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The Danish National Spatial Planning Framework

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Abstract

This paper attempts to provide an analysis associated with the performance of the current Danish national spatial planning framework based on a descriptive overview of its changing institutional arrangements and policy instruments. The Danish planning system has been historically qualified as holding a comprehensive-integrated character, which depicts a harmonized and coherent institutional and policy framework across different levels of planning administration. However, spatial planning in Denmark has been increasingly exposed to profound reorientations over the past two decades, a situation which could be generally understood as the outcome of a series of interrelated political and economic factors shaping and re-shaping spatial planning in different European contexts. In Denmark, the effects of a recent structural reform that changed the geographies of inter-governmental arrangements within the national territory have significantly transformed the scope, structure and understanding of spatial planning. Amongst the many implications of this reform, most spatial planning responsibilities have been decentralized to the local level while the planning domain seemingly portrays less spatial coordination and coherence across its diverse policy institutions and instruments. In this light, the paper provides a brief assessment regarding the planning outcomes of this reform and offers some key points concerning the current status of Danish spatial planning.

Key words: planning system; national planning; regional planning; land-use planning; institutional arrangements; Denmark.

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Context: Geography and General Structure of Government

Geography and Population

Located in Northern Europe, Denmark is the southernmost of the Nordic countries and consists of the Jutland peninsula and an archipelago of several hundred islands situated in the Baltic Sea. Excluding the overseas, self-governing territories of Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Denmark proper covers an approximate area of 43,000 square kilometers, a surface comparable with the sum of the areas of Maryland, Delaware and Rhode Island in the United States. In terms of land use, a total of 66% is used for farming and agriculture, while forests and heathland cover 16%. Urban zones and transport infrastructure comprise about 10% of the country's area while the remaining 7% consists of bodies of water such as lakes, marshes and wetlands (Statistics Denmark, 2012a).

As of 2012, Denmark's population is about 5.58 million, which equals a density of 129 inhabitants per square kilometer. Approximately one-third of the population lives in Greater Copenhagen (1,700,000) while an additional one-fifth resides in the country's next three largest cities: Århus (315,000), Aalborg (201,000) and Odense (192,000). According to current demographic projections, these four urban areas are deemed to continue growing in the coming decades (Statistics Denmark, 2012b).

In 2010, Denmark's GDP was DKK 1,755 billion (USD 56,300 per capita), which entailed an increase of 28% since 1990. Public and market services account for 80.1% of the GDP, manufacturing and construction for 17.1% and agriculture for 2.7%. Denmark has been traditionally characterized by high employment rates (74.5% in 2010) and low unemployment (4.3% in 2010) (OECD, 2012).

Denmark has a large public sector, which should be viewed as the counterpart of the Danish welfare system that offers free and wide access to education and health care. Subsidized by one of the highest taxation levels in the world (48% of the GDP) (Statistics Denmark 2012a), the welfare system has long succeeded in providing the population with a high level of well being as far as material conditions and quality of life are concerned. Moreover, Denmark counts with an active labor market characterized by its so-called 'flexicurity model', which combines flexibility for companies to hire and fire employees, and security for the unemployed at relatively high levels. As such, this model has contributed to adjust to shocks while limiting the social cost of unemployment. Altogether, the Danish welfare system combined with labor market flexicurity has contributed to ensure low poverty and inequality rates over time.

(Insert Figure 1 here)

System of Government and Administrative Structure

Since the enactment of its first Constitution in 1849, Denmark has functioned as a parliamentary democracy comprised by executive, legislative and judicial powers. Headed by the Prime Minister, the government of Denmark is comprised by the cabinet (*regeringen*), which carries out the executive functions of the country. The

cabinet is composed of several ministers whose core responsibility is to head specific government departments (ministries) in charge of particular sectors of government administration (currently a total of 18 ministries and 4 ministerial offices). Amongst others, the cabinet deals with draft legislation; proposals for parliamentary resolution; reports to Parliament; appointments for boards, councils and committees; decisions on proposals from the opposition for legislation, and parliamentary resolution (Statsministeriet, 2012).

The Danish system of government is based on the notion of negative parliamentarism, which entails that the Government cannot hold a majority against it in the Parliament. The Parliament (*Folketinget*) exercises legislative power and is the only branch of power enabled to adopt legislation. Consisting of 179 members (175 MPs elected in Denmark, 2 MPs in the Faroe Islands and 2 more in Greenland), the Parliament is responsible for adopting and approving the state's budgets and accounts, whilst also exercising control of the government and taking part in international cooperation (Folketinget, 2012). At the practice level, the Parliament is organized in 26 standing committees dealing with bills and proposals for parliamentary resolution. Amongst these, the Environment Committee currently deals with most planning-related affairs.

Denmark has traditionally had minority governments consisting of two or more political parties, which have established coalition governments occasionally supported by non-government parties. Based on the concept of proportional representation, the election system is carried out every fourth year although the Prime Minister may call for elections more frequently. Since October 2011, the Danish Government has been constituted by a left-wing coalition formed between the Social Democrats (*Socialdemokraterne*), the Danish Social-Liberal Party (*Radikale Venstre*) and the Socialist People's Party (*Socialistisk Folkeparti*), which has also been supported by the Red-Green Alliance (*Enhedslisten*).

Judicial powers are exercised by the Danish Courts, which since 2007 have been composed of the Supreme Court, the two high courts, the Maritime and Commercial Court, the Land Registration Court, 24 district courts, the courts of the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the Appeals Permission Board, the Special Court of Indictment and Revision, the Danish Judicial Appointments Council and the Danish Court Administration (Domstol, 2012). The Nature and Environmental Board of Appeals is concerned with planning-related matters.

In 2007, the former liberal-conservative coalition government implemented a new reform of local government structure that changed the geographies of inter-governmental arrangements in Denmark. As a result, the reform merged 275 municipalities into 98 larger units and abolished the county level. The reform similarly created 5 administrative regions with the main task to undertake hospital administration. The territorial and administrative restructuring of this reform generated a major redistribution of tasks and responsibilities between levels of government. Most notably, the former counties' responsibilities were mainly assigned to the municipal level, including most spatial planning functions.

Denmark has a decentralized system of public administration whereby local authorities administer most of the total public expenditure. The municipalities are authorized to levy taxes and are currently responsible for numerous tasks related to

employment, education, social services, culture and physical planning, amongst several others. The regions have no legal authority to levy taxes. Being dependent on central state and municipal funding, the regions' core responsibility focuses on health care administration. Both municipalities and regions are led by elected councils, which are voted for every four years.

Table 1. The 5 new administrative regions in Denmark (based on data retrieved from Statistics Denmark, 2012).

Region	Population	Area (km²)	Number of Municipalities	Largest City (~ Population)
Capital Region of Denmark <i>(Region Hovedstaden)</i>	1 714 486	2546	29	Copenhagen (550,000)
Region Zealand <i>(Region Sjælland)</i>	817 907	7217	17	Roskilde (83,000)
Region South Denmark <i>(Region Syddanmark)</i>	1 201 342	12256	22	Odense (192,000)
Region Central Denmark <i>(Region Midtjylland)</i>	1 266 682	13000	19	Århus (315,000)
Region North Denmark <i>(Region Nordjylland)</i>	579 996	7874	11	Aalborg (201,000)
<i>Total</i>	<i>5 580 516</i>	<i>42 894</i>	<i>98</i>	

General Overview and Brief History of Danish Spatial Planning

Fifteen years ago, the Commission of the European Communities contended in its *EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems and Policies* that spatial planning in Denmark held a comprehensive-integrated character, an appeal normally attributed to 'mature' planning systems (CEC, 1997). This assertion essentially derived from the statement that the planning domain in Denmark consisted of a '*... systematic and formal hierarchy of plans from national to local level, which coordinate public sector activity across different sectors but focus more specifically on spatial co-ordination than economic development*' (ibid, pp. 36-37). Accordingly, the Danish planning system distinguished itself from several other European planning systems in terms of its harmonized and coherent institutional and policy framework across different levels of planning administration.

The comprehensive-integrated tradition of planning systems and policies is mainly concerned with the Scandinavian legal family. It explicitly seeks to deliver a certain degree of horizontal and vertical integration of policies across sectors and jurisdictions. In this sense, comprehensive-integrated planning aims to achieve spatial coordination through a hierarchy of plans occurring at multiple scales. In Denmark, the birth of comprehensive planning can be traced back to the 1950s, when a number of sociospatial challenges emerged as a result of the country's increasing industrial structure and its rapid economic growth. Urban sprawl, industry requirements for extra land and a general decline of the living conditions of a considerable part of the population stood amongst the most significant. Population distribution similarly turned into an issue while a high migration rate to Copenhagen left several other regions lagging behind. This lack of balance called for the design of new planning capacities and schemes aimed at rethinking the spatial arrangement of Denmark's urban centers to tackle such increasing disparities (Gaardmand, 1993).

(Insert Figure 2 here)

In the 1970s, a territorial reconfiguration of the administrative division of counties and municipalities took place through a reform of local government structure. The rationale behind this reform was that every new municipality embraced a single town and its hinterland. Based on the provision of goods and services coupled with a hierarchical positioning of each centre in relation others, this spatial pattern came to replace the former land demarcation that displayed a sharp distinction between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, this structural reform also led to the institutionalization of Danish planning based on the social democratic ideology of equal development, which called for decentralization as the means by which development needs (i.e. a better access to public and private services that would have otherwise remained in a few urban centers) could be met throughout the entire country. In this sense, the Danish planning domain in the 1970s could be portrayed as '*...the spatial expression of the welfare state*' (Jensen & Jørgensen, 2000, pp. 31).

(Insert Figure 3 here)

Spatial planning underwent a period of ambiguity during the 1980s. While this decade observed the peak of the long-term welfarist planning exercise, which was carefully

implemented for over two decades, it also witnessed the rise of policy discourses highly influenced by neoliberal thinking. Conceived as an implementation tool, the urban hierarchy pattern was key in securing and enabling equal resource distribution throughout the whole territory. The principle of equal development thereby remained the basis of national planning policy throughout the 1980s. However, the interpretation of this principle shifted in terms of how to go about achieving equality. In this sense, the centre-right government at the time played an important role in reframing its understanding. Influenced by international agendas, the character of national planning thus began to turn away towards a rationale of diversity and modernization by the end of the 1980s (Ministry of the Environment, 1987, 1989; Nielsen & Olsen, 1990).

With national planning moving away from welfarist logics, regional planning remained confronted with the task of spatial coordination as well as the implementation of the hierarchical urban pattern. The counties thus continued to designate key roles to specific cities and towns as providers of services and infrastructure development. Additionally, the counties assumed a cross-sectoral focus stemming from the need to balance multiple interests and objectives by delivering a sound spatial planning framework for municipalities to advance their own land-use regulations. Binding regional plans thus defined urban development zones (i.e. infrastructure, traffic, business development), countryside regulations (i.e. recreational areas, nature protection, environmental resource management) and regional facility siting objectives (e.g. waste or energy facilities).

