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A Planning Palimpsest: Neoliberal Planning in a Welfare State Tradition

Helen Carter, Henrik Gutzon Larsen and Kristian Olesen

Abstract

In this article, we analyse the evolution and transformation of Danish spatial planning from its tentative origins in liberalist politics, through its rise as a central feature of the welfare state project, to its more recent entrepreneurial forms in a context of neoliberalisation. The article demonstrates how transformations of Danish spatial planning discourses and practices must be understood in context of previous discourses and practices sedimented as layers of meaning and materiality through time and over space. These layers do not completely overlay one another, but present a palimpsest saturated with contradictions as well as possibilities. We propose the notion of the 'planning palimpsest' as a helpful metaphor for drawing attention to the historical-geographical characteristics of planning discourses and practices.

Keywords: *Denmark, palimpsest, planning history, spatial planning, welfare state, neoliberalism*

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Helen Carter, Department of
Development and Planning,
Aalborg University, Skibbro-
gade 5, 9000, Denmark.
E-mail: hflc@plan.aau.dk

Henrik Gutzon Larsen,
Department of Human
Geography, Lund University,
Sölvegatan 10, 223 62 Lund,
Sweden.
E-mail: henrik_gutzon.larsen@keg.lu.se

Kristian Olesen, Department
of Development and Plan-
ning, Aalborg University, Skib-
brogade 5, 9000, Denmark.
E-mail: kristian@plan.aau.dk

1. Introduction

Spatial planning practices and discourses are in a continuous flux. Over recent decades, governance reforms and political shifts in many countries have sought to reorient spatial planning once more. These changes have been analysed as neoliberalisations of spatial planning; that is, as processes in which planning is being recast to the wider neoliberal project of emphasising market relationships driven by logics of competition and effectiveness. Borrowing the vocabulary of Harvey (1989), it could be that spatial planning in many countries has shifted from state-led 'managerialism' to (supposedly) market-led 'entrepreneurialism'. Insights such as this have inspired a growing body of research on how processes of neoliberalisation must be understood as transformations structured by extra-local as well as intra-local forces. Focusing on spatial planning, we seek to ground this kind of thinking through the metaphor of palimpsest, which points to a reality of meanings and materialities that are 'layered' through historical-geographical practices. This implies that neoliberalisation (or, for that matter, social welfarisation) does not wipe away previous policy regimes entirely, but that the remnants of such regimes continue to structure the present.

In this article, we apply the notion of the palimpsest in a historical analysis of the evolution and transformation of Danish spatial planning. We argue that the current transformations of Danish spatial planning discourses and practices must be understood in the context of a strong welfare state tradition as well as an earlier phase of liberalist politics. In the analysis, we illustrate how planning discourses and practices of previous regimes have sedimented as layers of meaning and materiality, which do not completely overlay one another, but present a palimpsest saturated with contradictions as well as possibilities. On the one hand, our aim is in this respect to contribute a systematic analysis of the evolution of Danish spatial planning that is sensitive to the temporal, spatial and socio-political contexts. On the other hand, we also aim to make a conceptual contribution to evolving debates on the transformations of spatial planning, particularly those pertaining to neoliberalisation.

The article is structured as follows. First, drawing on Doreen Massey's notions of 'rounds of investment', 'layers' and 'trajectories', the palimpsest concept is elaborated. Secondly, the article traces the layers and trajectories of Danish spatial planning through time. For practical reasons, we divide the analysis of the history of Danish spatial planning into three subsections that investigate the period before the establishment of the welfare state in the mid-twentieth century, the golden age of the classic welfare state, and the rise of neoliberal planning policies and practices since around 1990. Finally, in the concluding section, we argue that Danish spatial planning can be conceptualised as a planning palimpsest, in which the present is conditioned by previous planning discourses and practices layered in time and space.

2. Planning Palimpsest

Our suggestion that planning discourses and practices should be approached as evolving palimpsest is not divorced from broader theoretical developments. In the widest sense, our suggestion ties into the wide-ranging tradition of analysing and understanding changes (or lack hereof) in terms of path dependency (e.g. Bennett & Elman, 2006; Howlett & Rayner, 2006; Torfing, 2001). More specifically, we are particularly concerned with how the 'roll out' of neoliberal ideology and practices is constrained by time and space. As Larner (2003, p. 511) suggests, neoliberalism 'arrives in different places in different ways, articulates with other political projects, takes multiple material forms, and can give rise to unexpected outcomes'. Others have similarly argued for a focus on 'actually existing neoliberalism(s)' (Brenner & Theodore, 2002) and emphasised that processes of neoliberalisation are characterised by a 'necessary hybridity' (Theodore et al., 2011, p. 17). Here, it is important to recognise that cities, regions or countries are not just 'victims, dupes, recipients, or targets of neoliberalism' (Lovering, 2007, p. 357). Recognising that these arguments are applicable to other political ideologies and projects than neoliberalisation, it is the historical-geographical dimension of change that we seek to conceptualise through the metaphor of planning palimpsest.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a palimpsest is literally 'a parchment or other surface in which later writing has been superimposed on effaced earlier writing', but the word is also used metaphorically as 'something bearing visible traces of an earlier form' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2002, p. 1026). Both meanings apply to our application of palimpsest, as it suggests a historical practice on a spatial surface and simultaneously implies a layering of amalgamating materiality ('script' on a physical material) and meaning (what the 'script' may imply). Therefore, we use the notion of palimpsest to conceptualise the continuous transformation of planning and to emphasise how such transformations are conditioned (but not determined) by discourses and practices sedimented as layers of meaning and materiality through time and over space. Others have applied the palimpsest metaphor. Knox (2012, p. 8) suggests that a city district is a 'palimpsest of economic, social, and architectural history in bricks and mortar', for example, while Sigler (2014, p. 888) in a study of the Panama transit corridor uses the metaphor to highlight how 'each new regime of governance has brought with it new organizational, institutional and infrastructural systems'. Also, if fleetingly, Purcell applies the metaphor to the use of 'Superfund' designations in US environmental politics:

