MATTERS OF WORTH

PRACTICES, ACTORS AND OBJECTS OF
VALUATION IN THE DESIGN OF URBAN SPACE

STEFAN MOLNAR

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Practices, Actors and Objects of Valuation
in the Design of Urban Space

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p. 7 Aerial photograph of Masthuggskajen pre-redevelopment. Published courtesy of Göteborgs Stad (2018b)

p. 12 Brunnsparken pre-redevelopment. Published courtesy of Mitt i Göteborg (Sik, 2017)

p. 13 Aerial photograph of Brunnsparken post-redevelopment. Published courtesy of Jan Lif.

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Abstract

Urban planning and design inherently involve the assessment, attribution, and creation of value—environmental, monetary, moral, aesthetic, historical, or any other notions of 'good' that humans relate to in their daily lives. These often implicit practices of expressing value influence the urban spaces that emerge, making them crucial to scrutinize. Consequently, this thesis aims to generate knowledge about the socio-material practices of valuation that take place during the design and development of urban spaces and how they matter in shaping urban environments. Centering on pragmatist and materialist theories of valuation, planning, and design, the thesis draws from two case studies in Gothenburg, Sweden: ground floor planning in Masthuggskajen and the redesign of the public open space Brunnsparken.

The thesis finds that value is articulated through practices such as conversations, knowledge production, design and handling of artifacts, and place interventions, using various expressions: verbal, numerical, and visual. It reveals the diverse actors that articulate and negotiate value, from citizens to politicians, architects, police officers, and social workers. The research also highlights the role of cultural repertoires (e.g., rules, values, and classifications) and materials (e.g., planning documents, design tools, and urban spaces) in shaping these practices. Furthermore, the research identifies mechanisms for coordinating conflicting valuations, including agreements, misunderstandings, personal arrangements, relativizations, compromises, and domination.

This thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the socio-material processes through which intangible values are expressed in urban space design. Additionally, it underscores the need for further research into the role of specific valuation tools and practices and highlights the importance for practitioners to critically examine and refine how they articulate what is good, just, viable, and desirable.

Keywords: valuation, value plurality, value conflicts, coordination, socio-materiality, urban planning and design, users, uses, active ground floors, public open spaces

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Sammanfattning

Inom stadsplanering sker ständigt artikuleringar, bedömningar och skapande av värde—miljömässigt, monetärt, moraliskt, estetiskt, historiskt eller andra typer av 'nyttor' som människor förhåller sig till i sitt dagliga liv. Dessa ofta implicita sätt att artikulera värde har inverkan på vilka stadsrum som uppstår, något som gör dem viktiga att granska. Denna avhandlings syfte är därför att generera kunskaper om de socio-materiella värderingspraktiker som utövas när stadsrum utformas, och den påverkan de i slutändan har på urbana miljöer. Avhandlingen, som utgår från pragmatistiska och materiellt inriktade teorier om värdering, planering och design, bygger på två fallstudier i Göteborg: en om bottenvåningsplanering i Masthuggskajen och en om omvandlingen av Brunnsparken.

Avhandlingen identifierar olika sociala praktiker genom vilka värde uttrycks i planeringsprocesser, så som samtal, kunskapsproduktion, utformning och hantering av materiella objekt samt platsinterventioner, liksom uttryckssätt som används för att göra detta: verbala, numeriska och visuella. Den visar även på aktörer som utövar värderingar, från medborgare, till politiker, arkitekter, poliser och socialarbetare. Forskningen belyser även den roll som kulturella repertoarer (t.ex. regler, värderingar och klassificeringar) och materiella faktorer (t.ex. planeringsdokument, designverktyg och byggd miljö) har i att forma dessa praktiker. Vidare identifierar avhandlingen mekanismer för att samordna motstridiga värderingar, så som överenskommelser, missförstånd, personliga arrangemang, relativiseringar, kompromisser och dominans.

Avhandlingen bidrar med en djupare förståelse för de socio-materiella processer genom vilka svårfångade värden uttrycks i utformningen av stadsrum. Den lyfter också behovet av mer forskning om enskilda värderingsverktyg och praktiker, samt belyser vikten av att praktiker granskar och förfinar hur de artikulerar vad som är bra, rättvist, gångbart och önskvärt.

Nyckelord: värderande, värdepluralitet, värdekonflikter, koordinering, socio-materialitet, stadsplanering och stadsutformning, användare, användning, aktiva bottenvåningar, offentliga utemiljöer

List of publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

I.   Molnar, S. (2022). The framing of urban values and qualities in inter-organisational settings: The case of ground floor planning in Gothenburg, Sweden. *Urban Studies*, *60*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221090883
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     (Joint author)

III. Palmås, K., & Molnar, S. (2023). Peace Piece: On the Machiavellian moment in organizational innovation. In A. Rehn & A. Örtenblad (Eds.), *Debating Innovation: Perspectives and Paradoxes of an Idealized Concept* (pp. 339–355). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16666-2_17
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     (First author)

V.   Palmås, K., & Molnar, S. (2024). *The Medium of the Designer: Devices, Culture and Values in Urban Design [Manuscript under review].*
     (Second author)

Innehåll

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As I am writing the final words of this thesis, which concerns itself with the multiple people, materials, practices, and forms of worth that shape urban space, I'm reminded of the valuable support and contributions of the many individuals and institutions without whom this thesis wouldn't have been possible.

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"Decisions about urban policy, or the allocation of resources, or where to move, or how to build something, *must* use norms about good and bad. Short-range or long-range, broad or selfish, implicit or explicit, values are an inevitable ingredient of decision. Without some sense of the better, any action is perverse. When values lie unexamined, they are dangerous."

Lynch (1981, p. 14)

1. Introduction

The development of urban space and the built environment is fundamentally a search for value, a process of striving to achieve outcomes deemed good, right, beautiful, important, or just (Campbell, 2002; J. Hillier, 1999; Lynch, 1981; McFarlane, 2021; Weber, 2002). When engaged in shaping urban territories such as parks, squares, streets, and precincts, participants are continuously involved in practices of valuation—the assessment, attribution, and/or creation of value (Glucksberg, 2014; Metzger & Wiberg, 2017; Sezneva & Halauniova, 2021). These valuations can take various forms, ranging from arguments about the importance of particular wildlife (Blok, 2013), to calculations of the economic worth of real estate (Robin, 2018), judgments of the cultural-historical and aesthetic value of buildings (Bogdanova & Soneryd, 2021), and critiques of the unjustness of a regeneration scheme (van de Kamp, 2021).

Sometimes, these acts of valuation are explicitly recognized and referred to as such by those performing them, as in *plan evaluation* (Hull, 2011) or *real-estate valuation* (Ansenberg, 2022)[1]. However, often in planning processes, valuations are more implicit (Petersson & Soneryd, 2022). For instance, they may appear as emotionally charged critiques from stakeholders regarding neighborhood regeneration plans (Holden et al., 2015), experimentation with dormitory designs by an architecture student and their mentor (Schön, 1984), or the quiet appraisal of a building design by a lone architect (Farías, 2015). In fact, one could refer to valuation as somewhat of a "silenced practice."

Yet, the values expressed in a specific setting—how they are articulated, by whom, with what means, and toward what ends—can influence how people engage with the world and, potentially, the types of urban spaces that emerge (Christophers, 2014; Forsemalm et al., 2012; Metzger & Wiberg, 2017). This highlights the importance of understanding how values are practically enacted in urban planning and design. As Kevin Lynch (1981, p. 14) fittingly noted: "When values lie unexamined, they are dangerous."

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[1] Such practices may also, or alternatively, employ the term *value* to refer to the objects or outcomes of these processes, as in *place value* (Carmona, 2019), *best value* (Carmona & Sieh, 2005), *economic value* (Carmona et al., 2001), *social value* (Watson et al., 2016), or *use value* (Ståhle, 2006)

The observation that cities and their development are imbued with values is by no means new. Various strands of research have examined the, in some respects, objective *value* of urban space. For instance, numerous studies have explored the value inherent in different uses and designs of the built environment, such as the land values intertwined with urban form (Marcus, 2010), the well-being values of public spaces (Jing, 2023), and the cultural and identity values of main-streets (Talen & Jeong, 2019). In comparison, other strands of research have investigated how the pursuit of exchange value, and its tensions with the use value of urban landscapes, shapes spatial form and function, thereby influencing for whom urban spaces are intended (Castells, 1977; Harvey, 1973; Logan & Molotch, 1987).

Other lines of research have focused on *values* as subjective beliefs and attitudes of individuals and groups toward urban space. These studies, for example, have examined the generalized values and/or value judgments of professionals and citizens (Campbell, 2002; Hellström, 2008; J. Hillier, 1999; Johansson, 2009), and explored how judgments of value and taste reflect urban dwellers' class interests and social positions, thus becoming tools in struggles over resources, status, and space (Zukin, 1991, as cited in Zukin & Kosta, 2004, p. 102). Additional research has discussed the civic and democratic values, such as truth and respect, which are essential for fostering democratic discourse in public spaces (Sennett, 2020; Mouffe, 2008, as cited in Wallenstein, 2023). Finally, plenty of research has been conducted on values and norms embedded in higher-order cultural (and/or cognitive) constructs, such as discourses (Berglund-Snodgrass, 2016; Fredriksson, 2014; Tunström, 2009), frames (Schön & Rein, 1994; Van Den Broeck et al., 2013), and institutions (Berglund-Snodgrass & Mukhtar-Landgren, 2020; Healey, 1999).

Moreover, in recent years, there has been a growing interest among researchers in studying *valuation* as a socio-material process or practice—a stream of research increasingly known as valuation studies (Heinich, 2020; Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013; Hutter & Stark, 2015; Lamont, 2012; Waibel et al., 2021). This emerging field has particularly developed within certain strands of Science and Technology Studies (STS), economic and cultural sociology, and organization studies. The field is characterized by open-ended explorations of how different types of values are constructed, expressed and negotiated in everyday practices. Aligned with pragmatist sensibilities (Dewey, 1939), it seeks to bridge traditional divides between concepts such as values and value, monetary and non-monetary worth, calculation and judgment, and culture and materiality. Valuation studies is also increasingly mobilized in studies on spatial

development, and to some extent, in research on the planning and design of urban territories. This has led to examinations of how valuation is performed in design studio work (Farías, 2015), architectural competitions (Kreiner, 2020), building renovations (Sezneva & Halauniova, 2021), city rankings (Kornberger & Carter, 2010), and sustainability assessments (Lindblad, 2020), among others. Understanding how these often "hidden" values are constructed, articulated, and negotiated in everyday practices is important to gaining deeper insights into how urban spaces are shaped and experienced. This is where this thesis aims to contribute.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to generate knowledge about the socio-material practices of valuation that take place during the design and development of urban spaces and how they matter in shaping urban environments. As part of this endeavor, the thesis seeks to understand the plurality of practices, actors, objects, and principles that are involved in such valuations and to explore how these factors contribute to the design and development of urban territories. The research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are valuation practices in the context of urban planning and design?
2. How are cultural and material components involved in such practices?
3. How do dissonances arise within such practices, and how are they managed and coordinated in the context of urban planning and design?

By addressing these research questions, the thesis contributes to the broader discussion on how values are expressed in urban planning and design, with a particular focus on recent discussions about valuation as a socio-material practice within these fields.

1.2 Delimitations

This thesis is characterized by several delimitations. First, it does not aim to evaluate planning processes and/or the built environment per se, as is common in traditions such as urban morphology (Kropf, 2017; Marcus, 2010), public life studies (Aelbrecht, 2016; Gehl, 2011), environmental psychology (Astell-Burt et al., 2022; Boomsma & Steg, 2014), landscape architecture (Navarrete-Hernandez et al., 2021; Painter, 1996), planning ethics (Hendler, 1995; Johansson, 2009), philosophy of architecture (Fisher, 2015b), urban anthropology (Low, 2000), geography (Merten & Kuhnimhof, 2023), and economics (Gössling & Choi,

2015). In other words, the thesis does not produce normative judgments regarding the value of urban spaces—whether they are good or bad, beautiful or ugly, interesting or boring, just or unjust. Rather, it focuses on understanding the *processes* through which actors themselves engage in valuation. However, it recognizes that these processes are inherently intertwined with the sites being developed and their qualities and values (Beauregard, 2015; Fainstein, 2009).

Secondly, the thesis does not seek to capture general personal or cultural values (or related cognitive-affective structures such as norms, judgments, preferences, and attitudes) of actors, discourses, and frames outside of, and abstracted from, the activities and practices in which they are articulated. For example, it does not compare the values and attitudes of planners in different geographical contexts (Hellström, 2008; Johansson, 2009) or those of architects versus other professions (Paul Jenkins & Forsyth, 2009; Schneider & Till, 2009). Instead, it is delimited to studying how values are articulated in the context of planning specific urban spaces, such as Masthuggskajen and Brunnsparken.

Thirdly, the thesis does not concentrate on any particular type of value, such as environmental value (Pineda Pinto, 2020), financial value (Crosby & Henneberry, 2016), or design value (Bianco, 2018). It also does not focus on any specific types of actors, such as construction industry professionals (Troje & Gluch, 2020) or urban development engineers (Metzger & Zakhour, 2019). Similarly, it does not specialize in specific types of valuation activities, such as calculative practices (Miller, 1998, as cited in Christophers, 2014) or intuitive-emotional judgments (Styhre, 2013a). Instead, the thesis engages in an open-ended exploration of socio-material practices through which values are articulated, encompassing a range of value types—from environmental to aesthetic and moral—and involving a diversity of actors, including engineers, contractors, architects, politicians, property owners, businesses, and citizens.

Lastly, while the thesis engages with various perspectives and disciplines, it particularly draws upon and contributes to pragmatist, practice-theoretical, and/or materialist approaches in urban planning and design (Amin, 2002; Dovey & Symons, 2014; Forester, 1999; Healey, 1997; Latour & Yaneva, 2017; Murdoch, 2006). It especially engages with those that explicitly study practices and processes of valuation (Farías, 2015; Forsemalm et al., 2012;

Fuller, 2013; Holden, 2017; Kornberger et al., 2011; Lindblad, 2020; Metzger & Wiberg, 2017; Schön, 1984).

In addition, the thesis is territorially delimited to the study of local spaces within an urban context, rather than focusing on processes at other scales (Hayes & Zaban, 2020) or in rural or rural-urban settings (Grange et al., 2024).

1.3 Research Context: Active Frontages and Public Open Spaces

This thesis consists of two empirical case studies situated in Gothenburg, Sweden, focusing on the planning and design of two territorial sorts (Kärrholm, 2004): active frontages (AF) and public open spaces (POS). Each case serves as 'a case of' (Dumez, 2015, p. 48) how valuation practices are enacted in the planning and design of urban spaces. This section provides the research context by first offering an overview of active frontages and their associated values, followed by a description of how this territorial sort was planned in Masthuggskajen. The section then turns to an overview of public open spaces and their values, ending with a description of the regeneration of Brunnsparken as a public open space.

Active Frontages

The term *active frontages* (AF)—also referred to as active ground floors, transparent facades, interactive edges, and similar—describes ground-floor spaces of buildings that feature shops, cafés, and other activities easily recognizable through transparent and permeable facades. These frontages are designed to be visible from—and offer natural surveillance of—the adjacent outdoor area. Rather than being characterized by blank walls or curtained windows, AFs are typically depicted as featuring transparent windows, multiple entrances, articulated facades, and semi-public or semi-private uses such as retail, cafés, restaurants, and bars (Danenberg, 2023; Heffernan et al., 2014; Kickert, 2016; Talen & Jeong, 2019).

Several foundational thinkers in architecture, urban design, and urban sociology have discussed the importance of active frontages, even if they did not use the term explicitly. Jane Jacobs (1961) championed the idea of lively street-level environments with neighborhood services, wide sidewalks, and large windows to foster social interaction, vitality, and natural surveillance. Similarly, Jan Gehl (1961; 2006) emphasized the role of 'close encounters with buildings' in nurturing sociable and vibrant urban life. Likewise, Christopher Alexander and

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colleagues (1977) are known for having advocated permeability and transparency on ground-floor levels as principles within the broader 'pattern language' of architectural design, while Kevin Lynch (1961) highlighted building edges as critical for legibility and wayfinding. Today, the concept of active frontages is widely championed by actors such as municipalities and property owners in different parts of the world (Heffernan et al., 2014; Kickert, 2016).

Although AFs are often associated with uses like cafés, bars, and shops, their design and programming can vary depending on the context. Some scholars advocate that alternative uses such as arts and culture, community activities, municipal services, sharing economy facilities, and even housing, can also contribute to vibrant and inclusive environments (Heffernan et al., 2014; Kickert, 2016; Koch, 2018; Molnar & Tekie, 2018; Öberg, 2019; Royne et al., 2020).

The Values of Active Frontages

Active frontages are often associated with the creation of lively and vibrant streetscapes that enhance pedestrian flows, and encourages visitors to linger in public space (Carmona, 2021; Ewing & Handy, 2009; Hassan et al., 2019; Özbil; Ayşe et al., 2015). They are also valued for supporting local markets, increasing property values, and generating rental income (Carmona, 2019; Heffernan et al., 2014). The contribution to diversity at street-level is also believed to foster social interaction and community cohesion (Carmona, 2021; Mehta & Bosson, 2021). Furthermore, transparency in frontages is often linked to increased perceived safety and reduced crime through natural surveillance (Cozens & Love, 2015; B. Hillier & Sahbaz, 2008).

However, the argued benefits of active frontages have been subjected to critique. Some researchers argue that retail, liveliness, and permeability can under some circumstances lead to increased crime, unsafety, and anonymity (Cozens & Love, 2015; B. Hillier & Sahbaz, 2008; Talen & Koschinsky, 2013). Others question whether pedestrian density and economic vitality are always positive, given potential negative effects in the form of gentrification, social exclusion, and crowded streetscapes. Some researchers, therefore, advocate for street-level design that foster inclusion, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability (Danenberg, 2023; Koch, 2018; Molnar & Tekie, 2018; Öberg, 2019; Royne et al., 2020).

Masthuggskajen's Active Frontages

Masthuggskajen is a waterfront district in central Gothenburg, situated along the river of Göta Älv (see Figure 1). Historically an industrial and port area important for Gothenburg, the decline of the harbor industry during the last decades of the 20th century impelled property owners and local authorities to explore new uses for the now-vacant land along the river banks (Masthuggskajenkonsortiet, 2024; Molnar, 2022a).

Figure 1: Masthuggskajen pre-redevelopment. The area marked in yellow indicates the approximate zone intended for development. Första Långgatan, which runs along the southern edge of the area, marks the boundary between Masthuggskajen and the Långgatorna district. Image: Göteborgs Stad.

Plans to redevelop the area into an attractive waterfront district began in the early 21st century. Local property owners sought to boost their own properties, aligning with the broader municipal vision of turning Masthuggskajen into a dense, mixed-use inner-city district. The redevelopment aimed to replace a single-story flea market building, several outdoor parking areas, and multi-story car parks with new housing and office buildings, while also renovating four existing office properties. Additionally, new streets, squares, and green spaces were also to be created (Masthuggskajenkonsortiet, 2024; Molnar, 2022a).