During the 1990s, Danish spatial planning became significantly reframed in terms of its objectives and contents. A single Planning Act came into force in 1992, which replaced *equal development* with the aim to achieve '*appropriate development in the whole country and in the individual administrative regions and municipalities, based on overall planning and economic considerations*' (Ministry of the Environment, 2007a). This new catchphrase could be interpreted as an outcome of an international competitiveness agenda promoted by European spatial planning policies at the time (Amin & Thrift, 1995; Newman & Thornley, 1996). Depicted along these lines, the spatial structuring and positioning of Denmark became influenced by more market-oriented and polycentric growth thinking. In this sense, notions inspired by a language of competitiveness replaced former spatial concepts based on the urban hierarchy logic (Ministry of Environment and Energy; 1997; 2000; Ministry of the Environment, 1992; 2003). Despite this policy discourse, planning at the national level continued to adopt regulatory measures in the form of planning directives (e.g. coastal protection; out-of-town retail development; EU directive on environmental impact assessment), which are legally binding for regional and local authorities.

(Insert Figures 4 and 5 here)

A crucial shift in Danish spatial planning was linked to the enactment of the above mentioned local government reform, which brought along a radical reconfiguration of the political and administrative map of Denmark. In terms of planning practice, the reform transferred the counties' tasks and responsibilities to both national and municipal authorities. The new municipalities acquired responsibilities for town and country land-use planning while the Ministry of the Environment created seven

environmental centres scattered in different parts of the country to ensure the realization of national planning interests.¹

Following the structural reform, national planning clearly positioned itself in accordance with globalisation. The 2006 national planning report stressed the need to renew spatial planning as a prerequisite to pursue competitiveness demands (Ministry of the Environment, 2006). In responding to these challenges, the report focused on promoting differentiated settlement regions, most notably on creating two metropolitan regions, namely Greater Copenhagen and the Øresund Region as one cohesive urban region, and to the Eastern Jutland Region, consisting of multiple cities along a single urban corridor. In principle, then, Danish spatial planning continued to undergo the strategic turn of the previous decade. At the same time, the reform brought along an unprecedented planning directive for Greater Copenhagen, which could be understood as a case of recentralization enabling the Ministry of Environment to carry out regional planning in such area (Ministry of the Environment, 2007b).

(Insert Figure 6 here)

So far, Danish planning during the 2010s does not seem to be positioned with respect to any particular spatial development tendency. The diverse settlement pattern approaches adopted by former national planning reports during the past two decades are barely followed up and neither visions nor strategies have been put forward by the 2010 national planning report and the 2012 national planning proposal (Ministry of the Environment, 2010; 2012). With the exception of the coming 2012 Finger Plan Directive for Greater Copenhagen, Danish national spatial planning policies no longer display any maps or project current functional dynamics within the national territory. In this sense, the current planning approach at the national level clearly breaks away from the differentiated spatial reasoning associated with previous planning exercises.

¹ National and municipal planning became 'strengthened' respectively by one-third and two-thirds of the tasks run by the counties. This calculation is made in accordance with the total number of civil servants who were actually transferred to such entities (Østergård, 2010).

The Danish Planning System: An Overview

The Danish planning system is characterized by a decentralized division of tasks and responsibilities. Since the structural reform in 2007, the Planning Act delegates responsibility for comprehensive land-use planning and regulation to municipal councils. The regional councils are in charge of preparing regional development plans to support spatial development strategies at the municipal level. The Minister for the Environment is responsible for safeguarding national interests through national planning.

The Planning Act is intended to ensure that planning meets the interests of society with respect to land use and contributes to protect nature and the environment. The Planning Act specifies the following aims (Ministry of the Environment, 2007a, p. 5):

- Ensure appropriate development in the whole country and in the individual administrative regions and municipalities, based on overall planning and economic considerations;
- Create and conserve valuable buildings, settlements, urban environments and landscapes;
- Ensure that the open coasts continue to comprise an important natural and landscape resource;
- Prevent pollution of air, water and soil and noise nuisance; and
- Involve the public in the planning process as much as possible.

Planning System Principles

Since its inception in the 1970s, the Danish planning system has been characterized by three core principles, namely decentralization, framework control and public participation.

The principle of decentralization has long been established as a cultural institution, which strives for broad political and social consensus. The idea behind decentralization entails a fine-tuned relationship between national authorities and municipal councils. In this light, Denmark has a long tradition of delegating responsibility and decision-making authority to local governments. The decentralization of planning tasks is thereby based on trust in the municipal councils, which must provide, adopt, monitor and revise comprehensive spatial planning. The municipal councils are also responsible for delivering legally binding local plans prior to the execution of development projects, and for the control of land use that is implemented through the granting of building permits. These tasks and responsibilities are described in further detail in subsequent sections of the paper.

The principle of framework control entails that planning decisions made at lower levels must not contradict planning decisions established at higher levels. This principle bears with the idea of coordinating interests across different institutional scales through dialogue and partnership. In doing so, framework control is operationalized through dialogue and veto. On behalf of the government, the Minister for the Environment is required to veto municipal plan proposals that do not abide by

the stipulations and interests put forward by the national level. At the same time, any municipality may object to plan proposals of neighboring municipalities if such a proposals inflict upon its development objectives. This is particularly relevant in the case of Greater Copenhagen, which concentrates a relatively high amount of urban municipalities that are tightly confined within the same region. Moreover, vetoes must be declared during the period of public hearing whilst municipal councils are not allowed to adopt the vetoed proposal until the Minister, based on the assessment performed by a committee of state civil servants, agrees to its contents. Based on their competences and responsibilities, any state authority is actually entitled to veto local plan proposals. Until recently, three environmental centers located throughout the country but directly attached to the Ministry of Environment took care of these vetoes.

Public participation is ensured as an important part of the planning process. Together with local plans, planning proposals at the local level must be submitted for public debate, inspection and objection for at least eight weeks before they are finally adopted. Public participation is thus regarded as a significant democratic means through which objectives for economic development and environmental improvement are to be met. Particularly in the case of binding local plans, public participation allows opportunities for public inspection and objection prior to local changes of the spatial environment. There is no opportunity of an appeal into the content of an adopted plan, as the procedures of public participation are regarded as adequate for the legitimacy of the political decision

Zoning System

Since its establishment in the 1970s, the zoning system has divided the country into three types of zones, namely urban, recreational (summer cottage areas) and rural. Development is allowed in accordance with planning regulations in both urban and recreational zones. Developments or any land use changes for other purposes than agriculture and forestry are banned in rural areas, or subject to a special permission according to planning and zoning regulations. The change of rural areas into urban zones requires the provision of a binding local plan.

The Planning Act defines an urban zone as: i. areas allocated to urban development as part of an urban development plan; ii. areas allocated as construction zones for urban development by a building by-law; iii. areas allocated to urban development or public use by a town planning by-law; and iv. areas transferred to an urban zone by a local plan. The Act defines summer cottage areas as special zones allocated for the development such purposes by a building by-law or a town planning by-law; and areas transferred to a summer cottage area by a local plan. Finally, rural zones are defined as any other areas different from urban and recreational zones (Ministry of the Environment, 2007a, p.41).

Planning Policy Framework

The Danish planning system is divided into national, regional and local levels with a decentralized delegation of planning responsibilities, which places most decision making authority and its associated administrative competences mainly at the local level. Since the implementation of the latest structural reform in 2007, the Planning

Act has transferred most spatial planning tasks and responsibilities to the 98 municipalities by giving them a high degree of planning control of urban and rural areas. At the same time, specific planning responsibilities have been rescaled to the national level. The different policy institutions and policy instruments that comprise the Danish planning system are presented in Table 2 and respectively described under the sections *Structure of Planning and Land Use Governance* and *Key Planning and Land Use Policy Instruments*. Moreover, the dynamics of the overall relationship between such policy institutions and instruments is sketched in figure 4.

Table 2. Overview of the Danish planning policy framework after the reform of local government structure in 2007.

Policy institutions			Policy instruments		
<i>Level</i>	<i>Planning authority</i>	<i>Number of inhabitants</i>	<i>Type of plans</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Legal effect</i>
<i>National</i>	Ministry of the Environment, Nature Agency	5.58 million	National planning reports	National visions regarding functional physical development	Binding guidelines and recommendations
			National planning directives	Maps and legal provisions /circulars	Binding for local authorities
			Overview of national interests regarding municipal plans	National interests arising from legislation, action plans, sector plans and agreements between national authorities	Binding for local authorities
<i>Regional</i>	5 administrative regions	1,000,000 on average (wide deviations)	Regional spatial development plans	Advisory and visionary plans	Binding for local authorities
<i>Local</i>	98 municipal councils	30,000 on average (wide deviations)	Municipal plans	Policies, maps and land-use regulations	Binding for the local authorities
			Local / neighborhood plans	Maps and details legal land-use regulations	Binding for the landowners

(Insert Figure 7 here)

Structure of Planning and Land Use Governance

National level

The Nature Agency (*Naturstyrelsen*) at the Ministry of the Environment (*Miljøministeret*) has been the national administrative authority for spatial planning functions since 2011. The Agency is responsible for facilitating the planning system and for monitoring land-use planning tasks carried out at the local level. It advises the Minister for the Environment on planning issues and is in charge of preparing planning legislation. Like its predecessors, the Nature Agency aims at using spatial planning to strengthen the implementation of the country's environmental policies whilst fostering spatial development through planning. The institutional set-up associated with national planning has been reconfigured several times since the Ministry of the Environment assumed spatial planning responsibilities in 1975 (cf. Table 3).

Table 3. Timeline showing the reconfiguration of national-level planning authorities within the Ministry of the Environment.

National-level planning institution	Period
National Agency for Physical Planning (<i>Planstyrelsen</i>)	1975-1992
Spatial Planning Department (<i>Landsplanafdelingen</i>)	1993-2002
Forest and Nature Agency Spatial Planning Office (<i>Landsplanområdet</i>)	2003-2007
Agency for Spatial and Environmental Planning Planning Office (<i>Landsplan</i>)	2008-2010
Nature Agency Planning Office (<i>Tværgående Planlægning</i>)	2011-Present

The Nature Agency represents Denmark in international cooperation on spatial planning and on the environmental impact assessment of projects, policies, plans and programmes. This cooperation takes place within the European Union, the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and with planning authorities in the Nordic and Baltic countries. The Spatial Planning Department is also consulted on planning projects outside Denmark. Besides the Nature Agency, several other entities within the Ministry of the Environment deal with planning matters, namely the Environmental Protection Agency (*Miljøstyrelsen*) and the Nature Protection and Environmental Board of Appeal (*Natur- og Miljøklagenævnet*). The former is responsible for implementing national policies regarding pollution and environmental control on air, water and soil, waste management and environmental technology by administering the Environmental Protection Act, the Water Supply Act, and the Contaminated Soils Act. The latter is in charge of processing appeals against decisions made by municipalities under the above Acts.

Other relevant ministries involved directly or indirectly in spatial planning decisions through policy intervention are the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Climate,

Energy and Building, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs, and the Ministry of Business and Growth.

Since the implementation of the latest structural reform, national planning became reinforced in relation with its capacities to intervene in local planning themes and projects of international, national or regional relevance. To ensure the implementation of national policy objectives, the Ministry of the Environment created a total of seven environment centers scattered across the country with the task to oversee aspects concerned with nature protection, water resources management, national infrastructure projects, coastal zone management, retail trade and environmental impact assessment.²

Regional Level

The regional level lost most of its clout after the abolition of the counties following the structural reform in 2007. As a result, regional councils were deprived from their power in spatial planning and were mainly left with tasks and responsibilities in relation to hospital administration. In terms of planning, the administrative regions now have the errand to facilitate the preparation of regional spatial development plans (RSDPs), which are meant to emerge from bottom-up, multi-stakeholder processes in collaboration with municipalities and other regional actors (cf. next section). Moreover, the regions also handle responsibilities regarding soil pollution and raw materials planning.