Superfund governance, like so much neoliberal governance, is best seen as a palimpsest. It is made up of neoliberal elements (e.g. devolution and public-private partnerships) that have been laid on top of old Keynesian and Great Society ones (e.g. federal imposition of legal liability on polluters). Sometimes the old Keynesian structures have been entirely erased, sometimes partly, sometimes not at all. (Purcell 2008, p. 139)

Like these authors, we employ the notion of palimpsest relationally, which is to say that the concept for us merges the material and the social. But we also find the metaphor useful to bring out history and geography, time and space, as key dimensions of longer-term changes in spatial planning. We are in this respect inspired by Doreen Massey's seminal work on spatial inequalities as historical-relative phenomena (Massey, 1979, 1983, 2005).

Massey argues that spatial (or regional) differentiations emerge from historical rounds of investment that produce a spatial division of labour, in which new divisions 'will be overlaid on, and combine with, the pattern produced in previous periods' (Massey, 1979, p. 235). This 'combination of successive layers', Massey contends, 'will produce effects which themselves vary over space, thus giving rise to a new form and spatial distribution of inequality' (Massey, 1979, p. 235). It follows that 'local areas are not just in passive receipt of changes handed down from some higher national, or international, level'; rather, the 'vast variety of conditions already existing at local level also affects how these processes themselves operate' (Massey, 1983, p. 75). Different areas may, in other words, respond differently to more general processes such as deindustrialisation (or, in our case, social welfarisation and neoliberalisation) according to the combination of patterns previously produced.

Following from this, we propose that planning evolves in successive rounds that are layered upon, and combine with, historical-geographical patterns produced during previous planning discourses and practices. New modes of planning are influenced by wider changes, such as the rise of neoliberal ideologies and practices. But the form such changes take in a particular area, for instance in a region or a country, is contingent on the 'landscape' of layered meanings and materialities produced by previous planning discourses and practices. Meanings and materialities are in this respect used to emphasise that planning not only can result in spatial structures, such as built environments and infrastructure systems, but also involves spatial images imbued with powerful meanings. In spatial planning, such images are often inscribed in maps (Dühr & Müller, 2012; Jensen & Richardson, 2004). It is in this respect that the palimpsest metaphor becomes particularly pertinent. Like an actual palimpsest is a parchment of text layered upon partly erased older text, which can generate unintended material effects as well as inter-textual meanings, so do planning discourses and practices interact with socio-spatial landscapes of historically layered material structures and planning rationalities.

The notion of palimpsests is useful, we propose, as it emphasises more situated and nuanced spatialities than the more prevalent idea of 'hybridity' in the literature on neoliberalisation. We should not, however, expect to be able to draw up a detailed cross-section of layered planning discourses and practices. Such layers can be epitomised by a strategic spatial plan or an infrastructure project, for example, but they cannot be reduced to such representations and materialities. The palimpsest metaphor also has the advantages of hinting at intimately related historicities. This dimension is often captured in the notion of path

dependency. But to emphasise the temporal dimension of planning, we prefer here the notion of trajectories, which, according to Massey (2005, p. 12), simply implies ‘the processes of change in a phenomenon’. For us, trajectories are temporal chains of events and movements at different spatial scales that impact on the layering of planning discourses and practices. To a large extent, the combination of layers are thus mediated by evolving trajectories, which in wider contexts of social, economic and political changes provide incentives, ideas and resources, but also forms of resistance and structural friction, to planning. As we will illustrate in the following, such trajectories, although following general themes, can take distinct forms in particular contexts, and a trajectory can over time become imbued with radically different meanings.

3. The Evolution of Danish Spatial Planning

We use the case of Danish spatial planning to illustrate how a country’s planning history is made up of multiple layers. We identify three broadly defined historical-geographical stages in the evolution of Danish planning over the past hundred and fifty years. Each of these stages includes many layers of planning discourses and practices. Yet, we interpret these layers to constitute three identifiable ‘formations’, which for practical reasons we address in individual subsections. It should be emphasised, however, that this is not to suggest a neat compartmentalisation and periodisation. On the contrary, our aim is to emphasise that layered practices and discourses combine to condition (but not to determine) the evolution of planning. This entails that planning can be seen as a ‘palimpsest’ in which layered discourses and practices of the past are not completely erased by the rise of welfare-state or neoliberal ideologies, for example, but are discernible and influential in the present. The historical analysis of the evolution of Danish spatial planning builds on an extensive review of secondary as well as primary literature. Our analysis is divided into three sections that investigate the emergence

Table 1: Trajectories in Danish spatial planning

	Emergence of modern Denmark	Building a welfare state	Competitive cities and a competitive Denmark
Socio-spatiality	Denmark seen as a geographical whole; uneven spatial development; conflicts between periphery ('West') and centre ('East')	Planning as a welfare project; equal provision of and accessibility to welfare services	Major urban areas as drivers for the country; uneven spatial development
Scalar focus	The city (housing); national infrastructure	National urban development and transport planning; regions and municipalities	The city as a competitive engine; the EU
Political-institutional approach	Laissez-faire liberalism; emerging compromise with social priorities	Welfare state; growth as a prerequisite for welfare policies	Neoliberalism; remnants of the welfare state

of modern Denmark from the mid-nineteenth century, the establishment and golden age of the classic welfare state from the mid-twentieth century and the rise of neoliberal planning policies and practices from around 1990. Table 1 summarises key facets in this development.