A few years into the redevelopment, which had begun in 2008, the local government had developed a vision for Masthuggskajen which included efforts to integrate active frontages

into the district's ground floors. This included public facilities with shops, bars, and restaurants. The vision drew inspiration from the adjacent Linnéstaden district, especially the attractive Långgatorna quarters, known for their diverse streetscape and mix of functions (see Figure 2). In so doing, the regeneration of Masthuggskajen aimed at generating urban qualities that recent developments in the city had failed to deliver (Masthuggskajenkonsortiet, 2024; Molnar, 2022a).

Figure 2: Första Långgatan—which runs along the southern edge of the redevelopment area—has provided inspiration for Masthuggskajen's future ground floors. Image: Author's own.

A working group called The Active Frontages Team, consisting of local authorities, property companies, and consultants, was established to oversee this initiative. This commenced a several years long process of continuous research, stakeholder dialogues, negotiations, and planning. As of 2024, construction in Masthuggskajen is underway (see Figure 3) (Masthuggskajenkonsortiet, 2024; Molnar, 2022a).

Figure 3: Masthamnsgatan—which runs right through the redevelopment area—is slated to become a pedestrian-friendly street with active frontages and diverse outdoors amenities. Ongoing construction visible in the background. Image: Author's own.

The first case study of this thesis (discussed in papers I-III) investigates the planning phase of this redevelopment, from the initial visioning in 2008 to the adoption of the municipal land-use plan a decade later.

Public Open Spaces

Classical thinkers on urban and political life have long discussed the significance of the public sphere in shaping public opinion, fostering community, nurturing creativity, and enabling democratic discourse. This intellectual lineage stretches from Immanuel Kant (1784), George Simmel (1903), and Hannah Arendt (1958), to Jürgen Habermas (1964), and Henri Lefebvre (1974), all of whom explored the potential—and limitations—of the public sphere in contributing to both public and private goods (as discussed in Sennett, 2018, 2020; Varna & Tiesdell, 2010; Wallenstein, 2023).

As physical manifestations of the public sphere (Low & Smith, 2005, in Varna & Tiesdell, 2010), *public open spaces* (POS) are areas that are in principle open and accessible to all, including parks, gardens, squares, recreational areas, and streets. While often owned and

maintained by public entities, POS can also according to some definitions include spaces owned by civic organizations or private entities, provided they serve the public (Carmona, 2021; Loukaitou-Sideris Anastasia, 1993; Madanipour, 2003; Nemeth, 2009; Zhang et al., 2023).

Viewing POS as a distinct territorial sort allows for an analytical differentiation from similar types of territories. S*emi-public spaces*, while not fully public, permit some degree of public access, albeit with restrictions such as limited opening hours and uses. Semi-public spaces may include amenities such as shopping malls, plazas, and university campuses. In contrast, *semi-private spaces* are territories primarily intended for specific user groups, such as residential courtyards, corporate gardens, and membership-only pool areas (Carmona, 2021; Cozens & Love, 2015; Madanipour, 2003).

POS are heterogenous and can vary widely in form and function (Smith & Low, 2006 and Michel, 2003a, cited in Nemeth, 2009). Many such spaces are hybrid (Nissen, 2008, cited in Lee, 2020) exhibiting varying degrees of publicness and privateness, openness and closedness, and formality and informality, and cater for a variety of uses and needs (Carmona, 2010; Madanipour, 2003), reflecting what Amin (2008) refers to as 'situated multiplicity'. Moreover, these spaces often overlap and integrate with other spaces in the urban landscape (Marcus, 2010).

The Values of Public Open Spaces

POS are complex, multifaceted, and dynamic, making it challenging to define their values in a singular and straightforward manner (Carmona, 2010; Nemeth, 2009). As embodiments of the public realm, POS are often valued for functions and benefits unique to their nature, such as facilitating interaction among strangers, fostering new perspectives, promoting tolerance and learning, enabling debate, and providing anonymity (Sennett, 2020).

Firstly, POS such as parks and greenways are associated with environmental benefits by serving as wildlife habitats, improving air quality, and mitigating heat islands. They are said to function as the "green lungs" of cities, supporting biodiversity and absorbing pollutants (Carmona, 2021; Dempsey & Burton, 2012; Tzoulas et al., 2007).

Secondly, POS can provide mental and physical health benefits by offering opportunities for exercise, relaxation, and stress relief (Abraham et al., 2010; Carmona, 2021; Cronin-de-Chavez et al., 2019). However, such benefits are typically not equally distributed, whether socially or geographically (Cariñanos & Casares-Porcel, 2011; Cronin-de-Chavez et al., 2019; Low et al., 2005).

Thirdly, the social and democratic values of POS include opportunities for social interaction, community cohesion, and diversity. They can also serve as a foundation for the generation of publics and thus as agoras for political and democratic gatherings (Goffman, 1963; Low, 2000; Madanipour, 2003; Mehta, 2009; Sandström, 2019). Nevertheless, the actual impact of POS on these values is complex and depends on factors such as ownership, maintenance, rules and regulations, uses, and appropriations (Carmona, 2012; Franzén et al., 2016; Loukaitou-Sideris Anastasia, 1993; Persson de Fine Licht, 2017; Rosenberger, 2023).

Fourthly, liveliness and vibrancy are often regarded as core values of POS, particularly in squares and streets that function as nodes and connectors within urban networks. These spaces are often used to host events, ceremonies, and public performances (Bertolini, 2020; Gehl, 2010; Mehta, 2008; Sennett, 2024). Hybrid spaces, such as shopping malls, can also provide similar roles (Pitt & Musa, 2009; Rahman et al., 2016). However, the vibrancy, crowdedness, and disorder that at times characterize POS can sometimes lead to negative outcomes, such as unsafety, criminality, exclusion, and inaccessibility (Chaudhury et al., 2017; Dumbaugh & Gattis, 2005; Edwards & Maxwell, 2019; Navarrete-Hernandez et al., 2021; Van Hecke et al., 2018).

Finally, POS are sometimes associated with economic benefits such as boosting local economies, supporting retail, and increasing property values and tax revenue. However, the financial investments, maintenance costs, and reliance on private capital for upkeep pose challenges (Arancibia et al., 2019; Carmona, 2021; A. Davis, 2010).

Brunnsparken as a Public Open Space

Brunnsparken is a public open space in in central Gothenburg. This combined square, park, and public transport hub is located at the intersection of several major streets, adjacent to the Nordstan shopping center, making it one of the city's most trafficked public spaces. Spanning approximately 4,500 square meters, Brunnsparken features greenery, seating areas, pedestrian

pathways, and water features, including a fountain and a canal. Surrounding buildings range from two to five stories and include ground-floor commercial spaces such as restaurants, cafés, and shops, with office spaces above. As a key public transit hub, Brunnsparken connects numerous tram and bus lines, facilitating the daily movement of thousands of people within the city and region (Göteborgs Stad, 2017, 2018a).

Figure 4: Brunnsparken pre-redevelopment. While initially the whole of Brunnsparken was slated for regeneration, in the end only the central park area was redeveloped. Image: Mitt i Göteborg.

Brunnsparken's history dates to the early 19th century, when it was established as a location for accessing fresh water, as reflected in its name, meaning "Well Park." Over the years, Brunnsparken evolved into a central public transport hub, commercial center, and social gathering spot in Gothenburg, featuring an English-style public park in its center (see Figure 4). By the early 21st century, the site faced challenges such as wear and degradation, safety concerns due to heavy tram and bus traffic, and frequent debates about the presence of marginalized groups. These issues were further intensified during the 2015 refugee crisis when Brunnsparken became a gathering point for young refugees (Göteborgs Stad, 2017; Högberg, 2019; White, 2018). In response, a major redevelopment was launched, initiated by local property owners and the municipality.

This initiative focused on improving pedestrian accessibility, enhancing green spaces, and creating new meeting places, this as a means of increasing safety, attractiveness, and user-friendliness (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Brunnsparken after redevelopment, amongst others featuring new pedestrian pathways bordered by raised planters with integrated seating, new flooring, and improved lighting. Image: Jan Lif.

Figure 6: The redeveloped Brunnsparken. The open spot will feature a new café building. Image: Author's own.

Simultaneously, a coalition of social services, police, property owners, local businesses, and NGOs increased their presence on site, integrating security measures with social work (Göteborgs Stad, 2017, 2018a; White, 2018). The redevelopment was completed and inaugurated in 2020, except for a café building which is planned for construction in an open area at the park's center (see Figure 6).

The second case study in this thesis (presented in papers IV and V) surveys the redevelopment of Brunnsparken from its formal inception in 2017 to its completion and inauguration in 2020.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the major streams of previous research and theories that have informed the writing of the thesis. Chapter 3 details the methods and methodology, including the organization, financing, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 summarizes the five appended papers. Chapter 5 offers tentative answers to the research questions, while Chapter 6 concludes with overall findings and suggestions for future research and practice.

2. Previous Research and Theoretical Handles

This chapter provides an overview of key research strands that have informed and shaped the thesis. It begins by exploring the origins and evolution of the recent resurgence in socio-material studies of valuation—by some termed valuation studies—within social and urban research. Following this, the chapter delves into the primary concepts and theories that have guided the development of the thesis.

2.1 The Origins of a Reinvigorated Pragmatist Study of Valuation

For millennia, the question of what values should guide architectural practice and urban development, as well as the types of value that cities and towns generate, has been a central topic of discussion. Thinkers from Plato (360 BCE), Vitruvius (15 BCE), and Bacon (1625), to Kant (1790), Schopenhauer (1818), and Hegel (1826) all contributed to these debates (Fisher, 2015a). With the rise of the modern social sciences and their focus on the ongoing processes of industrialization and urbanization, questions of value and values remained prominent. Max Weber, for example, associated the modern city with values of efficiency, rationality, and profit[2] while Simmel discussed metropolitan life as a manifestation of freedom, diversity, and material worth over community. Similarly, Marx viewed urbanization as an ultimate outcome of capital's search for exchange value (Sennett, 2018). However, this chapter begins in the 1930s, with one of the key influences of many scholars in valuation studies—John Dewey's theory of valuation (Dewey, 1939, in Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013; Lamont, 2012). From there, the chapter traces some major streams of research that either have been the object of inspiration or critique for valuation studies, while highlighting some examples of how these streams have intersected with research on cities and their development[3].

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[2] Weber proposed that modern capitalist society consists of several distinct and incommensurable *value spheres*, each guided by a foundational core value. For example, while economic life has the pursuit of profit as a dominant principle, politics is guided by power, and aesthetics by beauty (Steinert, 2023).

[3] Note that this is not an overview of research on architecture, urban planning and design from the 1930s to the present. Rather, as valuation studies has primarily developed within the social sciences—particularly in fields such as Science & Technology Studies (STS), economic and cultural sociology, and organization theory—this section focuses on these traditions, including scholarship on cities that has engaged with them.

Dewey's Pragmatist Theory of Valuation

An inspiration for much work in valuation studies is John Dewey's (1939) theory of valuation, developed nearly a century ago. As a leading figure in American pragmatism, Dewey was interested in how humans pragmatically navigate and adapt to the indeterminate and problematic situations they face in everyday life. Among the issues he tackled were contemporary debates surrounding questions of value and values (Muniesa, 2011; Stark, 2009; Steinert, 2023).

In contrast to other prevailing theories of his time—which either focused on *values* as the subjective preferences of humans or on *value* as an intrinsic quality of actions, goods, and markets—Dewey proposed a pragmatic theory of valuation. He focused on values as emerging through *valuation*—an activity of expressing or determining what is good by engaging in decisions and practical actions in response to specific problems (Muniesa, 2011; Stark, 2009). It is a process of both observation and conceptualization oriented around transforming a problematic situation into one that is less so (Dewey, 1939). This is a fundamental human activity present in many aspects of life. Dewey (1939, p. 3) noted, "All conduct that is not simply either blindly impulsive or mechanically routine seems to involve valuations."

According to Dewey, valuation is an activity inherently contingent on both the human doing the valuing and the specific context in which it occurs. In Dewey's view, valuation blends *subjective* human values with the *objective* qualities of the valued entity. To articulate this synthesis, Dewey introduced the notion of *worth*, a concept that captures the integration of values and value and that would become frequently used in valuation studies (Muniesa, 2011; Stark, 2009). Dewey further emphasized that, in the face of indeterminate and uncertain situations, individuals possess the capacity to navigate between *intuitive judgment* and *reflective calculation*, a move that would become central in valuation studies (Stark, 2009).

Although Dewey was not concentrating on urban design and planning, he did discuss issues of town life, community development, and the role of space in reflective inquiry, learning, and democratic participation. From his pragmatist perspective, Dewey argued that functional town life and community development emerged from processes of collective learning among politicians, experts, citizens, and other concerned publics. These processes, he contended, necessarily involved balancing multiple individual and shared values through processes of

experimentation and *evaluation* (Gaudelli, 2005; Jayanandhan, 2009). Indeed, Dewey saw valuation as inherent to the act of *making* (Dixon, 2020). He argued that, among others, valuation arises in problematic situations where there "is necessary to bring something into existence which is lacking" (Dewey, 1939, p. 15).

The idea that worth emerges pragmatically through everyday practices of valuation would later become foundational in the field of valuation studies (Lamont, 2012; Stark, 2009), including research on cities and planning (Barnett, 2014; Fuller, 2013; Holden, 2017), while other parts of his thinking inspired work on design practice (Dixon, 2020; Schön, 1991), public participation (Marres, 2015), and the role of experimentation in city life and urban community (Hess, 2001; Sennett, 2018).

However, it would take some time for Dewey's thinking on values to gain traction in the social sciences, as well as in design and planning research. The mid-20th century, dominated by rationalist thought and systems thinking, led to a temporary decline in the influence of pragmatist ideas (Lindgren & Palmås, 2008). Nonetheless, as the next section will demonstrate, during this period the problem of value(s) continued to be discussed in both social theory and research on cities, planning, and design[4].

Parsons' Separation of Value and Values

By the mid-20th century, the study of value and values had become central to the social sciences (Gintis, 2017). However, a division between these two concepts soon emerged, often referred to as Parsons' Pact—a distinction that went against Dewey´s fusing of value and values (Stark, 2009; Steinert, 2023; Swedberg, 2003). Named after Talcott Parsons[5], the pact reflects an alleged agreement that he reached with his economist colleagues. Parsons argued that sociology should concentrate on the *moral* and *non-rational* aspects of human behavior, studying *values* understood as abstract, enduring, collectively shared beliefs about what is

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[4] At least according to critical theorist Herbert Marcuse, Dewey may have contributed to positivism's move away from the idea of a social science free of value judgments, instead treating them as something that can be studied and verified empirically. In a review of Dewey's Theory of Valuation (1939), published two years after its release, Marcuse (1941) said: "To a considerable extent, the impact of John Dewey's work and personality may have been responsible for the fact that positivism no longer maintains the ideal of a social science which is void of value judgments, but attempts to treat such judgment in verifiable propositions."

[5] Parsons was a key representative of structural-functionalism, a paradigm which views society as a system, the different parts of which, such as norms, values, roles, and institutions, each have their different functions, depend on each other and collectively help generate social order and stability (Steinert, 2023).

good, right, and desirable. These values transcend individual situations and provide ultimate ends towards which human choices are directed[6]. Conversely, economists should focus on *value*—desirable qualities of objects—and the skills, incentives, and rational "individualistic means-end calculations" (Steinert, 2023, p. 38), that humans employ to reach these ends. Thus, the pact exemplifies a more general distinction between the values that *explain* human action (explanans) and the value (whether social, economic, aesthetic, etc.) that can be *explained* by such actions (explanandum)[7] (Gintis, 2017; P. Smith, 1998; Stark, 2009; Steinert, 2023).

Around the mid-20th century, *economics* and *rational choice theory* gained prominence in the social sciences (e.g. Becker, 1962; Coleman, 1961, in Gintis, 2017), including in research on cities and planning. Gintis (2017) argues that with their focus on *rational value maximization*, these research streams has since then typically diverged from a Parsonian study of *values*. Similarly, scholars have noted how urban economics and theories of rational planning often have downplayed the subjective values and interests of actors (e.g. planners, architects, and engineers), emphasizing their *value neutrality*. These traditions have tended to share an interest in instrumental rationality as a means for market actors and/or experts to generate *value* in terms of market growth, land-value, employment opportunities, transport efficiency, citizen welfare, etc. (Allmendinger, 2009; Harding & Blokland, 2014).

Other lines of research on cities and planning put more emphasis on the *values* side of Parsons' Pact. Parsons' systems thinking became an inspiration (and topic of critique) for scholars studying *urban systems* (e.g. Bebout & Bredemeier, 1963; Demerath, 1947; Vander Zanden, 1973). These perspectives tended to view cities as integrated systems, comprising nested sub-systems (e.g., places, infrastructure, and social groups). In this view, different actors, places, and functions play their part in maintaining a balance between change and integration within the system.

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[6] With inspiration from Weber's notion of value spheres, Parsons proposed that systems and groups in society, including family, politics, and the economy, are governed by a limited set of foundational values internalized and shared by the members. These values underpin context-specific norms and individual motivations, and consequently contribute to maintaining social order and stability within the system (Gintis, 2017; P. Smith, 1998; Stark, 2009; Steinert, 2023; Swidler, 1986).

[7] This division resembles Weber's classic distinction between value-rational action and instrumental action (Swidler, 1986).

Another line of scholarship aligning with the values side of Parsons' dichotomy is certain lines of *cultural research*. As noted by Swidler (1986), for large parts of the 20th century, researchers on culture tended to embody a Parsonian view of values as abstract, foundational, and collectively shared beliefs that offer individuals goals for action. Such views were applied in various domains, including in the study of cities, urban communities, sub-cultures, and behavior in public space (e.g. Lewis, 1966, Liebow, 1967, Whyte, 1943, cited in Swidler, 1986)[8]. One theory that has often been taken to exemplify the Parsonian view of values is the classical and much-debated cultures of poverty thesis (Lewis, 1966; Liebow, 1967, cited in Swidler, 1986). According to this theory, one of the reasons why poor populations remain in poverty is because they are socialized into shared cultural values and norms—such as male dominance, lack of interest in education, and aversion to work—which constrain their prospects for improvement, even when opportunities arise (Hannerz, 1969; Swidler, 1986).

