to encourage a safer environment. Proposals for safer space should therefore not only be able to deal with this ongoing change of a system and allow for flexibility, but also regularly be revisited and reanalyzed.

Since there is no simple solution that can do justice to the overall complexity, it is also important for planners to move away from the search for planning utopia. Here one can point to the influences of the early twentieth-century ideal cities mentioned in Chapter 3, Howard's "Garden Cities of Tomorrow" and Le Corbusier's "The Radiant City". As Whitzman puts it, both support the idea of demolishing the old and starting over, which follows the idea that cities that are well designed will produce good and healthy people. In this context, one can also link to the ideas of Alice Coleman, Oscar Newman, and CPTED described in Chapter 3, which are about changing the physical aspects of an environment to create a safer environment. (Whitzman, 2019, p. 102)

Based on the findings, one can hereby point to the vision for Biskopsgården of the Garden City, which foresees a new safe and lively neighborhood. There is a risk that the idea of planning or designing away the problems without considering the opinions and needs of the residents would most likely exacerbate them. Thus, as Whitzman argues, design improvements should be combined with community development in order to make areas safer. (Whitzman, 2019, p. 95)

In general, it should be noted that safety in spatial planning is often treated as an additional requirement that can be added through a set of design improvements, whereas it should rather be treated as a defining concept. This results in the need as a planner to not think of design first, but rather to think of other elements that may be identified as missing. Design can then be used as a supporting tool for these missing elements for suggested improvements, enhancing the perception of safety and the feeling of being welcome and comfortable in an environment. Spatial planners should therefore adopt an approach that follows these key aspects and values and reflects the opinions, perspectives and needs of residents to encourage a safer environment, rather than easy top-down solutions that most likely do the opposite.

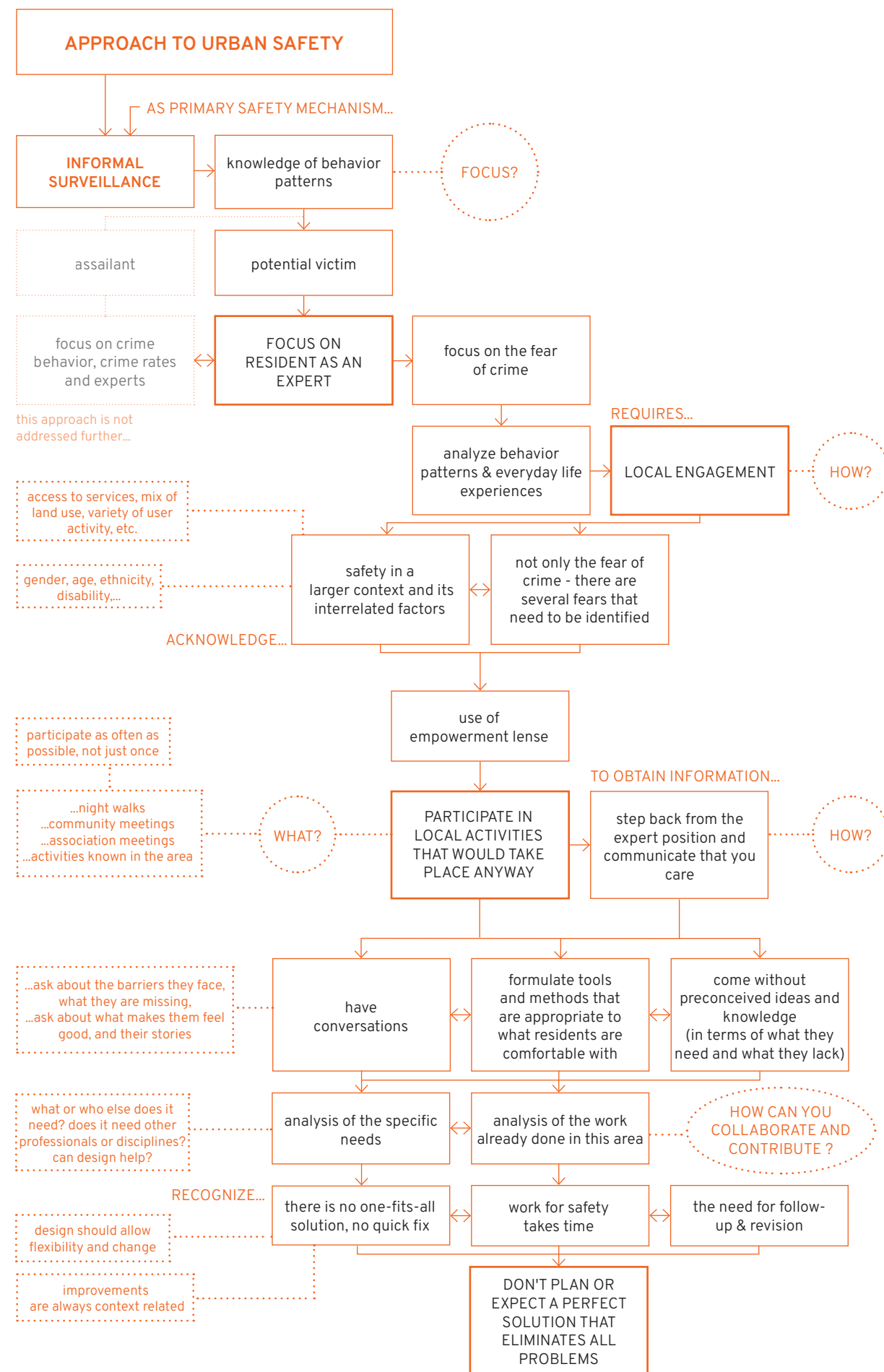


illustration.  
URBAN SAFETY APPROACH DIAGRAM  
(illustrated by author)

## WHAT COULD BE DONE

The findings in Chapter 4 have already brought forward some aspects that regard spatial matters and could be encouraged by architects and urban planners to support the work already done in Biskopsgården. This section details the various needs that could be identified in the neighborhood and the measures that could be taken from a planner's perspective. Because architects are often brought in at a stage, when needs have already been determined, it is important to take an approach like the one described in the previous section to get an overall view of the area.

One of the most significant answers to what could be done to create a safer neighborhood is to involve residents and make their needs known. Except for a few actors, the safety strategy generally focuses on crime rather than victims in the area. In this context, residents are considered victims, as they have to live with the consequences of the crimes itself and the strategy to combat crime. Architects and urban planners should therefore treat the residents in the area as experts. By focusing on the residents, one would not only empower them, but also highlight the good qualities of the neighborhood, as Biskopsgården has a strong sense of community that many people have no awareness of at all.

To promote safety in cities, Jane Jacobs among other things suggests focusing more on housing, neighborhoods and community centers. (Jacobs, 1961) From the report it could be drawn that the women's group would like to see a change in the housing system so that the ethnic groups within the neighborhood are mixed and there is not just one group living on one street. They also want more housing that meets the needs of residents and housing that allows for different living situations, so they don't need to move out of the area. A well-mixed community can promote understanding of each other, which can reduce prejudice and fear. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021, p. 92) In the new vision for Biskopsgården to become a Garden City, it is therefore crucial to ensure that affordable housing is provided, that meets the needs of residents and does not lead to gentrification.

