

Land and the City: New Ways towards More Dynamic Spatial Planning Methods as Recently Observed in Denmark

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ABSTRACT

The creation of private property often implies directions from spatial planning. It is therefore reasonable to state that decision on private property is indirect an implementation of spatial planning.

The purpose of planning is to promote desirable developments and to avoid unwanted events.

For instance a decision on large infrastructure project or in the process of development of urban zones often are a products of desirable developments - it is therefore easy to conclude that spatial planning has an effect on what happens in reality. It is easy to see that decisions like these over a period will have notable effect on the future developments in the land and the city. Good or bad.

But planning is also a political process with an ongoing debate and revisions of plans. In this light planning is a form in which feting the debate on the future development becomes central.

What is seen often – is that – despite the existence of a plan, the comprehensive regional or urban development does not automatically come along. What is wanted as desirable developments does not occur to happen. The reason could be that the existing planning guidelines has been too restrictive. But restrictive plans do tend to result in significant qualities when realised. Therefore what is more likely to be characterising the unrealised plans as described, is the absence of so-called dynamic elements. These more dynamic elements in planning seem to appear when the purpose of a plan is somehow connected to the existing general urban or regional development strategy. The successful development therefore tends to occur more often, when planning is considered as a precondition for regional development, as well.

It is in this line, that this paper will give some examples on new planning steps as recently been observed in Denmark. It is not a new planning method as such - even though new parts of legislation recently have been implemented through law administration. The examples that will be shown here will in particularly show a focus on the political aspect of planning and it will underline the purpose of planning as a means of effecting future urban and regional

developments. Planning will be described as a balance between, on the one side “development” and on the other side the “preparing the right conditions for development”.

Chapter 1 will firstly give a short overview of the physical outlook of the country of Denmark and afterwards generally describe the Danish planning system. Chapter 2 will describe the most recent national planning in Denmark as seen in a perspective “Denmark year 2025” including a vision for the future development and give a number of examples to outline how this has been implemented on a concrete basis. This will give some hints on what lays behind local decisions on the creation of private property as part of the political scene. Chapter 3 will conclude on the above.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Denmark at a Glance

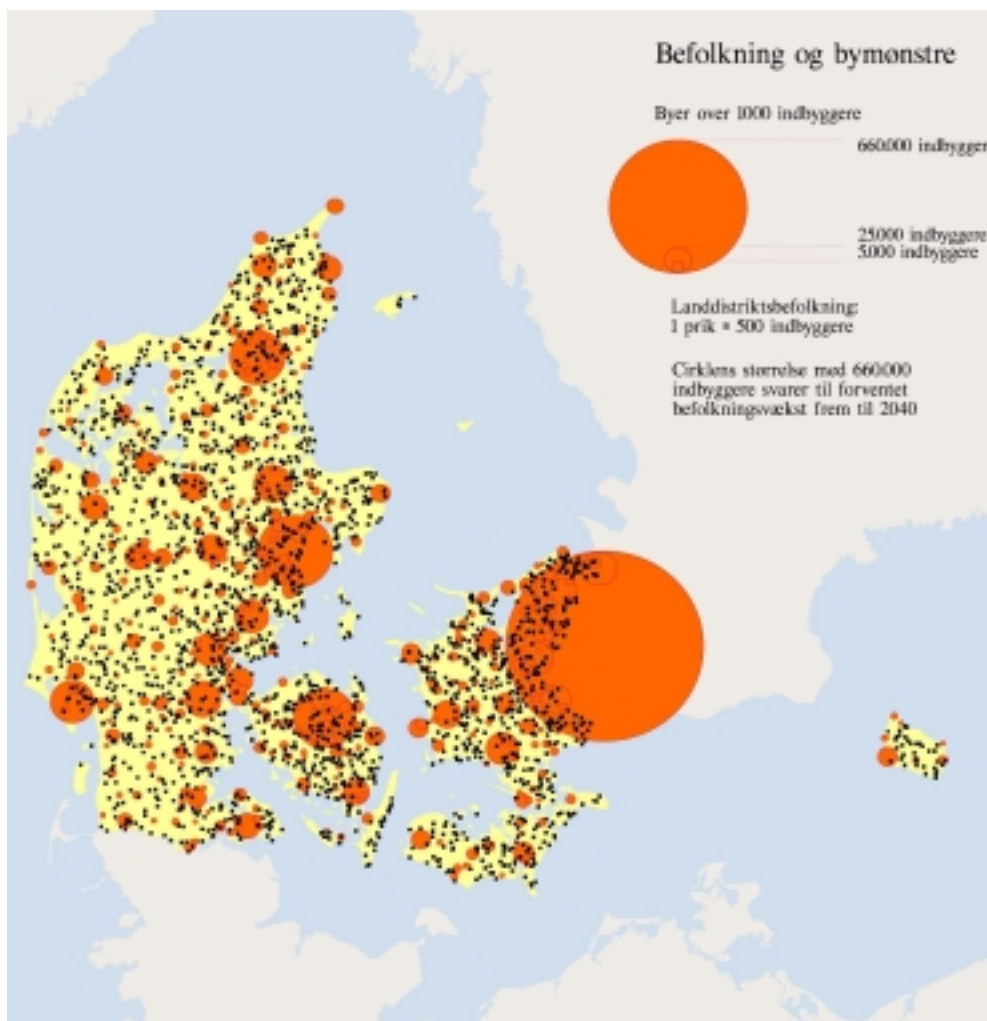
The Danish landscape is characterised by agriculture and by being quite flat with the highest elevation being about 200 m above sea level. Most of the country is made up of islands. Denmark has well defined borderlines - 7000 km facing water and 64 km territorially facing Germany.