Appointed by the regional councils since 2007, regional growth fora (RGF) are partnership-based bodies that have emerged as important arenas in fostering economic growth as a means to influence the spatial development of the regions. Constituted by representatives from the business community, educational institutions, labor market entities and politicians from the regional and municipal levels, each growth forum is intended to make recommendations to regional councils and the state in questions regarding the allocation of EU Structural Funds. RGF prepare business development strategies (cf. next section) based on local conditions for economic growth, including the development of peripheral areas. Such strategies are meant to comprise part of the foundation of RSDPs.

Following the implementation of the structural reform, an interest organization known as Local Government Denmark (*Kommunernes Landsforening* or LGDK) has acquired influence in planning matters at the regional level. As the member authority of Danish municipalities, LGDK instituted municipal contact councils (*Kommunekontaktråd* or KKR) at the regional level, which to some extent have functioned as ‘parallel planning arenas’ by developing political initiatives that foster inter-municipal collaboration. With the exclusive mandate to support municipal interests, these entities have succeeded in building trust with municipal directors and have developed into a significant regional player. In some cases, these emerging bodies have partially replaced specific planning functions originally ascribed to the

² The Ministry of the Environment recently announced the closure of these so-called Environmental Centers and their reassembling under a different configuration within the Ministry’s own premises in Copenhagen as of July 2012. This decision was based on the restructuring of the Nature Agency, which aims to align and strengthen the handling of cases and decisions while reducing management and administration costs.

regional councils (cf. Galland, 2012b). In this sense, municipal contact councils could be conceived as soft spaces of governance, which serve to promote economic growth initiatives to influence spatial development at the regional level.

Local Level

After the structural reform the responsibility for spatial planning and land use in Denmark rests solely with the 98 municipal councils. The newly assembled and larger local authorities have been further empowered to provide local solutions to local needs and to combine responsibility for decision making with accountability for financial, social, and environmental consequences. Each municipality has the obligation to prepare a comprehensive municipal plan covering its whole territory. In addition, municipal authorities have the right to prepare detailed and binding local plans for specific (neighborhood) areas in order to impose planning regulations. Moreover, municipalities should also provide local plans prior to implementation of major development projects. Altogether, the municipal plan comprises a framework for detailed local plans and for processing individual cases pursuant to the Planning Act as well as other sectoral acts (cf. next section).

Key Planning and Land Use Policy Instruments

The Danish spatial planning framework is comprised by an array of planning and land use policy instruments, which are developed by planning policy institutions at different scales. The following table provides a synthesis of these instruments, which are described in further detail in what follows.

Table 4. Summary of planning and land-use policy instruments.

Plan	Status and duration	Objectives, form and use	Production
<i>National planning reports</i>	Statutory reports providing general guidance and policies. Compulsory preparation after every national election.	Sets out the current national planning policies and provides guidance for regional and local planning authorities. Their rationale, scope and development orientation has varied widely over the past four decades (Galland, 2012a).	Prepared by the Ministry of the Environment and adopted by the government.
<i>National planning directives</i>	Statutory directives providing binding regulations on specific issues of national interest.	Sets out legal provisions on specific issues of national interest, e.g. determining the path for natural gas pipelines; the siting of wind turbines and electrical transmission lines.	Prepared and adopted by the Minister for the Environment. Binding for regional and local authorities.
<i>Overview of national interests regarding municipal plans</i>	Statutory reports prepared every four years.	To determine the interests and considerations arising from politically adopted decisions in the form of legislation, action plans, sector plans, national planning decisions and agreements between public authorities	Prepared by the Ministry of the Environment in cooperation with other relevant ministries. Binding for local authorities.
<i>Regional spatial development plans (RSDPs)</i>	Advisory, strategic development plans that describe the 'desired future spatial development' for each administrative region. Prepared every four years.	Portrayed as 'umbrella' tools for the inspiration of growth and development initiatives at the municipal level. In practice, RSDPs reject the aspiration to manage and control spatial development at lower scales (Galland, 2012b).	Framed to emerge from bottom-up, multi-stakeholder processes facilitated by the administrative regions in collaboration with municipalities and other regional actors.
<i>Municipal plans</i>	Statutory plans providing land use regulation. Compulsory revision every four years, covering the whole area of the municipality with a 12-year horizon.	Set out general and specific policies and regulations for land use in urban and rural areas. Main political instrument for development control at municipal level.	Prepared and adopted by municipal councils. Subject to public consultation at two formal stages: prior to preparing the plan proposal and prior to adoption. Binding for local authorities.
<i>Local / neighborhood plans</i>	Statutory plans providing binding regulations for local/neighborhood areas. Compulsory preparation prior to implementation of development proposals.	Set out detailed regulations for future land use, including written statements and maps to a scale between 1:500 and 1:5000.	Prepared and adopted by municipal councils. Subject to public consultation and objections for at least eight weeks prior to adoption. No possibility for appeals except for legal issues. Must comply with municipal plans. Binding for landowners.

National Level

The rules on national planning were originally introduced in 1974 and were significantly reinforced after the structural reform in 2007. As a whole, the national planning policy framework for comprehensive spatial planning and land-use decision-making is constituted by planning reports, binding regulations, guidelines and intervention in municipal planning for themes and projects of international, national, regional and local interest.

National Planning Reports

National planning reports set out overall spatial policies and objectives after each government election. In doing so, these reports are firstly prepared and submitted by the Nature Agency as a proposal with several thematic alternatives. Before the Minister for the Environment submits the report to Parliament on behalf of the government, a period of public debate is held whereby municipalities and other actors react to the proposal. The objectives of these reports are to provide guidance to the regions and municipalities and to set forth national planning policies on specific issues. The reports are prepared by the Nature Agency based on cooperation with other relevant ministries.

The contents and discourse associated with national planning reports suggest the adoption of distinctive development orientations and roles in pursuit of growth and development. Galland (2012a) shows how national planning reports, in liaison with other national policies, have assumed steering, balancing and strategic roles over different timeframes since the inception of national planning in Denmark. For instance, by aligning with welfarist logics, national planning played a steering role from the 1970s until the late 1980s (cf. figure 3). However, steering was largely supplemented and even substituted by balancing and strategic roles during the 1990s and 2000s.

The balancing role of spatial planning as expressed by national planning reports integrates former and current policy agendas through the merging of spatial concepts and the mediation of conflicting objectives. ‘Balancing’ thus emerges when the aim of spatial planning becomes rather differentiated in relation with its original welfarist objectives conducted through steering capacities. In this sense, the balancing role should be perceived as part of the reinvention of spatial planning as a policy domain conveyed by the introduction of economic and environmental dimensions stemming from sustainability agendas. In parallel, the strategic role of spatial planning arose following the adoption of European spatial planning concepts, which advocated competitiveness measures based on visionary strategies for spatial development (cf. e.g. figures 4, 5 and 6). A more detailed rationale behind the functional shifts behind the contents and objectives of national planning reports is offered below in the section *Factors Shaping Danish Spatial Planning*.³

³ Moreover, a thorough descriptive analysis concerning the history and evolution of national planning policy in Denmark can be accessed in: Galland, D. (2012a) Understanding the reorientations and roles of spatial planning: The case of national planning policy in Denmark, *European Planning Studies*, 20(8), pp. 1359-1392.

National Planning Directives and Rules

Directives are prepared and adopted by the Minister for the Environment and are binding for regional and local authorities. These instruments set out legal provisions on specific issues of national interest, e.g. determining the path for natural gas pipelines and the siting of wind turbines and electrical transmission lines. In this sense, planning directives can be used in two different ways: to make plans on specific infrastructure projects and to state siting regulations for energy facilities.

Following the introduction of planning directives for coastal area protection and retail trade in 1994 and 1997, respectively, the Planning Act adopted straightforward and simplified rules for both domains. In terms of retail planning, the overall rule is that land designated for retail trade must be located in town and city centers in a way that shops are accessible by all means of transport, particularly walking, cycling and public transportation. Moreover, regarding coastal protection, construction within 300 meters from the shoreline is banned and new summer cottage areas may no be designated. A coastal zone protection of 3 kilometers from the shoreline has been designated, which prohibits the transfer land to an urban zone or to conduct planning for development in a rural zone unless there is a specific planning-related or functional justification for location near the coast.⁴

Greater Copenhagen Finger Plan Directive

A special directive aimed at steering the development of Greater Copenhagen was introduced in 2007, which establishes a spatial framework for whole region by promoting urban development in accordance with the principle of station proximity (cf. figure 8). Greater Copenhagen can be conceived as one integrated region, including one cohesive labor market with common green areas. However, its governance has been historically complex as the region involves numerous municipalities (currently 34) responsible for their own spatial planning. The directive is based on the spatial conception of the first Finger Plan published in 1947, whereby Greater Copenhagen was vividly portrayed in the shape of a hand that outwardly projected an ordered urban expansion along five corridors (the fingers) into rural areas towards the west and north of the inner city (the palm) and in direction of relatively nearby towns. This expansion was based on the idea of moderate population increase and housing stock positioned in function of suburban railway lines. The space between the corridors was preserved for agricultural and recreational purposes.⁵

Resonating with its predecessor, the 2007 Finger Plan Directive regulates land use in all the 34 municipalities in Greater Copenhagen by delimiting areas for urban development, green areas, transport corridors, noise impact areas, technical installations, and so forth. Accordingly, the directive and the Planning Act state that Greater Copenhagen is subdivided into four geographical zones, namely the core urban region (the palm of the hand), the peripheral urban region (the fingers), the

⁴ A recent amendment to the Planning Act, effective September 2011, has loosened planning rules and directives in 29 'peripheral' municipalities to allow for more developments in rural areas and coastal zones. To a certain extent, this measure reflects the former (liberal-conservative) government's intention to minimize planning constraints.

⁵ The renowned 1947 Finger Plan for Greater Copenhagen was the first planning initiative above the urban level in Denmark. It came to represent the first comprehensive planning attempt to coherently address matters such as mass transport, industry development, housing and nature preservation in a supra-urban scale.

green wedges (located between and across the urban fingers) and the rest of the urban region (where urban development is only allowed in connection with municipal centers) (Ministry of the Environment, 2007a, pp. 9-10).

While the directive is not strategic in itself, it does make explicit the overall objective of securing a well-functioning metropolitan area to enhance international competitiveness. The binding nature of the 2007 Finger Plan Directive and the handover of its direction and execution to the Nature Agency after the structural reform are illustrative of how spatial planning tasks and responsibilities have also been recentralized. A recent amendment to the directive is currently being performed based on the political aim to convert Greater Copenhagen into a 'greener' urban region.