Another line of thinking during this period, also focusing on values in the Parsonian sense, is early *sociological institutionalism* (e.g., Selznick, 1949, as cited in Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; see also Stark, 2009).[9] Critiquing the aforementioned economic and rationalist theories of the time, early institutionalists emphasized the importance of informal, normative, and cultural dimensions of organized human conduct, noting that actors often have a preference for acting in accordance with their own values and norms over rationally pursuing the most efficient ways of reaching certain goals (McQuarrie & Marwell, 2009)[10]. In his foundational case study of a large regional and community development program, Selznick examined the *core values* that drove stakeholders such as authorities, planning bodies, leaders, and local communities. As each actor aimed to preserve certain values and goals, the program had to

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[8] One influential stream of urban theory during this period was the Chicago School, whose thinking shares a few similarities with that of Parsons. Firstly, like Parsons, the Chicago School was concerned with the growing social instability and disorganization of modern life, thus focusing on how social equilibrium and order are maintained in (urban) systems. Secondly, they viewed different groups and areas as playing distinct roles in the city, resembling Parsons' thinking on roles. Thirdly, they perceived 'social types', such as homosexuals, hobos, and prostitutes, as well as districts, as having distinct characters (McQuarrie & Marwell, 2009; Oswin, 2022). In fact, Oswin (2022) notes that Park and Burgess' concentric zone model viewed the city as constituted by different 'moral regions.' Although the author of this thesis has found no evidence that the Chicago School members were directly influenced by Parsons, his ideas were frequently discussed (Jaynes et al., 2009).

[9] In fact, one of the foundational thinkers of early institutionalism in sociology, Philip Selznick, was himself, just as Parsons, a functionalist as well as influenced by the latter's theory of action (McQuarrie & Marwell, 2009; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

[10] Note the similarity to Parsons' focus on the non-rational aspects of human behavior and how it is guided by shared values and norms.

consider, balance, and internalize these values to gain legitimacy. This process led to a gradual *infusion of values*, transforming the program into an *institution* with its own distinct culture that extended beyond its formal, technical, and economic structures.[11]

To summarize, the mid-20th century saw the establishment of a dichotomy between research focusing on, on the one hand, value as an intrinsic quality of objects, and, on the other hand, values as abstract and collectively shared, trans-situational, beliefs. However, from the 1960s onwards, critiques of these perspectives emerged (P. Smith, 1998; Steinert, 2023), which will be discussed in the upcoming sections.

Conflicting Interests: Use and Exchange Value as Drivers of Social Change

From the 1960s onward, conflict theory, Marxism and similar perspectives increasingly expressed hesitance towards the parsonian notion of explaining human action through shared cultural values. Instead, these perspectives viewed culture as either irrelevant in explaining human behavior compared to social structure (such as class structure) or as ideology that obscures and legitimizes conflicts of interest and social oppression. Scholars in this tradition therefore tended to emphasize *conflict* and *change* over the parsonian focus on *consensus* and *stability* (Gintis, 2017; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; P. Smith, 1998).

In research on cities and urban governance, these lines of thinking, among others, manifested in *pluralism* and *elite theory.* Both these perspectives—along with their "neo" variants—portrayed the shaping of urban space as the result of clashes and negotiations among the competing *interests* of planners, citizen groups, local businesses, and others. These conflicts were pictured as either being part of a plurality of separate social arenas (each with its own norms, values and goals) (as in pluralism) or as city-wide struggles between elites and non-elites (as in elite theory). Both perspectives, however, viewed the quest for *exchange value* by businesses (in growth coalitions or regimes with local governments) as drivers of urban transformation. Some elite theories, in particular, saw rhetoric about the importance of supporting the use value of communities as a strategic tool used by growth coalitions to perpetuate elite interests, often under the guise of *value-free development* (Harding & Blokland, 2014).

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[11] According to McQuarrie and Marwell (2009), work such as that of Selznick has had limited application to the study of cities and urban development.

Similarly, major thinkers in the *Marxist urban political economy* of the time, such as Castells (1977), Harvey (1978), and Massey (1984), shared a focus on *class interests* and tensions between *exchange- and use value* as drivers of urban change (cited in Harding & Blokland, 2014). Their analyses of urban politics, architecture, city life, and even the provision of public goods like education and transportation, frequently depicted these processes as attempts by Capital to prioritize exchange value—frequently at the expense of, or disguised as, use value (Fuller, 2013; Harding & Blokland, 2014).

From Values to Practices, Meaning, and Language

The late 1960s, 70s, and 80s saw the advancement of numerous research streams which shared earlier Marxist and conflict theory's skepticism towards Parsonian conceptions of culture and values, while at the same time critiquing the former for emphasizing social structure at the expense of *practices, language, symbols, and meaning* (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977; Douglas, 1966; Geertz, 1973; Hannerz, 1969, as discussed in Swidler, 1986, see also Smith, 1998)[12]. Many of these were part of a wider (re)turn to *culture* in the social sciences including in urban research, although one that emphasized cultural complexity (Soja, 1999).

To begin with, Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Anthony Giddens (1979), and other scholars directed their analytical lens at *social practices*—defined as chains of collectively shared routine activities and behaviors. Rather than focusing on how the actions of individuals and groups are influenced by norms and values, these researchers put more emphasis on the often subconscious *classifications, rules, resources, symbols, and skills* that people develop through their life-experiences, and positions within social structure (Schatzki, 2001).

This research soon came to direct its attention towards cities. Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of *field, habitus, and, capitals* have, for example, been employed in studies on how access to resources such as language, dress, and education is intertwined with people's appropriations of urban territories and functions (e.g., Dovey, 2010; Wacquant, 2008; Zukin, 1995), and how consumption spaces provide the "relatively well-educated, art-seeking, but not wealthy middle classes" (Zukin & Kosta, 2004, p. 102) with cultural capital. On the other hand,

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[12] To a large extent, these traditions shared several or all of their inspirations, including Marxist political economy, phenomenology, linguistics, institutionalism, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and American pragmatism (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; P. Smith, 1998).

Edward Soja (2000, cited in Dean, 2016) built on Giddens' theory of *structuration* to explore how social life, such as family and community, and city spaces simultaneously (re)produce each other[13]. Similarly, Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) and de Certeau (1984) were among the scholars who, at this time, explored the creative, productive and transformative aspects of everyday practice (cited in Sheringham, 2006).

A related research stream at this time was the *new sociological institutionalism (SI)* (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Like the old institutionalism, SI critiqued reductionist conceptions of humans as rational *value-maximizers*, emphasizing instead the informal, cultural and non-rational elements of practice. However, it also questioned the previously mentioned reliance on Parsonian values of its old institutionalist counterpart, instead emphasizing *cognition* such as the rules, classifications, scripts, and schemas that guide our perception of the world[14] (McQuarrie & Marwell, 2009; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

SI soon also became an inspiration for scholars in urban planning and governance, for example generating studies on how institutionalized rules, resources and frames structure the actions of planners, architects, politicians, and others, while their actions, in turn, impact city spaces (Healy, 1997; Schön & Rein, 1994, cited in Healey, 1999; see also Sorensen, 2017). Others have employed SI to explore the multiple *institutional logics* balanced by urban planners (Berglund-Snodgrass & Mukhtar-Landgren, 2020), and the coercive, imitative, and normative mechanisms by which actors in big city management become increasingly similar (Czarniawska, 2002).

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[13] Another conception of cultural practices that gained popularity during this period is Swidler's (1986) notion of culture as *repertoires* or *toolkits* (cited in Schatzki, 2001). Originally conceived by urban anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1969) as a response to the aforementioned tendency among scholars to view urban cultures as stable wholes with unique values, this perspective proposes that culture typically affects human behavior not through such values, but through largely non-propositional competencies, rules, styles, and habits. Individuals have a repertoire of such cultural elements that they flexibly draw from and adapt depending on the situation (Swidler, 1986). The notion of repertoires would subsequently become frequently used by scholars studying valuation (e.g. Farías & Flores, 2017; Krarup, 2023; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; Wagner, 1999).

[14] Sociological Institutionalism's (SI) connections to the first stream of practice theory are evident. SI draws on the work of Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979), as well as their influences, such as Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology and Berger and Luckmann's (1967) phenomenology. Additionally, SI has been inspired by the cognitive revolution in the social sciences (Simon, 1945; March & Simon, 1958; Cyert & March, 1963) (cited in Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

Issues of *discourse, and communication* also became prominent during the last decades of the 20th century, including in scholarship on urban planning and design (Cuthbert, 2003). One example is Jürgen Habermas's (1982) thinking on *deliberative democracy* and *communicative rationality (CR)*, which traded theories of instrumental rationality for one based on a belief in open, equal, and reasoned communication as an instrument for rational decision making based on mutually accepted norms and values. Habermasian thinking, for example, generated studies on the potential of public space in fostering civic dialogue and deliberative democracy (Sennett, 2020), the impact of the market and state on the life-world of urban dwellers (Dovey, 1999), and on communicative and collaborative planning as techniques of stakeholder deliberation and consensus-building (Forester, 1989; Innes & Booher, 1995; Healy, 1997, cited in Goodspeed, 2016).[15]

However, CR was critiqued by other discourse-oriented perspectives for having a naïve belief in rational discourse and consensus building founded in shared norms. These perspectives, as applied to planning and design, instead showed how discourses and knowledge claims are intertwined with, conceal, and rationalize underlying power relations that are not easily transformed (Flyvbjerg, 1998), as well as how mentalities and normative positions of citizens are shaped by wider rationalities and calculative techniques of government and market (Raco & Imrie, 2000) Similarly, the post-Marxist thinking of Chantal Mouffe (2008), proposed a conflict-oriented theory according to which society is imbued by a plurality of subjectivities with incommensurable discourses and interests[16]. Mouffe argued that to crate democratic cities, societies, and public spaces, opposing identities need to engage in open and peaceful, although passionate and agonistic, debate rather than strive towards rational consensus (Eranti & Meriluoto, 2023; Wallenstein, 2023).[17]

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[15] Related lines of communicative research that developed during this period was Schön's (1991 [1983]) work on reflexive practice and Weick's (1979) thinking on sense-making, both heavily influences by pragmatist thinking and interested in the conversations that people engage in when faced with uncertainty, complexity, and risk. These traditions subsequently came to be employed in studies of planning and design (e.g. Berglund-Snodgrass et al., 2023; Forester, 1999; Gentes & Marcocchia, 2023).

[16] Soja (1999) states that Mouffe, with her integration of culturalist ideas with those of political economy, was part of the wider turn towards culture during the late 70s onward. A tradition that many of the scholars in this section belong to.

[17] Scholars within planning ethics were also among the ones posing critique towards the Habermasian tradition, this time for putting too much emphasis on procedural values at the expense of substantive values (Campbell, 2002; Fainstein, 2009). Campbell and Marshall (1999, p. 474) critiqued planning research of the time for being

A Turn to Technology, Materiality, and Space

Before delving into the "invention" of valuation studies, it is essential to consider another significant research stream that played a role in shaping the field: the increasing focus on the agency of technology, materiality, and space within the social sciences, and which also came to shape research on planning and cities (e.g. Beauregard, 2015; Coutard & Guy, 2007; Farías & Bender, 2010; Guy & Shove, 2000; Hommels, 2005).

One such line of research was a new stream of *Social Practice Theory (SPT)* (Chappells & Shove, 1999; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2001). This perspective emphasized the role of *materiality, infrastructure, and sites*—such as technology, architecture, and energy—in social practices on top of the subjective rules, symbols, and classifications emphasized in earlier practice theory, while also critiquing the latter's alleged tendency to downplay human agency (see e.g., the discussions of Schatzki, 2001; Shove, 2017). In research on cities and the built environment, this approach has been used to examine topics such as the mutual interactions between everyday energy practices, buildings, and technical knowledge and expertise (Guy & Shove, 2000), the intertwinement of mobility flows and space (Urry, 1999), and the role of practices in explaining the willingness to volunteer in maintenance of blue-green spaces (Lamond & Everett, 2019).

A closely related research stream gaining traction during this period was that of Science and Technology Studies (STS). An early conception was *SCOT (the Social Construction of Technology)*, a perspective which posits that technology is constructed by social, cultural, political, and economic forces, rather than solely being the result of technical and linear processes. Thus, technologies have significant amounts of interpretative flexibility, meaning that social groups, engineers, designers, users, and others engage in negotiations until certain meanings find stability (Bijker et al., 1987; Bijker & Law, 1992). Connected to research on cities, Aibar and Bijker (1997), for example, analyzed the development of the Cerdá plan for the extension of Barcelona as an outcome of the negotiations between architects and engineers with their competing *technological frames*. In contrast, Hommels (2005) discussed how technological frames are one of the mechanisms contributing to the *obduracy* of cities.

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too proceduralist, subjectivist, relativist, and focused on individual interests, something which was "reflected in a general preoccupation with how to plan rather than issues concerning ends and values."

SCOT was one of the theories that eventually contributed to the development of *Actor-Network Theory (ANT)*[18], a perspective that posits that the agencies and interests of non-human entities should be considered on par with those of humans in scientific and technological development. Additionally, ANT shifts the focus of the analysis of power away from individual actors, instead emphasizing it as the collected outcome of a process of negotiations, translations, and stabilizations in *heterogeneous actor-networks* (Akrich, 1992; Callon et al., 1986; de Laet & Mol, 2000; Latour, 1988; Law, 1999).

ANT soon gained traction in scholarship on cities, architecture, and planning (Beauregard, 2015; Farías & Bender, 2010; Murdoch, 2006; Rydin, 2013; Yaneva, 2022), leading to studies on a wide range of topics. Some examples include studies on the dynamic and ever-changing socio-material flows in public spaces (Forsemalm, 2004; Kim, 2019), the repeated shifts between different scales and mediums in the work of architects and how this affects their designs (Palmås & von Busch, 2015; Yaneva, 2005), as well as the ways in which tourism becomes (de)territorialized and actualized in urban spaces depending on the situation, frames, and modes of travel (Farías, 2010).[19]

A (Re)Turn to Values

In parallel with many of the developments above, individual scholars raised concern that the social sciences, during recent decades, had directed too little empirical and theoretical interest in the role of value and/or values in human conduct—in money, morals, and affect[20]. Consequently, this period witnessed the production of various lines of scholarship on how

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[18] Other traditions that have contributed to the development of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) include semiotics, ethnomethodology, Large-Scale Technological Systems (LST), as well as the assemblage theory of Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault's work on power/knowledge (Law, 2008). Additionally, American pragmatism has played a significant role (Latour, 2005).

[19] Another materially inclined perspective is the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006 [1991]) on justification and coordination, which, along with ANT, has been discussed as part of a new French pragmatism due to their shared interest in how action arises in indeterminate socio-material settings. Both perspectives also emerged from critiques of Bourdieu's thinking and similar critical theories, as well as Marxist and rational choice theories, challenging their tendency to assume that the true motivations for people's actions are beyond their reach (as discussed in Bénatouïl, 1999; Guggenheim & Potthast, 2012). There are also significant overlaps between the French pragmatists and the new stream of Social Practice Theory (Schatzki et al., 2001).

[20] This critique has been raised not only in sociology (J. C. Alexander, 2002; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; Swedberg, 2003), but also in disciplines such as anthropology (Appadurai, 1986; Graeber, 2001), organization studies (Friedland, 2017), geography (Barnett, 2014), and political science (Inglehart, 1996, cited in Steinert, 2023).

monetary and non-monetary values intersect with and arise out of social practices (Steinert, 2023)[21].

One portion of this scholarship took place within the confines of the *new economic sociology (NES)* (e.g., Burt 1992; Fligstein, 1996b; Granovetter, 1973, 1985a, cited in Swedberg, 2003)[22]. Important studies include Viviana Zelizer's (1979; 1985) work on how the life insurance industry makes objects, such as children's lives, open to economic valuation and trade on the market, and Lucien Karpik's (2010) research on how fairness, quality, efficiency and other values are judged and calculated in markets where objects are hard to compare, such as literature, doctors' visits, and fine wine.[23]

These lines of scholarship, including studies on *economic embeddedness*, *performativity*, and *market construction* (Callon, 1998b; MacKenzie, 2006), as well as on *economization* and *financialization* (Caliskan & Callon, 2009; Chiapello, 2015), also made an important mark on research on cities. Christophers (2014), for example, explored the *performativity* of a new model for economic viability appraisal in the United Kingdom and how it influenced the potential for affordable housing provision. Relatedly, Rydin (2016) examined how sustainability concerns influenced commercial property markets in the United Kingdom, especially in prime sectors, while largely overlooking non-prime properties, something which can partly be connected to the ways that calculative practices and classificatory tools work (similar studies include Crosby & Henneberry, 2016; Henneberry & Roberts, 2008; Kornberger & Carter, 2010).

Related studies, which were closer to *cultural sociology*, showed less interest in economic calculation and more on general processes of evaluation (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000), classification (Bowker & Star, 1999), standardization (Brunsson, 2000; Timmermans &

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[21] However, most social scientists who study values today have not adopted a practice-oriented approach but instead focus on values (in the plural) as principles guiding behavior (Martin & Lembo, 2020, cited in Steinert, 2023). A well-known example is Inglehart's (1997) studies of value orientations across different parts of the world (cited in Steinert, 2023).

[22] There is also an original economic sociology associated with scholars such as Marx (1867), Weber (1905; 1922), Durkheim (1893), Simmel (1900), Veblen (1899), and Schumpeter (1918) (cited in Swedberg, 2003).

[23] Another example is David Stark's (2009) research on how organizational members *search* for what actions and outcomes are *worth* pursuing and how they coordinate their work amid uncertainty and friction. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Epstein, 2010), and the like. Important contributions include Lamont's (2000) examination of the activities and criteria that individuals use to assess the worth of—and make distinctions between—racial and class groups, and Espeland and Sauder's (2007) study of university stakeholders' reactivity to rankings and metrics[24]. A related contribution from this period is Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) research on the principles, proofs, tests, and objects that individuals employ in public disputes to justify and coordinate arguments and actions. The authors found that successful coordination often depends on establishing a shared sense of *ordinary justice*, which requires participants to legitimize their decisions based on one or several principles of *common good* (also called orders of worth)[25].

Not least, Boltanski and Thévenot's findings have been applied to urban contexts, as exemplified by Centemeri's (2017) study on environmental critique in large infrastructure projects, specifically an airport conflict. Centemeri identifies how stakeholders employed and alternated between various *modes of valuation*—local, universal, and emplaced—and how these dynamics fostered greater reflexivity within the local community regarding the environment's multiple values. Similarly, Albertsen and Diken (2001) investigated conflicts over mobility in public spaces, supporting Boltanski and Thevenot's finding that *engagement* with, and coordination in, these everyday contexts do not always depend on actors' *capacities and competences* to reach agreements or compromises around shared notions of justice and public good. In some situations, the relevant capacities and competencies might instead involve the ability to use *force*, establish and maintain *relationships*, or adhere to *familiar* rules and routines.

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[24] Yet another noteworthy example is Heinich's (2000) explorations of the rhetoric used by publics to evaluate visual art (and distinguish it from non-art), drawing on aesthetic (e.g., authenticity), political (e.g., freedom), and moral (e.g., personal conduct) values. Espeland and Steven's (2008) work on the role of numbers and quantification in shaping social worlds also provides a frequently cited reference.

[25] Boltanski and Thévenot also draw from normative and political theory, not only the theory of spheres of justice by Michael Walzer (1983). In identifying six principles of the common good—often referred to as orders of worth or worlds of justification—used by individuals in Western liberal democracies to perform justifications, they associate each principle with a historical philosopher: civic (Rousseau), market (Adam Smith), industrial (Saint-Simon), domestic (Bossuet), inspiration (Augustine), and fame (Hobbes).(Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006 [1991]). In later studies, Boltanski, this time with Ève Chiapello (2005 [1999]), identified an increasing presence of a seventh 'project' principle of common good based on the value of being active and having many and diverse projects, whilst Thévenot et. al. (2000) observed the frequent use of a 'green' principle in the public sphere.

