

The Conversion of Spatial Planning in Denmark: Changes in National and Regional Planning Policies and Governance Structures¹

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Summary

Danish spatial planning has been increasingly subjected to significant structural, functional and conceptual reorientations over the past two decades. The comprehensive hierarchical framework wherein planning policies and practices used to operate became considerably modified after the implementation of a local government reform back in 2007. The reform abolished the county level, which implied the re-scaling of planning policies, functions and responsibilities to municipal and national levels. This situation brought about radical shifts concerning the implementation of land-use tasks and the performance of institutional arrangements within and beyond the planning system. Based on an analysis concerned with these structural changes, the paper delves into the reorientation of spatial planning in Denmark in terms of the evolving conception of planning policies at different territorial scales, the changing role of planning in catering to growth and development matters, and the shifting institutional arrangements associated with the planning domain.

Key words: Spatial planning, planning system, planning policy, structural reform, Denmark.

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Resum: *La transformació de l'ordenació del territori a Dinamarca: canvis de les polítiques nacionals y regionals de planificació i de les estructures de governança*

L'ordenació del territori a Dinamarca ha estat significativament sotmesa a reorientacions estructurals, funcionals i conceptuals durant les darreres dues dècades. El marc jeràrquic d'administració en què les polítiques i les pràctiques de l'ordenament territorial solien dur-se a terme fou àmpliament modificat després d'una reforma del govern local implantada el 2007. Aquesta reforma propicià la revocació del nivell regional, induint el reescalament de les polítiques, les funcions i les responsabilitats de l'ordenament territorial als nivells municipal i nacional. A través de l'anàlisi d'aquests canvis estructurals, aquest article s'immergeix en la reorientació de les polítiques d'ordenament territorial a diferents escales, en l'evolució del paper de l'ordenació del territori en la gestió del creixement i del desenvolupament, i en els canvis de les estructures de governança associats a l'ordenació del territori a Dinamarca.

Paraules clau: ordenació del territori, sistema de planificació, polítiques de planificació territorial, reforma estructural, Dinamarca.

Resumen: *La transformación del ordenamiento territorial en Dinamarca: Cambios de las políticas nacionales y regionales de planificación y de las estructuras de gobernanza*

La ordenación del territorio en Dinamarca ha sido significativamente sometida a reorientaciones estructurales, funcionales y conceptuales durante las últimas dos décadas. El marco jerárquico de administración en el que las políticas y las prácticas del ordenamiento territorial solían llevarse a cabo fue ampliamente modificado después de una reforma del gobierno local implementada en 2007. Dicha reforma propició la revocación del nivel regional, lo que indujo el reescalamiento de las políticas, las funciones y las responsabilidades del ordenamiento territorial a los niveles municipal y nacional. A través del análisis de estos cambios estructurales, este artículo se sumerge en la reorientación de las políticas de ordenamiento territorial a diferentes escalas, en la evolución del rol de la ordenación del territorio en la gestión del crecimiento y del desarrollo, y en los cambios de las estructuras de gobernanza asociados a la ordenación del territorio en Dinamarca.

Palabras clave: ordenación del territorio, sistema de planificación, políticas de planificación territorial, reforma estructural, Dinamarca.

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1. Introduction to recent planning system shifts in Denmark

Spatial planning in Denmark has been exposed to important reorientations over the course of the past two decades. The comprehensive character associated with planning policies and practices at different administrative levels has notably shifted after the implementation of a structural reform that changed

the country's political subdivisions in 2007. Based on the principle of framework control, comprehensive spatial planning formerly entailed a high degree of cohesiveness and synchronisation amongst policy instruments and institutions across different levels of planning administration. Amongst the many implications of such reform, however, the county level became abolished and its land-use planning functions and responsibilities turned out to be re-scaled foremost to the municipal level. Changes have similarly taken place in terms of the governance structures in charge of spatial planning, wherein older and emerging institutions tend to assume different roles in catering for growth and development matters.

Such differentiation in Danish spatial planning suggests that the scope of planning policy at every level of planning administration currently entails different objectives and intended outcomes in relation with one another. To understand such differentiation, there is a need to inspect the grounds and motivations behind evolving planning policy orientations and spatial plans as well as the characteristics and capacities of emerging institutional practices entrenched within the altered structures of Danish spatial planning. To do so, the paper aims at unveiling the structural changes related with spatial planning policies and institutions, particularly after the implementation of this recent structural reform. The paper contends that the reorientations of spatial planning could be interpreted in light of the evolving conception of spatial planning policies; the changing role of spatial planning in catering for growth and development; and the changing governance structures embedded in the practice of spatial planning.

Following this introduction, the paper is subdivided in four sections and a conclusion. Firstly, the paper contextualises the case of spatial planning in Denmark from a historical perspective by introducing the core principles and objectives of the planning domain. Second, it covers the evolution of spatial planning in Denmark from the 1980s until recent policy shifts in the mid-2010s, a period that altogether showed significant signs of change with respect to the domain's policy frame at national and regional levels. Thirdly, the paper delves into the most recent transformations in spatial planning by addressing the motives behind the alluded influential reform of local government structure as well as the consequences that the reform, as such, has caused in terms of planning system's shifts until today. Fourthly, the paper assesses the character of such structural shifts and discusses some of the core challenges that potentially emerge from them. Finally, the paper draws some concluding remarks by synthesising the lessons learned from the case study.