The physical conditions of an environment are also aspects that need to be considered and evaluated when planning for a safer area, although these aspects should be considered as supporting

elements rather than aspects that result in solutions. Hereby special consideration must be given to the potential impact on residents, the community (focus on victims), and the public realm. Here it is important to emphasize that analyzing the impact requires an intersectional planning approach. In Biskopsgården, such physical aspects among others can include supporting elements such as lighting projects where it is considered necessary, the use of outdoor materials that make it easy to remove hateful graffiti, or outdoor information boards that allow for simple placement of informative flyers for the area.

It can be seen from the results that there is an overall need for essential services. For example, the report from Biskopsgården indicates that more simple education and training opportunities are needed for residents in order to reduce unemployment and create more opportunities for residents. Parents getting jobs and pursuing education strengthens the economy and the family. They become role models and can have positive influence on the children. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021) The findings also highlighted the services that are not available due to crime in the area, such as the closure of the activity hall and the use of the library services outside the opening hours.

The findings clearly show that more activity spaces and meeting places are needed to meet the diverse needs of the population. This includes more spaces for associations, but also other public places such as a cultural center and spaces for artistic activities such as theatre and dance. There is a need for public swimming pools, indoor volleyball courts, recreation centers, a culture house, playgrounds, but also open kitchens or spaces that allow a variety of such uses. Overall, there is a need for more suitable activity spaces for girls and older generations. According to the report activities for children can promote being more successful at school and develop better personal qualities. It also decreases the risk of getting caught up in bad environments. This would help to understand and enter the society and contribute to feel a sense of belonging in the rest of the society. (Myhre and Tuna, 2021, p. 93)

Offering such services in close proximity also allows linking activities of everyday life and overcomes residents' problems, such as not being able to travel far, requiring a lot of time, and not being able to afford to travel. It simply provides adequate and more equal access to the city.

These are needs, that spatial planners can aim to provide and design for and bring forward in the planning process. Strengthening these community spaces can empower residents by, among other things, giving them access to opportunities, providing a place to seek help in reporting crime or staying out of crime, promoting social cohesion and supporting informal surveillance. Here one can follow up on one of Jane Jacobs' arguments, which is to focus on more subtle aspects of urban safety, such as a mix of activities, land uses and parks that could attract diverse groups of people to use the space. If for various reasons it is not possible to provide such spaces in the neighborhood, planners should focus on strengthening public outdoor spaces. This relates to public spaces such as parks, squares and streets. For parks for example Jacobs argues to not only focus on the green benefits of parks but rather encourage a range of activities and users. Attractive activities allow informal surveillance, and fewer vegetation in turn provide clear sight lines. (Jacobs, 1961)

If one looks at Friskvåderstorget, one of the squares in Biskopsgården that is perceived as particularly unsafe, there are several indications that there is a focus on crime prevention to improve its safety. From the results, aspects such as higher police patrols, installed surveillance cameras and activity places nearby being closed due to crimes can be derived. As a result, the square remains an economic

hub with spaces mainly for shopping during certain opening hours. With minor exceptions such as the new library, a small playground, and the small, club room of the association Meeting Plays, which occasionally bring new life to the square, it does not encourage activities or other uses that would attract different types of people.

One might ask what Friskvåderstorget would look like if the aforementioned needs are identified and taken into account by planners? What if Friskvåderstorget would be transformed into an activity hub that attracts different kinds of people, provides meeting places and other services? In the following pages, a vision is drawn to answer this question and to show that safety can be promoted by a wide variety of context related factors. First, the square is reviewed in terms of the aspects that define it today, followed by a look at what could be developed in regard to the needs of the residents. It thereby aims to challenge the design aspects that result from a focus on crime and highlights alternative approaches. This vision neglects CCTV sightlines or other aspects that would be important to take into account in a strategy that focused purely on crime and individuals behavior. As this is merely a vision, it does not take into account building permits and other regulations. Furthermore it needs to be emphasized that these are not specific design proposals, but rather a way to illustrate that focusing on residents needs can result in improvements that are different from protection and control approaches. The vision shows how one of the various necessary improvements could look like. More specific design proposals from the perspective of local residents would need to be discussed with them in more detail and further analyzed.