(Insert Figure 8 here)

Overview of National Interests on Municipal Planning

Prepared by the Ministry of the Environment in cooperation with other relevant public authorities, this report outlines the aims and requirements of the government with respect to municipal planning. Arising from political decisions based on legislation, sector plans and agreements with other ministries, the report includes aspects concerned with urban development (including special considerations for greater Copenhagen), energy supply, green transport, green growth, tourism and recreation, use of rural areas and aspects of nature protection (Ministry of the Environment, 2011). These considerations are discussed and dealt with prior to the process of revising the municipal plans every four years.

Published every fourth year, this Overview should be understood as a core national planning instrument that municipalities should abide by in order to avoid veto. As already stated above in explaining the principle of framework control, the Minister for the Environment has the right to veto a municipal plan proposal on behalf of all the government ministers if such proposal contradicts national interests. Vetoes are made during the public hearing period, and the municipal council cannot adopt the proposal until the Minister agrees to its content. A committee of state civil servants assesses each municipal plan proposal during the period of public comment to coordinate the state's viewpoints. A national veto can also be imposed against a local plan when national interests are at stake. This way, the means of monitoring, dialogue and veto work to achieve a sustainable balance between the two levels of administration.

Table 5. Historical overview of relevant national spatial planning policies in Denmark.

1. *Zone Plan for Denmark (1962)*
2. *Report on Regional Planning and Regional Divisions (1966)*
3. *National and Regional Planning Act (1973)*
4. *National Planning Reports (1975-1979)*
5. *Municipal Planning Act (1977)*
6. *Report on the Future Urban Settlement Pattern (1979)*
7. *National Planning Reports (1980-1991)*
8. *Planning Act (1992)*
9. *National Planning Report (1992)*
10. *Planning Directive on Coastal Protection (1994)*

11. *Planning Directive on Retail Trade (1997)*
12. *National Planning Report (1997)*
13. *National Planning Report (2000)*
14. *National Planning Report (2003)*
15. *National Planning Report: The New Map of Denmark (2006)*
16. *Planning Directive: Copenhagen Finger Plan (2007)*
17. *Overview of National Interests regarding Municipal Planning 2009 (2007)*
18. *National Planning Report (2010)*
19. *Overview of National Interests regarding Municipal Planning 2013 (2011)*
20. *National Planning Report (forthcoming 2013)*

Regional Level

Regional Spatial Development Plans

This new type of strategic plan aims to capture and foster spatial development in close connection with business development. The RSDPs differ notably from the former physical, land-use regional plans as they only adopt a visionary scope, which limits them to offer a simple overview for growth possibilities at the regional level. In this sense, RSDPs focus on potential regional strengths within in diverse sectoral areas, namely business and labor market, education, tourism and recreation, culture, nature and the environment. As already stated, RSDPs emerge from bottom-up, multi-stakeholder processes in dialogue with municipalities. The role of the administrative region is thus to facilitate the actual process of generating such plans. Moreover, RSDPs should ensure cohesion with a series of sectoral plans and strategies, including those for business development (cf. below), employment, Local Agenda 21, education and culture.

In contrast with RSDPs, the former regional plans had a land-use character and addressed measures to manage and safeguard environmental assets. Influenced by the sustainability momentum of the 1990s, policy themes such as water resources management, nature protection and tourism were formerly assumed by the counties, which established 'green councils' to offer political advice as regards balancing nature protection with land-use considerations. Regional plans were imperative not only as guiding instruments for municipal plans, but also as conciliatory tools. In this sense, regional plans held an intrinsic capacity to coordinate municipalities in matters transcending their own boundaries. The regional planning process was crucial in balancing conflicting interests related with traffic services (such as harbors, railways and roads) and the siting of 'undesirable' facilities (e.g. solid-waste treatment plants, sewage disposal sites and windmill parks). Regional planning thereby ensured that a particular sectoral decision was not undertaken at the expense of another (for instance, a transport decision impacting heavily on environmental assets) while the process enabled the possibility for a diverse array of stakeholders to engage in plan negotiations between municipalities and counties during public debates. The suppression of the county level and its associated regional planning practices seem to have generated an important policy gap in the Danish planning system.

Business Development Strategies

Prepared by partnership-oriented regional growth fora (RGF), these new policy documents are aimed at improving the local conditions for economic growth. RSDPs should ensure cohesion with these strategic documents, which are based on the strengths of local businesses within each administrative region. Prepared every four years, these strategies are based on drivers for economic growth, namely innovation, entrepreneurship, education and new technology. Based on these strategies, RGF are intended to make recommendations to the state and the regional councils on support of European Union funds and regional development projects.

Local Level

Municipal Plans

The municipal plan is the main political instrument of the council for development control and serves at the time as a strategy for social and economic development and environmental improvement. The plan combines political objectives, land use policies and the more detailed land-use regulations into one document covering the total jurisdiction. Altogether, the municipal plan provides the linkage between national planning interests and detailed local plans.

The municipal plan consists of three parts:

- i. *A general structure* that establishes the overall goals and determines the future development of the community for housing and working, as well as environmental conditions, infrastructure facilities, and supply of public and private service. The general structure is displayed as a land-use plan locating specific areas for specific purposes (cf. figure 9).
- ii. *The Guidelines for land use* that cover a range of themes as stipulated in the Planning Act such as: designation of areas as urban zones and summer cottage areas; location of various urban land uses; structure of retail trade; location of transport facilities and technical installations; location of areas for hazard enterprises; location of areas for leisure purposes; the use of water courses and coastal waters; and the administration of agricultural, nature protection, and cultural interests.
- iii. *A framework for local planning*, which provides the basis for implementation through adoption of local plans. The framework describes the actual contents that local plans for the designated areas should include.

Each municipal plan is accompanied by a report describing the premises by which the plan is based. The report will normally include a presentation of the relationship with national and regional spatial development planning and the municipal planning in adjacent municipalities; and the expected chronological order for implementation of the plan. Municipal plans must be revised every four years. Between the main revisions the municipal council can prepare supplements to the plan. The process for revising or supplementing the plan is a four-stage procedure:

- i. *A strategy for municipal planning* indicating the overall goals of revising or supplementing the municipal plan. The strategy shall be published for public

inspection and debate for at least eight weeks. A strategy for Local Agenda 21 must also be advanced in connection with the municipal planning strategy, which specifies political objectives aimed at fostering sustainable development at the local level.

- ii. *Prior public participation* where the municipal council shall solicit ideas and proposals for the forthcoming planning. However, for minor amendments the municipal council may refrain from this procedure.
- iii. *Plan proposal*. The municipal council prepares the plan proposal (based on planning considerations, the public debate, and contact with other authorities) to be adopted by the council. The plan proposal (or supplement) shall be published for public inspection and debate for at least eight weeks for submission of objections etc. the proposal is also sent to the Ministry of the Environment to ensure consistency with the overview of national interests.
- iv. *Adoption of plan*. The municipal council processes the comments and objections submitted during the period of public participation and may make any relevant changes. The final proposal is then adopted and published.

Appeals can only be made concerning the legal issues involved in the planning process; for example whether the proper procedure was followed. There is no opportunity for an appeal against the content of plans, and there is no opportunity for an appeal against the discretionary decisions of the authorities when administering the adopted planning regulations. This also applies for the local plans (cf. subsection below).

The municipal plan is not binding for the landowner but the municipal council must strive to implement the adopted plan. Proposals for local plans as well as land-use decisions in general have to be consistent with the adopted planning regulations. Therefore, the plan is constantly monitored according to the general spatial and economic conditions of the community and the plan may be amended by provided supplements whenever needed.

The procedures, the structure of the plan, and the minimum content of regulations are determined by the Planning Act, but the municipal authorities have wide latitude in their planning approach. Traditional land-use regulation is the basic element in order to provide the framework for control of development and implementation. But the plan also has the potential as a strategic means linking sectors and coordinating municipal activities, e.g. in relation to urban regeneration, environmental resilience, and policies on attracting commercial development or improving the living conditions for specific population groups. The municipal plan thus summarizes the overall political objectives and priorities for development of the municipality.

(Insert Figure 9 here)

Local Plans

Local plans are the foundation of Denmark's spatial planning framework. The local plan is the main instrument for the municipal authority to issue detailed planning regulations while also the basic means for planning control through the issuing of building permits. The plans are legally binding on the landowners and hence

determine development possibilities and influence property values. Local plans are legally binding on the landowners who may not act in contradiction to the plan. However, local plans only regulate future transactions and thus do not require property owners to act. Regulations through local plans are hence not subject for claims of compensation.

A local plan is a flexible tool with numerous uses and, therefore, the content and extent of the plans may vary widely. The predominant use (about 80% of the local plans) is to provide detailed planning regulations for a small area in order to implement a specific development project. This relates to the power and duty for the municipality authority (stated in Planning Act) to provide a local plan prior to implementation of any *major* development and construction works. This duty is crucial to the planning system, as it ensures that *larger* developments are brought within the regulation of the planning system and within the provisions of public participation before implementation. The terms ‘major’ and ‘larger’ above refer to the extent of impact on the existing environment, and this understanding is well established after more than 30 years of practice.

As mentioned local plans may have various uses. The key use is to serve as the legal base for implementing specific development projects, e.g. a group of new dwellings, a hotel resort, a public institution or industrial works. A local plan may also be provided to issue detailed regulations for protecting and preserving valuable historical and architectural features in the centers of provincial towns. Another purpose may be to establish overall planning guidelines setting the scene for future development that may require further detailed local plans prior to implementation.

A local plan must contain two parts: the legal provisions and regulations for future land use displayed on maps, and a report accounting for its relation with the municipal plan and other relevant planning policies. Finally the plan must state the purpose of the plan and legal effects. Legal provisions govern the future spatial use of the area in terms of land use and construction works. The provisions can include a wide range of detailed regulations as determined in the Planning Act such as: zoning status; use of land and buildings; size and extent of properties; roads, tracks and transmission lines; building density and design; landscape features; etc.

Before adopting a local plan the municipal authority provides at least eight weeks for public inspection and comments. State authorities may veto a local plan if the proposal contradicts national interests. The municipal council then processes the comments and objections and may make any relevant changes before adopting the plan. The municipal council publishes the adopted plan on their website and makes it available on the national planning information system “PlansystemDK” (cf. figure 10).⁶

⁶ The e-planning portal provides public access to all municipal plans and local plans (either adopted or proposed) across Denmark. The map-based interface provides a range of navigation tools including address, cadastral parcel number, municipality, and area polygons. The areas of the development plans can be displayed in combination with cadastral maps, topographic maps, orthophotos and other kind of land-use constraints, such as conservation areas and coastal protection zones. Once the citizen has identified the development plan of interest, the system provides direct access to an electronic copy of the local plan and can display and generate a list of all properties (cadastral parcel numbers) impacted by the development plan. The e-planning portal also provides citizens with the facility to provide direct feedback on proposed development plans during the statutory eight-week consultation period.

(Insert Figure 10 here)

Plan 09 Initiative

In supplementing the above national reports, regulations and directives, the Ministry of the Environment set forth an initiative called Plan 09 in aiming to supervise and enhance dialogue between the national and local levels after the structural reform. Demanding new priorities and innovation on several fronts, the task of advancing comprehensive spatial plans for urban and rural areas evidently became a major challenge for the newly formed municipalities. Plan 09 was thus launched to support the development of methods and knowledge-sharing within and between municipalities in the planning process. Beyond addressing contents and know how, Plan09 similarly focused on enhancing political ownership and fostering local planning culture. The initiative thereby required cooperation between municipalities, consultants, researchers and interest groups on rethinking the structure, contents and spatial priorities of municipal plans.