Planning before Planning

In his modern classic on the history of Danish planning, Arne Gaardmand begins in 1938, which for him was the year of ‘the first workable urban planning act’ (Gaardmand, 1993 p. 5), reflecting his particular interest in this type of planning. Still, he recognised that Danish urban and regional planning has a longer genealogy, although it befell to Madsen (2009) to write the history of, so to speak, ‘planning before planning’. The details of this history are well beyond the scope of this article, but to contextualise the layers and trajectories that make up the palimpsest of contemporary Danish planning, we need to sketch the longer historical-geographical developments.

Lopsided, national and liberalist

The title of Madsen’s (2009) volume, *Skæv og National* (Lopsided and National), is a good point of departure, as it captures a theme that has been revived and reworked in planning discourses and practices since the nineteenth century. This is an image of Denmark as a geographical whole that is unequally developed. As we will see, this motif has since become a trajectory of uneven socio-spatial development that has reappeared with different practical and ideological implications (table 1).

The early manifestation of this trajectory was partly a creature of geopolitics. The 1658 loss of large territories in what today is southern Sweden, coupled with the synchronous advent of a strongly centralised and absolutist monarchy focused on Copenhagen, thus helps to explain why Denmark to this day has been characterised by a strongly skewed spatial structure in which Copenhagen on the eastern fringe dwarfs the rest of the country in terms of population as well as economic and political power. This uneven development was further aggravated by the 1864 loss of Schleswig and Holstein, which significantly reduced the state’s population and severed the connection to metropolitan Hamburg. Interestingly, this led some members of the economic elite to consider how Copenhagen could be better positioned in competition with particularly Hamburg (Madsen, 2009), a theme that in the 1990s resurfaced in the guise of inter-urban competition, which did much to alter the socio-spatiality and scale of planning. These developments cemented what became a recurring problem of ‘East’ versus ‘West’ in Danish spatial planning – and in Danish politics more generally. Yet 1864 also underlined Denmark’s transition into a small, supposedly monocultural nation-state (Østergård, 2006), and the notion of cultural and geographical coherence inherent to nationalism is arguably a key element in the formation of early visions of Denmark as a spatial whole for development and planning. It is hardly a coincidence that this was the period in which the Copenhagen elite ‘discovered’ Jutland (Frandsen, 1996; Hansen, 2008), which is to say that the peripheral areas of the

Jutland peninsula became part of the governing mental geography. Another emerging trajectory was a liberalist political-institutional approach to state intervention. Focusing on the 1880s, Madsen (2009, p. 10) points out that 'planning was informal in the sense that it did not support itself on a distinct, broad-spectrum planning legislation.' With the end of absolutism (1848-9) and the gradual introduction of a democratic polity, the second half of the nineteenth century was generally characterised by classic laissez-faire politics that offered entrepreneurs a very free hand, also in physically shaping a society in the grips of emerging urbanisation and industrialisation. This was epitomised by the evolution of modern Copenhagen, which was forged in a tension between liberalist 'chaos' and an emerging planned 'order' in which economic priorities (if not outright speculation) had precedence (Knudsen, 1988). But also at the larger scale of the country as a geographical entity, the liberalist political climate provided rich economic opportunities for magnates like C. F. Tietgen to act as 'sort of informal national spatial planners' (Madsen, 2009, p. 15). This was also the case in the development of the railway system, which in the second part of the nineteenth century became a key sector for investments and employment. Yet infrastructure (like railways, telegraph, roads and harbours) was one of the few sectors in which the otherwise mainly liberalist politicians found some state intervention to be legitimate (Hyldtoft, 1999). Somewhat haphazardly, and often fraught with more or less overt regional conflicts between the 'East' and 'West', the railway system thus became one of the first instances of strategic spatial planning at the scale of the state territory (Madsen, 2009). As we will see, this debate was to a large extent replayed during the big strategic planning project of the 1960s – the development of a state territory-wide motorway system.

The social-liberal compromise

From around 1900, the dominance of liberalist ideology in the political-institutional trajectory began to slowly blend with cautious measures of state intervention. Somewhat like elsewhere in Western Europe, the state slowly moved from being liberalist to including some forms of residual social assistance before becoming a pre-universal welfare state. From the mid-twentieth century, this process culminated in the universal welfare state. This development towards a strong welfare state tradition is crucial to understanding the complex nature of current planning discourses and practices. The key here is that liberalist politics were not swept away, but that the universal welfare state emerged in a pragmatic compromise between liberal and social forces (Petersen et al., 2011).

In the realm of planning, the 1920s and 1930s was a period of transition. Reflecting processes of urbanisation and the emergence of an actual working class in often poor and speculative housing, challenges to laissez-faire politics became noticeable in housing politics and planning. In fact, Bro (2006, p. 34) sees this field as 'one of the central welfare initiatives of the germinating welfare state' (also Bro, 2009). Typical of the compromise politics between liberalist and social forces, the housing question was eventually addressed by private associations with

state support (Larsen & Lund Hansen, 2015). But actual urban planning – let alone regional or national planning – was slow in coming, not least because powerful interests still viewed such measures as an infringement of private property rights. In the assessment of Madsen (2009, p. 150), the 1925 Urban Planning Act was thus ‘so protective of private property rights that it invited to speculation’. Still, there was throughout the interwar years a mounting pressure for more effective urban planning in cities led by social democrats and a hotbed of activist planning intellectuals. The latter included the 1921 establishment of the independent Danish Town Planning Institute, an undertaking inspired by British planning debates, and the publication of Alfred Rådvaad’s (1929) *Borgmesterbogen* (The Mayor’s Book) – an ‘activist’ call for urban planning. Eventually, the Urban Planning Act was in 1938 revised to ‘a far more useable urban planning law’ (Gaardmand, 1993, p. 20). Yet compromises between socio-economic priorities had been established as a trajectory in Danish planning, which truly came to the fore with the post-war establishment and consolidation of the welfare state.