5.  
FRISKVÅDERSTORGET  
(Google (2022))



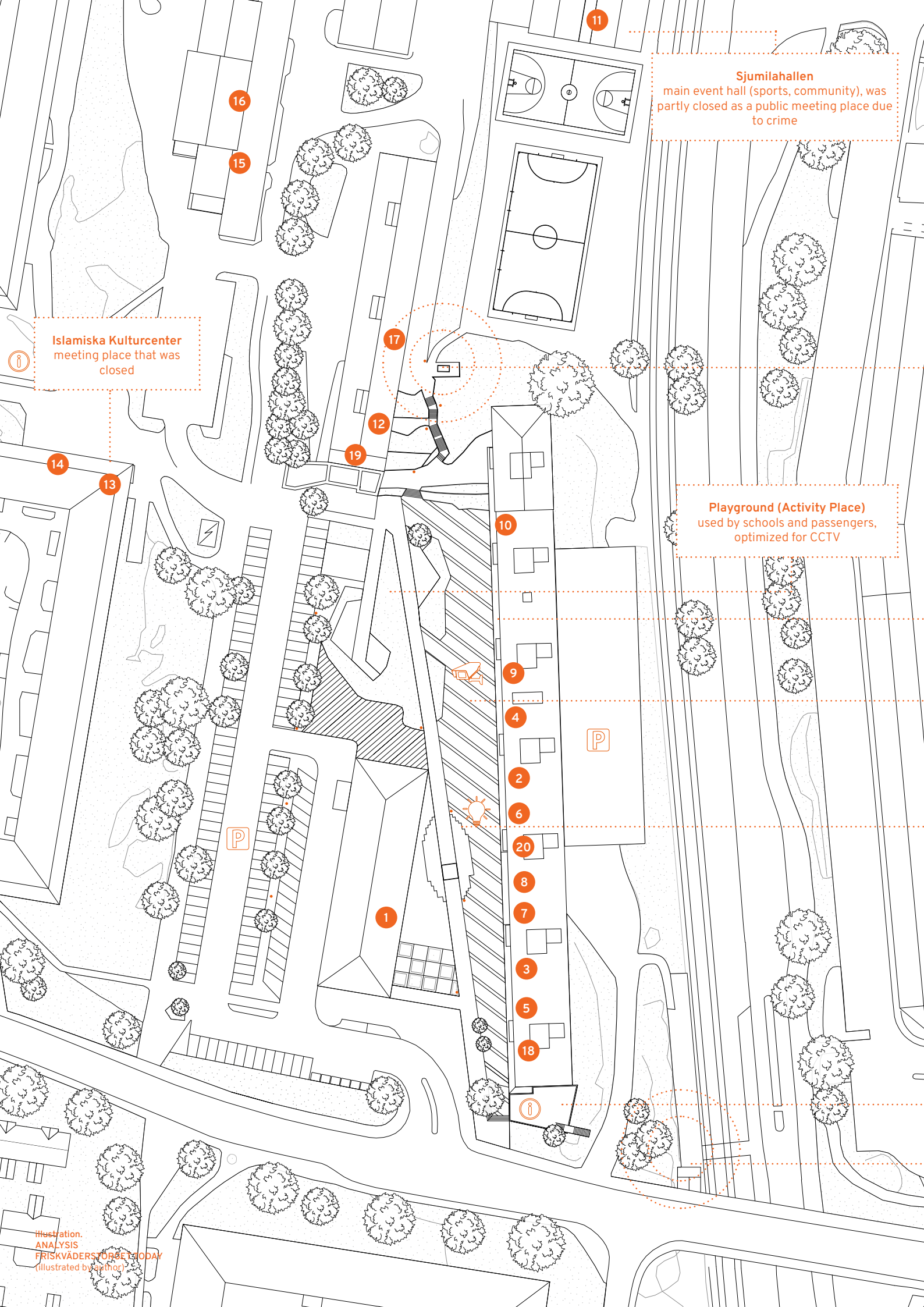


Illustration.  
ANALYSIS  
FRISKVÅDERSTORGET TODAY  
(illustrated by author)

0 20 40m

**Sjumilhallen**  
main event hall (sports, community), was partly closed as a public meeting place due to crime

**Islamiska Kulturcenter**  
meeting place that was closed

**Playground (Activity Place)**  
used by schools and passengers, optimized for CCTV

**Police patrol**  
regularly at different times of the day

**Potential entrapment area/  
hidden places**

**Camera surveillance**  
various CCTV cameras have been installed on the square.

**Clear sightlines**  
the placement of trees, plants, and other design elements has been optimized to ensure good visibility.

**Covered passage**  
could be potential "hidden spots" but positive in relation to weathers

**Recessed doorways/  
entrances and windows**  
oriented towards square

**Local economic hub**  
the stores are mostly for shopping and do not encourage other activities

**Seating Area**  
placed in center of the square, not clear whether it invites usage

**Paths**  
clear sight, do not lead to obscure places

**Lighting**  
the square enables identification of a face from a distance of 10 m for a person with normal eyesight, does not lead to obscure places

**Information Boards**  
information boards for orientation in the area

**Tram Station**  
seperated tram station, potential entrapement area, lack of maintenance

Friskvåderstorget is located on a main road for cars, trams and buses. A long slab building forms a strong border between the main street and the square. On its edge is a tram stop, which serves as an important connection to the city center. The trams run regularly, except during early morning hours. On one half of the square one can find grocery stores, a health center and other stores for daily needs with regular opening hours in a time frame from about 8:00a.m. to 8:00p.m. The other half of the square consists of parking spaces. Some facilities for educational purposes are located in close vicinity. Apart from the stores there are few spaces that offer different kinds of activities and invite people to linger on the square. The results and analysis at Friskvåderstorget today showcase that the design of the square is primarily focused on control and protection strategies. The main activities that exist either revolve around consumption, were closed due to crime incidents or are adapted to the needs of CCTV. Overall, it can be concluded that it does not necessarily invite a large number of people to stay and is more of a transit space that does not really encourage the concept of natural surveillance. Therefore, by looking at the results, it allows for reimagining the square and attempting to implement some of their different spatial needs and perspectives to give them a sense of ownership, reinforce a mix of activities in public space and thereby generate more presence on Friskvåderstorget.

The vision questions: What could the square look like with a safety concept that focuses on residents as experts? Are there other or additional answers than more police patrols and camera surveillance that can encourage safety?

### Stores and Boutiques

1. Willys hemma (supermarket)
2. Istanbul kötthandel (meatshop)
3. Hjalmar's spelbutik
4. Ödmans livs (convenience store)
5. Tazeli frukt (fruit market)
6. Najav Shop
7. Tele Store

### Restaurant and Café

8. Min Tårta Café & Konditori
9. Pizzeria Primavera

### Healthcare

10. Friskvåderstorget Vårdcentral

### Activity Places, Associations and Religious Buildings

11. Sjumilhallen
12. Meeting Plays, Slottet (club room)
13. Islamiska Kulturcenter
14. Biskops Moské

### Education and Residents Service

15. Sjumilaskolan
16. Oppen Förskola Sjumilaskolan (preschool)
17. The international Preschool Biskopsgården
18. Library Norra Biskopsgården
19. New Bostadsbolaget Service Center (under construction)

