Same game, different rules.
5 different conceptualisations of information among key actors in the early phase development of a shopping centre in Norway during the late 2000s.

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Reference topics: 6 & 7

This paper aims to investigate critical differences — and similarities —between the information concepts of key actors during early phase concept development of a complex building project.

Drawing on Batesonian theory of information, our study systematises reports from 5 lead actors in concept development, notably: Project engineers, the head architect and representatives from the city planning office. The study is organised around open ended interviews with the actors; each giving their evaluation of a what informed the concept (what made a difference) during the early project phases of a municipal/shopping centre, developed and built in central Norway 2006-2012.

Conducting a content analysis of the transcribed interviews, we map the concept information per actor alongside three analytic parameters; respectively: 1. *Information topic*, 2. *Temporal reference* and 3. *Analytic modality*

A four dimensional scatter plot visualise our findings as an information sphere. This allows a reading of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of difference and sharedness characterising an early phase (information) concept.

Throughout the discussions we reference the information concepts discovered with a complex systems perspective. This allow us to differentiate between the projects local feedback loops and information that actually comes to have meaning through the built objects participation in the greater, open-ended urban system.

Thematically, this research addresses the apparent incompleteness of a proper information model capable of bridging diverse professional perspectives in concept development and urban planning. Such a model would arguably be of critical value during the early phases of development, both because the fundaments of great concepts are established early on, but also, pragmatically, because here information is at its cheapest.

By opening the black box that is *concept* to empirical inquiry we aim to refocus the discussion on professional differences into a pragmatic process outlook — conceptualising information as feedback loops in complex systems.

Key words:
Actors, information concepts, early phase development, urban systems, content analysis