The basic infrastructure consisting of highways and main railroad line forms a large “H” - based upon spatial planning decisions dating back to the 1960-ties. To large bridges - crossing The Great Belt (between the islands of Funen and Zealand) and The Strait of Øresund (between Denmark and Sweden) - complete the structure and has significantly reduced time-distance.

Export of agricultural products is still a major part of the GDP. However industrial products such as wind turbines, telecommunication equipment and pharmaceuticals are becoming increasingly important.

The Greater Copenhagen area dominates the urban structure with a population of 1,8 mill (The City of Copenhagen: 500.000 inhabitants), which is about 1/3 of the population. The major cities are Århus (220.000 inhabitants), Odense (145.000 inhabitants) and Aalborg (120.000 inhabitants). 85 % of the population lives in urban settlements with more than 200 inhabitants. Apart from villages and minor towns the average sizes of Danish towns is between 20.000 and 50.000 inhabitants.



Map 2:
Denmark has
5,33 mill.
Inhabitants

The 5 largest cities are
Copenhagen,
Århus,
Odense,
Ålborg and
Esbjerg

85 % live in
urban areas
1/3 lives in the
Greater
Copenhagen

1.2 The Danish planning system

1.2.1 The framework system

Denmark has one of the world's simplest and clearest spatial planning systems. There is an extremely decentralised delegation of responsibility, where the municipalities are responsible for comprehensive municipal planning and local planning for specific areas. The counties and The Greater Copenhagen area are responsible for regional planning. The Minister for Environment can influence this planning through regulations, national planning directives and public information. When national interests are at stake, the Minister can veto the planning decisions of the municipalities and counties. The appeals system is similarly simple compared with that of other countries. In most cases, only legal and procedural questions can be appealed.

The Planning Act is based on the principle of framework control, in which plans must not contradict the planning decisions made at higher levels. If these higher-level decisions are changed, the planning at lower levels must be adapted accordingly.

The Planning Act emphasises that the intention of planning is to aim towards:

- Appropriate development in the whole country and in the individual counties and municipalities, based on overall planning and economic considerations;
- Creating and conserving valuable buildings, settlements, urban environments and landscapes;
- Maintain the coastal areas as an important nature and landscape resource;
- Preventing pollution of air, water and soil and noise nuisance;
- Involving the public in the planning process as much as possible;
- Promote a sustainable retail structure with a variety of different shops in all types of cities.