### Service and Beauty

20. Kezzo Klipp (Hair Salon)



# FRISKVÄDERSTORGET TODAY

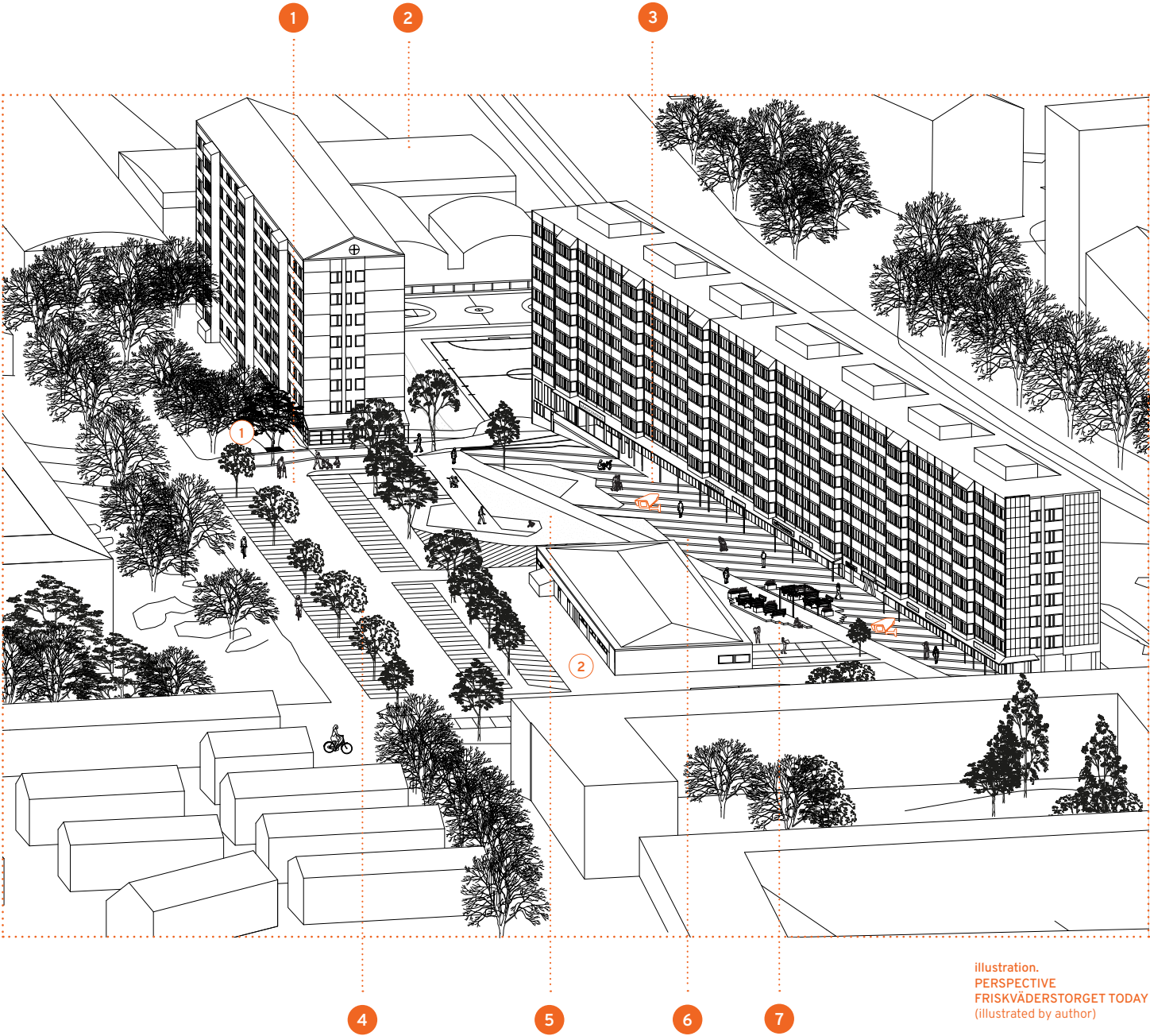


illustration.  
PERSPECTIVE  
FRISKVÅDERSTORGET TODAY  
(illustrated by author)

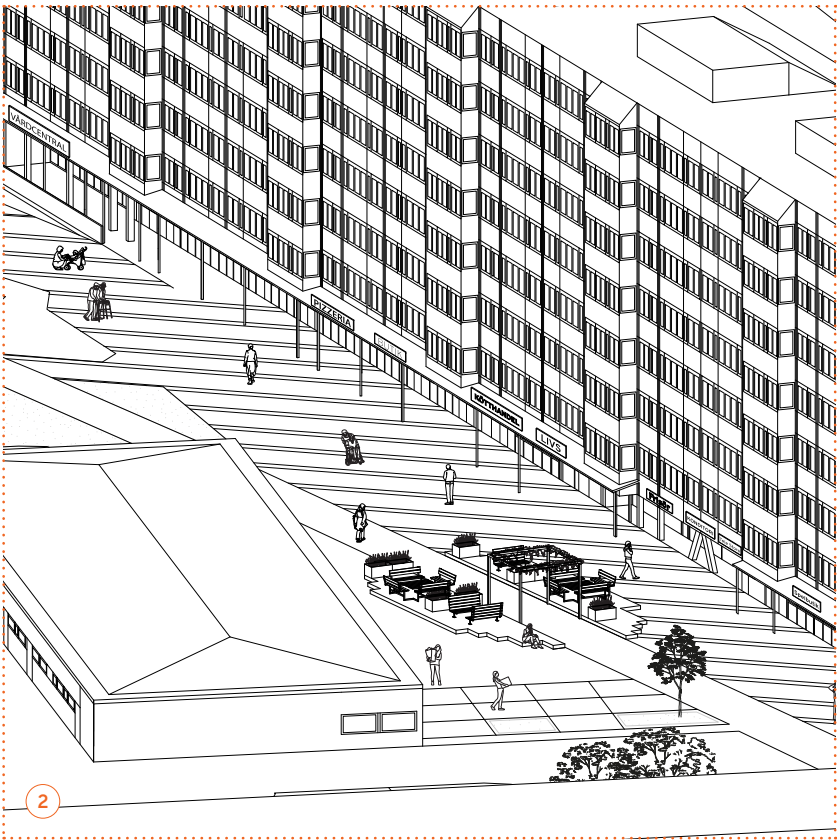
## Site conditions and uses

- 1. High police patrol
- 2. Sjumilahallen - closed
- 3. Camera Surveillance
- 4. Parking spaces
- 5. Playground
- 6. Clear sightlines
- 7. Seating area, entryway



**Parking lot**  
since half of the space is taken up  
by parking lots - what if part of  
them were relocated and used for  
activities for the local population?

**Local economic hub**  
given that the stores on the  
square today are mainly for  
shopping and don't really  
encourage other activities - what  
if the square encouraged a mix of  
uses and activities that residents  
asked for, thus inviting different  
types of people to linger and  
encouraging natural surveillance?