Plan Implementation Tools and Processes

The Danish planning system is mainly plan-led (rather than market-led) with development possibilities being determined in the general planning regulations at the municipal level, and further detailed in the legally binding local plans. However, planning regulations established by the planning system are mainly restrictive. While the system is designed to prevent that undesirable development occurs at any time, it cannot guarantee to ensure that politically desirable development actually takes place at the right place and time, since the planning intentions are mainly achieved through private developments.

Legal Means of Planning Control

When a local plan is adopted, the development possibilities are legally determined and development proposals that conform to the planning regulation are easily implemented without any time delay. When no local plan is provided the basic condition for approval and implementation of development proposals refers to the extent to which the proposal conforms to the adopted planning regulations in the municipal plan. The legal means of planning control can then be explained by examining four possible situations of development proposals as shown in the table below.

Table 6. Legal means for planning control in terms of scenarios for development proposals (CEC, 1999).

Political decision Development proposal	Desirable	Undesirable
	Conforms to adopted planning regulations	Does not conform to adopted planning regulations
	Permission (i)	Prohibition (iii)
	Adjustment (i) (ii)	Refusal (iv)

- i. Major development proposals may be subject to providing a local plan.
- ii. Planning regulations in the municipal plan have to be formally amended or adjusted prior to approval. This process includes negotiations between the developer and the municipal authority as well as public participation prior to adoption.
- iii. The municipal authority has the power of prohibition by imposing a ban for a maximum of one year. Within this period a local plan must be provided with new planning regulations, which will prevent the implementation of the original development proposal.
- iv. Refusal requires that the planning regulations in the municipal plan are sufficiently precise to allow the proposal's unconformity to be decided. Otherwise a ban must be imposed, cf. (iii) above.

It is evident from the diagram above, that the legal means of planning control are sufficient. The system is able to ensure that undesirable does not occur, and the system also enables that desirable development can occur even if it does comply with adopted planning regulations.

Means of Implementation

Even if the means of planning control are well in place, implementation may not automatically take place as intended by the municipal plan. This relates to the fact that most development is implemented through private developers and investments. However, the municipal authority may enforce implementation in some cases, e.g. by compulsory purchase for urban development in compliance with the municipal plan, although this option has not been much used in recent years. Another option for the municipal council is to use compulsory purchase (expropriation with full compensation) as a means to implement a local plan. However, this will presuppose that implementation is imminent and that the landowner has no intentions or does not want to contribute to implementing the plan. Expropriation can also be used for implementing planning for public institutions and infrastructure facilities.

The municipal authority may also adopt a more active role in purchasing land and property at the free market for the purpose of achieving planning objectives in a longer perspective. This way the municipal council becomes the developer and can take full control of the implementation process (cf. e.g. Galland, 2011). It must be noted though, that the activities of the municipal councils are limited by the so called 'municipal authority' (*kommunalfuldmagt*) stating that the councils are not entitled to engage in business activities and thereby compete with other private activities and they are not allowed to support individual business enterprises. In relation to plan implementation, this means that the municipal authority cannot offer favorable terms such as below market land sales or tax abatement as a means encourage implementation. The courts eventually solve any conflicts that may rise in relation with the municipal authority.

The municipal council may also decide to invest in a policy that encourages private investments in trade and industries. This relates to investment in public institutions and infrastructure to support easy access and a good social environment for the work force. Furthermore, the coordination of spatial, sectoral, and economic planning supported, for instance, by a municipal branding campaign, can provide an attractive investment environment for the private sector.

Building Control

The Building Act determines the final control of implementation to be executed through the granting of building permits, which must be consistent with adopted planning regulations. The building permit thus functions as the final stage in the planning control system. The Building Act also provides a range of detailed regulations of construction works. Larger development proposals are subject to provision of a local plan that will set the planning regulations. When processing the building permit for implementing the construction works the municipal authority will check the project against the adopted planning regulations and other relevant

legislation, as well as the detailed demands for construction works as listed in Building Act.

If the development proposal only turns out to have a minor impact on the local environment the municipality may still decide to provide a local plan for issuing detailed planning regulations. Otherwise the development proposal must comply with any precise planning regulations in the municipal plan. In the case when there is no local plan and no precise regulations in the municipal plan concerning the specific area for development, the development proposal must comply with the general building provisions as stated through the Building Act. These regulations imply a minimum plot size, a maximum building density and building height, a minimum distance from a building to a party boundary. These general building provisions serve as basic safeguard for appropriate development, and they do not apply when otherwise stated in a local plan.

Zoning and Sectoral Land Use Control

As mentioned in the above planning system overview, a basic element of the planning system is the division of the country into three zones: urban, summer cottages, and rural zones. Development is allowed in urban and summer cottage zones in accordance with the current planning regulations. In rural zones, covering about 90% of the country, developments or any change of land use for other purposes than agriculture and forestry are prohibited or subject to a special permission from the municipal authority according to planning and zoning regulations. These provisions are intended to prevent urban sprawl and as well as uncontrolled development and installations in the countryside. Changing rural zones into urban zones requires provision of a local plan stating the planning regulations for future development. Any change from urban to rural zone is followed by compensation to the landowners for any expenses the owner has incurred in anticipation of using the property in an urban zone.

In addition to the regulations already mentioned above there are a range of other rules that may affect the possible use of land and thereby require permission. For example, a permit is needed for implementation of construction works within the fixed protection zones of natural features (coastal, forests, streams) identified in the Nature Protection Act; change of farming land to be used for urban purposes requires a permit according to the Agricultural Holdings Act; and implementation of development projects that are likely to have significant effects on the environment are subject to environmental impact assessment according the Environmental Protection Act that is carried out as a supplement to the municipal plan. All of such statutory land-use provisions must be complied with even if a local plan is provided.

In summary, the impact of national versus local government in support of sustainable development is a mix of vertical and horizontal connections where national and sectoral policies are implemented in a top-down mode while they become integrated at the local level through comprehensive spatial planning. Altogether, monitoring, dialogue and the national power of vetoing a proposal for a municipal or a local plan constitute the core means to make the planning system work.

Factors Shaping Danish Spatial Planning

Planning systems were originally advanced in several Western European post-war welfare states during the 1960s and 1970s. Behind their emergence was the rise of 'Keynesian welfarism', which relates with the interventionist position of capitalist states to secure full employment and economic growth through a congruent association between national economy, national state and national society (Jessop, 1990; 2000). Planning systems and policies emerged in this context as spatial frameworks to tackle the mounting socio-economic disparities that occurred between regions. In terms of spatial concepts, these objectives were materialized within individual national territories based on hierarchies of central places (Christaller, 1966).

As the Danish case indicates, spatial planning agendas at the time were translated into plans, regulations, guidelines and schemes dealing with land-use allocation, urban expansion, infrastructure development, settlement improvements and sectoral policy co-ordination, amongst others. Based on these qualities, the traditional conception of spatial planning in this and related European contexts could be understood as:

"... the methods used largely by the public sector to influence the future distribution of activities in space (...) undertaken with the aims of creating a more rational territorial organization of land uses and the linkages between them, to balance demands for development and to achieve social and economic objectives" (CEC, 1997, p. 24).

The downfall of welfarist regimes led to the establishment of neoliberalism, which sought to promote international competitiveness and sociotechnical innovation in open economies. A main implication stemming from this paradigm shift was that social policies became significantly subdued to economic policies in allowing for greater labor market flexibility. Accordingly, by the 1980s, the traditional scope of spatial planning was readapted to support new economic experiences by replacing welfarist policy objectives with the promotion and regulation of distinct development projects such as efforts aimed at revitalizing rundown areas of cities and city-regions (Healey et al., 1997).

In Denmark, however, this neoliberal turn did not take place at the same pace as it might have occurred elsewhere in Europe (e.g. in Britain or the Netherlands). In contrast, the Danish social democratic state kept key policy sectors out of the market and introduced neoliberal policy adjustments later until the mid-1980s, whereby policies were modulated to improve the performance of its accumulation regime (Jessop, 2000; Harvey, 2005). As implied in the sections above, this fact contributes to explain why the underlying conception of Danish spatial planning at the national and regional levels remained essentially unchanged until the early 1990s and mid-2000s, respectively.

As elsewhere in Europe, Danish planning policies were subjected to neoliberal adaptations during the 1990s. In what has been defined as a 'strategic turn' in spatial planning (cf. e.g. Salet & Faludi, 2000; Albrechts et al., 2003), spatial planning supplemented its project-led and land-use regulatory focus with a new emphasis on innovative place-making activities based on relational processes for decision-making (Healey, 2007). This new focus on 'place qualities' caused that spatial planning

policies were reframed in a vocabulary of economic positioning to promote competitive cities and city-regions in European and global contexts (cf. e.g. Healey et al., 1999). In Denmark, this shift was particularly noted in the contents and orientation of national planning reports (1992, 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2006), which became inspired by spatial planning concepts derived from the European Spatial Development Perspective (CSD, 1999; Faludi, 2004) that to a considerable extent replaced the former welfarist logic based on urban hierarchies.⁷

The following series of economic, socio-cultural, and political factors contribute to explain how the planning domain in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe has been shaped since the 1990s (Albrechts et al., 2003). As framed here, it is worth noting that most of these factors are rather connected with the changing conception of national and regional spatial planning in Denmark. As such, the Danish case of land-use planning that was largely re-scaled to the local level (except for Greater Copenhagen) has remained largely unchanged in terms of its contents. Moreover, the political factors stated below are intrinsically related with changing institutional arrangements, which have influenced all levels of government in Denmark particularly after the structural reform.

Table 7. Synthesis of factors shaping and re-shaping spatial planning in European contexts during the 1990s and early 2000s (based on Albrechts et al., 2003, p. 115)

Economic

- Re-structuring of production relations.
- Global positioning of city regions through ‘competitiveness’ agendas
- Widening of economic relations from local networks towards global relationships.
- Rules applied by the European Union (e.g. EU regional development funds).
- Fiscal stress of governments and the consequent search for partnerships to increase investment capacities.

Environmental

- Ecological vulnerabilities and environmental constraints on economic growth.
- Concern for quality of life and environmental consciousness.

Political

- Decentralization of governance functions and new forms of governance and government reorganization (e.g. structural reforms of local government).
- Changes in financing local governments (need for budget sharing).
- Political/cultural emphasis on regional and local identity and cohesion.
- New modes of territorial policy integration.
- Discourses and practices of a European spatial planning policy community.

In terms of its institutional arrangements, the Danish planning system displays a significant alteration compared with its original structure even though, in principle, the framework control by which the national level steers local levels remains in place. The former steering role of the state should be understood in light of the welfarist conception of spatial planning and of the emergence of ‘classical-modernist’ institutions, which sought to attain ‘territorial synchrony’ during the post-war decades (Hajer, 2003). The progressive transition from welfarist to neoliberal regimes caused

⁷ Denmark was the main Nordic contributor of the ESDP (Böhme, 2002). Several concepts derived from this initiative were incorporated in Danish national planning policies.

that the state's planning tasks and responsibilities were transferred to an array of different actors operating at different administrative levels. Consequently, there has been an upsurge of governance structures oftentimes occurring at scales different from formal administrative and territorial levels, which supplement or replace hierarchical arrangements.