Both counties and municipalities are required to promote public participation in the planning process by organising public hearings.

The statutory requirements for a regional plan preparation effectively involves three stages:

- initial public solicitation of ideas, proposals etc. the simultaneous publication of a planning report, a set deadline of at least eight weeks for submission of comments and a concurrent information campaign to encourage public debate.
- preparation and adoption of a proposed plan, publication of the plan with an appurtenant report, and a further deadline of at least eight weeks for the public to submit objections etc. to the proposed plan
- Adoption of the final plan. The regional plan must cover a period of 12 years.

1.2.2 Municipality Plan

Every municipality in Denmark has a municipal plan. The purpose is on the one hand to set up the objectives for the development of land use. On the other hand the municipal plan has a key role in the overall strategic planning for the community.

The plan is a structure plan setting up the framework (on detailed maps) for the local planning regulation. It focuses on residential areas, commercial and industrial areas, transport and other services and recreational areas. The political involvement in the strategic elements are getting stronger these years, and there is an increasing synergy between physical, sector and economic planning and an ongoing development of the public participation.

Municipal planning is an ongoing process, balancing between the advantages of having a set plan and strategy - and the dynamic of revising when needed. Every four years there are local elections and just after the election the Municipal Council sets up a strategy for the municipal planning pointing out the major tasks of the future as regarded at the moment. The strategy also points out, if the existing municipal plan needs to be revised. It can be a revision of the entire plan or just parts of it.

The strategy is publicised and the public has the possibility to comment and maybe even change the strategy. The public participation has an important impact on the broad support of the strategy. The next step is to revise (parts of) the plan as decided in the strategy. The revision (entirely or partly) also comprises public participation.

1.2.3 Regional Plan

The 11 counties and The Greater Copenhagen area must prepare and adopt every 4 years a revised regional plan. The Planning Act determines the topics for which binding guidelines may be established in a regional plan. The degree of detail must not be greater than is required by national and regional interests. This ensures maximum flexibility for the municipalities in their planning. The municipal plan as well as the construction activities of public authorities must not contradict the guidelines set out in the regional plan.

The report must account for the premises of the plan, which in practice means:

- Describing the existing state of the region (nature, demographics, the regional economy, transport and supply pipelines etc.
- Presenting any calculations and forecasts of expected trends and
- Presenting the objectives of the planning and explaining the choices made.

The regional plan must include guidelines for urban development, the countryside, nature and environment protection, large technical facilities and retail structure. The report must also describe the expected order of the implementation of the plan. The purpose is to create the

basis for a public debate. The report must also make it easy for laymen and authorities to understand and interpret the regional guidelines. The regional plan covers a period of 12 years, but planning is a continuous process. Both the premises and objectives can change between 4 years revisions. The Country Council can therefore at any time prepare a supplement that adds to or amends an adopted regional plan.

1.2.4 The Rural Zone

The clear delimitation between town and countryside in Denmark is a result of zoning. The provisions of the Planning Act on rural zones are a cornerstone in protecting the countryside. Rural zones include the countryside and many villages.

The provisions on rural zones are mainly intended to prevent uncontrolled land development and installations in the countryside and to preserve valuable landscapes. Urban development can only occur where land is transferred from a rural zone to an urban zone through a local plan. The provisions on rural zones ensure that parcelling out, construction and changes in the use of existing buildings and land are not allowed without the permission of the rural zone authority.

An important exception is that construction necessary for commercial agriculture, forestry and fishery operations requires no permit. Nor is a permit required for additions to and renovation of existing buildings or the use of craft and industrial enterprises and for storage and office purposes of existing agricultural buildings no longer necessary for agricultural operations.