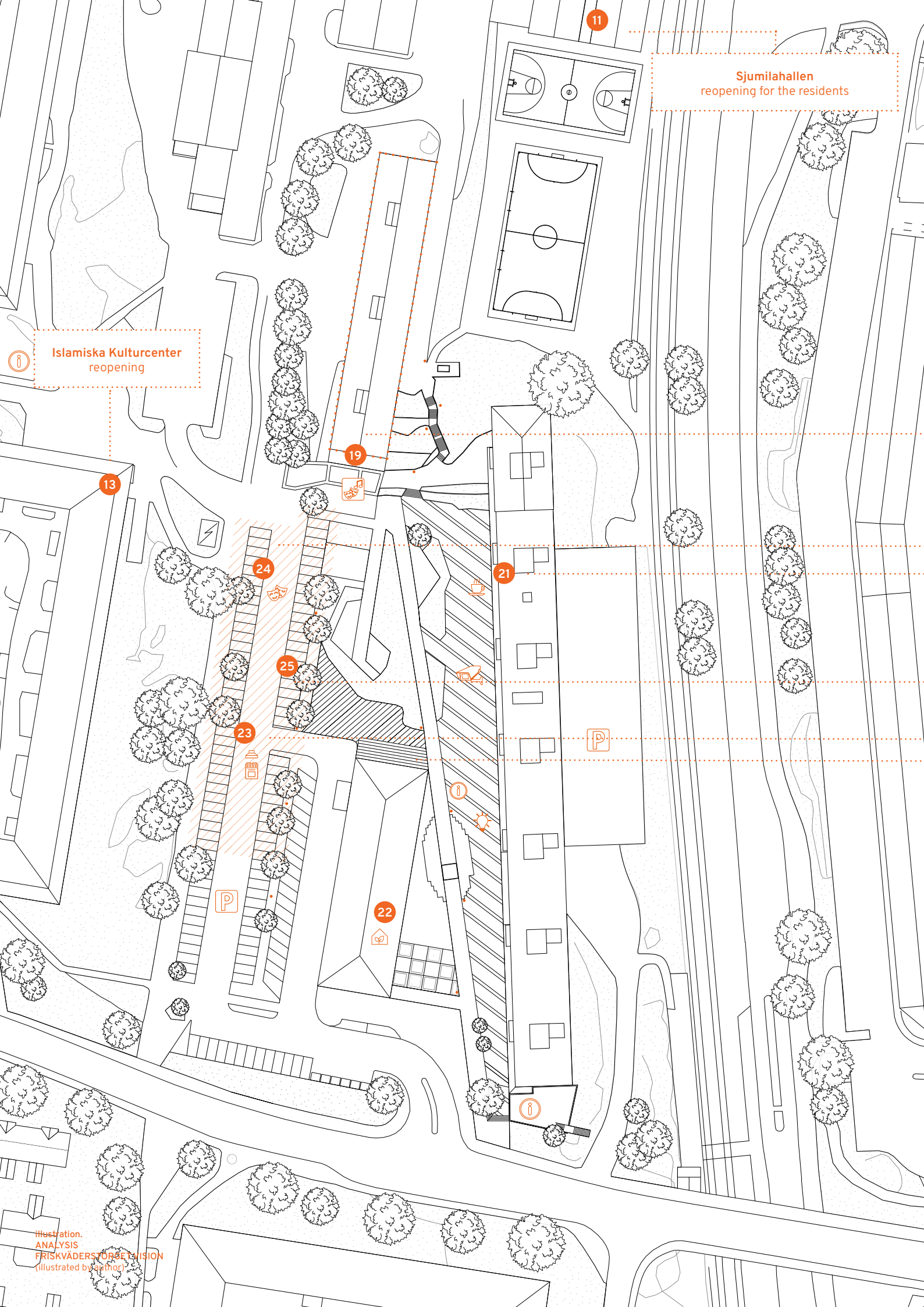


Illustration.  
ANALYSIS  
FRISKVÄDERSTORGET VISION  
(illustrated by author)

0 20 40m

- Activity/meeting places**  
reopened primarily  
for the residents
- Different openings hours**  
generating uses with different  
opening hours than regular ones
- Culture center**  
the entire ground floor is converted  
into a culture center, providing places  
for artistic activities, dance, theater,  
etc.
- Outdoor theater**  
additional outdoor space for the  
culture center and associations
- Språkcafé, space for associations**  
use of vacant rooms on square,  
introducing a språkcafé, which can  
be booked and used by various  
associations
- Spaces for the library**  
mobile outdoor spaces that can be  
used for working, reading, but also for  
other purposes, e.g. as a sales booth  
or puppet theater for children
- Open kitchen**  
mobile outdoor kitchens, which are  
available to the associations at any  
time
- Addition of seating stairs**  
directed towards the playground,  
creating additional seating on the  
square for lingering and conversations
- Roof greenhouse**  
as an additional, more central space  
for existing associations in this part of  
the district
- Information pillar**  
information pillar that allows for easy  
sharing of information about the  
services available in the area
- Parking spaces**  
part of the parking spaces are  
removed and replaced by moveable  
uses

What if? In this vision, Friskvädertorget is activated by a variety of activities that could be derived from the needs and perspectives of the findings. As half of the space is dedicated to parking, this scenario removes some of the car lots and replaces them with mobile structures such as an open kitchen and rooms that expand the library space. This is to create spaces in public settings where residents can cook, eat, meet, work, and hold activities together that are available even if spaces are closed due to certain incidents. The vision also follows the idea of simple additions to public spaces that can be replaced or moved if needed to allow change and flexibility. In this scenario, in order to attract different types of people at different times of the day, among other things, the service center of the housing company (19) is moved and transformed into a culture center. The culture center provides spaces for artistic activities and other meeting spaces. The opening hours here are different from the regular ones, to revitalize the square at times when it is not very busy. The square also offers an outdoor theater that can be used for various purposes, from assemblies to theater and dance performances. Overall, the vision aims to define and reinforce a more diverse land use that is inviting, welcoming and can attract a variety of people. The objective thereby is, to generate natural surveillance so that residents feel safer and can use the space at different times of the day.

#### Stores and Boutiques

1. Willys hemma (supermarket)
2. Istanbul kötthandel (meatshop)
3. Hjalmars spelbutik
4. Ödmans livs (convenience store)
5. Tazeli frukt (fruit market)
6. Najav Shop
7. Tele Store

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15. Sjumilaskolan
16. Oppen Förskola Sjumilaskolan (preschool)
17. The international Preschool Biskopsgården
18. Library Norra Biskopsgården
19. ~~New Bostadsbolaget Service Center~~ **Culture Center**

#### Service and Beauty

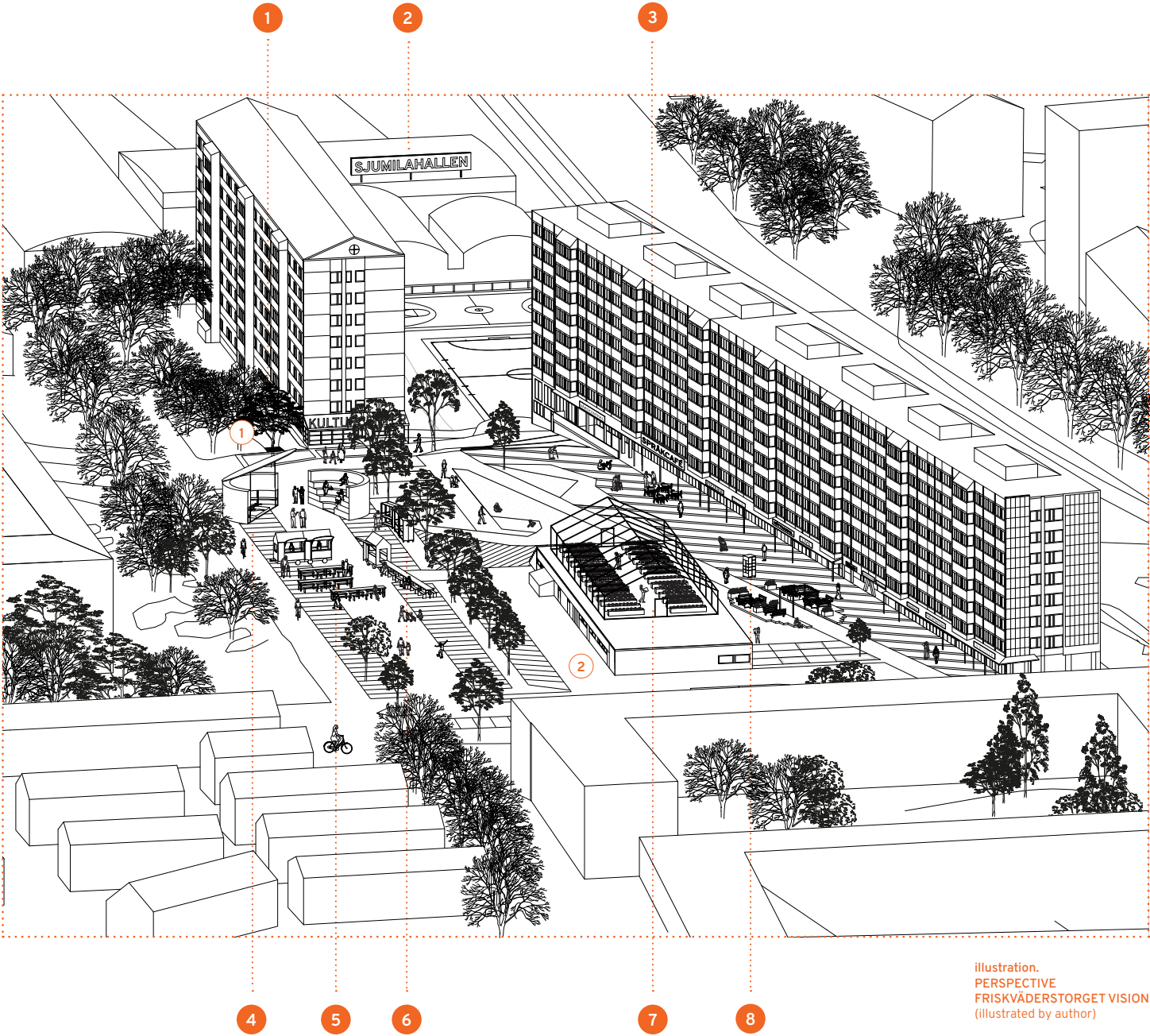
20. Kezzo Klipp (Hair Salon)