During the rise of modern Denmark, from about the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, planning only emerged gradually as a formalised practice of state intervention. This was particularly due to the political-institutional dominance of laissez-faire liberalism that lasted until the interwar period. At best, nascent planning practices took place at the scale of cities, particularly in relation to housing. But with a significant role for private entrepreneurs, the development of national infrastructure like railways can be seen as initial moves towards planning at the scale of the state territory. Yet, although this was the period in which a widening public came to imagine the country as a geographical whole, the territory was also highly unevenly developed. As we will discuss in the following, these trajectories of the socio-spatial dimension of planning, planning’s scalar focus and the political-institutional approach underpinning planning have persisted until the present. But as we have already seen in relation to how social priorities came to modify the dominance of liberalism in the political-institutional trajectory, the form and implication of these trajectories have gradually been transformed. Already from this early period, however, the layering of materiality and meaning helped to engender some continuity in the unfolding of these trajectories in the phases to come. This involved the image of the country as a whole and yet unequally developed geographical entity. Also, the material associated with the gradual expansion of a territory-wide railway system and the establishment of ports – with the effects this had on the urban structure – came to structure Danish planning discourses and practices over the following hundred years.

Spatial Planning as a Welfare State Project

In the decades after World War II politics became increasingly ‘social democratic’ in character. In the Scandinavian context this implied the regeneration of a somewhat controlled capitalism coupled with extensions of social security and a consolidation of democracy (Petersen et al., 2012). The liberalist bias in the political-institutional trajectory was

finally superseded (but not vanquished) by a more social ideological master narrative, in which spatial planning emerged as an important policy field. For some forty years planning gradually emerged as a distinct, spatial-political dimension of the wider welfare state project, and a number of key layers of planning were laid down. This involved among other things an up-scaling of planning politics to the scale of the entire state territory, in which the socio-spatial trajectory re-emerged in debates about spatial inequality. Planning became a territory-wide specialisation of the welfare state objective of material growth and social equalisation. Appropriating Harvey's (1989) notion, this territory-wide 'managerialism' became a hallmark of planning politics until the end of the 1980s.

Planning as the spatialisation of the welfare state

The provision of housing remained a central theme in post-war planning politics. Most directly, this was a question of providing housing for the rising and increasingly urban population, but it was also a reflection of growing wealth and an increasing acceptance of adequate housing as a public responsibility. This, coupled with an emerging consensus on the need for state intervention, was reflected in the unanimously passed 1939 Housing Sanitation Act, later revised in 1959 and 1969 (Vagnby & Jensen, 2002). On a larger scale, the 1938 Urban Planning Act was supplemented by the 1949 Town Regulation Act and the 1960 National Building Act, enabling planning to respond to increasingly growing cities (Gaardmand, 1993). Hereby the legislation was in place for the large number of planning experiments carried out in the golden age of planning in the 1960s, representing an important layer of Danish planning history.

Although heavily focused on local and urban scales with clear emphasis on welfare provisions, the post-war period also involved a further, if gradual, up-scaling of planning. Inspired by emerging plans for the redevelopment of war-torn London, the chairman of the Danish Town Planning Institute, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, initiated discussions on how best to plan the sprawling Copenhagen Region (Bidstrup, 1971; Gaardmand, 1993; Jensen, 1990). Spearheaded by Peter Bredsdorff, the iconic result of this process was the 1947 *Skitseforslag til Egnspan for Storkøbenhavn* (Outline suggestion for a regional plan for Greater Copenhagen) (Egnsplankontoret, 1947). Because of its suggestive cover illustration, the document became known as the 'Finger Plan'. The plan proposed how dwellings and workplaces could be developed around five public transport corridors ('fingers'), whilst leaving the space between the 'fingers' as recreational areas. Although never officially adopted (until a later incarnation in 2007), the Finger Plan has had a tremendous impact on planning discourses and practices in the Greater Copenhagen Area and beyond, and constitutes a key layer in Danish planning. In the following years, the Finger Plan was further refined in the planning of the Køge Bugt urban corridor (approved 1966), which became the planning model for masterplan-driven urban development (dispositionsplanlægning) (Gaardmand, 1993).

From around 1960, planning debates were further up-scaled to Denmark as a territory-wide space. Economic development and associated spatial problems sparked discussions of a need for a national spatial plan, or at least national spatial planning (*landsplanlægning*) (Schmidt, 1968). The debate, mainly led by planning intellectuals, was ignited by Erik Kaufmann's influential article *En Landsplan-hypotese* (A National Plan Hypothesis) in *Byplan*, the journal of the Danish Town Planning Institute (Kaufmann, 1959). Explicitly inspired by Gunnar Myrdal's development theory, and bearing some resemblance to Walter Christaller's central place theory, Kaufmann envisioned a state-wide system, where development was anchored in regions built around hierarchies of nodal cities, which became known as 'star cities' (figure 1). Another suggestion put forward by professor Johannes Humlum involved the creation of a north-south motorway in the middle of Jutland (Humlum, 1961). Both proposals sought to address the uneven geographical development that was accentuated by the accelerating economic growth (Gaardmand, 1993), and thus the socio-spatial trajectory of the 'lopsided Denmark' as a key theme in the national planning debate. In the end, the Danish Government's preferred model, known as the 'Big H', was to use infrastructure investments (motorways) to support the existing urban structure, rather than as a means to address spatial inequality.