In this sense, the abolition of the Danish counties and of land-use planning functions at the regional level is suggestive of how the progressive loss of 'territorial synchrony' (Hajer, 2003) and the 'hollowing out' of nation-states (Jessop, 2000) have been lately 'filled in' (Jones et al., 2005) by 'soft spaces' of governance (Haughton & Allmendinger, 2007; Haughton et al., 2010) occurring at regional and local scales. Soft spaces can be illustrated by examples of formal and informal bottom-up initiatives that include public and private stakeholders working across policy sectors and administrative scales. In Denmark, the rise of Regional Growth Fora and Municipal Contact Councils influencing regional development planning illustrate this notion.

The termination of several decades of 'statutory' regional planning has been the outcome of different interrelated factors that stem from the implementation of the structural reform. The 'softening' of the Danish planning system, the governance dynamics associated with 'filling in' the regional scale, the emergence of soft spaces of planning and governance based on urban clusters and polycentricity (as promoted by the 1997, 2000 and 2003 national planning reports) as well as settlement and commuting regions at different scales (as promoted by 2006 national planning report), the explicit alignment of national planning with competitiveness objectives (until 2006) and nature protection agendas (as of 2009), and the re-scaling of land-use functions and policies are amongst the most notorious factors (cf. Galland, 2012a, 2012b).

Key Outcomes and Lessons

The outcomes stemming from the above review suggest that the Danish national spatial planning framework has somewhat diverged from the comprehensive-integrated tradition that originally characterized it. In principle, a comprehensive-integrated planning system is meant to depict coherent conceptual orientations as well as stable and coordinated institutional structures occurring within and across the different levels of planning administration. The Danish case shows that current planning policies and practices embedded in the system have less to do with spatial coordination (as compared with outcome of the first structural reform in the 1970s) that they do with supporting divergent policy agendas (e.g. nature protection or business development that depict rather spaceless conceptualizations). Hence, there is less spatial reflection and thematic coherence across policies put forward at national and regional levels (with the exception of Greater Copenhagen). In this sense, national-level planning is mainly concerned with promoting specific sectoral issues, regional-level planning concentrates on fostering growth-oriented strategies to facilitate regional development, and municipal planning now undertakes physical land-use tasks and responsibilities in urban and rural areas.

From an institutional angle, Danish spatial planning also seems to detract from its comprehensive-integrated character. The institutional set-up of the Danish spatial planning system originally portrayed institutional comprehensiveness and territorial synchrony. In principle, the inheritance of these qualities seems to stay put in the graphic representation and the structural configuration of the planning system (cf. figure 7). However, it is evident that the welfarist scope of this former state spatial project has been significantly altered after the recent abolition of the county level and the rescaling of planning tasks and responsibilities to national and local levels. In this sense, the formal institutional structures of planning within and across administrative levels have become less consistent.

At the national level, spatial planning has gradually lost an important share of its former institutional clout, particularly under the rule of the liberal-conservative coalition government during the previous decade. This is illustrated by the changing institutional arrangements within the Ministry of the Environment whereby spatial planning tasks have been reduced and handed over from the now extinct Spatial Planning Agency to an office within the Nature Agency whose agendas certainly diverge from those that were once promoted by former planning authorities. At the regional level, a fuzzy governance landscape characterized by the emergence of formal and informal soft spaces has lessened the narrow reach of RSDPs. Finally, the local level stays put as a strong land-use actor with strong legal means of planning control (albeit subdued to national level interests and planning directives). In this sense, a new hierarchical relationship has been generated between national and local planning authorities, which focuses more on regulatory intervention than it does on spatial coordination.

The above policy and institutional shifts as well as the ‘softening’ of the principle of framework control suggest that the comprehensive-integrated approach of Danish spatial planning could be worn out. Whereas the scope of the former comprehensive-integrated version of Danish spatial planning was self-evident by definition, the current version entails ambiguous conceptual orientations and unrelated institutional capacities across levels of planning administration. To an important degree, the divergent policy framework and the partial institutional fragmentation associated with the Danish planning system exposed by its less related plans and its less connected administrative levels imply that the performance of Danish spatial planning can only be exercised through a local land-use regulatory framework.

To understand Danish spatial planning at a broader level, it becomes necessary to look into the changing planning rationale and the shifting and emergent, formal and informal governance arrangements associated with every layer within the planning system whereby shifting policy contents and competing institutional capacities seem to diverge from the inherited synchronized logic of the current planning regime. While the Planning Act nonetheless continues to hold on to its former systematic logic based on framework control, the above disparities suggest that there could be a need to redefine or at least readjust the institutional framework of Danish spatial planning.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has attempted to provide a descriptive analysis of the Danish national spatial planning framework in terms of its governance structures and policy instruments. From a broader political economy stance, the paper has also addressed a series of factors that seem to shape the performance of the Danish planning system in light of its more recent structural reorientations. In this sense, the paper has stressed that the comprehensive-integrated character of Danish spatial planning has been gradually dissolved. This argument is supported by the impression that there is less spatial coordination and coherence across different levels of planning administration as well as less spatial reflection embedded in most policy instruments (except for municipal plans and the Greater Copenhagen directive). In this sense, current planning policies and practices at different administrative levels neither address the potential physical structure nor the functional relationships associated with Denmark proper. In contrasting with its predecessor, the current planning system pays less attention to the integration and coordination policy strategies put forward by other sectors (i.e. the tasks and responsibilities associated with the now extinct regional plans). This lack of strategic reasoning and geographical thinking has evidently reduced the possibility for spatial planning to have a say in present and future decision-making processes. Hence, in contrast with its predecessor, the current Danish planning system has less power to make plans matter.

The above review also suggests that Danish spatial planning has the faculty to align itself with prevailing government agendas. In this respect, spatial planning ends up reflecting the ideologies and interests of the government in place. Influenced by a wave of globalisation and competitiveness agendas, neoliberal-minded governments have evidently favored the relative strength of specific economic sectors within the country since the late 1980s. In contrast with the social welfarist objectives of the 1970s, these governmental preferences in support of new sectors have indirectly caused that spatial planning be regarded more as a cost than an asset. Accordingly, it is evident that the Danish planning domain has increasingly lost political clout.

The 2007-2008 'Credit Crunch' and the on-going recession, in principle, only seem to diminish the significance and weight of spatial planning in Denmark. In view of the on-going global economic restructuring, there is evidently a common perception amongst governmental actors about a lessened need for comprehensive spatial planning. Globalisation and the accompanying liberalization of world markets have led to radical changes with regard to Denmark's role in the international division of labor. As elsewhere in Europe, the Danish manufacturing industry (which traditionally played a fundamental role in the country's economy) became more equally distributed and a considerable part of it has been outsourced to Asia. At the same time, other sectors (like finance, tourism and transport) have significantly developed. These economic shifts imply that the overall profits associated with the Danish economy relate much more to international monetary flows and much less to local production. Consequently, also from this sectoral stance, the need for spatial planning seems to have radically diminished (excluding the case of transport and infrastructure planning). It is also in this context that the recent structural reform can be understood as a state initiative to mobilize institutions towards different forms of economic growth promotion.

As of late 2011, a centre-left coalition government has come into power replacing the liberal-conservative government that ruled Denmark since 2001. This new government will face the challenge to go through the still on-going recession, implying that a continued focus in support of growth agendas is most likely to remain in place. Based on these assertions, Danish spatial planning as conceived before the structural reform is unlikely to persist under its temporary setback status during the 2010s. Rather, it is more likely to persistently remain 'spaceless' (again, except for municipal planning and Greater Copenhagen) and deprived from all its former societal and distributive capabilities. In this sense, planning is also likely to be understood as an all-purpose tool designed to fill-in specific sectoral agendas, particularly at national and regional levels. Without a sound, cross-level planning system, local land-use planning could hence be prone to face numerous inter-municipal challenges given the lack of expertise to deal with spatial coordination, formerly a regional competence that has been voided.

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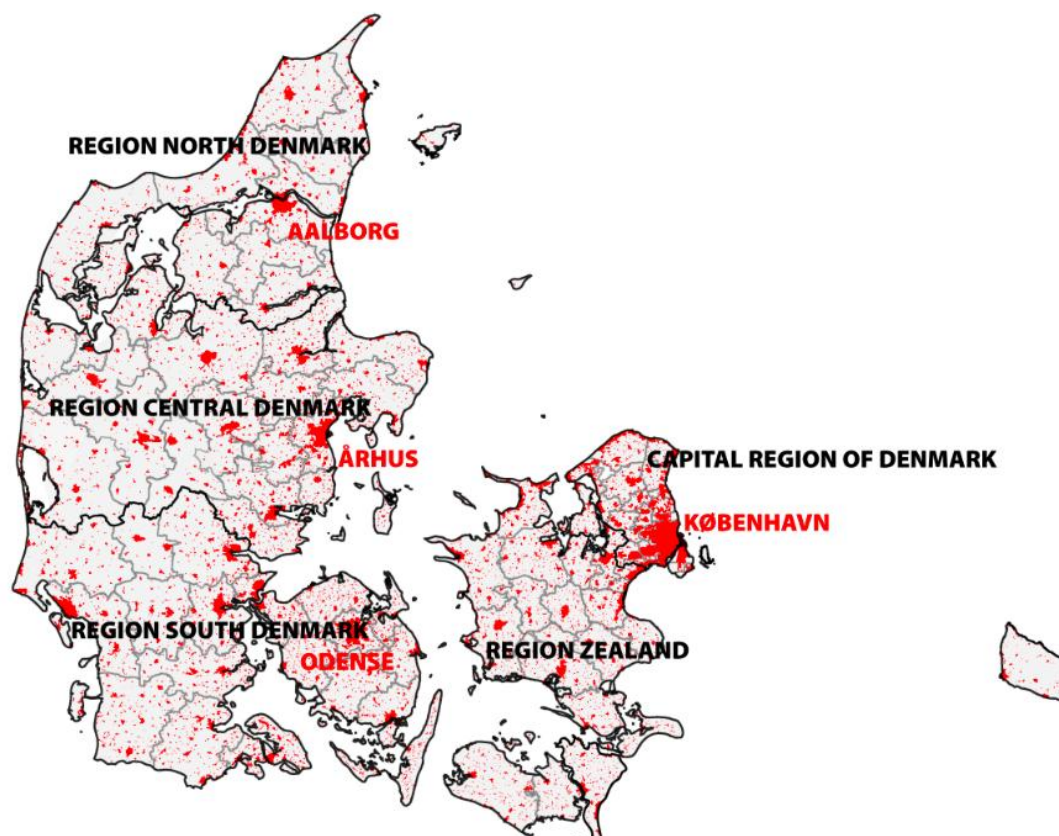
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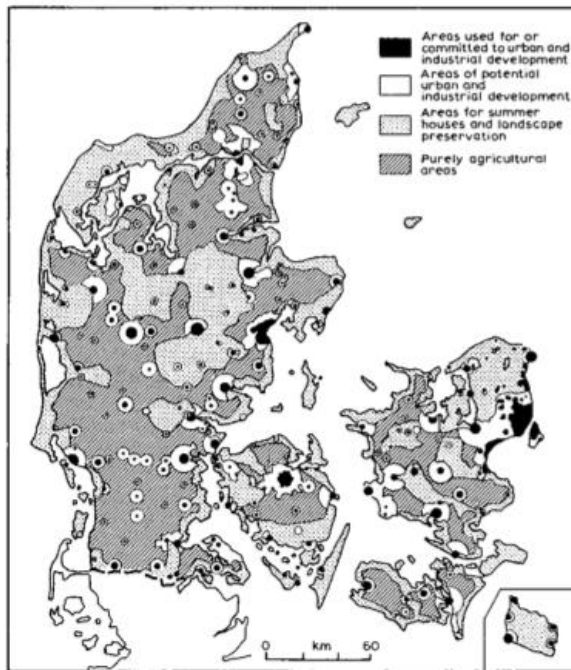
Figures

Figure 1. Urban and rural areas of Denmark within an administrative subdivision of 5 regions and 98 municipalities.