#### Added activities and uses

21. Språkcafé, association space
22. Greenhouse
23. Open Kitchen
24. Outdoor Theater
25. Spaces for the library

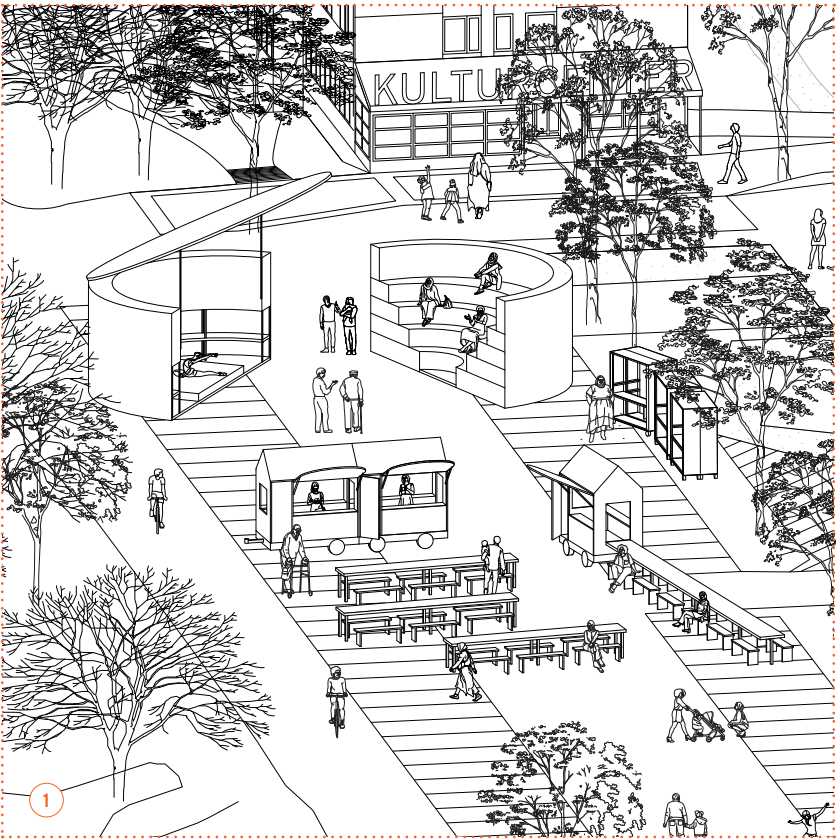


# FRISKVÄDERSTORGET VISION



## Added activities and uses

1. Culture Center
2. Sjumilahallen - reopened
3. Språkcafé, Rentable association space
4. Outdoor Theater
5. Open Kitchen
6. Spaces for the library
7. Greenhouse
8. Info Pillar



**Culture center**  
provides activity places for residents, with different opening hours than existing spaces on the square. it offers space for ateliers, workshop and exhibition rooms, small rooms for theater and dance etc.

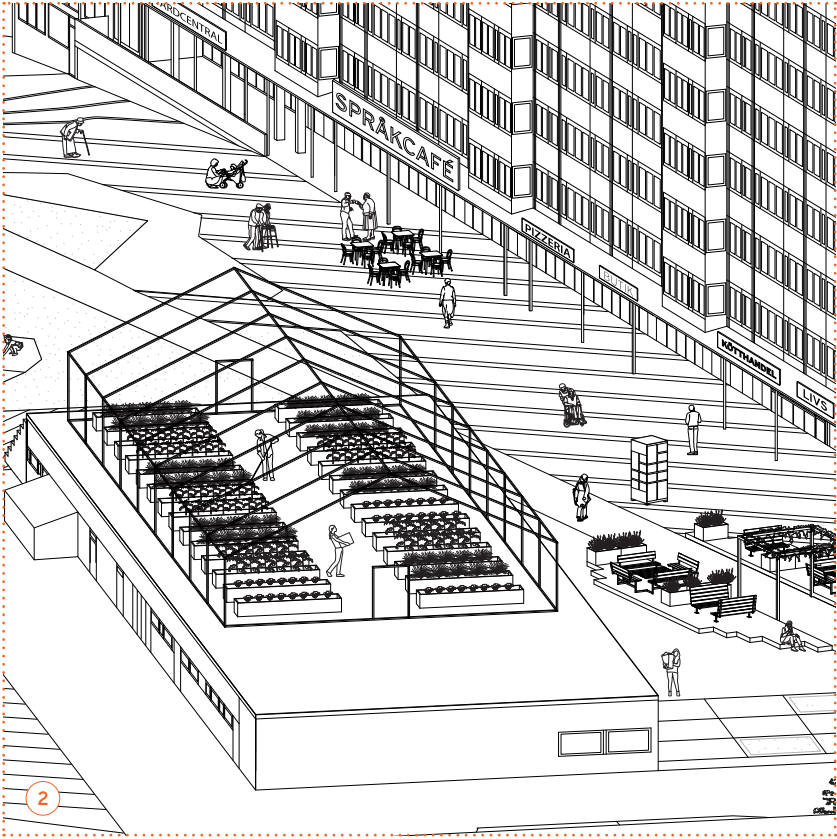
**Open kitchen**  
provision of the needed kitchen spaces for women, which is available to residents at any time. mobility allows easy change of location.

**Outdoor theater**  
part of the culture center. provides outdoor spaces for theater, dance and other uses. open to residents at any time of day.

**Språkcafé**  
Provision of a much-needed meeting place for residents that operates as a café, but also offers rooms that can be booked and used by various associations at any time

**Roof greenhouse**  
promoting the work and prolonged presence of different groups of people on the square

**Information pillar**  
based on identified needs. enables easy distribution of information that is distributed in multiple locations



# 6. CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis is to explore how urban design by using a gender perspective can promote a sense of safety in the urban environment. By analyzing existing literature, exploring a specific site, and critically reflecting, it was possible to highlight certain aspects that should be considered as the safety debate moves forward.