Figure 1: Kaufmann's star city model (Kaufmann, 1959, p.127)

Nevertheless, the debate resembled the strategic planning of the railway network a century earlier, in the sense that infrastructure planning was closely coupled to debates about spatial inequality. As Schmidt (1968, p. 83) recognised early on:

among the many different political goals that must be considered in national planning, there will always be one that is put forward with force, namely to avoid too great disparities in the development of the different parts of the country.

At the same time, however, the national planning debate seemed also to have led to the consensus ‘that quantitative growth was a precondition for progress in the social and cultural sphere’ (Gaardmand, 1993, pp. 81-82). In fact, Knudsen (2007) argues that this was the very precondition on which the Danish welfare state was built. This insight underlines the palimpsestic nature of spatial planning that was to characterise planning politics in the years to come.

Consolidation of spatial planning as a welfare project

As in many European countries, modernising and rationalising planning legislation was the major topic of the 1970s in Denmark. Whilst the early planning legislation had played an important role in legitimising planning as a state activity, planning legislation was now to be integrated into a coherent and comprehensive planning system. In Denmark these aims were taken a step further with the ambition of developing ‘societal planning’ (samfundsplanlægning), linking spatial and economic planning (Bislev & Dybdal, 1984; Dansk Byplanlaboratorium, 2013; Gaardmand, 1993). This aim was first presented in the report *Danish National Planning, Present State and Future Prospects* (Secretariat of the National Planning Committee, 1972), and explored further in two ‘planning perspective’ reports (Budgetministeriet, 1971, 1973). The central thesis in the planning philosophy was an understanding of growth in production and consumption as a prerequisite for overcoming societal problems, such as spatial inequality, whilst growth at the same time was perceived as an outcome of a market economy (Gaardmand, 1993). This again points to the palimpsest characteristics of spatial policies at the time, and a particular understanding of the dynamics between spatial planning and a free market. The vision of societal planning continued to live on among planners during the 1970s, but was effectively buried as the realities of the economic crisis in the beginning of the 1980s became evident (Dansk Byplanlaboratorium, 2013; Gaardmand, 1993).

The planning reform implemented in a three-staged process from 1969-1977 was motivated by both political ambitions for simplifying and modernising planning legislation, and also by professional desires to build a comprehensive planning system integrating various tiers and sectors of planning (Dansk Byplanlaboratorium, 1972; Gaardmand, 1993). A three-tier planning system operating on the principle of ‘frame management’ (rammestyning) was designed, in which counties and municipalities were given far-reaching planning powers. At the na-

tional level, the Minister of the Environment published yearly national planning reports. The early reports were preoccupied with developing a nation-wide urban pattern (bymønster). The debate was launched in 1978 in the paper *Det Fremtidige Bymønster* (The Future Urban Pattern) (Planstyrelsen, 1978), and resembled to a large extent the national planning debate from the 1960s. The Government's aim was to build a nation-wide hierarchy of towns and cities in order to ensure that everybody would live within 15 km of a district centre, providing the necessary services and a diverse labour market (figure 2). Upgrading towns to district and regional centres in the more peripheral parts of Denmark became a core concern of national spatial planning in the beginning of the 1980s. The provision of welfare services had become a central goal of spatial planning at all levels of government. The socio-spatial trajectory's concern with spatial inequality was not only reinforced, but spatial planning had become an integral part of the welfare state. However, in the mid-1980s the policy of building a welfare-based urban pattern at the national level was put on standby, as ideas that have come