Other research on values has closer affinities to *Actor-Network Theory (ANT)*. One notable example, beyond Callon's (1998a, 2007) aforementioned research, is Latour's (2004) work on how objects in scientific and technical practice evolve from being matters of fact to becoming worrisome and controversial *matters of concern*—how they become a 'thing' that engage humans and-non humans in joint discourse. Another influential example is Antoine Hennion´s (1997, 2005) work on how amateurs and experts in food, music, sports, and other domains learn to become valuators, and deploy taste and appreciations appropriately, by developing their *dispositions* and *attachments* to ideas and objects.

Hennion's thinking has since inspired scholars in architecture and urban studies, as exemplified by a study on building renovation by Albena Yaneva (2008). Yaneva demonstrates that buildings are not passive objects; rather, renovation is an experimental process where buildings "resist" efforts to control them and present "surprises" to the humans involved. Buildings thus act as *mediators* that redistribute agency, alters people's attachments to them, and influence how meaning and value is communicated and perceived. Similarly, Latour's thinking on matters of concern has influenced urban scholarship, as seen in a study by Mottaghi et al. (2020) on the introduction of blue-green infrastructure in neighborhoods. Their research highlights how the implementation of such solutions in public spaces generates new *affordances* that reshape and intensify inhabitants' everyday ethical considerations and matters of care and concern. Such solutions, therefore, do not merely come with technical and environmental implications but also with social implications (some other studies analyzing matters of concern include DomÍnguez Rubio & Fogué, 2013; Jensen et al., 2016; Winge & Lamm, 2019).

The Invention of Valuation Studies

The previous section highlighted how some practice and pragmatist-oriented scholars around the turn of the century began focusing on how monetary and non-monetary values are enacted through socio-material practices. However, this research was highly heterogeneous and fragmented. At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, however, scholars such as Helgesson and Muniesa (2013), along with Michel Lamont (2012), began advocating for the need to unify these diverse approaches to stimulate joint learning and collaboration. This led to the emergence of the field of *Valuation Studies*, which soon saw the establishment of a dedicated journal, a series of readers, conference panels, and special journal issues. Since

then, the field has also slowly begun to develop its own set of canonical concepts, theories, research results, and internal debates.

Despite much of the work in valuation studies not directly addressing urban planning and design, there is a growing body of research in this area[26]. For instance, in a study of neighborhood regeneration and waste management in London, Luna Glucksberg (2014) examines acts of valuation engaged in by citizens, politicians and experts. She finds a continuous positive valuation of urban middle-class residents and their waste management practices, while working-class tenants tend to be subjected to *symbolic devaluations* while being excluded from more sustainable forms of waste management practices. This simultaneous exclusion and devaluation of the working class legitimizes the physical transformation of the area including the *displacement* of some existing tenants, the author argues[27]. Similarly, Ask Greve Johanson's (2021) PhD research mapped the practices through which urban planners in local government know, value and operationalize the vague concept of livability. Johanson finds that planners do not enact livability as a single entity, but as different *assemblages* of ideas, terms, and materials. Here, *planning tools* help make different conceptions of livability tangible while obscuring others, a form of *opaqueness* that makes urban spaces and natures more governable.

Other than the two studies just discussed, work over the past decade explicitly or implicitly linked to valuation studies has explored an array of topics, if not explicitly urban planning and design, at least spatial planning. These include real-estate valuation by property developers (Ansenberg, 2022; Grander & Westerdahl, n.d.; Robin, 2018), customer valuation of tourism destinations (Baka, 2015), sustainability assessments in property development (Lindblad, 2020; Rydin, 2016), and the valuation practices performed by architects and architectural critics (Coughlan, 2023; Farías, 2015; Kornberger et al., 2011; Kreiner, 2020; Stark & Paravel, 2008; Styhre, 2013a). Additional research has focused on valuations by citizens, politicians, and experts in neighborhood regeneration (Blok, 2013; Fuller, 2013; Holden, 2017; Metzger & Wiberg, 2017; Styhre et al., 2022; van de Kamp, 2021), citizen valuation of community energy projects (Kuch & Morgan, 2015), and modes of valuation employed in

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[26] Some of the more commonly studied empirical domains in valuation studies include healthcare, climate change, energy, biodiversity, finance, education, and research.

[27] Glucksberg's study is the only one published in *Valuation Studies* that addresses urban planning and design.

public participation and civic activism (Blok & Meilvang, 2015; Centemeri, 2017; Eranti, 2017; Herzog et al., 2024; Krarup, 2023; Meilvang et al., 2018). Other studies address the valuation of old buildings destined for renovation (Goebel, 2021; Sezneva & Halauniova, 2021), valuations of risks and plannings solutions in urban river planning (Petersson & Soneryd, 2022), appraisals of urban art (Ten Eyck, 2016; Thévenot, 2014), valuation and valorization in waste management (Bleicher et al., 2019; Reno, 2009), and risk and financial valuation in public transport planning (Boholm & Corvellec, 2016; McGlinn et al., 2019)[28].

2.2 Theoretical Handles Used in This Thesis

This section presents the theoretical handles—the key concepts and theories—used in this thesis, drawing from the historical perspectives discussed earlier. The first part explores the nature of valuation as a socio-material practice and its connections with both values and value. The second part examines the intertwined cultural and material components that shape valuation practices. Finally, the third part addresses the value dissonances that may arise and the ways in which these are coordinated when urban spaces are developed and designed.

Valuation as a Socio-Material Practice

This thesis draws inspiration from John Dewey's (1939, p. 139) view of valuation as an activity through which actors express or explore what is good in relation to a specific problem or circumstance. This broad definition, as noted by previous scholars (e.g., Coughlan, 2023; Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013), has its advantages. It allows for the identification of the numerous activities in which people engage daily that involve the attribution of value, and it enables comparisons of similarities and differences among these activities. However, with the concept of valuation encompassing such a broad range of phenomena, it risks including everything and nothing at the same time. This underscores the importance of mapping the different forms and expressions that valuation can take (Coughlan, 2023).

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[28] This paragraph includes only studies that explicitly reference the field of valuation studies and/or utilize scholarship directly associated with it. Nonetheless, defining the boundaries of valuation studies in relation to urban planning and design is not a straightforward task. Consequently, there are likely studies from other fields examining socio-material practices of valuation in urban planning and design that are not included here. Additionally, there may be studies explicitly referencing valuation studies in relation to urban planning that the author has not identified.

As emphasized in the previous chapter, the perspective adopted in this thesis, consistent with Dewey's thinking, treats value as both a *verb* and a *noun*. The expression of something's value (noun) emerges—or is enacted—through and as part of the activity of valuing (verb) (Kjellberg et al., 2013; Muniesa, 2011). Consequently, the pragmatist perspective on valuation does not concern itself with whether value is *subjective* or *objective*; rather, it recognizes value as encompassing both aspects, thus shifting attention towards how subjectivity and objectivity are created. Value is subjective in the sense that it reflects individuals' desires, preferences, feelings, and sensations as they in specific settings attach to or detach from things, humans, and non-human species. However, value is also objective in the way that Daston and Galison (2007) discuss objectivity. In this view, value becomes objective through a process of objectification, that is, a demanding and context-dependent chain of actions and agreements by which the object starts being treated as having value and thus has material, real-life consequences (as discussed by Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013). Another way that one might put it is that the value of an object is objective in the sense that the object's "behavior" matters for how it is valued. This dual nature of value is why Dewey introduced the notion of *worth*, a concept that captures the interplay between values and value.

Another point worth noting is that in everyday life, expressions of value are rarely referred to as such by those performing them, though this does occasionally occur. Expressions of value, as Coughlan (2023, p. 172) notes, are often embedded in *activities and practices with other names* (see also Heuts & Mol, 2013). People can, for example, express values whilst engaged in activities of observation and appraisal (Lamont, 2012), such as when experts collect and analyze financial data to determine the monetary worth of a redevelopment scheme (Robin, 2018). Values are also expressed as part of activities of communication, such as when public servants and consultants deliberate on the sustainability values of a neighborhood (Lindblad, 2020). Furthermore, people perform valuations while engaged in the production of, or tinkering with, objects (Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013; Heuts & Mol, 2013), as seen when architects create and modify models to learn about and generate design values (Coughlan, 2023). Conversely, activities that aims at destructing or disassembling something can also involve the articulation of values, such as when property developers demolish a city district to increase market values (Glucksberg, 2014).

Moreover, as several of the examples above illustrate, valuation practices can also be defined by the degree of *(un)certainty* with which the valuator approaches the object of valuation. A practice may focus understanding the existing value of an object, on tinkering with something to generate value, or on persuading others of the value the valuator argues already exists in the object—sometimes all at once (Heuts & Mol, 2013). Hutter and Farías (2017) capture this distinction by differentiating between practices of *probing* and *pushing* values, while Vatin (2013) distinguishes between *evaluation* and *valorization*.

As the examples above also demonstrate, a valuation can be channeled through different forms of *mediums* or *expressions* such as "numerical, gestural, or verbal expressions" as Heinich (2020, p. 84) puts it. For instance, the experts analyzing real estate values in Robin's (2018) study of an urban regeneration scheme expressed values numerically in a report. In contrast, the architects tinkering with physical models in Coughlan's (2023) study employed both gestural and verbal acts to express the value of design decisions, as did the public servants and consultants discussing neighborhood sustainability values in Lindblad's (2020) study.

This thesis also, in line with Dewey (1939) and others (Martinus Hauge, 2017; Stark, 2009), understands valuation as a practice that can involve both *judgment* and *calculation*. Value judgments are here understood as a subjective, qualitative process of following one's inner signals, feelings, and intuitions to understand the worth of some entity the value of which is uncertain (Styhre, 2013a), perhaps due to a lack of ready-made standards and principles (Karpik, 2010). One example could be when a design studio teacher evaluates a student's architectural sketches based on his own internalized appreciative system (Schön, 1984). On the other hand, valuation can also be calculative—an objectively oriented process of calculating the best choice based on objectified data and procedures, often involving quantitative reasoning (Karpik, 2010; Styhre, 2013a). Langford's (2021) study of professional valuers determining land value using tools such as Base Area Value (BAV) and Return on Investment (ROI) exemplifies this. Nevertheless, it is important to note that judgment and calculation are often highly intertwined in practice. Even a seemingly objective act of calculation must, to some extent, involve individual judgment (Stark, 2009; Styhre, 2013a), in the words of Callon and Law (2005, p. 718) "accounting and estimating" blend into each other. This is one reason to why some scholars prefer the term valuation in the first place: it

has the potential of collapsing the distinction between judgment and calculation (Martinus Hauge, 2017).[29]

Valuation, as defined here, can also have different degrees of *formality and informality*. At times, expressions of value can be a highly formalized and codified process, relying on institutionalized and standardized procedures, as seen in Langford's property valuers or the city ranking practices scrutinized by Kornberger and Carter (2010). However, it can also be informal. The design studio participants portrayed by Schön (1984) and Farías and Wilkie (2015), for example, typically do not rely on standardized protocols but rather on tacit and unarticulated values, norms, habits, and scripts.

Another central point to make is that valuation practices can manifest a wide variety of *forms of value*—both monetary and non-monetary (Lamont, 2012; Stark, 2009). As Helgesson and Muniesa (2013) note, while broad distinctions like those of economic and non-economic value can be beneficial, these are mere abstractions that help us orient ourselves in the world. However, articulations of value in everyday situations are highly difficult to capture in detail. Value can be plural, fluctuate rapidly, and coexist with other values with which it can combine, intersect, and conflict. This view, that valuation can simultaneously draw from different forms of value, is characteristic of valuation studies scholarship. For instance, Greeson et. al. (2020, p. 153) observe that "economic valuation processes are entangled with (and difficult to unfold from)" judgments of moral, cultural, and social values. Similarly, Farías (2015) notes that appraising a building design as more functional than another might well involve a qualitative judgment about which alternative best fits within the project's budget constraints.

After Waibel et al. (2021), this thesis argues that practices of valuing engage both humans and non-humans in different kinds of *positions* which, together with the *relations* between them, are part of influencing how values are articulated in a setting:

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[29] Some scholars have suggested that a more appropriate distinction would be between *qualculation*, as the qualitative-quantitative agencies aimed at numbering, ranking, rating, etc., and *non-qualculation*, as those that refuse to "enumerate, list, display, relate, transform, rank and sum" (Callon & Law, 2005, p. 730). To give an example, Nigel Thrift (2004b) explores the role of qualculation in today's society where everyday practices are increasingly permeated by a taken-for-granted technological background. This, for example, involves people mixing intuitive assessment and data-driven analysis when perceiving and interacting with time and space.

- Valuator: What individuals and identities take the position as *valuators* in a particular situation—such as property market specialists (Rydin, 2016), architects (Kornberger et al., 2011), competition juries (Kreiner, 2020), citizens (van de Kamp, 2021)—matters for how the value of some entity is expressed.

- Valuee: The entity being valued, or the *valuee*, can vary widely when urban spaces are planned and designed. These can range from non-humans such as urban graffiti (Ten Eyck, 2016) and urban rivers (Petersson & Soneryd, 2022) to humans such as artists and cultural activities (Goebel, 2021).

- Audience: The *audience*—those who witness or are believed to witness—an act of valuing plays a significant role in how value is perceived and acted upon. The expectations of clients (Farías, 2015) and juries can influence how architects express the value of their designs to themselves and/or to others. The citizens attending a public consultation might very impact how a project team articulates the value of real-estate project (Stark & Paravel, 2008)[30].

The Cultural and Material Components of Valuation

As discussed in the previous chapter, valuation studies have evolved partly in response to critiques of earlier Parsonian thinking of cultures as wholes guided by abstract, collectively shared, durable and trans-situational values that award humans with actionable goals. Instead, a more heterogenous, dynamic and cognitively oriented view of culture has become popular, such as that on *cultural repertoires* as popularized by Swidler (1986). This thesis embraces such a view of culture, emphasizing how the practice of valuation is inherently tied up with those cultural tools that the valuator draws from.

To begin with, *rules* play a role in structuring valuations, serving as both formalized guidelines and informal expectations (also called norms) within specific contexts. As already discussed by Parsons, while values tend to be abstract and internalized, norms and rules are more situation-specific and objectified; they demand adherence from outside the individual

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[30] For a well-known example outside the realm of urban planning, see Espeland and Sauder's (2007, cited in Waibel et al., 2021) study on the impact of media rankings on law schools. The authors demonstrate how law schools didn't start reacting to the rankings until *audiences* such as students, alumni, and boards of trustees had begun to take them seriously.

actor (Steinert, 2023). Valuation studies scholars such as Lamont and Thévenot (2000) have highlighted how norms and rules tend to be unevenly distributed across various organizations, social groups, practices, places and times leading to diverse expressions of value in different settings. For example, in urban planning and design, as briefly mentioned earlier, different organizations, such as political bodies and government departments, might adhere to partly different norms and rules impacting how they frame the values of a site or project (Metzger & Wiberg, 2017; Schön & Rein, 1994). Similarly, different professions, such as architects and economists (Styhre, 2013a), or architects and lighting designers (Farías, 2015), tend be guided by divergent norms and rules that impact practices of valuing. Yet another example is how rules structure what forms of evidence, proofs, and knowledge claims are appropriate if a certain valuation is to be deemed legitimate and believable in a certain context, such as within land-use conflicts (Baker & Fick, 2022; Berg, 2024).

However, this thesis also wishes to emphasize that the *values* carried by individuals or embedded in artifacts and practices also can influence how values are articulated, though often to a lesser extent than Parsons originally suggested. Ann Swidler (1986) noted that while values can indeed guide action in some circumstances, they are often less deterministic than Parsons believed. In the context of urban planning, different types of higher-order values and principles—such as economic, environmental, or aesthetic—may influence valuations to varying degrees (Fuller, 2013; Holden, 2017). For instance, Styhre et. al. (2022), in a study on the valuation of housing in low purchasing power and low-amenity urban neighborhoods, note that different actors, such as property developers and public servants, bring with them partly different values into a project. At the same time, there are still values that individuals and organizational members share, while individual actors can embrace a variety of types of values in tandem, for example both economic and social values.

Classifications, beliefs, understandings, and *qualifications* also guide valuations. Cultural constructs such as these influence what can and cannot be valued in the first place (Lamont, 2012). For example, different ways of categorizing and understanding nature's values can influence how nature gets valued (Blok, 2013; Centemeri, 2017). Similarly, how an area is categorized can impact how it is qualified and valued. For example, defining an area as a place with untapped urban qualities rather than as an dilapidated area might make it easier for public servants to imbue it with positive values (Metzger & Wiberg, 2017).

On top of cultural factors, *material arrangements* are also part of valuations—they generate affordances (Martinus Hauge, 2018) influencing what expressions of value are deemed appropriate and possible. To begin with, valuation practices are *situated practices* (Waibel et al., 2021). They always take *place* somewhere, something which consequently influences their enactment. Non-human elements such as architecture, technologies and spatial configurations, as well as the presence of human actors, all contribute to shaping the valuation process. Farías (2015) for example demonstrates how open-office landscapes in architecture firms facilitate casual encounters that lead to collaborative evaluative work. Similarly, Petersson and Soneryd (2022) show how the configuration of a workshop is part in structuring the valuation of an urban river.

Moreover, as was discussed in the previous section, the object being valued, the *valuee*, also influences valuation. This means that the material qualities of the humans and non-humans involved in the valuation process actively co-produce values. However, it's not just the material qualities that matter, but also how these qualities are categorized, framed and interpreted. For example, the previously discussed study by Metzger and Wiberg (2017) illustrates how the framing of a sites materials qualities can influence valuation. This example also illustrates the fact that material aspects (in this case the sites actual physical qualities) and cultural aspects (cultural constructs such as common ways of categorizing and qualifying spaces) are intertwined in valuation.

Lastly, the *devices*, such as instruments, tools and technologies, used in valuation can also play a role. Such valuation devices, ranging from simple analogue instruments such as pen and paper, to sophisticated technologies, are not merely neutral tools; they actively shape the valuation process. The material form of these devices, along with the cultural values, norms, rules, beliefs and categories inscribed into them, can influence which epistemic positions and value attributions become viewed as legitimate and trustworthy (Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013; Lamont, 2012).

But devices do not only shape the perceptions, affects, and actions of planning actors, but also the built environment and urban life. Such as when, as demonstrated by Enora Robin (2018, p. 1) in a study on property development projects, they play a role in "the translation of market values in the urban fabric, through the production of urban knowledge". As valuation studies scholar David Stark (2009) puts it, "tools count," referring to the dual nature of (some)

tools in both providing "counts"—as in numerical representations—and to "count," that is, to matter and make a practical difference to the world, the latter being the case as long as they are part of "situated socio-cognitive and sociotechnical networks" (p. 119).