Chapter 2 *Women, safety and urban space* brought forward how women's access to the city and how their fear and the lack of safety or perception of safety influences their behavior and restricts their access to the urban realm. It highlighted the need to include a gender perspective in a spatial planning approach to safety that would emphasize women's experiences and perspectives. More crucially, it made clear that an intersectional perspective is needed in the planning approach, as perceptions of safety depend on a variety of factors and an interplay of individual characteristics. Thus, by using an intersectional lens one can bring to the forefront different experiences and perceptions of safety related to different forms of social oppression among women and focus on those who have the least access to the city. The chapter has also made clear that the perception of safety can only be achieved through the fulfillment of basic human needs. A closer look at women's fear showcases how their perceptions of fear are altered by a variety of factors, including media, negative experiences, and people's narratives, among others. It also reveals how this significantly affects their behavior and the way they commute across the city, especially when considering women that have fewer financial, educational, and personal resources. Finally it shows that cities have already tried to make urban space safer and that there are already several directions for different discourses on safety. However, it is questionable whether their focus is on the right elements.

In chapter 3 two different main directions of spatial safety approaches could be elaborated. The chapter juxtaposes the crime prevention approach and the safer cities approach and thereby identified their main emphases and focal points. It made clear that the main focus of the crime prevention approach lays on the potential offender and how design can influence their behavior through protection, control and other paternalistic safety strategies and thereby relies on experts. Although the crime preventions approach offers useful strategies,

it became apparent that the application of the strategies can often lead to exclusion and that the use of such strategies can often have the opposite effect and more likely reinforce perceptions of feeling unsafe.

The thesis highlights that the approach is missing one key element of urban safety, which is the fear of crime and how it affects urban residents' behavior and thus their access to the city. It also lacks the social dimension, which takes into account that women perceive more fear in public spaces compared to men and have different perspectives and experiences in urban environments. The safer cities approach in contrast considers the perspective of the victims and the fear of crime taking into account the influences it has on their behavior. This is carried out through local community development and design improvements with a focus on empowering residents and promoting their autonomy. Illustrated examples have showcased a variety of outcomes and made clear that the results of the safer cities approach are custom designed solutions to local problems that fit the needs of the resident's everyday life experiences. The approach brought forward how by focusing on the residents perspectives and needs, solutions can be developed that make public spaces safer and more accessible. It thereby made clear that safety strategies need to go beyond protection from crime and focus on providing physical, social, mobility, and institutional infrastructure to create a safer environment. This chapter furthermore highlights that the general discussion in recent years has broadened from issues of safety and crime prevention to the recognition that gender is linked to other identities and marginalizations and leads to exclusion in complex ways. This has resulted in the development of approaches that are widely used in cities around the world. However, the application of certain approaches is far too complex, resulting in a loss of actual focus. This emphasizes the need to redefine safety approaches.





From the process and conduction of the methods in the case study in Biskopsgården, it could be highlighted that there is a need for a caring approach to safety in this area. The process made it clear that to understand the women's perspectives and experiences, it is important to recognize that one should not ask much of the residents themselves in order to obtain information. In the beginning of the case study the process of the thesis involved a tension related to uncertainty of the residents about my intentions due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with each other. This tension has defined and highlighted the general need to use activities that were taking place in the area anyway, as methods for this approach. The methods should therefore focus on the resident as the expert and encourage them, value their opinion and not make them feel even more excluded.

The analysis of the main actors in this field, the work already done, national and regional initiatives and actions has revealed that the general approach to solving safety issues focuses on the local level. Through the analysis of the local actors and actions, the research was able to determine that much is already being done to make the area safer. However, the many actors and collaborations make the overall safety strategy unclear, which can have a negative effect on collaborations as a whole and as the research showcased on the residents of the area. The analysis of the local measures also showcases that the area's main focus is on crime prevention and preventing the recruitment of new members to criminal groups and thereby follows similar strategies as the crime prevention approach mentioned in chapter 3.

The findings of the case study revealed that there is a core tension that shows that residents feel safe on the one hand and unsafe on the other. Many stories and experiences pointed to the complex nature of safety itself. The findings thereby revealed interrelated tensions that highlight this complexity and the many factors that influence safety.

The stories and experiences revolving around various tensions show how factors such as media, crime incidents, narratives from people and other parties reinforce the negative image of the area, leading to prejudice among outsiders and reinforcing a sense of lack of safety among residents. The tensions have made clear that

everyone's perception of safety is different and can depend on a variety of factors. There is also evidence that residents are changing their behavior out of fear by staying off the streets at night or wanting to move out of the area.

The findings showcase that residents feel that not enough is being done to make the area safer. It draws attention to the fact that the use of the planning strategies today does not necessarily make them feel safe. When looking at the closure of activity and meeting places due to crime, it makes clear that the answers to the question of how to make the area safer tend to rather reinforce the lack of safety. The results also show that it fails to ensure access to essential services, suggesting that the impact of these measures on residents is not being considered. The case study has shown that there is a strong community in Biskopsgården that wants to make a difference themselves. It became clear that it is necessary to empower them, because there is a lack of that.

The confluence of the tensions presented illustrates not only limited access to certain services, but also the resulting limited access to opportunities. Residents' experiences and perspectives highlight how the responses and strategies used for crime prevention can deprive residents of opportunities in employment, education, or other areas. The resulting fears make it clear that safety does not only mean being protected from crime. It becomes clear that the lack of fulfillment of basic human needs has a major impact on the perception of safety.

Analysis of the work in the area was also able to show that people are already focusing on the physical conditions in the area to promote a sense of safety. Safety walks are already working with residents in the area to change the physical conditions where residents feel unsafe. Although these aspects need to be considered, there is a question as to whether the focus here should not be too much on lighting or maintenance, but rather on design improvements that bring different activities into the spaces, make them more accessible for a variety of people, and create a more inviting environment.

The research overall, indicates that the focus in this area is on crime, criminal behavior and its prevention, and that the safety approach is dependent on experts and paternalistic safety strategies. The result are solutions that do not consider their impact on residents and are more likely to lead to further exclusion. One can hereby highlight the one missing key element, as in chapter 3, which is the consideration of fear of crime. It can hereby conclude that there is an overall requirement to focus on the needs and perspectives of residents in order to promote safety. This aspect has already been outlined as part of the safer cities approach in chapter 3. The process of methods in the case study (4) thereby emphasizes and reinforces the need for the strategy of treating residents as experts as a primary tactic for a spatial planning approach to safety.