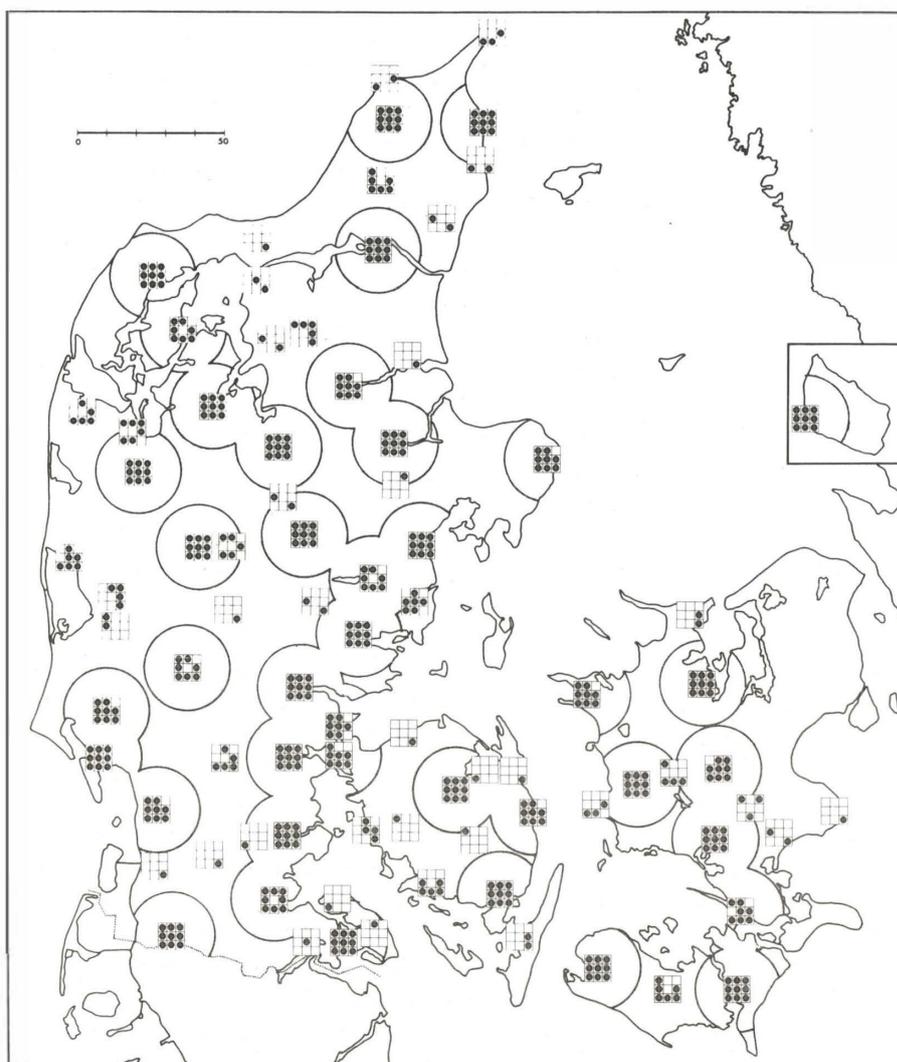


Figure 2: *The spatiality of district centres in Denmark. Centres with more than seven functions are depicted with a circle illustrating the distance of 15 km from the settlement (Planstyrelsen, 1978, p.34)*

to be termed 'neoliberal' spread to the country, particularly from the UK. With the election of a conservative-liberal government in the early 1980s, the societal planning paradigm was abandoned and the state was increasingly tuned towards promoting favourable market conditions (Bogason, 2004; Knudsen, 2007; Østergaard, 1999). But a neoliberal revolution akin to that in the UK did not take place in Denmark in the 1980s. The ideal of the social welfare state remained despite heavy criticism (Torfing, 2001). This again points to a strong path dependency with palimpsestic characteristics in Danish spatial planning.

Growth, Balance and Spatial Planning

It was from the late 1980s that growing neoliberal effects on spatial planning became evident in Denmark. In this period, planning was being reinvented and 'geared towards creating growth' (Næss, 2009, p. 229) in an increasingly 'entrepreneurial' manner (Harvey, 1989). This trend and its effects on planning should also be seen in a broader context, where neoliberal ideas were becoming more widely translated into the Danish policy landscape (Kjær & Pedersen, 2001), whilst a tension in socio-economic priorities was still visible in this process. This was a period of change in the political-institutional trajectory, as Denmark was transforming from a 'welfare state' to a 'competition state' (Pedersen, 2011), thereby adding another layer onto the history of Danish spatial planning.

Copenhagen as an international city

The socio-spatial trajectory of planning at the beginning of the 1990s began once again to focus on Copenhagen and its development, with a widely touted belief that this would lead to development throughout Denmark as a whole (Andersen & Pløger, 2007; Gaardmand, 1991, 1993; Jørgensen et al., 1997; Lund Hansen et al., 2001). A working group on the Capital Region was established by the conservative prime minister Poul Schülter in 1989. In its report entitled *Hovedstaden: Hvad vil vi med den?* (The Capital: What do we want to do?), the group made a variety of suggestions related to a desire for greater growth and a stronger international profile for Copenhagen, including a fixed connection across the Øresund to Sweden (IH, 1989). The recommendations mirrored a belief that 'the capital region again has the possibility to become a dynamo in the development of the country' (IH, 1989, p. 36) and the bridge would give Copenhagen a 'unique chance for a new prosperity for the benefit of the whole of Denmark' (Lov om Ørestaden, 1991).

Following the working group's promotion of an entrepreneurial approach to urban development in Copenhagen, came the Committee on the Capital Area's Traffic Investments, established in 1990. From the official name it may seem that this committee had a narrow focus, however it made a major contribution to the development of Copenhagen in the 1990s through the recommendation to create a new urban area on the island of Amager, Ørestaden (UHT, 1991). The committee argued that it would be possible to finance a new metro for the city, through the sale of publicly-owned land on Amager (Jørgensen et al., 1997; Lov

om Ørestaden, 1991). Furthermore, critics argued that this increasing number of committees marked an elitist and corporative turn in Danish spatial planning, known as ‘the mahogany table method’ (Gaardmand, 1996), at the expense of a well-established democratic planning tradition (Jørgensen et al., 1997).

The idea for Ørestad was not new, having also been the subject of an architectural competition in the 1960s (Gaardmand, 1991). However, with the promise of a bridge to Sweden from Amager, it took on a new relevance. The creation of Ørestad has been interpreted as a clear expression of a new type of market-oriented urban development in Denmark (Jørgensen et al., 1997; Majoor, 2008), and a materialisation of the desire to place Copenhagen as not just Denmark’s capital but ‘the North’s only Euro-pole’ (Miljøministeriet, 1992, p. 70). The focus on promoting economic development in Copenhagen was legitimised by a new Planning Act in 1992, where the core objective of planning was changed from securing equal to ‘appropriate’ development (Jørgensen et al., 1997).

Whilst the scalar focus of planning focused partly on Copenhagen, another part of this trajectory was placing entrepreneurial urban development in the wider scalar context surrounding the formation and expansion of the European Union, particularly throughout the 1990s. With the new focus on the somewhat ambiguous idea of ‘appropriate development’, a political dimension was also added to the national planning reports, which now were published after every parliamentary election. The first national planning report after this change, entitled *Danmark på vej mod år 2018* (Denmark on Road Towards 2018) (Miljøministeriet, 1992), placed focus on the development of the whole country in a European context. This scalar focus became even more explicit in the 1997 report *Danmark og europæisk planpolitik* (Denmark and European Planning Politics) (Miljø- og Energiministeriet, 1997), which focused on spatial planning in the context of the European Spatial Development Perspective (Jensen, 1999). This changing scalar trajectory in national spatial planning, along with the growing focus on Copenhagen and entrepreneurial development of the city, illustrates how spatial planning was becoming increasingly a tool to promote economic development and the competitiveness of Denmark within the European Single Market. Whilst the social welfarist and redistributive dimensions of spatial planning disappeared from the discursive planning scene, they remained an integral part of the hierarchical planning framework at municipal and county level until the planning reform in 2007.