The paper builds on the analysis of planning policies and is informed by several interviews that have been conducted with key policymakers and planning actors at different scales. Amongst others, the examination of policy documents related with Danish spatial planning includes national planning

reports, regional (land-use) plans, regional development plans and business development strategies. Such analysis has been supplemented by structured and semi-structured interviews conducted with national and regional planners involved in plan and strategy-making processes over the course of the past two decades.

2. The genesis of spatial planning in Denmark³

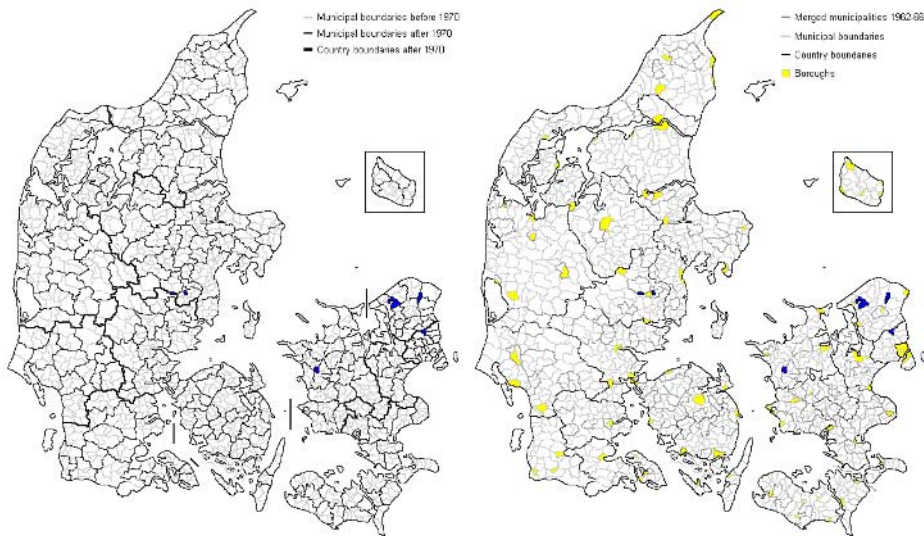
The Danish planning system is founded “...in the tradition of understanding the necessity for functional cities and the regulation of land-use” (CEC, 1999, p. 18). Its original scope is rooted in forms of physical planning aimed at the regulation of towns and the zoning of urban districts. In Denmark, the need for more comprehensive planning arose during the mid-1950s when the country faced a series of unprecedented challenges and side effects product of its rapid economic growth and its changing industrial structure. Some of these consequences comprised urban sprawl, industry requirements for additional land, an increasing demand for summer cottages and a decline in living conditions for a considerable part of the population (Elbo, 1981). This situation led to establishing a series of planning law reforms during the mid-1960s (CEC, 1999).

On top of the above issues, there was a distribution concern that soaring economic growth was being experienced mainly in Copenhagen while other regions were considerably lagging behind. Population distribution also turned into an issue given the high migration rate to Copenhagen and some eastern towns in Jutland. The perception of an “unbalanced Denmark” hence emerged and turned into a political debate that reached all sorts of planning spheres (Gaarmand, 1993). A demand to push for local development based on comprehensive regional planning seemed as the appropriate path towards addressing such disparities.

Denmark underwent a structural reform in the 1970s that resulted in a first radical territorial and political reconfiguration concerning the administrative subdivision of counties and municipalities (fig. 1). The core idea behind this reform was that every new municipality embraced a single town and its hinterland by adhering to a ‘central place’ settlement pattern, whereby the largest town in every given municipality maintained a central position to provide the remaining towns and villages with access to basic and more specialised services (fig. 2). This approach clearly substituted the former land demarcation that showed a sharp distinction between the urban and the rural.

3. An in-depth account regarding the history and evolution of national spatial planning in Denmark can be found in Galland (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.

Figure 1. The local administrative and political division of Denmark before and after the 1970 structural reform