The study underscores the general tension of feeling safe on the one hand and unsafe on the other, which highlights its overall complexity. The research also made clear that there are a number of factors that influence perceptions of safety. The case study, however, suggests that the used safety strategy appears to address only a small portion of those factors such as unpredictable people and spatial conditions. In addition to fear of crime, the results also reveal a number of interrelated fears that influence residents' behavior patterns, daily activities and thereby restrict their access to urban resources. While the general narrative painted by the media and other channels usually brings forward a mere fear of crime, the research could bring forward different types of fears among women: The fear of crime, the fear of violence, the fear of rape, the fear of being attacked, the fear of racism, the fear for their children's safety, the fear of being feared (prejudice), the fear of not being able to stay in their home and the fear of not belonging. These fears correlate with many other factors that influence their perception of safety. One can thereby conclude and emphasize that there is a need to move away from the notion that safety primarily means protection from violent crime and highlight the need to consider the issue of safety in a broader context. Encouraging safety is about providing basic human needs, a sense of belonging, and a sense of feeling welcome.

As a result, the thesis could identify various needs for Biskopsgården. In relation to housing there is a need for mixed neighborhoods, and more affordable housing that allows for different living situations and family constellations. The findings show that there is an overall need for essential services in Biskopsgården. This especially regards activity and meeting places for the community that meet the diverse needs of different people. The results could show that public spaces, which are generally perceived as unsafe, are mainly designed based on protection and control. This work has drawn a vision of how spatial planners can propose a different response based on the residents' perspective, which is to plan for access to missing services and different types of activities that attract a variety of people. The resulting activation of public space could encourage a safer environment through access to essential services, as well as informal surveillance through pedestrian interaction. At the same time, a welcoming and friendly environment can provide a sense of ownership and belonging and thereby empower residents to use the space at different times of the day.



The present work aimed to answer two main research questions:

→ **RQ1**  
**How and in what ways can spatial planning with a gender perspective encourage the feeling of safety for all?**

The findings of the thesis highlighted that the primary need for a spatial planning approach to encourage safety is the focus on the resident as an expert. Regardless of the stage at which spatial planners are considered, this should be seen as a key aspect in a planner's approach. To do this, planners need to engage locally. From the results, it becomes clear that in order to really take a step back and move away from the expert position of the planner, one should participate in activities that would take place in an area anyway. The research has illustrated that this can help to restrain oneself and naturally place the resident in an expert position. Through community meetings, night walks, or other activities that take place in an area, by observing, listening, and talking with residents, one can participate in a part of their everyday lives and thereby understand their actual real needs and perspectives. By treating residents as experts, not only can they be empowered, but by understanding and formulating proposals that meet their needs, planners' suggestions can promote autonomy and thus a sense of safety.

In addition, the research highlights the need to combine a gender perspective with an intersectional perspective in planning, in order to bring forward the different experiences and needs of women themselves and to analyze and identify the fears and concerns that often remain excluded, invisible and unrecognized. To promote safety, spatial planners must also move away from the notion that a set of guidelines or design improvements concerning protection or control can create safety for all. The research has shown that the use of such strategies without considering the impact on the urban user can more likely exacerbate the low sense of safety. Therefore, the strategies and improvements should be formulated in terms that do not result in the exclusion of its residents. Promoting safety takes time, and the problems and solutions are highly dependent on the context, which means they cannot be fixed by quick fixes or one-size-fits-all solutions.

The second key aspect for spatial planners is to consider safety in a broader context and the factors associated with it. As mentioned earlier the findings of the case study suggest that the current planning strategies are lacking in this respect. They illustrate that the focus is only on a few factors such as spatial conditions and individual behavior, while overlooking other factors that have a great impact on residents' perceptions of safety. The research reveals how these overlooked factors influence women's behavior and limit their access to the city resources. Spatial planners must therefore view safety in a broader context and understand that it is related to aspects such as the provision of adequate physical, social, mobility, and institutional infrastructure.

Considering the broader context of safety also makes it clear that designers and planners should not focus primarily on design, but rather focus on the variety of needs and what is missing in an area. Using Biskopsgården as an example, it was possible to show the great need for meeting and activity places. Taking into account the factors that can affect the feeling of safety, this is an element that must be improved to encourage safety. Design can then be used as a supporting tool to reinforce or introduce these elements in the public realm.

However, through the suggested approach, improvements and suggestions will certainly go beyond that and lead to solutions that are not necessarily aimed at a response that can be achieved through design solutions. Therefore, it is necessary for spatial planners to collaborate with other professions and involve the right expertise or disciplines for the identified needs.

→ **RQ2**  
**What can planners focus on beyond what is being done today to productively engage in the safety debate?**

By considering the earlier mentioned aspects, in order to productively engage in the safety debate, spatial planners should focus on local engagement. This means both treating residents as experts and analyzing the overall system and what is already being done in the area to understand how one can collaborate and how improvements or other proposals can work with and contribute to that system.

As mentioned, treating the residents as experts and obtaining information requires an approach that enables one to step back and break the usual hierarchy between planner and resident. This can be done, as in the case study conducted, by attending meetings, night walks, and activities that would take place in an area anyway. In any case, it is important to formulate tools that meet the needs of the residents. Being productively engaged means participating not just in one community meeting or other activities in the area, but in multiple of them. The research has shown that this approach can put one in situations where it is impossible to ignore the tensions, feelings, and perspectives of an area, and that attending only one meeting does not make this possible. The research also highlights that in order to empower and value residents' opinions, it is important to come without preconceived notions and knowledge about their needs and deficiencies, as the residents know the problems best themselves and can voice their actual needs.

The importance of safety work requiring time has been addressed previously. The research has also demonstrated the importance of recognizing constant change in a system. This means that to encourage safety, design improvements, and developed strategies require flexibility and adaptability to keep up with change. It also means that safety work must be reviewed regularly, and follow-up is required. As societal structures change so do perceptions of safety and the factors that influence them.

The study has made it clear that spatial conditions such as lighting and maintenance are important aspects to consider when promoting safety but are more likely to be an essential supportive element. The findings suggest that when considering safety in a broader context, spatial planners should rather focus on making public spaces accessible and inviting by defining activities that attract a variety of different users. This would involve the implementation of lighting strategies and maintenance work. Likewise, community centers, libraries, or other essential public facilities should be planned in close proximity to address the everyday experiences of an area's residents and their connection between categories and space.

Overall, it should be noted that safety in spatial planning is often treated as an additional requirement that can be added through a set of design improvements, while research findings reveal that it should rather be treated as a defining concept due to its complexity and interrelated factors.

Encouraging safer environments is a complicated and challenging task. Therefore, when considering the approaches and education of spatial planners today, it is questionable whether we are focusing on the right elements and whether we are even properly skilled and qualified to do so. Thus, there is a general emerging need to re-evaluate spatial planning approaches for safety in order to achieve the primary goal of making cities and human settlements safer for everyone.

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## ► Figures

### Figure 1: Everyday life, Gender Roles and Urban Spaces Diagram

Ciocoletto, A. and Collectiu Punt6 (2014) *Spaces for Everyday life: Urban Quality Audit from a gender perspective*. Barcelona: Sustasis Foundation.

### Figure 2: Maslow's Pyramid of Needs

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### Figure 3: CPTED Principles (1st Gen.)

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