Moreover, tools can have both positive and negative impacts, and their effects are not inherently beneficial. Applied to "the craft of planning," Jonathan Metzger (2018, p. 113) discusses tools for assessment of ecosystem services, arguing that they affording reductionist and simplified accounts of reality as thus "paves the way for unthoughtful action underpinned by illusions of commensurability, substitutability and tradability where this simply is not."

To summarize the argument thus far, this thesis portrays valuation practices as being structured by the relationships between valuators, valuees, and audiences. Moreover, the intertwinement of cultural and material factors also plays an important role[31] (see Figure 7).
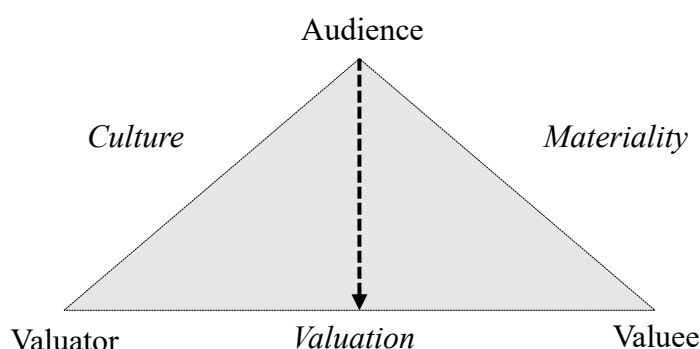
Figure 7: The constellation of positions, culture, and materiality shapes how values are enacted within a given setting (adapted from Waibel et. al. (2021).

Evaluative Dissonance and Coordination

Another central theme in this thesis is *value plurality*, which highlights how a single setting can be characterized by the coexistence of multiple forms of worth (Lamont, 2012). One example is how the valuations of actors often draw on and shift between a plurality of types

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[31] Whilst Waibel et. al. (2021) include only rules in their model, this thesis expands the framework to incorporate additional cultural elements. Additionally, this thesis opts for the term materiality over infrastructure, as used by Waibel and colleagues. This choice is made because infrastructure often refers to the taken-for-granted and "hidden" structures of the world, potentially overlooking other aspects of aspects of materiality, such as some tools and technologies.

of value simultaneously—environmental, historical, democratic, and so on—as discussed in the previous section. Another example is how a valuation practice can draw from a plurality of *modes of engagement* with the situation. As has been proposed by Thévenot (2000) and further explored within the confines of urban planning scholarship (Blok & Meilvang, 2015; Eranti, 2017), an expression of value can refer to either individual interests—what is beneficial for the valuator—or to the public good—what is of value for the public based on shared higher-order principles—or to close local affinities—the emotional connections and familiar attachments that the valuator has to other things, persons, or animals. Eranti (2017) exemplifies the latter with how citizens sometimes refer to their own personal and emotional attachments to a place when denouncing plans to redevelop the site.

Lastly, it can be noted that how value plurality is materialized in any given setting depends not only on the involved cultural repertoires and material arrangements, but also on the individuals who are present and their dispositions (Bourdieu, 1999; Hennion, 2005). For instance, as Styhre (2013a) has argued, while those in the architectural profession are more often trained to base their judgments on aesthetic and emotional criteria, economists are typically trained to rely on standardized and quantified categories, rules, and procedures.

The presence of value plurality in social settings often leads to *evaluative dissonances*, which are defined as moments when valuation practices or principles come into conflict (Stark, 2009). This thesis views this concept—in music referring to the sounds produced when different musical scales are combined—as potentially useful to understand friction as it arises throughout the shaping of the built environment. Just as musical dissonance can be either disturbing or creatively stimulating, dissonances in planning and design can lead to destructive conflicts, but can also be productive and creative (Farías, 2015). In a Deweyan tradition, the uncertainty and indeterminacy that undoubtedly arise when value principles clash may at times function as ways of 'sourcing newness'—as in new ideas or new design alternatives—and potentially "at a later time, turn into an innovation" (Hutter & Farías, 2017, p. 434).

Participants in planning and design often employ various strategies to *coordinate* their work in moments of dissonance. Building on the research of Boltanski and Thévenot, David Stark (2009) has further explored the different coordination strategies that actors use during disputes in the public sphere, referred to by Eranti and Meriluoto (2023, p. 699) as "cultural

tools of action."[32] To begin with, there are instances when participants either already possess or develop what Stark (2009) calls a *shared understanding*: an explicit or implicit agreement on what is of value, and thus, on which higher-order principles are relevant.

Moreover, there are moments when participants believe they agree on the basic proofs and principles of valuation, but subtle frictions persist. In these cases, coordination may occur thanks to what Stark (2009) describes as coordination through *misunderstanding*. This process is facilitated by the "silent coordination of circulating boundary objects" (p. 109), which allows actors to work together without fully resolving their underlying differences. Stark (2009) argues that these ambiguous boundary objects, originally identified by Star and Griesemer (1989) as crucial for fostering cooperation among heterogeneous actors, are effective in fostering coordination precisely because the actors do not share a common understanding of them.

Yet another strategy involves settling what Boltanski and Thévenot (2006/1991) refer to as a *compromise*, a potentially fragile agreement combining elements from diverging practices and principles. A practical example of a compromise is described by Holden and Scerri (2015) in their study on an urban redevelopment project where participants disagreed on which cooling system to choose for buildings. The conflict was resolved by deciding on a capillary cooling system, which, while less comfortable for potential housing customers than traditional air conditioning, was more environmentally friendly. This decision represented a compromise between market worth and green worth, balancing economic and environmental considerations.

Several scholars have expanded upon Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006/1991) thinking on compromises, suggesting that the process of reaching a compromise can be a highly creative endeavor. Building on the idea that uncertainty and indeterminacy can serve as a source of

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[32] Interestingly enough, in a comparison between Boltanski and Thévenot's and Mouffe's thinking in relation to urban politics, Eranti and Meriluoto (2023) argue that the coordination strategies identified by Boltanski and Thévenot have the potential to provide a perfect answer to Mouffe's (2000) call for a "'plurality of legitimate answers to the question what is the just political order'" (Mouffe, 2000, quoted in Eranti & Meriluoto, 2023, p. 698). What Eranti and Meriluoto (ibid.) seems to mean by this is that Boltanski and Thévenot has managed to observe several answers to the question of how situated justice can be achieved in public disputes. However, when saying this, the authors also emphasize that Boltanski and Thévenot's theory should not be seen as a theory of politics as it is applicable of various domains of human life.

newness (Hutter & Farías, 2017), moments of dissonance can sometimes set off a *search* for what Stark (2009), drawing on Schumpeter (1934) calls *recombinations*. These are novel and functional ways of reconfiguring people, practices, materials and institutional, elements through compromises. Farías (2015), in his study on architectural practice, illustrates how dissonant valuations of an architectural design, not only lead to new questions and problem formulations but also frequently generate unseen opportunities and alternative design options. This process can transform and reconfigure "the valuation processes through which design decisions are made and unmade" (p. 272). A specific example of this can be found in Donald Schön's (1984) account of a design studio, where a teacher and student, confronted with competing valuations of the student's sketches, collaboratively develop a new building structure that integrates the frames of both individuals. As Stark (2009, p. 99) aptly puts it, design can indeed be "a process that involves bricolage."

Scholars have also identified additional strategies of coordination which come into play when actors abandon attempts to resolve the dispute based on higher-order principles. *Private arrangements* (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) are one such mode, where local agreements are founded upon what benefits the parties involved, prioritizing personal interests over more general principles. This type of coordination is driven by the immediate needs and desires of the actors, rather than by a search for the public good.

Relativization (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) is another approach, where actors shift away from generalized principles of value and instead focus on more localized and pragmatic judgments. In these situations, coordination is achieved through factors specific to the context, such as what will get the job done or what an external authority (e.g., a client or judicial expert) deems appropriate. Stark (2009) notes that relativization often arises due to practical constraints like budgetary limitations or tight deadlines. In such cases, the priority becomes simply moving the work forward, with decisions being seen as "temporary settlements" (p. 108) rather than permanent resolutions.

In some disputes, actors may engage in the denunciation of each other's valuations without making a genuine effort to come to some kind of agreement. This can lead to open and unproductive situations where progress stalls (Stark, 2009). However, even these contentious moments can give rise to coordinated action. For instance, through *persuasion*, one actor may attempt to "*enlist* or *enroll* others in recognizing the legitimacy of its performance criteria."

thus contributing to a "process of ongoing *realignment*" (Stark, 2009, p. 105, based on Latour, 1986. Italics added).

Furthermore, through *domination*, coordination is achieved not through mutual agreement or persuasion but through the unequal distribution of resources, skills, tactics, or knowledge. In these scenarios, the party with greater power imposes its position on others, forcing the continuation of work according to its own agenda (Stark, 2009).

3. Method and Methodology

The writing of this doctoral thesis began without a predefined methodological approach or theoretical perspective. As the research progressed, guidance was found in pragmatist thinking, which argues that the ability of the researcher to navigate questions, problems, and concerns that continuously arise is at least as important as following specific methodological procedures (Law, 2003; Martinus Hauge, 2017). As will be seen in this chapter, the thesis has indeed undergone several shifts and transformations throughout the process.

3.1 Organization of the Doctoral Research

Affiliations

This doctoral research was conducted as an Industrial PhD. The researcher's primary employment was with RISE (Research Institutes of Sweden), a research institute situated outside of academia where one co-supervisors was based. However, the main supervisor and a second co-supervisor were affiliated with Chalmers University of Technology. The doctoral studies were primarily conducted at a 50% pace (and during some periods less than that).

This arrangement has generated both challenges and opportunities. The researcher has had to balance thesis writing with projects, funding applications and administrative work at RISE, creating a fragmented work environment. However, the arrangement has potentially fostered both a theoretical wisdom and a practical sensibility, a phronesis, as Aristotle (cited in Flyvbjerg, 1998) would have called it.

The foundation and funding of the research have developed over time, ultimately being based on two projects.

The Case Studies

The first project, focusing on ground floor design in Masthuggskajen, was co-financed by RISE, the Center for Management of the Built Environment (CMB) at Chalmers, City of Gothenburg, and the Mistra Urban Futures research platform. An affiliation with the Mistra Urban Futures research school (2016-2019), resulted in the project being organized in the spirit of *transdisciplinary co-production*, where the concerns of non-academic stakeholders guide the research process rather than disciplinary problems (Polk, 2015).

The study originated from concerns raised by Älvstranden Utveckling AB (ÄUAB) and Mölndala Fastighets AB, two municipal property companies. Their common concern was why the emphasis on social issues which is often present during the early stages of planning, tends to be swapped for an increased emphasis on technical and economic matters downstream in the process. This led to a joint research application, and to the researcher's interest in how values are articulated and translated in urban planning and design.

The Masthuggskajen regeneration was jointly selected as a case by the researcher and a group of civil servants at Älvstranden Utveckling AB due to its alleged high social sustainability ambitions. The researcher's approach was exploratory, without any pre-given problem formulations or solutions. The collaborators had few detailed wishes when it came to methods or theories. However, they helped facilitate access to interviews, meetings, and internal documents, and provided feedback on research outputs.

The second project, examining valuation in the co-design of public spaces, focused on the regeneration of the Brunnsparken square in Gothenburg. This project was organized more in line with traditional *basic research*. The research was primarily funded by RISE and Chalmers and had no stakeholder involvement in problem definition. The researchers independently identified the problem, collected and analyzed data, and produced academic outputs, with the intention of eventually disseminating the findings to stakeholders. Public servants from the City of Gothenburg were, however, helpful in providing access to interviews and documentation.

3.2 Research design

From the start, a qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate for both studies, as the aim was to capture the complexities and developments of each project. To achieve this, the research generated verbal, visual and observational data rather than numeric data (Flick, 2014).

Both studies follow traditional qualitative single-case study designs (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2007) although they were also inspired by ethnographic methods (Aspers, 2007). In line with the traditional definition of case study design, the two studies involved generating detailed, context dependent data on a specific, bounded system: the Masthuggskajen and Brunnsparken

redevelopments. This approach was chosen because the research questions required detailed, in-depth descriptions of the processes (Flyvbjerg, 2002).

The research has also taken inspiration from ethnographic research designs, particularly in its use of observational methods and its liberal view on what sources of information have the potential to function as data (Aspers, 2007). However, the studies were not embedded enough, nor was the writing sufficiently in accordance with ethnographic conventions, to justify use of the label ethnography.

3.3 Data Collection

The following section will discuss the methods of data collection used in both case studies.

Interviews

Interviews played an important role in data collection in both case studies. The studies used *thematically open interviews* (Aspers, 2007), designed to explore a topic in a more open-ended manner than semi-structured interviews, while maintaining a degree of structure. This approach, grounded in an ethnographic 'empirical phenomenological' perspective, emphasizes the researcher avoiding the imposition of pre-conceived theories and concepts ('second order constructions') on the interviewee's narratives ('first order constructions') by striving to 'bracket' these during data collection.

In the Masthuggskajen case, an *A-scheme* was employed, as described by Aspers (2007). This is a horizontally aligned and visual interview guide divided into sections, each representing a specific theme of interest. Sub-themes are represented in boxes, with some left blank to allow for new themes to arise. Throughout the interview, the interviewer notes key observations and connections, drawing arrows between the boxes to highlight relationships. This tool facilitated an open-ended and creative exploration of the themes without imposing preconceived understandings through pre-formulated, theory-driven, questions. The themes explored included practices, values, goals, designs, policies, sources and resolutions of friction, and explanations of project outcomes. Initial interviews focused on topics such as housing, public space, amenities and ground floor designs, but the focus narrowed over time.

In the Brunnsparken case, a more traditional *interview guide* was selected as the research goals and theories were more clearly defined from the start. These interviews centered on design moves, valuation practices, dissonances, and their resolution. Despite the more structured approach, broad themes were still used, in line with the overall, open-ended, research design.

In both case studies, interviewees were chosen based on the following selection criteria: 1) deep and extensive experience of the redevelopment, 2) employment with major participating organizations, and 3) direct operational involvement with the project.

For the Masthuggskajen case, 23 interviews were carried out by the researcher between early 2017 and late 2018. In the Brunnsparken case, nine interviews were conducted between late 2022 and early 2023. The researcher participated in seven of these interviews, while the co-author independently conducted the remaining two. The interviews typically lasted between 1,5 and 2,5 hours and were recorded. Informal conversations before and after the interviews, typically lasting an extra 20-30 minutes, were also treated as data. Summaries of the interview, informal conversations, and general reflections were normally noted on a phone immediately after each session.

Furthermore, all interviews were transcribed in both case studies. For the Masthuggskajen study, the researcher transcribed the interviews personally. For the Brunnsparken case, initial transcriptions were performed using an online automatic transcription service, but the results were of insufficient quality. Consequently, the researcher and co-author manually revised the transcriptions, and in some cases re-transcribed portions with the help of an intern at RISE. In hindsight, it is questionable whether automatized transcriptions saved time. Notably, in both case studies, the transcriptions were anonymized, stored locally on a computer, and backed up on an external hard-drive.

Observations

Observational methods were employed in both case studies, particularly to gain insights into places and events outside the interview context (Aspers, 2007). Observations allow the field to "speak back", challenging the interpretations of the researcher (Aspers, 2007).

In the Masthuggskajen case, *participant observation* was chosen as the primary observational method. This approach was guided by Asper's (2007) empirical phenomenological ethnographic strategy in which the researcher attempts to "bracket" preconceived theories and tries to generate an as detailed account of the situation as possible. Field notes were recorded on a phone using the conventions suggested by Aspers (2007), such as employing symbols to distinguish between first-order and second-order constructions.

Approximately 50 hours of observations were conducted in Masthuggskajen from early 2017 to late 2018, focusing on situations where individuals from different partaking organizations were present. These included formal and informal meetings, seminars, email-conversations, workshops, and walk-shops. Observational data from earlier projects where Masthuggskajen was discussed were also incorporated. These were not extensive observations but rather snapshots from settings where the redevelopment had been discussed. The field notes were typically refined shortly after the observation, during which time the researcher also wrote down reflections on the overall atmosphere of the situation (Aspers, 2007).

The on-site observations in Brunnsparken took the role of *direct observations* of human and animal behaviors, a technique sometimes referred to as behavioral mapping. Additionally, observations of physical traces of behaviors, and evaluations of the site's physical design, were conducted (Low, 2000). These latter observations were guided by an observation protocol, a document containing questions about the site's design and programming (Low, 2000). The on-site observations were conducted on two occasions, each lasting about three hours, with one session involving the co-author and another with the same intern who had assisted with interview transcriptions.

Living near Brunnsparken, the researcher also conducted spontaneous and unstructured *informal observations* of the site throughout the year, in line with ethnographic conventions (Aspers, 2007). During these visits, photographs were taken, and observations were noted on a phone. The notes and images were manually transferred to an Excel sheet awaiting possible analysis. However, no formal analysis was ultimately performed on the data. Despite this, the observations provided valuable background knowledge for further data collection, analysis, and writing.

Document Studies

Document analysis was another method used in both case studies. In line with Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the analysis of documents allowed the researcher to gain insights into the redevelopments without intervening in the participant's behaviors.

To begin with, *formal documents* were analyzed for both studies, such as plans, designs, studies, and instruments produced by the organizations involved. Some of these documents were publicly available, whilst others were not and had been provided by the collaborating partners.

Informal documents were also studied, such as notes, PowerPoints presentations, and other materials from meetings, seminars, and workshops produced by the involved organizations. For Masthuggskajen, the documents covered the period from 2015 to 2018. In Brunnsparken, the documents covered the entire scheme, from 2017 to 2020. In both cases the documents provided insights into activities which had not been covered by the formal documents.

In the Masthuggskajen case, nearly 130 documents were collected and analyzed, around 100 of which were from the period between 2008 and 2016, whilst the rest focused on the years 2017 and 2018. In comparison, the document analysis for the Brunnsparken redevelopment involved the scrutiny of almost 90 documents. These were produced between 2017 and 2021 and totaled over 500 A4 pages of text and images.

3.4 Data Analysis and Writing

In line with Aspers' (2007) observations on ethnographically inspired research practices, the case studies were characterized by an intertwinement between data collection, analysis, and writing. The approach was abductive (Aspers, 2007), meaning that there was a continuous interplay between the formulating of theoretical stances, reading, and collection of data.

Pre-Analysis Phase

The analysis in both cases began even before the data collection started (Aspers, 2007). In the case of the Masthuggskajen scheme, initial discussions with the key collaborators, along with a review of literature, functioned as a form of *pre-study* (Aspers, 2007). The initial research

questions were gradually refined—a process involving collaborators from Älvstranden Utveckling AB. This process played an important role in the early stages of analysis.

In the Brunnsparken case study, this pre-analysis phase was more straightforward. One reason for this is that, as has been mentioned earlier, the two researchers from the beginning had a clearer understanding of which research questions and theoretical perspectives would be employed. Nevertheless, the formulation of the study's aim and research questions similarly served as a form of early analysis.

Coding and Formal Analysis

Both case studies featured a period of more formal coding and analysis. In the Masthuggskajen case study a method called *static-dynamic analysis* (Aspers, 2007), was used which involves comparing static themes (such as "goals) in parallel with trying to understand their dynamics (e.g. how goals transformed over time).