The County Councils and the Greater Copenhagen Authority are rural zone authority in the countryside. The Municipality Councils are rural zone authority in the village delimitation areas and for local plans in rural areas. The basis for assessing specific rural zone issues is the guidelines of the regional and municipal plans for development in the countryside and in villages. These guidelines weight protection and commercial interests in a broad sense.

2. NATIONAL PLANNING PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Vision 2025 for National Development

The Vision “Denmark year 2025” was part of the National Planning Report 2000 presented by the Danish national government.

The vision was built on the large “H”, which creates a structure for decentralised development in Denmark. The vision also build on the development of national centres, which are larger cities providing a variety of public and private services and having as well as having a dynamo-effect on the development in the respectively urban regions.

As a new concept the National Planning Report 2000 stated that also an urban network could be appointed as national centre. Appointing to new national centres did this - both located in

the western part of Denmark. The national centres were appointed on the basis of their willingness to co-operate and create a network between their urban centres. They each consist of 8 and 4 municipalities respectively. The aim of the co-operation is to improve the service and business structure within the networking area. The aim is also that this has an effect on the whole region and the surrounding area.

One of the strategic tasks that the national centres, has is to give room for regional development aspects to influence their planning strategy. As a result of globalisation many Danish municipalities must redefine their role in these years. A major element is to point out the consequences of being part of a region loosing elements of autonomy due to loss of industry and so on. The area of knowledge based economy has come along.



Map 3: Vision 2025

Two new national centres marked circles

Taking these trends seriously cities and regions must add to the idea of spatial planning taking more dynamic and strategic thoughts onboard.

One large issue effecting spatial planning is that business development has another structure today than previously. The specialisation in each region tends to be stronger in certain specific business areas. The use of IT and the connection to knowledge capacity seem to be crucial for each type of the traditional industry. The focus on services and knowledge based industries gives possibilities for having a greater variety of businesses in the urban centres and in residential areas.

This means, in planning terms, that there is an increasing intention to avoid urban sprawl as well as securing the qualities of the cities and towns. A focus on mixture of functions, on creating lively urban areas and to renew brown field areas is the positive outcomes of this new planning trend. The following examples from the Danish cities: Ringkøbing, Holstebro and Århus will show this from a concrete angle.

2.2 Example: Ringkøbing

Ringkøbing is a town located in the very West of Denmark by an inlet next to the Nordic Sea. It is a town of 18.000 inhabitants.

One of the towns biggest industries - the shipyard "Nordsøværftet" closed down in 1997. The town council managed to redefine the role of the city by using the old harbour area, for new purposes. What could have been a minor disaster for Ringkøbing was changed into new opportunities for the area. The council set up a masterplan for the harbour area pointing out areas for residents, business, industry and retail.

In the masterplan that was created it is emphasised that the harbour is supposed to be a new part of the town. Especially the waterfront should bring new qualities to the town. Great architectural concern was laid in the plan and the following planning for the area.

In 2000 a local plan was adopted for the area. Apart from following the ideas in the masterplan the plan was even more specific on pointing out architectural issues that had to be followed by in the new development. Elements like proportion, variation, harmony, density, light and shadow, following traditions in building, giving touch of maritime style and so on.

In 2000 the former wharf had been sold to a company which started to build 9000 m² - and the Danish windmill-industry Vestas was now the owner off the whole outer part of the old harbour. The changes have been taking speed really fast - and now only four years after the closing down of the old shipyard - big parts of the new town is there - and more is to come.

The example shows that when old industry closes down, the local councils can benefit from not hesitating in defining the new role of the area. In this case taking a regional approach in defining the role of the area, can be a way for achieving a sustainable and robust development. The whole region around Ringkøbing is building up a broad competence in windmill technology, from knowledge to production. The area around Ringkøbing has most

recently been the owner of the new National Knowledge Centre on Windmill Industry, supported by the Danish Ministry of Industry and Economics.

2.3 Example: Holstebro

The masterplan for Holstebro is a vision for the development of the city and it points out the steps to be taken. The purpose of the plan is on the one hand to create a broad urban policy and on the other hand to make a physical structureplan. The plan therefor combines the strategic use off planning with a concrete catalogue of planning guidelines.