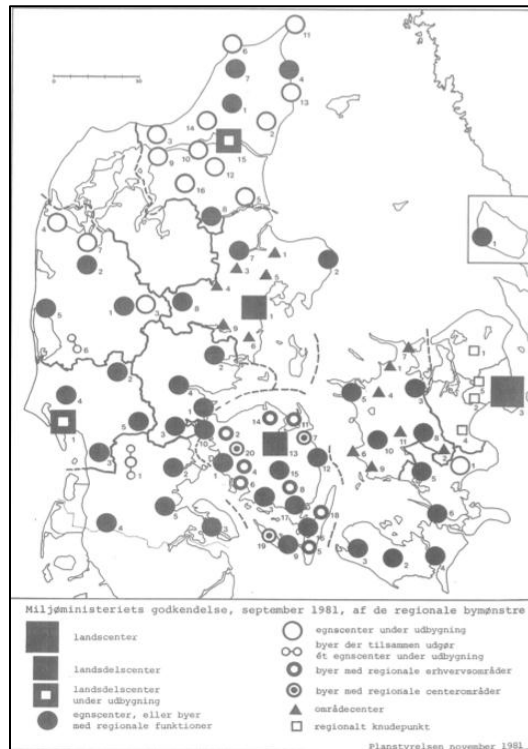
Source: Authors' own.

Figure 2. Zone Plan for Denmark prepared in 1962 by the National Planning Committee.



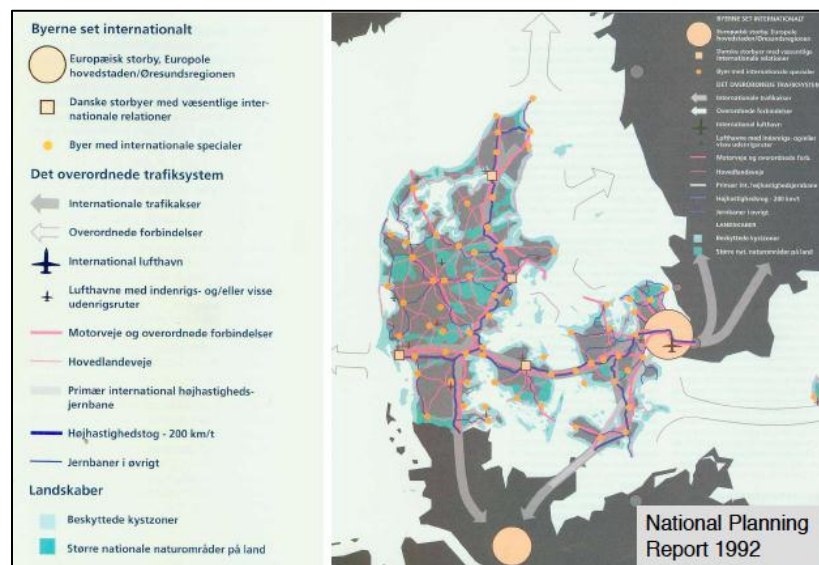
Source: Elbo, 1981, p. 293

Figure 3. The former hierarchical urban settlement pattern of Denmark based on national, regional and local centres.



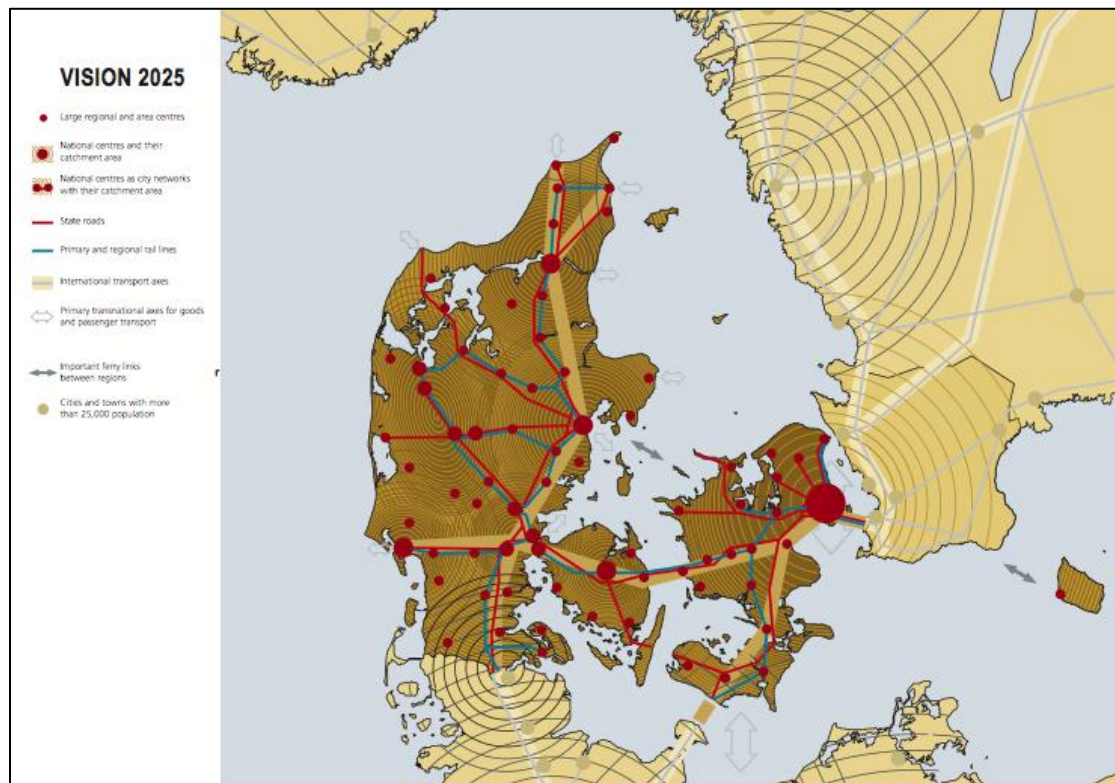
Source: Ministry of the Environment, 1981, p. 34

Figure 4. Spatial development perspective in the 1992 National Planning Report.



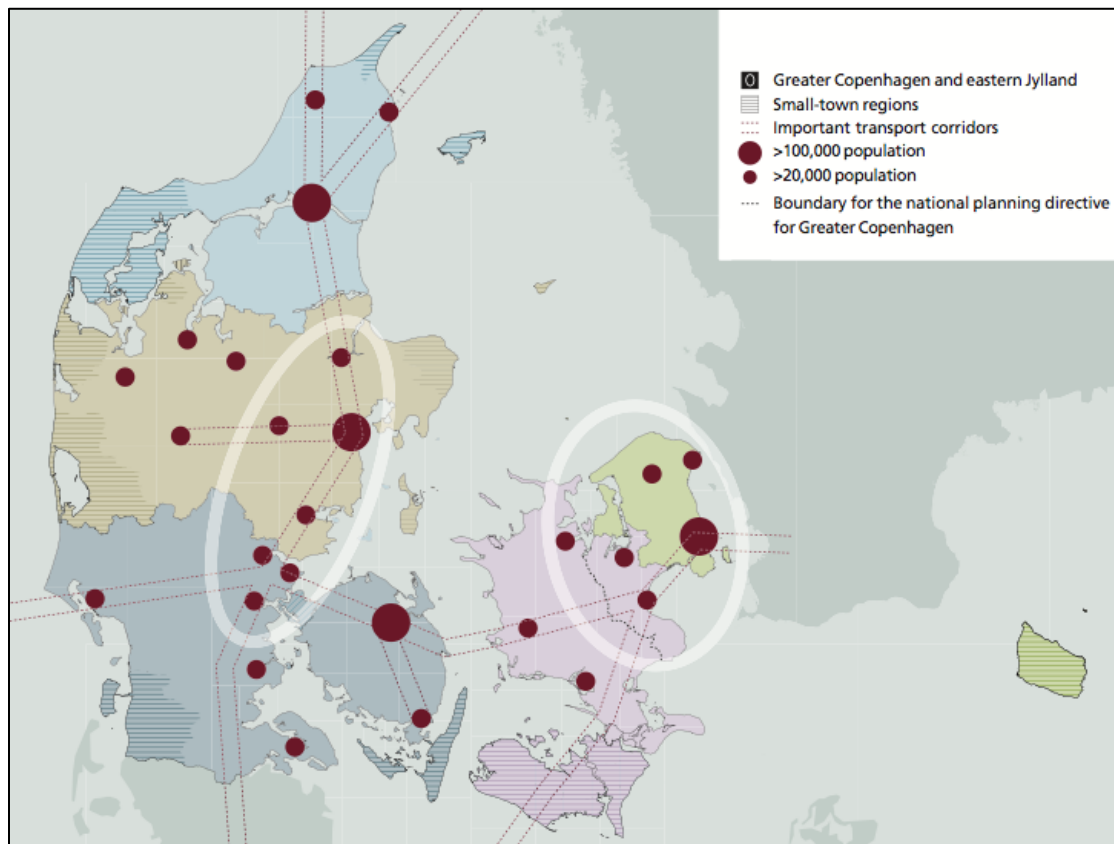
Source: Ministry of the Environment, 1992, p.15.

Figure 5. The 2000 National Planning Report 'Vision for 2025'.



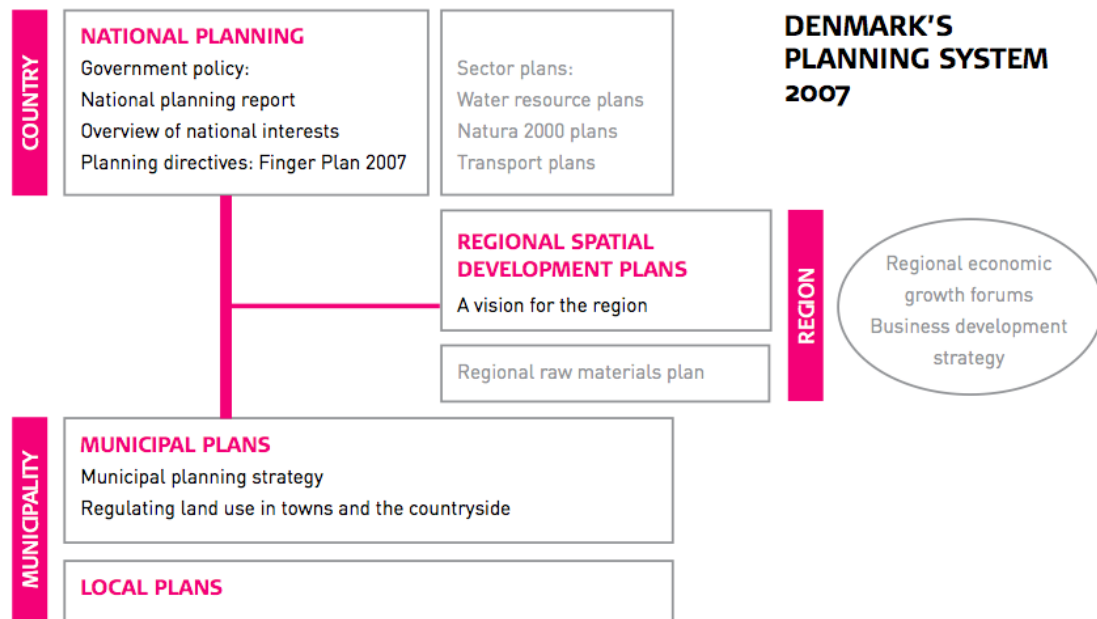
Source: Ministry of Environment and Energy, 2000, p. 15.