Analysis was combined with a formal coding process. A *coding scheme* was created in Microsoft Word which described how the material should be organized. The scheme featured both empirical and theoretical codes, the latter being informed by previous research. However, in line with the thesis' overall empirical phenomenological sensibility, the theoretical codes were based on language and meanings used by participants in the field (Aspers, 2007).

The material was then coded in *NVivo* in three coding cycles. After the final coding phase, several tables were produced summarizing the key findings, themes and categories. These tables were then translated into bullet points in Microsoft Word, which later supported the writing process. During the coding process, two interns aided the process by coding a selection of the material. They followed the same steps, but only made use of Microsoft Word.

When it comes to the Brunnsparken study, the researchers employed the *rigorous and accelerated data reduction (RADaR) technique* (Watkins, 2017). This technique is aimed at helping researchers store, organize, code, reduce, and analyze qualitative data in a rigorous (systematic and careful) yet accelerated manner, building on techniques from grounded theory.

The RADaR technique (Watkins, 2017) includes a chain of steps which were followed. To begin with, the author formatted all the collected data in a coherent manner and transferred it into a large, all-encompassing, data-table. Both researchers then read and discussed the material, as well as formulated several tentative research questions. Then the author reduced the data in the table, deleting all information that was not relevant for the research questions. In parallel, empirical codes, as well as early interpretations, were noted in the table. Subsequently, the author developed the table into several sub-tables, each targeting one of the research questions. These tables went through data reduction and coding. In parallel, a codebook was constructed providing a list of specified empirical and theoretical codes, which were used to code the data one last time. Finally, broader categories and themes were created, as had been done in the Masthuggskajen study, which were then used in the writing process.

Writing

In both case studies, the writing process commenced directly after coding was complete. For the Masthuggskajen study, the previously mentioned list of bullet-points was used by the researcher to write a popular report which was intended for the project's collaborators. The researcher then wrote a first research article based on the first part of the report. The second part of the report then served as the basis of a second research paper and a book chapter, both of which were jointly written with the researcher's main supervisor.

In the Brunnsparken study, the tables with categories and themes were employed by the author to write the fourth paper of the thesis, in collaboration with one of the co-supervisors. Parts of the tables were then re-coded by the author, and subsequently served as the foundation for the fifth research article, which was written together with the main supervisor.

3.5 Research Quality

The term research quality refers to the extent to which the research and the researcher contribute to sound and reasonable claims. The degree to which it benefits wider society is also considered an indication of research quality according to some scholars (Aspers, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This thesis adheres to John Law's (2003) argument that good research ultimately involves crafting convincing narratives from inherently complex, fluid, and messy situations, rather than rigidly following predetermined standards. Nonetheless, it insists that such standards can still provide useful heuristics when applied with care and

reflexivity. Therefore, this section discusses the quality of this thesis using Lincoln and Guba's (1985, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) four classical quality criteria.

Credibility

Credibility, similar to internal validity, concerns whether the research claims provide trustworthy answers to the research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In both case studies, the collected material only covers a small section of the examined events —this is often the case in qualitative research (Aspers, 2007). A variety of tactics for increasing credibility were employed. Firstly, an agnostic and critical attitude was adopted towards the sources. Secondly, a variety of types of data and methods were triangulated. Thirdly, explicit criteria and procedures for data sampling were used. Fourthly, the writings went through researcher peer-review by colleagues, journal/conference reviewers, as well as editors (Aspers, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

In the Masthuggskajen case study, outputs were also reviewed by non-academic collaborator ('respondent validation') as a means of enhancing credibility. Simultaneously, the researcher was cautious not to become too entangled in the interests of the stakeholders, among other things, by exiting the field after data collection was over (Aspers, 2007; Flick, 2014).

Transferability

Transferability, similar to external validity, concerns the extent to which a study is applicable to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Two things support the transferability of the case studies. To begin with, 'thick descriptions' have been provided to make it easier for others to judge how applicable the study-findings are in other contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Furthermore, the sampling of documents, interviewees etcetera was structured as to ensure maximum variation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Nevertheless, both case studies provide unusual cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006) in that they, at least in a Swedish context, represent unusually ambitious and resource-intensive redevelopment schemes, which may reduce transferability to other contexts.

Dependability

Dependability, alternatively termed consistency or reliability, refers to how consistent the results are with the data: outsiders should feel that they can depend on the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In line with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) argument, the limited word count of the research articles has made it difficult for the researcher to account for the study's dependability. However, this kappa provides additional room to do this.

An audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) has also been created to increase dependability. This audit trail has included 1) storing all data in a safe and secure place, and 2) documenting and justifying the major steps taken throughout the process. The existence of this audit trail is expected to increase the reader's belief in the results.

Confirmability

Confirmability, similar to objectivity, concerns the extent to which the research findings can be either confirmed or contradicted by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). At least two things support the confirmability of the two studies. First, both the research process and its results have been scrutinized by others. Second, the researchers had no existing knowledge of the redevelopment schemes and their participants prior to the beginning of the studies. Third, the researchers did not have anything invested in the cases and their outcomes beforehand. The last two points have hopefully mitigated the risk of the results being impaired by any potentially destructive biases.

3.6 Research Ethics

As emphasized by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), research ethics encompasses a broad range of considerations. This study has addressed ethical issues throughout the different phases of the research process.

The Ethics of Problem Formulation

Ethical concerns arise as early as the problem formulation phase, particularly regarding who is involved in formulating the problem and with what objectives (Patton 2015, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the Masthuggskajen case study, the researcher took this ethical dimension into consideration by involving stakeholders in problem formulation.

In contrast, the Brunnsparken case study did not involve stakeholder participation, which may limit its ethical standing. Nevertheless, when contacting stakeholders, the researchers tried to be transparent about the aim of the study and what for what purpose the collected data was being collected, thus adhering to ethical procedures.

Interviewing Ethics

Interviewing also carries ethical implications (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), which the researcher considered throughout the process.

Initially, potential interviewees were contacted via email, with an explicit option to decline participation. If an individual did not respond, only one follow-up email (or one follow-up message on their answering machine) was sent to respect their autonomy. Still, in the Masthuggskajen study, the collaborators at Älvstranden Utveckling AB on a few occasions facilitated contact with interviewees. This could be seen as ethically questionable if it pressured individuals to participate to maintain good relations.

During the interviews, the researcher promised anonymity to the participants, emphasized their right to skip questions or end the interview at any time. The researcher also offered the participants the option to review the transcripts, though none opted to do so. Many participants expressed that they had enjoyed and learnt from being interviewed, something that according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggests good ethical practice

Another ethical consideration relating to interviewing ethics is selection of participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While efforts were made to interview a diverse group of organizational representatives, there was an overrepresentation of municipal employees in both case studies. Additionally, the lack of interviews with civil society members is ethically concerning.

The Ethics of Observation

Observational methods also raise ethical issues (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), particularly in the Masthuggskajen case study.

When observing meetings and gatherings, the researcher tried to be transparent about their affiliations and intents. However, as argued by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the researcher found it challenging to live up to principles of informed consent from all participants in large and/or spontaneous settings.

An additional ethical concern relates the representativeness of observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the Masthuggskajen case, some actors, such as municipal employees, received more attention than others. While this could be justified by the municipality's role in representing the public interest, it raises questions about representation.

Yet another ethical consideration relates to how the observations impacts the setting and its participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the Masthuggskajen study, the author sought to sustain a decent behavior throughout, whilst opting not to impact the setting more than needed. As the observations carried out in Brunnsparken were unobtrusive, it is likely that the impact was neither positive nor negative.

The Ethics of Document Analysis

The selection and handling of documents also involves ethical considerations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One concern is anonymity. In both case studies, the author was careful not to share any sensitive material to unauthorized individuals. Furthermore, the researcher made sure that such documents were securely stored locally on a computer.

Another ethical concern is the representativeness of voices and perspectives in documents. In both case studies, municipal documents constituted a considerable part of the material. In the Brunnsparken study, contributions from journalists also took up a more significant role than those of, for example citizens, businesses, consultants, and property companies. This overrepresentation, partly due to difficulties in accessing private sector documents, warrants consideration.

The Ethics of Coding, Analyzing, and Writing

Coding, analyzing, and writing also raises ethical concerns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The selection and prioritization of themes and information can raise ethical queries. In both case studies, the researcher had to craft simplified narratives from complex and multiple realities.

While efforts were made to balance these demands, there is still an ethical risk of misrepresentation.

The writing process also raises ethical concerns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the Masthuggskajen study, several external collaborators reviewed the popular report. In contrast, no stakeholders reviewed the Brunnsparken case, as no non-academic material was produced. Academic papers from both studies were not reviewed by external stakeholders during production, though the researcher shared the published papers.

Finally, safeguarding the anonymity of organizational actors or project specifics can be ethically challenging (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is especially the case in high-profile cases like Masthuggskajen and Brunnsparken. In this research, the projects were not anonymized, but the identities of individual and, when possible, organizational participants were kept confidential.

The Ethics and Positionality of the Researcher

The credibility and ethics of a study is intertwined with the researcher's credibility and moral compass (Patton, 2015, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The ethical soundness of a study is therefore connected to how the researcher navigates ethical dilemmas. Although statements of biases, data trails, and codes of conduct are important, they represent only a minority of the ethical questions encountered during a research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher's positionality is also closely connected to ethics—and ultimately to research quality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this thesis, the researcher had both prior experience of visiting the redevelopment sites and a background in urban development practice. The researcher was also already acquainted with one of the collaborators in the Masthuggskajen case study through previous project work. Moreover, in parallel with the thesis work, the researcher was involved in several additional research projects on the topics of active frontages and public space design, which also involved the City of Gothenburg, albeit different individuals and municipal departments that those of the two case studies.

Taken together, all of this means that the researcher did not approach the two case studies as a "blank slate." On the one hand, this provided the researcher with insights and access that would have otherwise taken long to establish. On the other hand, it involved a risk that the

researcher's preconceived notions could and relationships to actors in Gothenburg imbue the research process with too much bias.

As a means of handling both everyday ethical dilemmas and moral queries related to background and positionality, the researcher has engaged in continuous self-critical reflections throughout the process. Moreover, several other steps have been taken to ensure research quality and ethics, as described in this chapter. Additionally, in both cases, the non-academic collaborators and contacts had an explicit interest in having the processes scrutinized for the sake of learning, meaning that the researcher felt no pressure to amplify the achievements of the regeneration schemes. Beyond this, the researcher hopes for Masthuggskajen and Brunnsparken to become well-functioning sites that generate well-being for both humans and non-humans.

In the end, it is up to the reader to decide whether to trust the credibility and ethical compass of the researcher and the study. Hopefully, the reflections provided in this chapter will assist the reader into making this decision.

4. Paper Summaries: Valuation in Active Frontage and Public Open Space Design

This chapter summarizes the five papers that are a part of this thesis.

4.1 Paper I. Molnar (2022b) The framing of urban values and qualities in inter-organizational settings: The case of ground floor planning in Gothenburg, Sweden

This paper is published in the journal *Urban Studies*. It is based on the case study of ground floor planning in Masthuggskajen, Gothenburg, Sweden. The data was collected by Molnar, with some assistance from two interns, and analysis and writing were also conducted by him.

While studies of values and valuation have a long history within urban research, few have studied valuation as a socio-material practice as it is conceptualized in valuation studies. One exception is Metzger and Wiberg (2017), who combine the dichotomy of *valuation and valorization* (as proposed by Vatin, 2013) with theories on *framing* (Callon, 1998a; Goffman, 1986) and *qualification* (Callon, 1998a), to study how organizational actors with the help of *value devices* (Aspers & Beckert, 2011), frame the urban qualities and values of a redevelopment area in Stockholm, Sweden.

As opposed to Metzger and Wiberg's (2017) focus on intra-organizational settings, this paper extends their framework to study how values and qualities are framed in *inter-organizational settings* (Stark, 2009) comprised of property owners, consultants, and municipal actors with different backgrounds and interests. Moreover, the paper adds a systematic focus on how value plurality plays out in such settings, investigating how project participants make use of different *value scales* (Aspers & Beckert, 2011) when articulating value.

The *aim* of the paper is to generate knowledge on the framing of urban values and qualities in inter-organisational settings that shape urban development projects. The paper pursues its aim by investigating a case of inter-organisational ground floor planning and design in the Masthuggskajen redevelopment project, in Gothenburg, Sweden, over a 10-year period.

One of the study's *findings* is that, while the municipality initially framed active ground floors as a valuable quality, local property owners to some extent devalued it. Over time, the quality of active frontages became collectively valorized by property owners and municipal actors alike, while exactly how their qualities were valued varied depending on the situation, actors, and devices. The article also finds that actors shift between different modes of valuing depending on the situation, and that these modes can morph, for example by switching between temporal and spatial scales. Moreover, the paper argues that a project such as that in Masthuggskajen can be understood as an *evaluative landscape* (Brandtner, 2017) made up of a long chain of valuation practices and devices.

One *conclusion* is that studying how values and qualities are framed in inter-organizational settings adds a complementary view on the role of valuation practices in urban regeneration to that of Metzger and Wiberg. Furthermore, the paper concludes that a systematic focus on value plurality, operationalized through the notion of value scales, allows one to extrapolate and compare the incommensurable forms of higher-order values that actors draw from, combine and switch between. This furthers what the author decides to name *evaluative agnosticism* keeping the researcher from making a priori judgments about which values are most important. Nevertheless, this perspective may also lead to the researcher losing sight of underlying power dynamics.

Ultimately, one of the *contributions* of this paper to existing research on socio-material valuation practices in urban planning and design is achieved by extending previous research to the study of inter-organizational settings. One of the paper's *implications* for future research is the understanding that redevelopment projects function as evaluative landscapes constituted by diverse and incommensurable valuation practices and devices.

4.2 Paper II. Molnar & Palmås (2021) Dissonance and diplomacy: Coordination of conflicting values in urban co-design

This paper, published in the journal *CoDesign,* was co-authored by Molnar and Palmås. It utilizes the same data as Paper 1. Molnar collected the data, with some assistance from two interns, and performed the analysis. Molnar and Palmås collaborated on the writing and editing of the paper. Palmås contributed with expertise on co-design and Actor-Network Theory.

The paper heeds a call by Whitham et al. (2019) for the need for more knowledge on the role of valuation practices in co-design processes. Compared to prior research studying conflicting frames (Schön, 1984), interests (Palmås & von Busch, 2015), and agonism (Björgvinsson et al., 2012; DiSalvo, 2012), this paper offers a somewhat different account of conflicts and their resolution in urban co-design.

Methodologically, the paper leverages the same empirical material as the first paper but abandons the chronological perspective. Instead, the paper construes the inter-organizational process as an instance of *urban co-design* where developers, municipal actors, consultants and stakeholders jointly tried to create mixed-use active frontages with a variety of rent-levels. This is in line with Tonkiss' (2013) notion of design of cities as a complex process, involving the assembly of and tinkering with physical objects, policies, business models, organizations etcetera.

The paper *aims* to explore how dissonant values arise and are coordinated in urban co-design. It draws from previous findings by Stark (2009) and Farías (2015) and combines this with a realist perspective on newness viewing successful design and innovation as both a matter of idea generation and stabilization of socio-material arrangements (Machiavelli, 1985/1532, cited in Latour, 1988).

One *finding* is that most actors engaged in the co-design of active ground floors—regardless of their backgrounds or interests—were involved in four major types of dissonances. These concerned: 1) physical design, 2) tenants and users, 3) economic and non-economic value, and 4) historical and future-oriented value. The paper also identifies several *coordination practices*, as the authors decide to call them, that helped manage value conflicts: talking, introducing and/or inventing concepts/documents/tools, creating organizations, and suspending unpleasant issues. Furthermore, the paper finds that each of these practices makes use of one or several of Stark's (2009 as develop from Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1991) *coordination strategies*, such as shared understandings, misunderstandings, compromises, relativization, persuasion and domination.

One *conclusion* is that urban co-design is a form of *diplomacy*—a process where a diverse range of strategies are used to coordinate value conflicts that are not necessarily tied to the interests or frames of specific actors. The paper also emphasizes the importance of not, when

studying valuation practices, forgetting about the meta-values and politico-economic factors that constrain such processes. Finally, the authors stress the need for future research to explore further how different types of coordination strategies are employed in urban co-design and integrate this with a more systematic focus on power and politics.

4.3 Paper III. Palmås & Molnar (2023) Peace Piece: On the Machiavellian moment in organizational innovation

This book chapter is published in the anthology *Debating Innovation* (Rehn & Örtenblad, 2023). It is co-authored by Palmås and Molnar and draws on the case study on ground floor planning in Masthuggskajen. Molnar contributed insights from the case study and expertise in valuation studies and urban literature, while Palmås provided expertise in music theory, Actor-Network Theory, and Machiavellian thought.

Historian Jill Lepore (2014) has recently criticized the tendency to associate innovation and the creation of newness solely with Schumpeterian disruption, a view she argues rests on shaky evidence. Similarly, while valuation studies scholar David Stark (2009) has generated constructive insights into innovation as the settlement of dissonant values, his perspective has received criticism for not emphasizing enough the mechanisms through which new solutions are translated and stabilized within organizations (Beckert, 2011). To address this general lack of focus on stabilization, some scholars have drawn on Machiavelli's (1985/1532) understanding of innovation (innovazione) as the forging of novel associations to restore order in times of turbulence (Callon et al., 1986; Latour, 1988; Marres, 2005; Pocock, 1975).

Starting from the premise that this bias towards disruption is also present in urban design and innovation, this book chapter *aims* to generate insights into the role of stabilization in sourcing newness.

Methodologically, the chapter pursues its aim by examining the planning and design of active ground floors in Masthuggskajen as a case study, where a heterogeneous group of property developers, municipal actors, and consultants were tasked—both collectively (as an area-wide level) and individually (within their own properties)—with developing ground floors with values such as liveliness, environmental friendliness, energy-efficiency, profitability, socio-

economic diversity, and high architectural quality. The chapter builds on literature on active frontages and research on the sourcing of newness in design and innovation.

In line with Stark's (2009) research, one *finding* is that the meta-organization involved in Masthuggskajen's development was organized as a *heterarchy*—a governance structure with not one but several hierarchies and thus with multiple, equally important, performance criteria. As is typical of heterarchies, the actors in Masthuggskajen not only acknowledged the clash of criteria but also strove to leverage it by engaging in both individual and collective processes of *search* (Stark, 2009) for *new combinations* of materials, architectural designs, business models, policies, organizational forms, tenants, users, and uses.

Another finding is that, in attempting to generate order in moments of dissonance, the actors enacted a variety of *coordination strategies* (Boltanski & Thevenot, 1991, cited in Stark, 2009), from local agreements and compromises to acts of domination. In cases of particularly stubborn conflicts—such as those between profitability and rent-level mix—the strategy of suspension was also used, where thorny issues are left to be solved in the future. One reason for such lack of resolutions is that the organizations were often unwilling to reduce profits beyond a certain point, highlighting a lack in Stark's (2009) theory regarding the understanding of power and politics. This lack, it seems, is at least partly connected to the fact that the theory focuses on conflicts between practices and principles of valuation, rather than on disputes between actors with diverging vested interests.