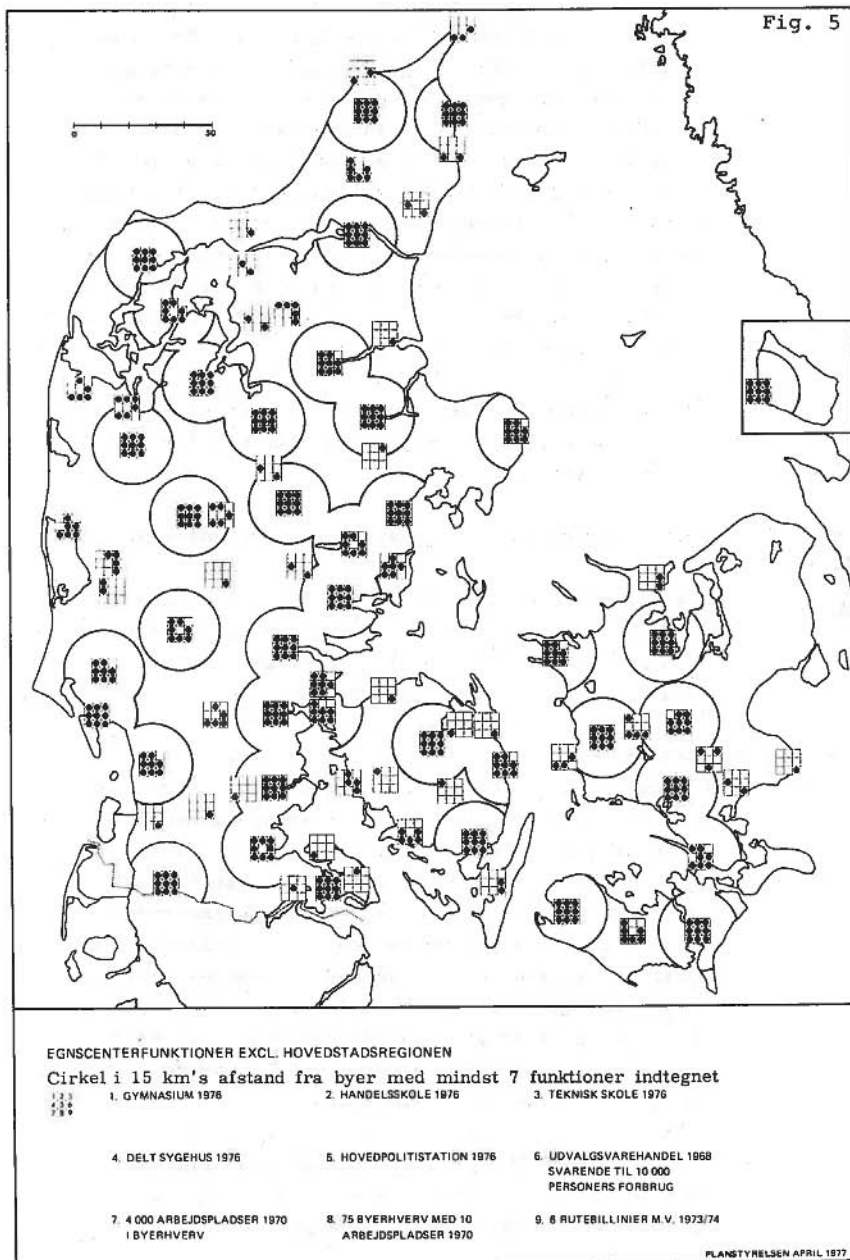
Source: Jorgensen & Vagnby, 2005

This first structural reform hence prompted the establishment of an urban settlement pattern in Denmark. Planning at the national level determined the creation of national, regional, municipal and local centres based on the notion of service provision. In doing so, the principle of equal development was adopted at the policy level, which called for the need to reach decentralisation targets in order to meet the developmental needs of more peripheral regions. This approach essentially translated into a better access to public and private services that would have otherwise remained in larger urban centres (Ministry of the Environment, 1978).

From the mid-1970s until 2007, the national spatial planning framework in Denmark consisted of three levels of planning administration (national, regional and local) and four types of plans (national, regional, municipal and local). Regulatory planning instruments at the national level (i.e. planning directives) were also adopted later in the 1990s. The planning system was therefore based on shared objectives amongst different levels tied together through social welfarist logics. This was implemented through the principle of framework control by which plans at lower levels could not contradict the objectives, interests and conditions determined by plans at higher levels.

To summarise, the 1970s saw the rise of coordinated forms of planning that became institutionalised. Planning became the means by which welfarist ideas could be implemented through the equal distribution of resources across the whole territory. The social democratic ideology of equality thereby became the founding mechanism of the national planning apparatus in Denmark.

Figure 2. Urban pattern of Denmark with respect to public and private service functions. The circles in the map represent urban centres with at least 7 service functions located within a distance of 15 kilometres



Source: Ministry of the Environment, 1978

3. The evolution of national and regional spatial planning policies

3.1 The evolution of national planning

National planning during the 1980s underwent a transition period that, to some extent, lacked a consistent pattern. While the beginning of the 1980s observed the peak of a long-term planning exercise that was carefully advanced during the 1970s, the end of the decade witnessed the rise of alternative policy discourses influenced by neoliberal thinking.

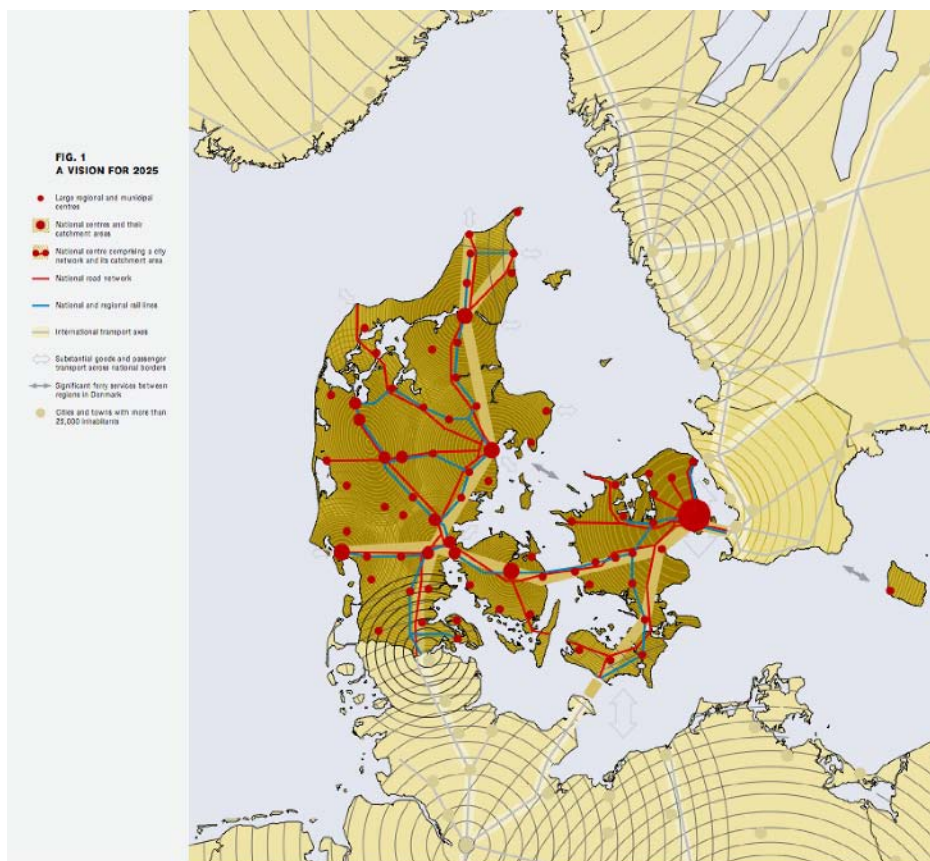
The strong welfare orientation of previous decades became spatially defined in the 1981 national planning report wherein 'national centres' were determined by the state. At the same time, counties and municipalities nominated various forms of regional and local area centres, respectively. Conceived as an implementation tool, the urban hierarchy pattern was key in securing and enabling equal resource distribution throughout the whole territory. While the principle of equal development remained the basis of national planning policy, the interpretation of equality *per se* shifted in terms of how to go about attaining it. In this sense, the centre-right government that ruled from 1982 to 1993 played an important role in reframing the understanding of the equal development paradigm. The character of national planning thus began turning away from equal development towards diversity, modernisation and internationalisation (Ministry of the Environment, 1989).