Structural reform 2007 and the re-discovery of (Eastern) Jutland

The liberal-conservative coalition government elected in 2001 quickly appointed a committee to rethink Denmark’s political-administrative structure. The resulting reform, which took effect in 2007, was the most significant reworking of planning legislation since the 1970s. The reform can perhaps best ‘be understood as the liberal and conservative coalition government’s attempt to signal political vigour, whilst at the same time dismantling large parts of the public sector, including spatial planning’ (Olesen, 2012, p. 914). The reform produced a new dual level planning

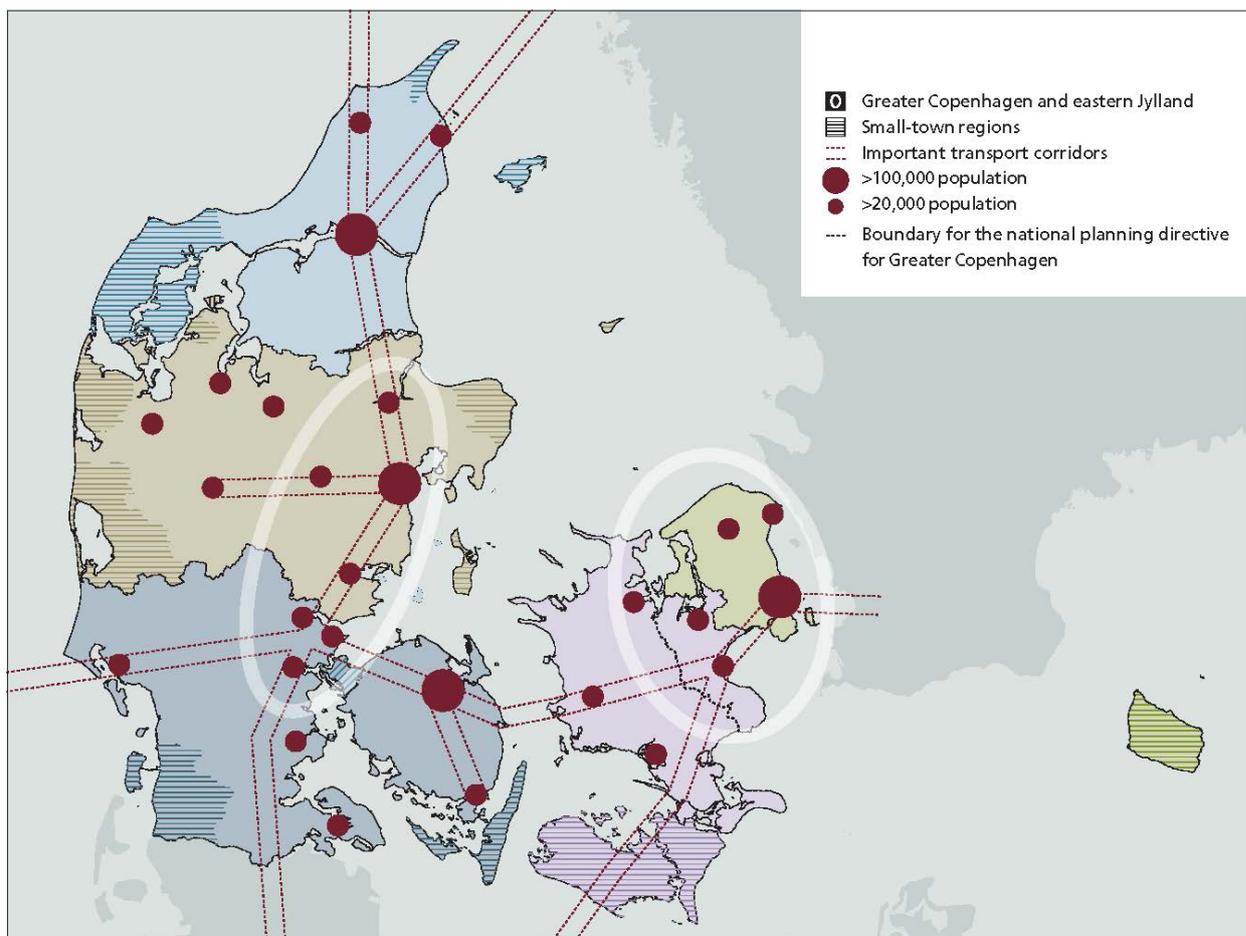


Figure 3: *The new map of Denmark (Ministry of the Environment, 2006, p.15)*

system, in which counties were abolished and municipalities were given greater responsibility for their own development. In addition, a new regional level was created, which was given regional development responsibilities, whilst having no formal planning authority in terms of land use regulation (Galland, 2012). As a consequence, regional planning became solely driven by the explicit neoliberal aim to ‘promote economic development and competitiveness in the fight to attract investors and tax-payers’ (Næss, 2009, p. 230).

In the 2000s national spatial planning became more concerned with national affairs. As in the mid-nineteenth century when Jutland was ‘discovered’ by the elites in Copenhagen, Danish spatial planning was partially ‘re-discovering’ Jutland in the 2000s. Whereas Copenhagen by this point had been the key spatial focus for planning and economic growth for more than a decade, the 2006 national planning report presented a New Map of Denmark (figure 3), outlining the eastern part of Jutland centred on the city of Aarhus and a number of smaller towns to its north and south as Denmark’s second metropolitan area (Miljøministeriet, 2006).