One *conclusion* is that dissonant valuations and principles can indeed function as a source of novel ideas, perspectives and decision-making alternatives in urban planning and design. The paper also suggests that a variety of coordination strategies can be used to restore order in moments of dissonance. However, for successful designs and innovations to be realized, it is important for the involved parties to find ways to stabilize socio-material arrangements over the long-term, stressing the entangled nature of innovation, power, and politics when spaces in the city are developed. Another key conclusion is that in many cases, coordination does not result in total resolution, where all discord is eradicated and harmony achieved—instead, there is a boundless 'suspension of resolution.'

One implication for future research is the importance of embracing a nuanced understanding of the relationship between conflicting valuations and stabilization in urban design and

innovation. Moreover, it is vital for future studies to acknowledge the central role that power and politics have in translating and stabilizing newness within the built environment.

4.4 Paper IV. Molnar & de Fine Licht (2024) Defensive for whom: The valuation of users and uses in public space design in Gothenburg, Sweden

This paper, the first of two based on the thesis's second case study on public space design in Brunnsparken, Gothenburg, was written together with de Fine Licht. The study was designed collaboratively, with interviews carried out by both authors and document analysis performed by Molnar, with some assistance from an intern. Molnar conducted data analysis and writing of the paper. It was submitted to *Urban Studies* in February 2024, returned with major revisions, and is scheduled for resubmission in autumn 2024.

Defensive urban design is the intentional use of design to obstruct or exclude certain users and uses from public space. This paper responds to calls for more nuanced understandings of defensive urban design (Rosenberger, 2017), particularly in how such designs evaluate users and uses. The paper starts with the hypothesis that despite the aim of defensive architecture and design to exclude certain users and uses, the valuation processes involved are heterogeneous.

Methodologically, the authors pursue this aim through a case study of Brunnsparken in Gothenburg, Sweden, where a redesign process explicitly intended to reduce the presence of criminals, marginalized users, and non-human species such as birds and rats. The paper combines previous research on excluding and defensive urban design (Allen, 2006; Atkinson, 2003; Chellew, 2019; N. Smith & Walters, 2018; Thörn, 2011) with literature on the *positions* (Waibel et al., 2021) that actors take when involved in valuation processes.

One *finding* is that defensive urban design in Brunnsparken did not circulate around a simple dichotomy of valorizing the public while devaluing marginalized users. Rather, the scheme was imbued with a plurality of valuations, where different actors (valuators) appraised designs, user groups and uses (valuees) in different ways, through diverse principles and devices. The paper also finds that, over time, ways of valuing users and uses shifted. While

initial devaluations particularly focused on criminals, marginalized groups, birds, and rats, additional categories were introduced over time, such as workers and people with disabilities.

Similarly, the paper finds that some groups were subjected to positive valuations, including pedestrians, certain residents and even marginalized individuals. Finally, the paper confirms the findings of previous studies that dissonant valuations do not merely arise between members of different groups, but also between individuals belonging to the same group.

The paper *concludes* by nuancing the common view that defensive urban design solely should be understood as catering to the interests of middle- and upper-class citizens at the expense of marginalized groups. Instead, it stresses the heterogeneity of these processes in terms of how different uses and users are categorized and evaluated, by whom and with what means. The authors propose that future research should: 1) investigate local nuances in how various users and uses are valued; 2) include a more diverse range of valuators in the analysis; and 3) critically reflect on the moral implications of including or excluding different user groups and activities in public spaces.

4.5 Paper V. Molnar & Palmås (2024) *The medium of the designer: Devices, culture and values in urban design*

This paper is currently under the first round of reviews in the design journal *She Ji.* The paper was collaboratively conceptualized by Molnar and Palmås and builds on the same data as paper IV does. For this paper, Molnar conducted additional coding and analysis, while Palmås provided a literary study and writing.

This paper explores the relationship between devices, cultures and valuation in urban design practice. The paper combines Donald Schön's (1992; see also Schön & Wiggins, 1992), according to Gentes and Marcocchia (2023) neglected work on materials in design with contemporary research on the relative importance of valuation cultures and valuation devices in shaping how people express value (Fourcade, 2011; Martinus Hauge, 2016; Zuiderent-Jerak & Van Egmond, 2015).

The paper *aims* to offer an integrated perspective that bridges materialist and culturalist views on design practice, shedding light on how tools, media, and cultural factors co-produce the

evaluative judgments and decisions that designers make regarding quality and value. The paper pursues its aim by using the re-design of Brunnsparken, a public open space in Gothenburg, Sweden, as its case study.

The paper's confirms *findings* from other empirical domains (Zuiderent-Jerak & Van Egmond, 2015) that material and cultural factors are inherently intertwined in the evaluative work of urban designers. It demonstrates that cultural repertoires (Swidler, 1986) influence both the selection and the evaluation of devices used in the design process. It also highlights how devices, in turn, are employed to perform valuations of other objects, potentially influencing actions, designs, and cultural norms and values over time.

The paper also finds that a distinction can be made between different types of devices based on how open or closed they are. The citizen survey is identified as a "weak" device, with cultural rules and beliefs significantly shaping the valuations it produces, thereby limiting its impact. In contrast, the design proposal document is described as a "polyvalent" device, whose influence varied depending on cultural and institutional factors, often prioritizing certain perspectives over others, such as security concerns emphasized by police representatives. Lastly, budget and procurement documents are classified as "strong" devices, often overriding architectural intentions due to their decisive role in final design judgments, particularly within the constraints of Swedish design and planning practice.

5. Discussion: Valuation Practices in Urban Planning and Design

This chapter discusses the results of the five papers in relation to the thesis's three research questions: (1) What are valuation practices in the context of urban planning and design? (2) How are cultural and material components involved in such practices? and (3) How do dissonances arise within such practices, and how are they managed and coordinated in the context of urban planning and design? Drawing on insights from the thesis's case studies as well as from the conceptual handles presented in section 2.2, the discussion aims to shed light on the practices, actors, cultures, and materials of valuation, as well as the emergence and coordination of dissonance, in urban planning and design.

5.1 Valuation as a Socio-Material Practice

This section explores the first research question: "What are valuation practices in the context of urban planning and design?" It examines the integration of valuations in various types of social practices and discusses some different forms of valuators, audiences, and objects of valuation (valuees) involved when values are articulated (see Figure 8). Understanding these diverse practices and positions is important for comprehending valuation fully.

The multiple practices of valuation

Valuations are embedded in everyday practices and activities (Dewey, 1939; Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013; Kjellberg et al., 2013), which often go by other names (Heuts & Mol, 2013). The two case studies have highlighted a broad range of such practices, some of which will be discussed here.

Previous research in urban planning and design has underscored the pivotal role of talk and communication in shaping planning processes and decisions (Beauregard, 2015; Björgvinsson et al., 2012; Forester, 1999; Healey, 1997; Sanches & Frankel, 2010; Schön, 1992). This thesis further emphasizes *conversational practices* as a crucial arena for articulating and negotiating value. These practices encompass various forms of dialogue and discussion through which values are expressed, debated, and negotiated.

The case studies illustrate how diverse conversational practices contribute to articulating value. For example, in Masthuggskajen, meetings were held where property developers collectively evaluated business models for active frontages, with discussions involving the assessment of personal, collective, and public worth (Eranti, 2017; Thévenot et al., 2000). Similarly, stakeholder workshops in Brunnsparken had participants review three alternative designs for the future site, providing a forum to negotiate and (try to) agree upon the values associated with each proposal. Additionally, a casual conversation in a corridor once escalated into a debate about the role of artists as users of ground floor facilities, reflecting how informal interactions also play a role in articulating and contesting values. These examples confirm previous scholars' findings (Kreiner, 2020; Kuch & Morgan, 2015; Lindblad, 2020; Petersson & Soneryd, 2022; Thévenot, 2014) that valuations in urban planning and design are actively constructed through ongoing conversations and interactions among stakeholders.

Practices of *knowledge production* have already been shown to play a crucial role in urban planning and design (Coutard & Guy, 2007; Farías, 2015; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Guy & Shove, 2000; Raco & Imrie, 2000; Rydin, 2007; Vigar, 2012). Similarly, research on valuation in urban planning has shown how specific ways of articulating value are intertwined with procedures for producing knowledge, expertise, evidence, and proofs of worth (Holden & Scerri, 2015; Metzger & Wiberg, 2017; Robin, 2018; Rydin, 2016). In line with this, both case studies highlighted various examples of this interplay. For instance, a group of external experts on arts and culture tasked with mapping the existing cultural actors in Masthuggskajen were not merely conducting a technical exercise; their work involved assessing which tenants contributed to the area's desired character and vitality. Likewise, in Brunnsparken, the safety measurements conducted before and after the regeneration were not just about collecting statistics—they involved evaluating the adequacy of current safety measures and their impact on public perception, functioning to legitimize design and policy decisions.

Other practices relate to the *production and use of artifacts*. In urban research, much has been written about the role of plans, policies, tools, and technologies in shaping the worldviews, decisions, and actions of planners, designers, and other stakeholders (Beauregard, 2015; Coutard & Guy, 2007; Hommels, 2005; Palmås & Eriksson, 2016; Yaneva, 2022). Similarly, scholars investigating valuations in urban settings have emphasized how the design and use of tools, technologies, and architecture influence which types of value, as well as subjects,

objects, and proofs of valuation, are legitimate within a given context (Farías, 2015; Rydin, 2016; Schön, 1984; Styhre, 2013a).

The case studies offer additional insights into how these artifact-related practices shape valuation processes. For example, property developers in Masthuggskajen were not merely allocating ground floor spaces when developing a joint master plan; they were actively evaluating how the distribution of tenants could enhance the overall value and appeal of the area. In another example, project members in Brunnsparken evaluated potential suppliers of street furniture, considering not only costs and durability but also how the choices would reflect and reinforce the desired identity of the space. Additionally, an umbrella organization for Swedish inner cities awarded a prize to project members for their efforts in improving Brunnsparken's nighttime economy, highlighting how such recognitions serve as a form of valuation that legitimizes and reinforces specific planning and design decisions

Lastly, scholars have emphasized that practices of *place intervention*—such as conducting on-site visits, modifying architectural objects, and engaging in place-making activities—are crucial aspects for, at least some planning and design actors (Beauregard, 2015; Palmås & Eriksson, 2016). This thesis shows how these interventions are not just about modifying physical spaces; they are also deeply intertwined with processes of valuation. For instance, in Masthuggskajen, architects and children who participated in temporary place-making activities were not only shaping the space physically but were also involved in valuing how different elements contributed to the area's character and functionality.

Similarly, in Brunnsparken, cultural-historical experts who performed on-site assessments while caring for historical objects were engaged in a form of valuation that went beyond mere preservation. They evaluated the historical significance and cultural relevance of the objects in relation to the broader goals of the redevelopment project. These examples illustrate how place interventions serve as sites where various forms of value are assessed, negotiated, and materialized (Baitsch, 2018; Goebel, 2021; Sezneva & Halauniova, 2021).

Heterogenous Valuators

Previous research has explored the human and non-human actors involved in planning and designing urban spaces (Beauregard, 2015; Yaneva, 2009). Building on this foundation, this thesis introduces the work of Waibel et al. (2021) to urban scholarship, illustrating the

different positions that actors can take when expressing value. Firstly, there is the actor performing the valuation, termed the *valuator*.

One distinct role that actors can take is that of *lay valuators*. These are members of the public who actively participate in the valuation process. Lay valuators may act on behalf of themselves, a collective identity, or represent broader publics (Marres, 2005). The case studies illustrate several examples of the role of lay valuators, such as children evaluating Masthuggskajen's existing design as part of a "child's impact assessment", and citizens *probing* the values of Brunnsparken's existing design and *pushing* (Hutter & Farías, 2017) future values while answering a citizen survey.

However, the presence of lay valuators is relatively limited in both case studies compared to *professional valuators*, who are human actors that articulate value as representatives of a profession or specific expertise. In both case studies, professional valuators include urban planners, architects, municipal politicians, cultural-historical specialists, engineers, artists, businesses, property owners, and various other professionals involved in the projects. In Brunnsparken, additional professional valuators included police officers, social workers, and representatives of disability organizations. Given the specialized knowledge and formal authority that experts bring to the process (Robin, 2018; Rydin, 2007; Vigar, 2012) it can be expected that the valuations of professionals have a significant influence on design and decision-making compared to those of lay valuators.

Another role identified is that of *organizational valuators*, where individuals articulate value on behalf of an organization. The case studies provide numerous examples of individuals performing valuations as representatives of property companies, consultancy firms, research institutions, and meta-organizations representing broader institutional fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). While it may initially seem artificial to consider organizations as valuators, both case studies highlight how individuals adapt their evaluations based on whether they are acting personally or on behalf of an organization (Brunsson, 2024). A representative from a property company in Masthuggskajen exemplifies this role. In personal conversations, she vocally supported her employer's potential provision of below-market rents for select street-level facilities. However, when acting as the company's spokesperson in a larger meeting, the same individual significantly altered her stance, downplaying the value of the idea. This shift

demonstrates how organizational affiliations can influence the articulation and prioritization of value, reflecting the complex interplay between personal beliefs and institutional interests.

Multiple Valuees

Another component of valuation in urban planning and design is the entity being evaluated, referred to as the *valuee* (Waibel et al., 2021, see also Helgesson & Muniesa, 2013). To begin with, the case studies demonstrate that *places*, or rather their representations, constitute a primary form of valuee. Actors could frequently be seen attributing worth to entire areas, such as "Masthuggskajen" and "Brunnsparken," as well as to various sub-areas or zones within these larger areas. These sub-areas were defined and distinguished through visual representations, programming, and the distribution of architectural objects, among other factors. For instance, in Brunnsparken, the eastern part was territorialized as a combined pedestrian zone (Kärrholm, 2008) and performance space (Sennett, 2024), something which influenced what uses, users, and design artefacts were deemed appropriate for the site. Similarly, the division of Masthuggskajen's existing ground floors into several sub-areas with different identities—such as associating the eastern part of the cite with culture and creativity and the western part with local community—influenced the valuation of possible future uses and users.

Architectural objects—such as facade designs in Masthuggskajen and seating designs in Brunnsparken—also constitute valuees when developing urban spaces. In addition, *technologies* such as the chaos lighting and surveillance cameras in Brunnsparken were frequently subject to valuation, reflecting how technological elements contribute to the overall evaluation of urban spaces, as did *tools and devices* themselves, such as the three design alternatives discussed and evaluated by stakeholders in Brunnsparken.

Valuees also include *users and other stakeholders*. The case studies exemplify how both individual users and user groups are enrolled as valuees. An example of the former is a journalist's valorization of an eccentric street performer in Brunnsparken, while a public servant's devaluation of the presence of children at the site exemplifies the latter. Additionally, *non-human species*, especially rats, pidgeons, and seagulls, played significant roles as valuees in Brunnsparken, sparking mostly negative valuations. In contrast, no non-human species were configured as users in the Masthuggskajen study, something which aligns with the observed tendency to neglect animals in territorial planning (Metzger, 2014).

Lastly, just as users (Berker, 2011), stakeholders (Metzger et al., 2017), architectural objects (Kärrholm, 2016), and spaces (Högström & Philo, 2020) are enacted in multiple and ever-changing ways in planning and design, so too are valuees.

Neglected Audiences

In addition to active valuators, valuation processes in urban planning and design often involve *audiences* (Waibel et al., 2021), such as an audience observing architects presenting their new designs (Stark & Paravel, 2008). While this thesis has not explicitly focused on audiences, some examples can still be drawn from the empirical material.

For instance, in Brunnsparken, local politicians, though physically distant, were a constant presence, shaping the evaluative work of project members so that it would meet the formers' expectations. The digital presence of journalists in media similarly came to influence the valuations performed by project members, such as deciding on suitable project timeline amongst others based on what would look good in the media.
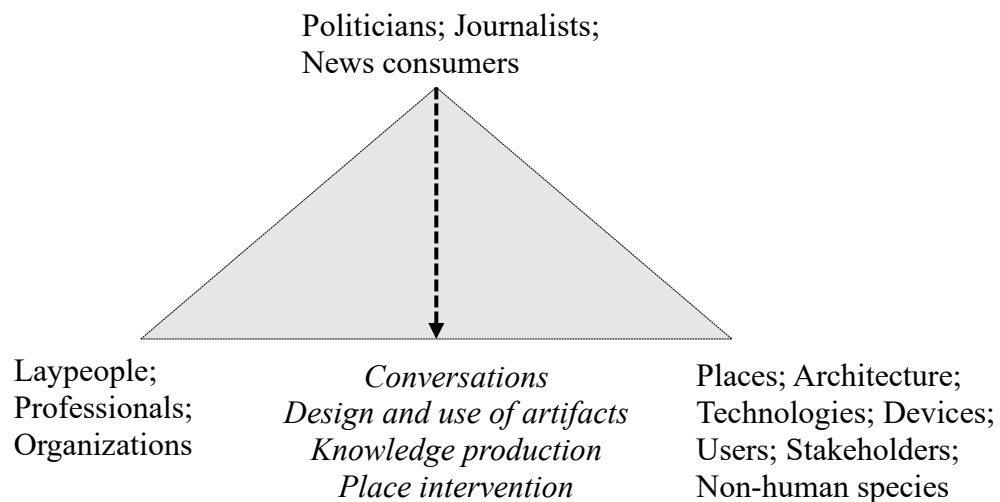

Figure 8: Examples of valuators, valuees, audiences, and practices of valuation present in the empirical material.

5.2 Materials and Cultures of Valuation

This section addresses the second research question: "How are cultural and material components involved in such practices?" It explores how cultural repertoires and materials, together with the practices, valuators, valuees, and audiences, form the broader value constellations (Waibel et al., 2021) that guide valuations (see Figure 9).

Valuation Cultures

Cultural repertoires consist of beliefs, rules, classifications, skills, and other elements that guide human conduct (Hannerz, 1969; Swidler, 1986), including articulations of value (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Wagner, 1999; Waibel et al., 2021).

A key component of cultural repertoires is *rules*—both explicit and implicit, formal and informal—expectations of behavior that are internalized within bodies, minds, and material structures (Cerulo et al., 2021; Douglas, 1987; Schatzki, 2005). Some rules regulate the legitimate procedures of valuation in specific contexts, including the appropriate actions, actors, materials, and principles of worth (Waibel et al., 2021). The case studies provide numerous examples of *procedural rules*, such as national regulations dictating when public participation is required, which influenced citizen involvement (as valuators) in the redevelopment of Masthuggskajen, and local government policies that emphasize active frontages as a key planning goal of new constructions.

Rules also govern the appropriate use and expression of *emotions* in social practices (Schatzki, 2005), including in cities and urban planning (Dikeç, 2024; Thrift, 2004a). In Gothenburg, cultural rules had long stipulated that Brunnsparken was a place to be feared at night, an assumption that influenced evaluative efforts throughout the site's redesign.