Figure 6. The 2006 National Planning Report 'The new map of Denmark'.



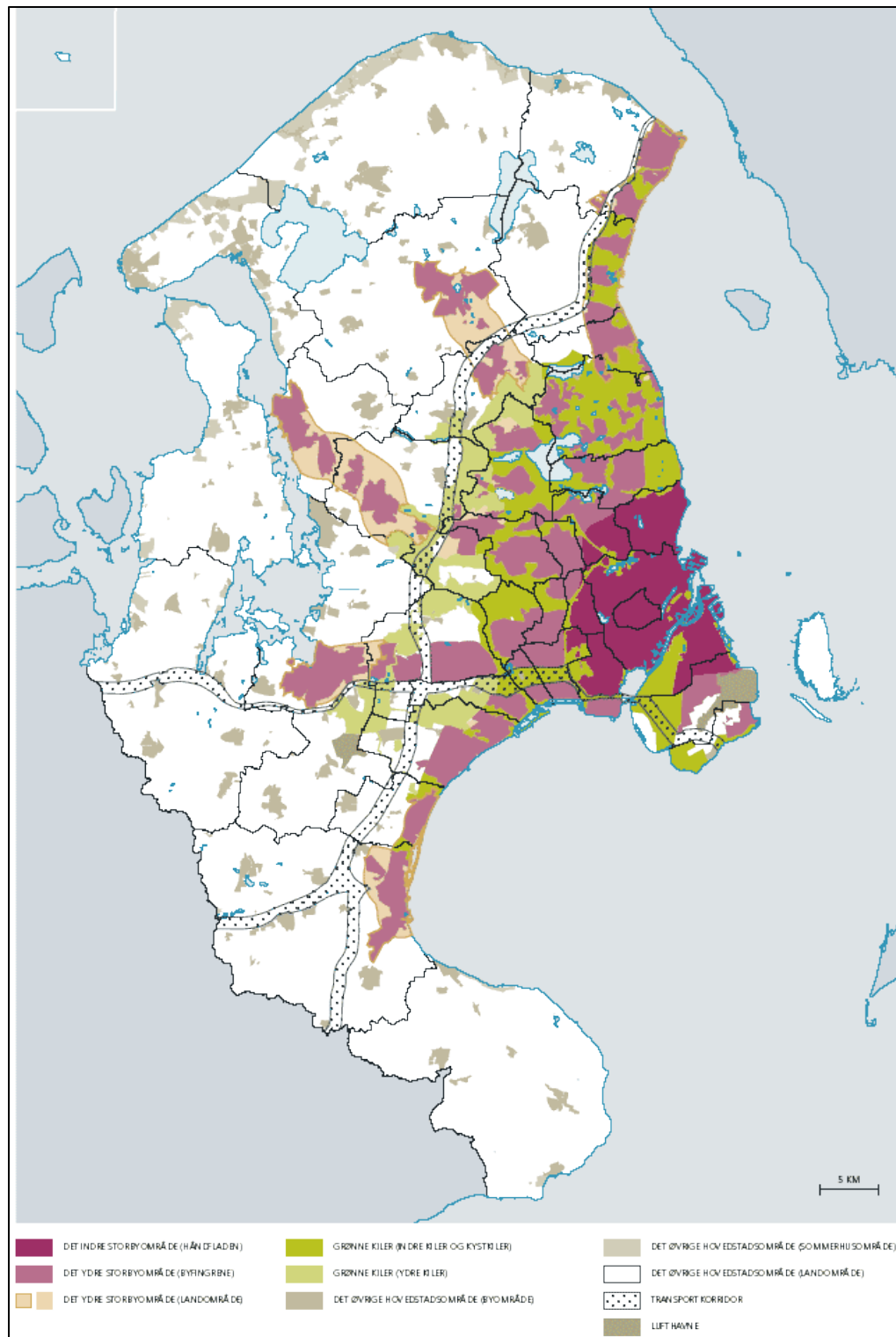
Source: Ministry of the Environment, 2006, p. 15.

Figure 7. The Danish planning system after the implementation of the structural reform in 2007.



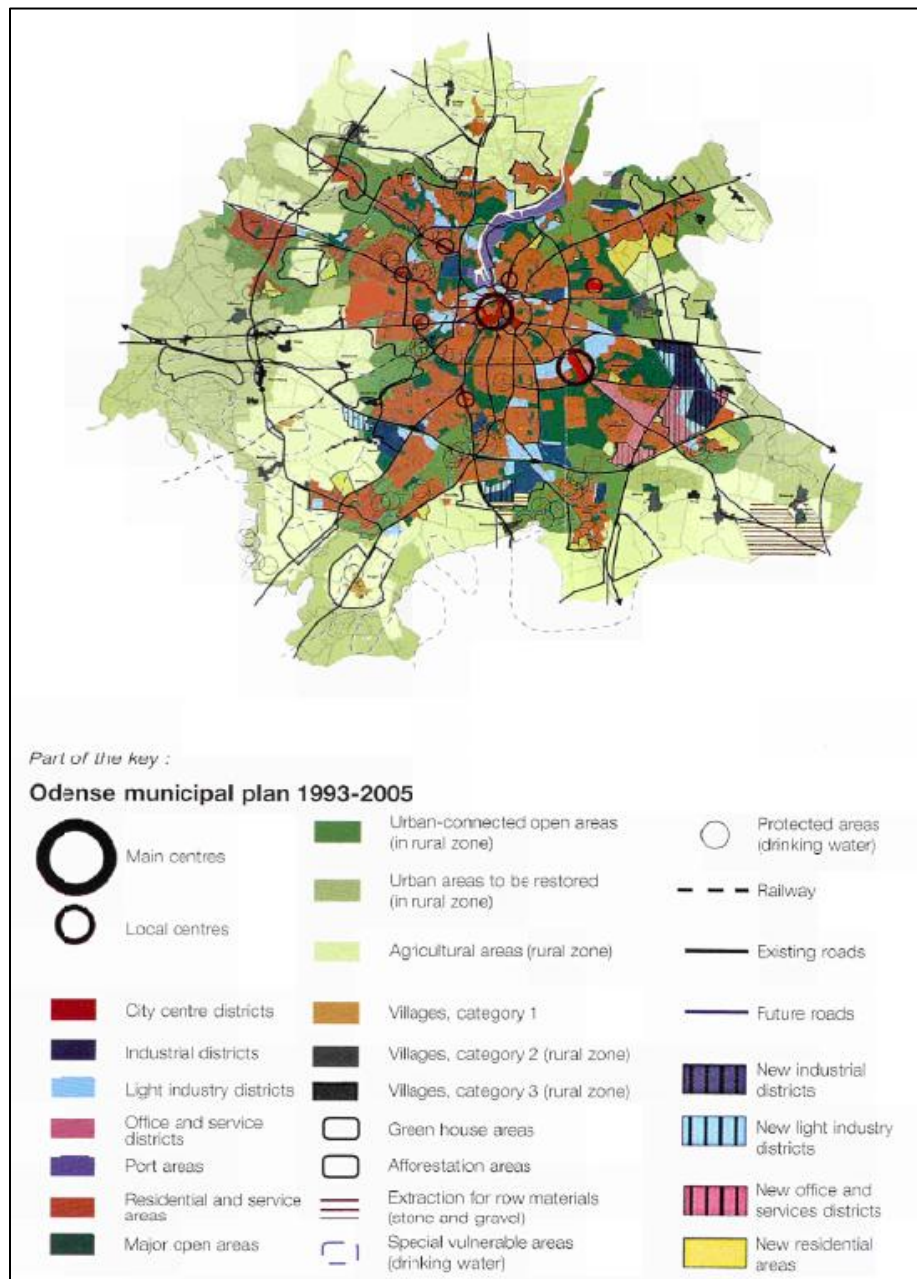
Source: Østergård, 2009, p. 14.

Figure 8. Greater Copenhagen 2007 Finger Plan Directive.



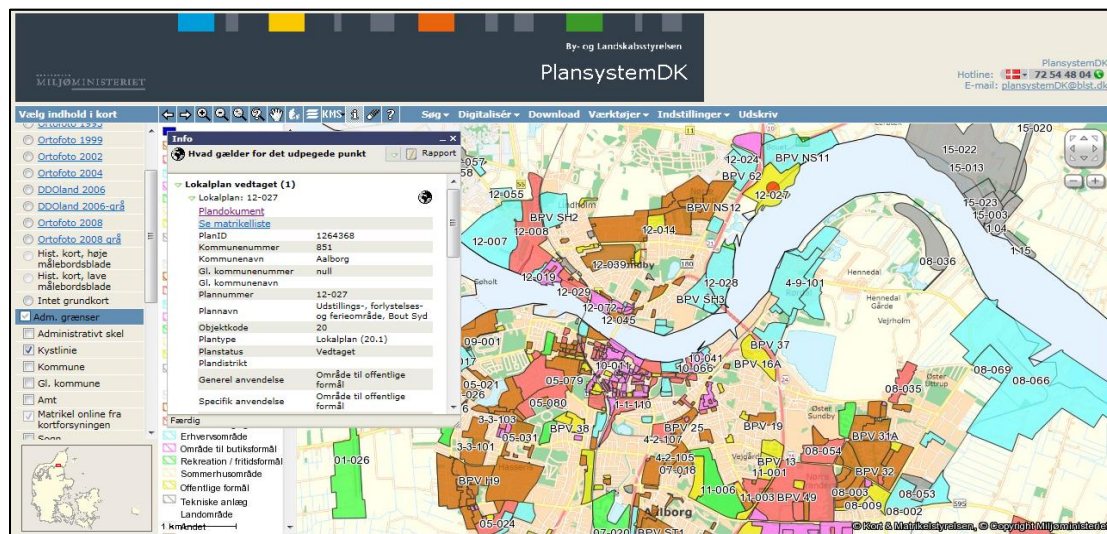
Source: Ministry of the Environment, 2007b, p. 16.

Figure 9. Example of a general structure of a municipal plan (the former Municipality of Odense).



Source: CEC, 1999, p. 119.

Figure 10. Example of the Danish e-planning portal ‘PlansystemDK’



Source: Retrieved from <http://plansystemdk.dk>