The diversity goal takes its point of departure in the government's liberal ideology and its agenda to reform distribution policy resulting on the push to stimulate private and local solutions rather than public and national ones. Moreover, the 'diversity agenda' seemed to reflect the national government's desires towards promoting deregulation and changing its sectoral foci. The shift from equality to diversity was similarly influenced by the change in focus within regional policy in Western Europe, which in the 1980s shifted from regional balance to regional development programs.

During the 1990s, the aim of national planning was redefined based on spatial considerations that promoted the Øresund as a leading international urban region and Scandinavian gateway (fig. 3) (Ministry of the Environment, 1992a). As such, Copenhagen was positioned at centre stage and other Danish cities were portrayed as development nodes linked to international transport axes. Moreover, a new Planning Act entered into force in 1992, which integrated and simplified planning and zoning provisions that were previously addressed by several planning acts originally advanced in the 1970s. This shift allowed for national, regional, municipal and local plan-

ning as well as zoning and the administration of rural areas to be merged into a single law. Beyond these functional adjustments, a highly remarkable shift was the Act's opening chapter, which stated that the purpose of planning was to aim towards "*appropriate development in the whole country and in the individual counties and municipalities...*" (Ministry of the Environment, 1992b). While this reorientation clearly conflicted with the equal development principle that characterised Danish planning from its inception, it aligned with the competitiveness agenda advocated by the nascent European spatial planning at the time (Amin & Thrift, 1994; Newman & Thornley, 1996).

Figure 3. The Map of Denmark in 2000 evocative of European agendas and discourses of polycentricity



Source: Ministry of the Environment and Energy, 2000

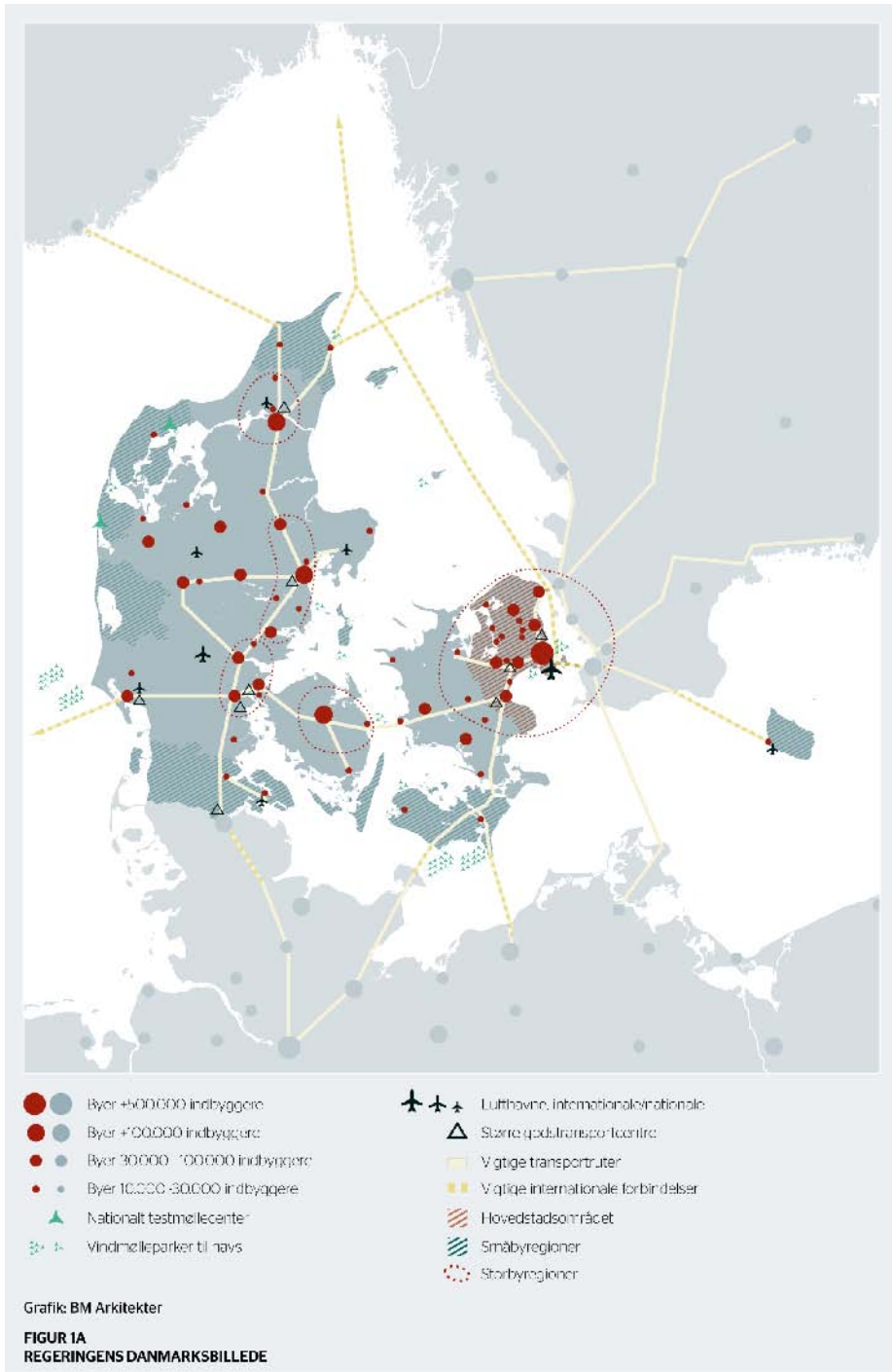
In accordance with this shift, the spatial structuring of Denmark at the national level depicted during the 1990s was characterised by market-orien-