Rules also organize *ontologies*, shaping perceptions of what identities, classifications, and relationships exist (Douglas, 1987; Waibel et al., 2021). The case studies provide examples of how such ontological rules structure valuations. For instance, in planning Masthuggskajen's ground floors, initial assumptions favored retail, restaurants, cafes, and bars as primary users, which in turn influenced evaluative processes, such as the choice of engaging a retail consultant to evaluate different lines of programming. These assumptions reflect tacit rules within the institutional field of ground floor design (Kickert, 2016; Koch, 2018), thereby

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establishing predefined categories of "natural" users. This also demonstrates how rules provide mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, dictating which actors are seen as legitimate valuators, audiences, and valuees in a given context (Lamont, 2012; Waibel et al., 2021).

Similarly, rules delineate the characteristics, boundaries, and qualities of territories, thereby contributing to valuations. For example, during the early stages of Brunnsparken's redevelopment, no clear boundary defined the site. Over time, a delimitation emerged, focusing on the park environment at Brunnsparken's core. This decision influenced valuations by specifying which users and uses were deemed legitimate, thereby contributing to territorial inclusion, exclusion, and control (Högström & Philo, 2020; Kärrholm, 2008).

In addition to rules, *understandings* and *beliefs* also constitute elements of cultural repertoires (Swidler, 1986). These include often unspoken *practical understandings* (Schatzki et al., 2001) such as skills and competencies which structure practices. The case studies illustrate how such skills and competencies influence how values are expressed, particularly in situations where interactions between participants were not seamless. For instance, in both case studies, social servants found themselves overshadowed by engineers, hindering their effective participation in discussions due to their unfamiliarity with the dominating rules of conduct (see also Berglund-Snodgrass et al., 2022). This highlights how participants' practical understandings can influence valuations by influencing their ability to engage as valuators.

But what Schatzki (2012) calls *general understandings*—abstract knowledge of the nature, worth, and place of things in the world—also govern everyday practices. The case studies provide examples of how such understandings shape valuation processes. For instance, the previously mentioned case of social servants struggling to communicate with engineers illustrates a mismatch between the general understandings held by different lines of participants, something which in turn affects their ability to perform evaluative work.

Materials of Valuation

Material arrangements also shape valuations of urban space (Farías, 2015; Gentes & Marcocchia, 2023). Following Shove's (2017) work on social practices, it is proposed here that materials can assume three roles in supporting valuations.

One such role is as *tools*—objects employed to carry out a practice (Shove, 2017). Tools in the form of *visualizations* both enable and constrain how value is enacted in planning and design (Farías, 2015; Latour & Yaneva, 2017; Styhre, 2013a). In both Masthuggskajen and Brunnsparken, a variety of visual representations —from photos and renderings to 3D animations—were used to project values across different scales and mediums (Beauregard, 2015; Farías, 2015; Yaneva, 2005). In Masthuggskajen, reference objects and best practice examples (Ariztía, 2016; Styhre, 2011) helped actors visually communicate what values they wanted the ground floors to live up to, such as classical values of transparency, vibrancy, and aesthetic diversity (C. Alexander, 1977; Gehl et al., 2006). Similarly, technologies, such as surveillance cameras in Brunnsparken provided continuous feedback on site activities, helping the police to evaluate the workings of the site and make decisions related to safety and design, constituting a form of urban governing at a distance (Söderström, 2017).

Written documents and *calculative tools* also function as apparatuses for valuation in urban planning and design (Rydin, 2016; Styhre, 2013a). Reports and websites, for instance, organize information and arguments, thereby shaping perceptions of value. In both case studies, the production of such materials involved inscriptions of value, while also functioning as devices for further valuations. Additionally, economic devices, such as budgets, economic calculations, and business models, operationalized monetary worth into evaluative criteria, guiding resource allocations and decision making (Styhre, 2013b; Styhre et al., 2022).

But according to Shove (2017) materiality also structures social practices as a *resource*, referring to material means that are consumed as part of a practice. This thesis shows how material resources also regulate valuation in urban planning and design. For example, *money* as a resource significantly influenced decisions regarding procurement and project scope in both Masthuggskajen and Brunnsparken. In Brunnsparken, the availability of financial resources determined the scale and ambition of design interventions, affecting evaluations related to material quality, sustainability, and aesthetic preferences. Moreover, *time* and *bodies* function as resources, such as project deadlines, man-hours, and available workforce, and shape valuations. For instance, a team dedicated solely to the objective of enforcing active frontages in Masthuggskajen—made possible by relatively large monetary resources— allowed for in-depth explorations and assessments of possible strategies to achieve this goal.

Moreover, *space*, both physical and virtual, provides support for valuation in urban contexts. *Physical space* can foster what can be called *on-site valuations*, and may serve as arenas where stakeholders assess spatial qualities and test design hypotheses (Beauregard, 2015). For example, in Brunnsparken, architects conducted on-site safety inventories during snowy conditions to evaluate pedestrian flows and pathway placements, while representatives of disability organizations assessed the site's accessibility both before and after its redesign.

Similarly, physical space, such as meeting rooms and office spaces, can also foster what might be termed *off-site valuation*. For example, in Brunnsparken, a stakeholder meeting held in a room a few floors up in a building adjacent to the space influenced participants' perceptions, making them more aware of the dense tree canopy and its impact on site darkness. It was the meeting room's proximity to, but not direct location on, the site that enabled this new possibility for valuation, making it a *semi-on-site valuation*.

Lastly, just as *virtual space* facilitates practices—such as peoples' movement through physical space (Thrift, 2004b)—they can be expected to influence valuation in urban planning and design. In Brunnsparken, ongoing discussions in online news media and social platforms allowed diverse stakeholders—from journalists to citizens—to contribute to the ongoing valuation of the site. These virtual spaces extend the reach of valuation practices beyond the physical boundaries of the site, enabling distributed and collaborative engagements with urban environments, including what might be termed *valuations at a distance*.
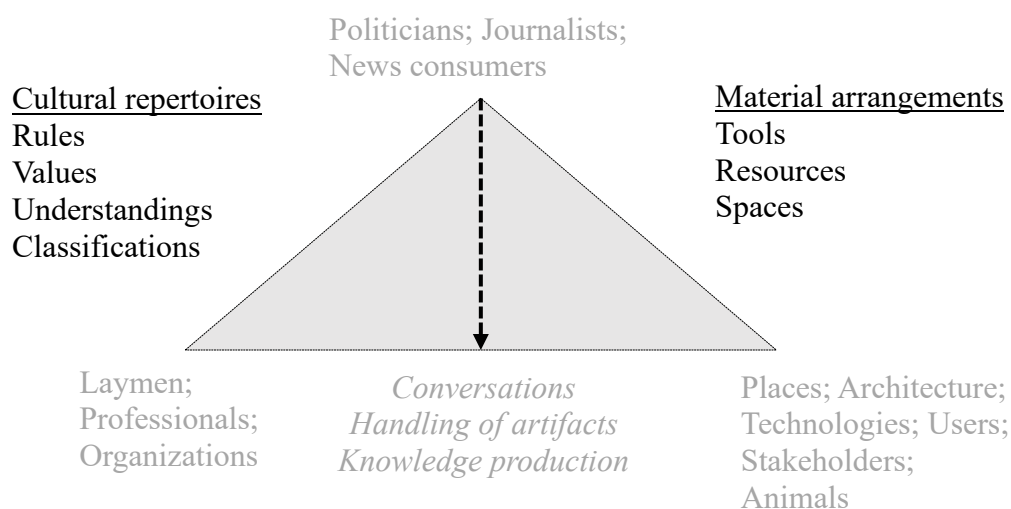

Figure 9: Examples of cultural and material aspects of valuation in urban planning and design. The positions and practices of valuation from Figure 8 are in grey color.

5.3 Emergence and Coordination of Dissonance

This section addresses the third research question of this thesis: "How do dissonances arise within such practices, and how are they managed and coordinated in the context of urban planning and design?" The section first explores examples of evaluative dissonances that can arise in urban space development and then examines how these dissonances are coordinated.

Dissonant Valuations

This thesis specifically examines the role of *evaluative dissonances*—moments when valuations clash (Farías, 2015; Stark, 2009). The case studies explore both consonance and dissonance, illustrating how these dynamics coexist. In Brunnsparken, examples range from consonant devaluations of criminal behaviors to dissonant articulations of the worth of children's play. In Masthuggskajen, instances include dissonant valuations of mixed-rent levels for ground floor facilities and consonant valuations of street-life vitality.

The thesis identifies various forms of dissonances that can arise in this context. One form involves moments when the value of an object is articulated in dissonant ways, not necessarily due to incommensurable principles of value. For instance, in Brunnsparken, a public debate among politicians on the appropriate size of the redevelopment budget highlighted economic criteria, safety, and liveliness. Here, dissonance did not stem from incommensurable value principles but from an intertwined epistemic dissonance (Farías, 2015) regarding what budget size would achieve a successful redesign.

At other times, conflicting valuations are indeed rooted in incommensurable principles. For example, in Brunnsparken, a public debate in a Gothenburg newspaper between an architecture critic and a city politician on the quality of the final redesign revealed different evaluative principles. The critic emphasized cultural-historical, aesthetic, and architectural quality, which he found lacking in the redesign, while the politician highlighted democratic values, justifying the redesign by the increased public use of the site.

Research on socio-material processes of valuation has shown that a single actor can draw from and combine multiple, incommensurable evaluative principles—such as health, economy, authenticity, and energy efficiency—when performing valuations (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). The case studies confirm this, showing that valuators often draw from

several evaluative principles when assessing worth. For example, members of the accessibility council, while conducting an on-site inventory of Brunnsparken's accessibility, also considered principles of comfort, traffic safety, and perceived crime safety.

Despite the plurality of values, the case studies suggest that certain evaluative principles carry more legitimacy than others. In the early stages of Masthuggskajen's ground floor planning, principles of "activity" and "economy" were particularly influential, while evaluations increasingly incorporated the principle of "social mix" over time. Similarly, in Brunnsparken, perceived safety and liveliness were principles with special status.

As has previously been discussed, processes of designing and shaping urban spaces involves numerous *valuees*, whose valuations can conflict. Therefore, an analytical distinction can be made between three types of dissonant valuations of valuees: (1) dissonant valuations of *users*, such as the divergent values attributed to the poor and police officers respectively in Brunnsparken; (2) dissonant valuations of *uses*, such as conflicting views on the role of art and culture in Masthuggskajen's ground floor facilities; and (3) dissonant valuations of *materials*, exemplified by the conflictual valuations of active frontages in Masthuggskajen.

Furthermore, the thesis illustrates how dissonant valuations can emerge between actors with different identities, such as those from different organizations or professions. For instance, police officers and park employees assigned different values to maintaining a public toilet in Brunnsparken. Dissonant valuations can also arise among members of the same group. An example is how police officers within the same organization assessed the value of chaos lighting in Brunnsparken in incommensurable ways.

Coordinating Dissonance

Previous research has focused on consensus-making, shared interests, and similar dynamics in urban planning and design (Beauregard, 2015; Healey, 1997). Similarly, it has been shown that what Stark (2009) refers to as *shared understandings* of value can serve as a means of coordinating dissonance in urban planning (Holden & Scerri, 2015). For example, during the redevelopment of Masthuggskajen, participants reached a general agreement that ground floor facilities would be integrated into all new buildings. This shared understanding allowed actors with divergent goals to coordinate effectively within the active frontages team.

Stark (2009) also found that *misunderstandings* about what other actors perceive as valuable can actually facilitate coordination. This is true also in urban planning and design. For instance, while members of the active frontages team generally supported the idea of a rent-level mix for ground floors, they held different views in other forums, such as internal company discussions, about what "rent-level mix" meant and what each company's contribution would be. In this case, the goal of a "rent-level mix" functioned as a vague boundary object, masking underlying dissonances.

In some cases, *compromise* can be a tool for coordinating dissonance in urban planning and elsewhere (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Holden, 2017). In Brunnsparken, architects created a new scenario by combining elements from different alternatives, after stakeholders had reviewed each scenario in multifaceted and somewhat conflictual ways. This creation of a new scenario—and thus of a new valuee—enabled enough stakeholders to align their valuations, thereby maintaining order. Although friction remained, the compromise allowed participants to experiment with new ways of creating harmony, fostering innovation and new design alternatives.

Coordination can also be achieved through *power dynamics* (Stark, 2009), rather than through agreements or compromises. This involves certain valuations gaining legitimacy over others through force, enrollment, and persuasion. An example is the local government's demand that property companies in Masthuggskajen enforce facilities in the ground floors of their buildings. Power over and through valuation can also manifest in moments of inclusion/exclusion from participation, preventing certain actors from engaging in evaluative work. Additionally, cultural repertoires and material arrangements play a role in the power dynamics. For instance, ontological and procedural rules established by politicians, or the distribution of temporal resources such as workforce allocation, stipulate broader constraints in terms of how value can and is expected to be articulated.

Finally, it is important to note that coordination in moments of dissonance is always enacted as part of mundane practices. Coordination is a pragmatic accomplishment that occurs during meetings, email conversations, site visits, report writing, budgeting, sketch work, and other everyday practices constituting the designing of urban space.

6. Concluding Remarks: Summary and Future Possibilities

6.1 Reviewing the Argument

The aim of this thesis has been to generate knowledge about the socio-material practices of valuation that take place during the design and development of urban spaces and how they matter in shaping urban environments. The focus has been on understanding the plurality of practices, actors, materials, and cultural elements involved in these evaluations, as well as how conflicting valuations are pragmatically enacted and coordinated. This exploration was guided by three research questions:

1. What are valuation practices in the context of urban planning and design?
2. What are the cultural and material components of valuation?
3. How do dissonances emerge, and how are they coordinated within such practices?

The thesis is grounded in two case studies that represent the design of distinct urban territorial sorts: active frontages and public open spaces. The first case study, documented in three papers, analyzes ground floor planning and design in Masthuggskajen, Gothenburg, Sweden. The second, captured in two papers, scrutinizes the planning and design of the public open space of Brunnsparken, also in Gothenburg.

Drawing from these case studies, discussions within the thesis, and triangulation with previous research, several key arguments emerge regarding the role of valuation practices in urban planning and design.

Firstly, valuation practices are *omnipresent* in urban planning and design processes. They are deeply embedded and often "hidden" within practices and activities that are labeled differently. These practices can be categorized broadly into conversational practices, knowledge production practices, the design and use of artifacts, and practices of place intervention.

Secondly, within these practices, actors engage in the assessment of the value of designs, actions, ideas, territories, users, uses, and many other *valuees*. These assessments may focus on a plurality of *types of values* such as environmental impacts, monetary returns, aesthetic

appeal, authenticity, or a combination of these and other factors. There is also a plurality of different *types of valuation practices*. They can rely on intuitive judgments and/or calculation, quantitative, qualitative, and/or visual expressions, as well as may involve either the assessment of value or the strategic production and enactment of value.

Thirdly, a diverse array of actors can assume the role of *valuators* in urban planning and design, including planners, architects, engineers, police officers, social workers, and citizens. While certain types of valuation practices and principles may be more common within specific professions, these are many times merely loosely coupled. Similarly, different entities become objects of valuation—referred to as *valuees*—ranging from territories and their representations, and material designs to users, uses, and even valuation devices themselves, such as plans or documents. These processes are dependent on categorization, commensuration, and qualification, which determine what is considered valuable and what is excluded. Additionally, the articulation of value can be influenced by *audiences*, whether they are citizens, politicians, or journalists, who observe but do not participate in the valuation process.

Fourthly, the enactment of value is shaped by the intertwinement of *materials and cultures* of valuation. Cultures of valuation can be understood as repertoires of shared rules, understandings, and categories that actors draw upon, typically implicitly, to guide how valuations are performed in a setting. Material arrangements, on the other hand, generate affordances by enabling or constraining valuations through their ability to "request, demand, allow, encourage, discourage, and refuse" (J. Davis & Chouinard, 2016, p. 241) behaviors. The thesis identifies three roles that materials can play in structuring valuations: as tools, resources, and sites.

Fifthly, the thesis explores different forms of conflicts between valuations, termed *evaluative dissonance*. Valuations that clash can either draw from the same overarching principles and types of value or from those that differ and are incommensurable.

Sixthly, the thesis identifies various mechanisms for *coordinating dissonances*, including agreements, misunderstandings, personal arrangements, relativizations, compromises, and domination. These coordination mechanisms are always embedded in the same practices in which the valuations are performed.

Lastly, urban planning and design projects are composed of larger assemblages of everyday practices that collectively form broader *evaluative landscapes*. The successful stabilization of these networks of valuation practices ultimately determines which articulations of value prevail and influence how urban spaces are designed, programmed, and utilized.

6.2 Suggestions for Future Research and Practice

The thesis highlights several themes that warrant further exploration in future research. One potential avenue that departs from the focus of this thesis is to conduct *single-device studies*, scrutinizing specific valuation tools in urban planning and design, such as economic appraisal techniques, traffic assessments, or social impact assessments. One example is Westerdahls and Grander's (2022) recent discussion on the role of the net present value (NPV) method in housing provision. Another approach would be to carry out *single-practice studies*, examining valuation within a specific type of practice, as Lindblad (2020) did with a study on the valuations during a workshop on sustainable neighborhood development. Additionally, there is potential in exploring the evaluative practices of specific *types of valuators* connected to, for example, organizational types, teams, and professions. Research on private individuals as valuators in urban planning and design is also needed, as most existing studies have focused on professionals and experts.

From a practical standpoint, future work could apply the findings and conceptual frameworks developed in this thesis to support urban planning and design practice. One potential path is to *disseminate research findings*, thereby enhancing practitioners' ability to identify, scrutinize, and transform valuation practices when necessary. Another potential path involves collaborating with practitioners to *refine existing valuation tools and practices* in urban planning and design. This could include revising current tools or developing new ones, ultimately supporting the emergence of valuations that matter for how cities are designed and used.

7. References

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MATTERS OF WORTH

PRACTICES, ACTORS AND OBJECTS OF VALUATION IN THE DESIGN OF URBAN SPACE

STEFAN MOLNAR

How We Make Sense of What Matters in Urban Planning

Urban spaces are more than just buildings and roads — they reflect what society values. This thesis explores how these values are judged, calculated, and expressed in urban design and planning. By studying two processes in Gothenburg, Sweden — the planning of ground floors in Masthuggskajen and the redevelopment of Brunnsparken — the research uncovers how diverse actors like citizens, architects, property owners, police officers, and social workers infuse these processes with value. This occurs during ordinary and often taken-for-granted activities such as conversations, studies, design work, and physical changes to places.

Values expressed in these processes vary widely, from environmental and economic to moral, aesthetic, and technical considerations. These values are communicated through different expressions — words, numbers, and visuals — and are shaped by cultural rules and beliefs, material designs and technologies, and personal interactions. Urban planning is thus not just about designing places, but also about negotiating what is considered important, beautiful, useful, and just.

Understanding how values are practically expressed in everyday life can help planners, designers, and citizens create processes and tools that better reflect the diverse needs and values of communities and organizations. This research highlights the importance of continuously making sense of what practices, objects, and actors need to come together to enhance the value of urban spaces.