Holstebro is located in the northwestern part of Denmark in Jutland. It is a city with 40.000 inhabitants. In the National Planning Report 2000 Holstebro together with Herning, Ikast and Struer was appointed as national centre. The role of Holstebro in that urban network is to be a town of culture, retail, education, IT-business and a high quality of the inner town.

The overall vision for the structure of Holstebro is to develop a circular town of high density to secure short distances. This gives the need of urban renewal and reuse of brown fields areas. Old industrial areas in the central part of the town are being redefined in this line. The compact structure of the city is important because of the purpose of attracting IT, knowledge based and design-oriented businesses as well as workforce.

The Masterplan shows that it is important to define ones role as part of a broader urban network. It is also valuable to be aware of the city's identity and specialisation. The masterplan is an important tool in the dialogue with external partners. The concrete plan creates an ongoing dialogue with various partners on the development of the urban areas.

2.4 Example: Århus

Århus is the second largest city in Denmark and it is one of the few bay cities in the country. The city lies literally on the waterside and is flanked to the north and south by wooded areas. The river valley cuts through the east Jutland and where it disappears into the sea Århus was founded for more than thousand years ago. For thousand years the river harbour was the primary basis for trade and fishing.

During the nineteenth century the river lost its importance as a harbour area when the large dock areas were built off the coast. At the same time, the city experienced a massive expansion.

Between 1930 and 1938 the Århus River was channelled and covered to improve traffic conditions. Adage of the past gave way to today's Aaboulevard. This was done to facilitate road traffic to and from the expanding Århus Docks at the coast.

During the recent years efforts have been made to reduce the amount and speed of traffic in the city centre, and return more of the streets to pedestrians and bicyclists.

As a part of a plan for Århus inner city the municipality decided to reopen a part of the river through the city and use the riverside area for recreational purpose. Hereby, the city could achieve a reduction of traffic, especially through traffic, and a reduction of parking space. On the other hand the architectural qualities of the city could be strengthened by recreating the river surroundings and by supplying the existing shopping area with a new attractive shopping street.

The first part of the river was reopened in 1996. Hereby the former market atmosphere was replaced by a popular cafe life along the river edge and a part of the city was returned to the pedestrians. In 1996 the Municipality of Århus received a prize for the inner city planning because of its new thinking and involving both environmental, cultural, traffical and architectural aspects.

3. CONCLUSION

The dynamic elements in planning seem to appear when the purpose of a plan is somehow connected to the existing general urban or regional development strategy. The successful development tends to occur more often, when planning is considered as a precondition for regional development, as well.

This paper have been given some examples on new planning steps as recently been observed in Denmark. The renewed strategic municipal planning legislation means that the door is open for a stronger political involvement in the strategic elements these years. The renewed legislation means that there can be an increasing synergy between physical, sector and economic planning and an ongoing development of the public participation. Municipal planning is an ongoing process, balancing between the advantages of having a set plan and strategy - and the dynamic of revising when needed.

Spatial planning can be described as a balance between, on the one side “development” and on the other side the “preparing the right conditions for development”.

The example shows in this paper add a few conclusions to this.

Local councils can benefit from not hesitating in defining the role of the area, when an industry closes down. Defining the role of the city must take a broader approach, including the whole region.

Whether it is windmill production in the case of Ringkøbing, IT and design in the case of Holstebro or it is improving the city quality and underlining its history and identity as in Århus – spatial planning is used strategically. Spatial planning can be used as the way of achieving a sustainable and robust development.

Spatial planning is the tool that cities and regions can use, in preparing good preconditions for regional and business development.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Mette Kragh has previous been employed as official in local regional government in Storstrøms and Roskilde County. She worked with EU regional policy and regional planning. Now Mette Kragh is employed as a surveyor in the Ministry of Environment, where she works in the Spatial Planning Department. Her tasks are EU spatial planning policy and Danish national planning policy.