ted and polycentric growth agendas. This development reorientation was translated into the creation of urban business clusters to enhance the competitiveness potential of smaller cities in global markets (Ministry of Environment and Energy, 1997, 2000). At the same time, however, environmental impact assessment as a method was also adopted by the Planning Act, which placed environmental sustainability objectives along with competitiveness demands at the core of national decision-making processes. Such environmental objectives also matched the evolving work and agendas of two major international programmes, namely the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and the Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB).

Furthermore, important regulatory measures were also established in the form of national planning directives, which became legally binding for regional and local authorities (e.g. coastal protection, retail trade provisions). On the one hand, the reorientation of planning at the national level showed how the domain was becoming more visionary and strategic towards achieving spatial development objectives by aligning with international growth agendas. On the other hand, the introduction of such regulatory instruments indicated the national level's desire to remain in control of planning matters at lower scales in accordance with the former welfarist logic.

In contrast with the spatial concepts used by national planning reports during the 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century, the newest national planning report published in 2013 (fig. 4) articulates a less strategic spatial approach. As such, the report shows that growth should concentrate within city-regions located along the national highway system (Ministry of the Environment, 2013), which reflects a continued differentiation of space. This particular focus concerning the growth of specific city regions is largely influenced by economic growth policies put forward by other ministries. The map is therefore not only an expression of the competitiveness agenda already adopted by the government of Denmark during the past two decades, but could also be indicative of how the Ministry of the Environment has lost its political clout in planning decisions by being subdued to other ministerial interests.

Figure 4. The Government's map of Denmark in the 2013 national planning report



Source: Ministry of the Environment, 2013

3.2 The evolution of regional planning

The institutionalisation of regional planning in Denmark was the result of an attempt to implement coherent planning for areas above the urban level, whose first signs had already been witnessed in the cases of North Jutland and the city-region plans for Copenhagen and Aarhus that were delivered during the first two post-war decades. The passing of the National and Regional Planning Act in 1973 marked the initiation of regional planning in Denmark, which adopted a more tangible form after provisions for the establishment of regional plans were put forward in 1977.

The first generation of Danish regional plans was advanced in 1980. Since then, the domain adopted a cross-sectoral focus in attempting to coordinate the multiple objectives of spatial planning in coherence with welfare values and in pursuit of equal development. This was materialised through a physical-functional orientation embedded in the distribution of socioeconomic development objectives and the management of environmental assets. The spatial reasoning behind regional planning thereby sought to provide a coherent framework for municipal planning based on legally binding land-use provisions. As such, these provisions required the counties to advance regional plans that included the designation of zones for urban development, recreational purposes, nature protection, environmental resource management, infrastructure development and the siting of regional facilities (such as waste or energy facilities), amongst other relevant themes.

Regional planning in light of the above rationale was comprised by 7 generations of plans prepared by each of the 14 Danish counties from 1980 to 2005. Regional plans were advanced based on a time frame of 12 years, and were revised and updated at least every 4 years (typically after the election of county councils). The process for preparing the plans typically included two periods for public debate. The first hearing comprised a call for ideas and solutions open for civil society organisations, while the second concentrated on the draft plan to be discussed by county and municipal actors. The elaboration of the first generation of regional plans was rather lengthy and included several revisions before final drafts were adopted.

Regional plans advanced during the 1980s defined the hierarchical pattern of urban centres for each individual county. The key roles of towns and cities with respect to service provision and infrastructure development were defined for every single county. Through the urban pattern logic, plans sought to ensure equal development by strengthening weak areas partly at the expense of stronger ones. Moreover, these plans put forward guidelines concerned with natural resources management and also highlighted aspects that addressed the open country and the designation of special natural and agricultural areas.