The social dilemma of peripheral areas

Despite the focus on entrepreneurialism in planning and the idea that Denmark generally would benefit from Copenhagen's, and later Eastern Jutland's, development, there remained a dilemma for the somewhat dormant welfare state layer of Danish planning. Although planning and policy-making were becoming increasingly neoliberal, the remnants of the welfare state continued to affect the political-institutional trajectory of planning. Despite the enthusiasm for metropolitan development, on a national level 'outer areas' (udkantsområder) remained, and the socio-spatial trajectory of uneven development became clear once more. 'Balance' had remained as a policy objective in national planning reports (e.g. Miljøministeriet, 2003), but apart from granting planning permission to build 8000 new summer cottages in especially 'needy' areas, the issue had remained at the discursive level.

With the neoliberal individualisation of places, it had become the municipality's responsibility to generate growth within the municipal boundaries. This trend was further institutionalised by the 2007 structural reform. Since the beginning of the 2000s, municipalities were obliged to prepare plan strategies and act more strategically in their planning. As a consequence, even smaller cities adopted entrepreneurial strategies emphasising competition and ambition (Carter, 2011). Yet these developments did not prevent a growing discussion of 'outer Denmark' (Udkantsdanmark). These variously defined areas, mainly parts of west and north Jutland and the country's smaller islands, were discussed at length in the Danish media, academia and policy circles, with the discussion being reminiscent in some ways of the 'East' versus 'West' conflicts of the nineteenth century. The social-democratic led coalition government that came to power in 2011 institutionalised this focus by establishing a Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs, which works to a large extent on policy for these marginalised areas.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s neoliberalism and spatial planning seem to have gone hand in hand in Denmark. Neoliberalism has provided a new legitimacy for and a new end-goal to spatial planning; that is, to increase the competitiveness of cities and city regions (Olesen, 2014). Whilst processes of neoliberalisation have resulted in significant planning reforms in other European countries, the impacts of neoliberalisation on the Danish planning system have been more modest, and remnants of the welfare state are still clear. Our historical analysis of the evolution of Danish spatial planning suggests that particular socio-spatial, scalar and political-institutional trajectories will continue to shape the discourses and practices of Danish spatial planning in the years to come.

4. Conclusions

In this article we conceptualise changes in spatial planning as having palimpsestic characteristics. In our analysis of the evolution of Danish spatial planning, we use the palimpsest concept to highlight the importance of historical and geographical layers for modern day spatial planning, rather than exclusively focusing on the contemporary permeation of ideologies from other places. The concept of palimpsest provides a perspective to our understanding of the fixations such as the neoliberalisation of spatial planning, as it draws attention to the contradictions and opportunities, which are created by neoliberalism overlaying social welfarism and liberalism. This gives a particular view of neoliberalisation in terms of what has gone before, and the effects earlier layers of the palimpsest have on that process. In some cases we find that the ongoing neoliberalisation of current spatial planning discourses and practices are ‘softened’ by the welfare state tradition. However, this is not always the case. Appropriating a notion from Christophers (2013), planning palimpsests can equally produce ‘monstrous hybrids’ that reproduce and intensify geographies of socio-economic inequality – with deceptive notions of welfare state planning shining through.

Furthermore, we illustrate how the evolution of Danish spatial planning can be understood as played out in three trajectories, capturing the socio-spatial dimension and the scalar focus of, as well as the political-institutional approach to, spatial planning through time and space (table 1). At the same time, the evolution of these three trajectories, together with the interaction between them, contributes to producing layers of meaning and materiality, forming a planning palimpsest of sedimented layers of planning discourses and practices.

The New Map of Denmark (figure 3) is an illustrative example. This image ties into a long-standing trajectory in Danish planning politics that evokes socio-spatial differences between the ‘East’ and ‘West’, going back to the construction of the national railway system in the mid-nineteenth century, and the debates and practices surrounding the establishment of the national motorway system after World War II. The debates as well as the infrastructures have sedimented as layers of meaning and materiality that came to structure future planning. With the rise of the welfare state and a strong belief in the power of planning, the almost self-evident aim was to overcome uneven geographical development. Yet with the rise of neoliberalism, discourses of inter-urban competition at international and intra-national scales shifted the planning-political focus to Copenhagen and eventually also Eastern Jutland. Whilst the peripheral areas were almost lost in this turn to entrepreneurial planning politics, recent discussions of ‘Outer Denmark’ demonstrate that this turn is not played out on a clean slate, but is influenced by meanings and practices layered during past rounds in the evolution of Danish planning politics. This also illustrates that there are no clean breaks between the political-institutional approaches to spatial planning; rather these are muddled by each other, with remnants of previous approaches remaining traceable within the contemporary palimpsest.

We suggest that the palimpsest metaphor is useful, as it offers a nu-

anced perspective in the debate on ‘variegated’ neoliberalism(s), and beyond, by drawing attention to the need for a deeper focus on the spatiality and historicity of neoliberalisation. Such a focus entails a wider perspective on the rationalities forming the layers and trajectories of contemporary spatial planning, rather than focusing solely on an apparently all-encompassing neoliberalism. In our perspective, it would be a misconception to understand the recent evolution of Danish spatial planning as a simple shift from state welfarism to neoliberalism. We use the metaphor of the planning palimpsest to highlight how previous planning discourses and practices sedimented as layers of meaning and materiality continue to condition contemporary planning discourses and practices.

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