During the 1990s, regional planning provisions were made more complex due to the implementation of two legally binding national planning directives that were included as amendments to the Planning Act in 1994 and 1997, respectively. The first directive addressed the safeguarding of coastal zones, which made regional plans responsible of ensuring their protection. The se-

cond directive dealt with retail trade regulations, whereby regional plans were meant to pose restrictions regarding the location of these facilities, amongst other constraints. Beyond these inclusions, the two generations of plans advanced in the 1990s continued to designate aspects related with the urban pattern, infrastructure development and the use of rural areas based upon socioeconomic considerations (i.e. demographic and labour market trends).

The final two generations of regional plans published in 2001 and 2005, respectively, differed from the former generations in terms of the inclusion of environmental themes following the enactment of European Union directives. Environmental impact assessment became a regional responsibility after the passing of a EU directive that had entered into force in 1999. Regional plans acquired the duty of specifying guidelines on the location and design of projects that were likely to have significant effects on the environment. Moreover, special responsibilities concerned with water resources protection and water quality were similarly assumed by regional planning in response to another EU directive adopted in 2000. The last generation of regional plans of 2005 was the last of its kind, which maintained legal status through a national planning directive until 2009. The directive stated that the 2005 regional plans should be integrated into the first generation of municipal spatial plans.

In synthesis, regional plans became imperative not only as a binding instrument for municipal plans with sectoral interests and objectives, but also as a conciliatory tool to balance sectoral considerations. For instance, regional planning became useful in ensuring that a particular sectoral decision was not undertaken at the expense of another (e.g. a transport decision impacting heavily on environmental assets). Another intrinsic capacity related with regional plans entailed the coordination of municipalities in matters transcending their own boundaries. In this respect, the regional planning process proved beneficial in balancing conflicting interests and in coordinating objectives related with traffic services (such as harbours, railways and roads) as well as the siting of 'undesirable' facilities (e.g. solid-waste treatment plants, sewage disposal sites, petrochemical plants and even wind-mill parks). Furthermore, the process also enabled the possibility of stakeholder participation including negotiations between municipalities and counties as well as two periods of public debate regarding aspects of draft plans.

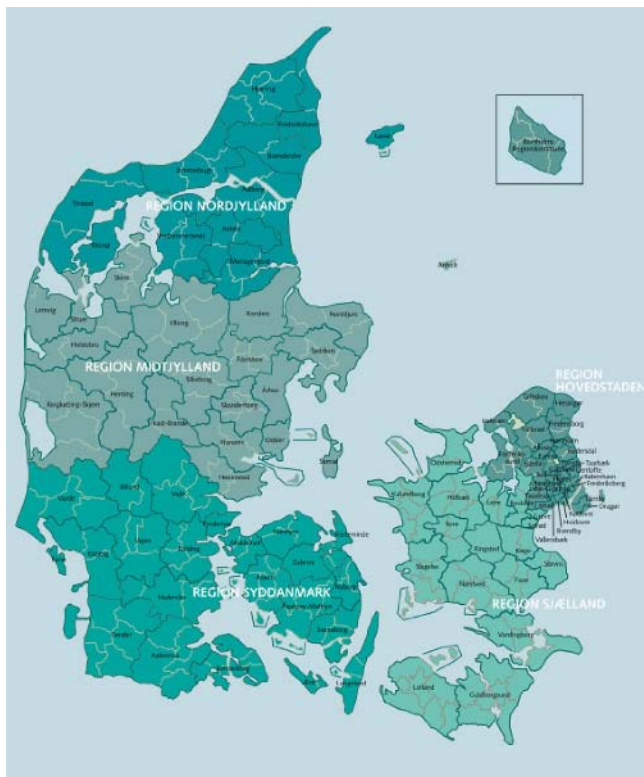
4. The new Danish spatial planning system and its policy implications

4.1 Structural reform

A reform of local government structure was implemented in 2007, which had a significant impact on the Danish spatial planning system and planning

policies (Galland & Enemark, 2013). The reform modified the geographies of inter-governmental arrangements in Denmark by merging 275 municipalities into 98 larger units and by abolishing 14 counties (fig. 5). The territorial and administrative restructuring that this structural reform brought about generated a major redistribution of tasks and responsibilities between levels of government and transformed the comprehensive-integrated rationale that formerly characterised the Danish planning system.

Figure 5. The current administrative and political division of Denmark. A total of 98 municipalities and 5 administrative regions were created after the 2007 structural reform.



Source: Local Government Denmark, Danish Regions, and the Ministry of the Interior and Social Affairs, 2009

A so-called ‘Commission of Administrative Structure’ was appointed to determine the need to carry out the structural reform. The Commission highlighted that the territorial size of administrative units was inappropriate for task performance given that overlapping responsibilities and functions between municipalities created vast inefficiencies. In contrast the reform implemented in the 1970s, this new reform was based on processes geared towards efficiency considerations and managerial effectiveness, and no recommenda-

tions in terms of spatial restructuring were delivered at all. This meant that territorial considerations regarding conventional peripheral problems, functional relationships (mobility and commuting patterns) between municipalities or other geographical appraisals were overlooked (Jørgensen, 2004).

4.2 The new planning system and the re-scaling of planning tasks and responsibilities⁴

The 2007 structural reform transformed the Danish planning system from its traditional multi-tier configuration to a double-tier structure comprised by national and municipal planning. This shift eradicated the hierarchy of plans formerly dictated by the principle of framework control. The abolition of the county level was filled-in by the creation of five new regions, which were mainly created for health care administration purposes. However, these new administrative regions were also given the task to facilitate regional spatial development planning processes targeted towards the preparation of advisory and visionary development plans (see subsection 4.3).

The structural reform privileged municipalities by allocating them a great number of tasks and responsibilities once taken care of by the counties. Several regional planning provisions related with land-use were thus repealed and transferred to municipalities, which upheld the right to undertake and decide upon physical planning in urban areas and the countryside. In doing so, the Planning Act also gave the new municipalities the necessary autonomy to designate urban zones, locate transport facilities, and manage aspects concerned with agriculture, cultural and historical heritage, amongst others (Ministry of the Environment, 2007).

The abolition of the counties also prompted the transfer of some planning controls to the national level. To ensure the implementation of national policy objectives, the Ministry of Environment created seven environment centres 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. In addition, national planning became reinforced in relation with its capacity to intervene in municipal planning themes and projects of national or regional relevance through the right of veto (cf. Table 1, Overview of national interests regarding municipal plans). Based on the above redistribution of tasks at municipal and national levels, the 2007 structural reform could then be regarded as a case of “centralised-decentralisation”, i.e., a recentralisation of government (Andersen, 2008).

4. A discussion concerning how spatial planning systems tend to shape territorial scales can be accessed at Galland & Elinbaum (2015) Redefining territorial scales and the strategic role of spatial planning: Evidence from Denmark and Catalonia, *disP: The Planning Review* (forthcoming).

Table 1. The spatial planning policy framework in Denmark as of 2014

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	5.62 million	National planning reports	National visions regarding functional physical development	Advisory 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. The Minister for the Environment has the right to veto a municipal plan proposal if it contradicts national interests
<i>Regional</i>	5 administrative regions	1,000,000 on average (wide deviations)	Regional spatial development plans (repealed in 2014)	Advisory and visionary plans	Binding for local authorities until February 2014
<i>Local</i>	98 municipal councils	30,000 on average (wide deviations)	Municipal plans	Policies, maps and land-use regulations	Binding for local authorities
			Local plans	Maps and detailed legal land-use regulations	Binding for landowners

Source: adapted from Galland & Enemark, 2015 forthcoming, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

4.3. From regional planning to regional growth agendas

The former regional planning provisions stipulated by the Planning Act were repealed and substituted by updated provisions aimed at undertaking planning processes with the objective to produce regional spatial development plans for each administrative region. Instituted in 2007, these plans were aimed at describing the desired spatial development of each region, and their intent was to break away from the regulatory mandate of the former generation of plans. In principle, the regional spatial development plans were to be understood as a 'soft' policy instrument aimed at offering a canopy for development initiatives to inspire the making of municipal plans. In this sense, the regional spatial development plans clearly rejected the idea that spatial planning should mandate or handle development at regional and municipal levels.

The regional spatial development plans were depicted by the Planning Act as the outcome of bottom-up, multi-stakeholder settings facilitated by regional authorities in collaboration with municipalities, interest organisations, educational institutions and other actors in each region. As such, they could be regarded as a national government's attempt to improve Denmark's position in global competitive markets. Their rationale portrayed the new administrative regions as members of a greater partnership strategy aimed at supporting the central government's focus on strengthening Denmark's role in the global economy (Larsen, 2011). In this sense, both regional and municipal levels were increasingly expected to become strategically co-responsible for a broader economic development, adjustment and adaptation (Ministry of the Environment, 2006). However, the making and outcome of both the first as well as the second and last generations of regional spatial development plans underwent a series of procedural challenges that limited their implementation potential (Galland, 2012b). These plans were finally repealed from the Planning Act in early 2014.

Furthermore, the above alignment with economic growth and competitiveness caused that the 2005 Business Development Act handed the new regions statutory responsibility to set up partnership-like entities known as regional growth forums. Comprised by representatives from regional and municipal councils, local businesses, trade unions and knowledge and educational institutions, these forums aim at fostering and advancing initiatives to improve local conditions for economic growth via the preparation of business development strategies. From inception, the main role of these forums has been to make recommendations to regional councils and the state regarding EU funding allocation for specific regional development projects. Hence, business development strategies are aimed to foster the strengths of businesses in the regions, which reflect the government's four drivers of economic growth: human resources, entrepreneurship, accumulation and sharing of knowledge, and access to new technology.

In accordance with the abovementioned Acts, both regional spatial development plans and business development strategies were to ensure full cohesion with one another. The 2005 Business Development Act stipulated that business development strategies were to constitute the core foundation of regional development plans. In view of the growth forum's political and economic clout in relation with the lack of power of the administrative regions, the implementation of regional spatial development plans became highly conditioned by their strict alignment with economic interests pursued by regional growth forums. This scenario created a functional overlap, which generated the revocation of regional spatial development planning alongside their withdrawal from the Planning Act in 2014.

The above policy and institutional shifts suggest that the 2007 structural reform triggered the 'softening' of the principle of framework control. This is

illustrated by the lessened degree of harmonisation between plans at different scales and their vast differences in thematic aspects. Since then, national planning has been mainly responsible of overseeing aspects related with environment and nature protection, although it has continued to deal with the land-use planning of the Greater Copenhagen area. Moreover, the level of the administrative region does not have a say with respect to current spatial planning decisions any longer, and municipal planning prevails as the sole actor responsible for land-use planning. This overall restructuring associated with the Danish spatial planning system holds several implications in terms of future ways to portray planning and spatial development in practice. The following section discusses some of these effects.

5. Discussion: What does the transformation of spatial planning entail?

The recent evolution of spatial planning in Denmark leads to a general discussion concerning a different way to portray the planning domain in terms of its goals, perspectives, functions and modes of operation. Firstly, the contents and the rationale behind spatial planning have importantly shifted as a result of evolving development orientations prompted by political and economic driving forces at national and international scales. As such, spatial planning was originally regarded as a societal need and as an orchestrated effort to alleviate the pressing urban and rural development issues of the post-war decades. This became evident in the advancement of national and regional planning exercises seeking for the ordered expansion of a city hierarchy with respect to service provision and sectoral coordination.

The socio-spatial logic of national plans persisted until the late 1980s while the cross-sectoral and land-use conditions of regional plans remained in place until the mid-2000s. Of utmost relevance was the establishment of an urban pattern logic, which yielded hierarchical spatial arrangements within individual counties. This enabled a more even spatial distribution of demography, labour market and economic growth, which contributed to secure more equal socio-economic development throughout the whole country. However, with the rise of supra-national and national interventions as well as the Planning Act's shift from equal to appropriate development, the contents of national and regional plans gradually placed more emphasis on strategic considerations and environmental themes during the 1990s and early 2000s, respectively. Along with these thematic shifts, the welfarist logic embedded in both national and regional planning steadily decreased in importance.

Without a doubt, the most important shift emerged from the 2007 structural reform that abolished regional planning provisions and substituted them with a new policy instruments geared towards achieving growth. While the

contents of regional development plans inherited several thematic aspects from the former regional plans, the former dropped the spatial logic promoted by the latter. This situation entails that the cross-sectoral nature of current plans is only regarded in light of drivers of economic growth while the balance of conflicting sectoral objectives appears to be largely overlooked. In other words, the conception of regional space once based on the equilibrium of socio-economic aspects, environmental quality, land use and infrastructure development at inter-regional and intra-regional scales has turned out to be fully dissolved. This has created an important policy gap, which could be prone of generating specific sectoral issues in connection with aspects transcending municipal boundaries.

The above regional policy gap suggests that the former 'Panopticon' role of spatial planning across different scales has been replaced by a dual role that widely differs from comprehensive-integrated tradition of Danish planning. In this sense, spatial planning has been predominantly geared towards the promotion of growth strategies at the regional level and the protection of nature and the environment at the national level. The traditional structure of the Danish planning system based on the principle of framework control once ensured spatial coherence through the coordination of municipal and other sectoral plans. Through this mechanism, both national and regional planning acted as a 'Panopticon' that directly intervened and safeguarded inter-municipal coordination in spatial development matters.

The absence of the 'Panopticon' role may imply that municipalities face serious challenges due to their potential lack of collective expertise and their competing interests. This may actually hold true in cases where municipalities embark upon projects transcending their own boundaries or wherein an array of sectoral issues requires coordination for the sake of balancing regional space. Some examples comprise the implementation and maintenance of EU-sponsored development projects formerly upheld through regional planning intervention; the management of environmental issues such as groundwater and surface water quality affected by the leaching of old industrial areas; the grants of special agriculture permits based on the compliance of *ad hoc* regulations; and the balance of regional population or labour market considerations, which are no longer overseen in liaison with other sectoral plans

Finally, in terms of institutional arrangements, the hierarchical structures that previously upheld plan-making processes and plan implementation have also been considerably altered. The Danish planning system currently relies on a much flexible version of the principle of framework control, implying that the regional level no longer directly imposes its provisions on municipalities. This situation poses the risk of creating an 'island planning' syndrome at the municipal level, whereby individual municipalities only plan in accordance with their own goals and interests while disregarding the need to ensure coherence with neighbouring municipal plans and strategies.

6. Concluding remarks

An assessment of the outcomes stemming from the above analysis suggests that spatial planning policies embedded in the system are less founded on spatial principles in the same extent to which their counterparts did in the aftermath of the first structural reform. Hence, there is lessened spatial reflection and thematic coherence across policies put forward at national and regional levels: national-level planning focuses on specific sectoral issues mostly concerned with nature protection and the environment while regional-level planning strictly promotes growth-oriented strategies to facilitate regional development.

From an institutional angle, Danish spatial planning also seems to have stepped away from the original comprehensive tradition. The institutional set-up of the Danish spatial planning system that depicted territorial synchrony has become significantly altered in light of the recent rescaling of planning tasks and responsibilities after 2007. Currently, formal planning structures seem to be less consistent within and across levels of political administration. At the national level, spatial planning has lost a considerable share of its former institutional clout over time, particularly under the rule of the previous liberal-conservative coalition government. At the regional level, a fuzzy governance landscape characterised by the emergence of regional growth forums lessened the narrow reach and scope of formal regional spatial development planning, which became ultimately repealed from the Planning Act in 2014.

The above policy and institutional shifts as well as the 'softening' of the principle of framework control are suggestive of a certain degree of fragmentation as exposed by the planning system's less connected administrative levels. To understand what spatial planning entails in terms of conceptual orientations and institutional capacities, it is currently necessary to look not only into every formal layer within the system, but also across or within administrative levels where alternative governance arrangements with oftentimes higher political clout replace formal structures. While the Planning Act nonetheless still builds on a systematic logic based on framework management, the above disparities show that there could be a need to redefine the institutional framework of Danish spatial planning in the future.

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