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Danish 'strategic spatial planning' in transition

Olesen, Kristian

Publication date:
2010

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Olesen, K. (2010). *Danish 'strategic spatial planning' in transition*. Paper presented at 24th AESOP Annual Conference 2010, Helsinki, Finland. http://aesop2010.tkk.fi/pdf/AESOP_2010_Abstract_book.pdf

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DANISH 'STRATEGIC SPATIAL PLANNING' IN TRANSITION

KRISTIAN OLESEN¹

Keywords: strategic spatial planning, spatial restructuring, Denmark

This paper argues that 'strategic spatial planning' in Denmark is currently in a transition period. Recently, new scales of planning and new forms of governance have emerged as a consequence of state initiatives to reinvent 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level, after the regional level was abolished as part of the structural reform in 2007. The new approaches towards 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level in Denmark have taken different forms. In the Greater Copenhagen Area, the Ministry of the Environment has prepared a national planning directive, while in the Eastern Jutland Region and Region Zealand the Ministry has initiated dialogue projects with the municipalities building on voluntariness and dialogue. There is no clear picture of how 'strategic spatial planning' in Denmark will develop in the future. This paper sets out to explore the driving forces (both external and internal) behind these recent changes in Danish spatial planning.

1. Introduction

This paper argues that 'strategic spatial planning' in Denmark is currently in a transition period. Recently, new scales of planning and new forms of governance have emerged as a consequence of state initiatives to reinvent 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level, after the regional level was abolished as part of the structural reform in 2007. In particular, this paper is concerned with exploring the driving forces behind the recent changes in Danish spatial planning. Limited research has so far been carried out on Danish 'strategic spatial planning' and none has so far explored the recent changes emerging as a consequence of the structural reform in 2007.

There is a growing body of literature discussing what has been articulated as new approaches to 'strategic spatial planning' or a revival of 'strategic spatial planning' (Albrechts et al., 2003; Haughton et al. 2009; Healey et al., 1997; Healey, 2007; Salet & Faludi, 2000). The planning literature describes how new planning approaches to the organisation of space have become more dominant during the 1990s (Albrechts, 2004), especially at the subnational level (Albrechts et al., 2003; Healey et al., 1997; Salet et al., 2003). These initiatives are seen as responses to increased complexity of governance relations and spatial issues

¹ Department of Development and Planning, Aalborg University, Denmark

(Albrechts, 2004; Healey, 2007), and a need to combine short-term actions with spatial visioning (Albrechts, 2004). In this paper, 'strategic spatial planning' refers to the processes of spatial strategy-making at the subnational and national level in Denmark. The term is put in inverted commas to highlight how Danish planning practice does not necessarily correspond with wider European trends or theorisations in the literature.

Processes of 'strategic spatial planning' are often interpreted as responses to wider changes in society such as economic restructuring and processes of spatial restructuring and rescaling. Theorists talk about rescaling of state initiatives towards the regional (and transnational) level and a transformation of the nation state with globalisation as the key driving force (Brenner, 2004a). Similar processes have recently taken place in Denmark in connection to the structural reform in 2007. However, the Danish processes of spatial restructuring seem to follow a different logic than in many other European countries. As part of the structural reform, the internationally recognised Danish three-tier planning system was reduced to a two-tier system, as the regional level (the counties) were abolished. The changes also included the abolition of the metropolitan institution for the Greater Copenhagen Area (Hovedstadens Udviklingsråd, HUR). The structural reform therefore dismantled the regional level, which in many other European countries is currently being strengthened as part of simultaneous rescaling processes.

In this new spatial reality without a strong regional level, state initiatives have been initiated to reintroduce 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level in Denmark. Some of these initiatives take place outside the planning system and have led to the emergence of new scales of planning and new forms of governance building on voluntariness and dialogue, while other approaches have reinforced the state's control of the municipal planning. It is thus unclear in which direction 'strategic spatial planning' in Denmark seems to be moving.

Instead, it can be argued that Danish spatial planning still is in a transition period after the structural reform in 2007. The core elements in Danish spatial planning are currently under pressure. This is particularly true for the traditional planning system, the famous Finger Plan for the Greater Copenhagen Area and the national planning reports produced after every election to the Parliament. There is no doubt that Danish spatial planning is in a turbulent period with recent organisational changes in the Ministry of the Environment, changing Environmental Ministers and not least varying national interests in 'strategic spatial planning'.

Danish 'strategic spatial planning' is currently in a defining moment. The Ministry of the Environment seems to put their trust in a few initiatives towards 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level. The success of these processes will most likely determine the destiny of Danish 'strategic spatial planning'. There is therefore an urgent need for a critical investigation of the recent changes in Danish 'strategic spatial planning' in order to understand the implications these changes might have for the urban environment and quality of life in the Danish metropolitan regions.

This paper is concerned with exploring the external and internal driving forces behind the recent changes in Danish 'strategic spatial planning'. Firstly, the analytical framework for this analysis is presented. Secondly, the changes in national spatial planning in Denmark are discussed with a point of departure in the 2006 national planning report. Thirdly, three processes of 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level are presented. Finally, the key external and internal driving forces are highlighted along with some of the main characteristics of the recent changes in Danish 'strategic spatial planning', hereunder the emergence of new scales of planning and new forms of governance.

2. External & Internal Driving Forces for Change

Planning literature has been concerned with understanding why new initiatives towards 'strategic spatial planning' are emerging and becoming increasingly popular in recent years. Research has explored the 'driving forces' behind the recent initiatives towards 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level (Albrechts et al., 2003; Healey et al., 1997). These driving forces are either seen as being external and exogenous or internal and endogenous (Healey et al., 1997). This understanding resembles an institutional understanding of the interaction between the wider structuring logics of society and the active work of actors in realising and shaping these structuring forces (Healey et al., 1997).

The external driving forces are related to wider trends in society which somehow 'affect' and in some cases even promote processes of 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level. Firstly, the external driving forces relate to processes of economic restructuring and an emerging 'competitiveness' agenda where urban regions attempt to position themselves in the more globalised society by promoting a regional identity and image highlighting regional and local assets (Albrechts et al., 2003; Healey, 1998). In this worldview, some urban regions are promoted as nodal points in the global economy, while other are increasingly marginalised, leading to the 'Archipelago Europe' (Brenner, 2004b).

This competitiveness agenda sometimes clashes and other times seems to coexist with an increasing environmental agenda, especially the ambitions of promoting sustainable development and more recent initiatives to reduce CO²-emissions and combat climate changes. When these agendas seem to coexist, spatial strategies often attempt to transfer environmental concerns into positioning strategies, e.g. in the 1997 national planning report where Denmark was articulated as 'a green room in the European house' (Jensen, 1999; Ministry of the Environment, 1997). In many cases, environmental issues remain part of the policy talk rather than actual policies (Khakee, 1997).

Secondly, processes of spatial restructuring, rescaling and decentralisation (Brenner, 2004a) have furthered a requirement for new forms of multilevel governance and new modes of territorial policy integration. As a consequence, new alliances have been created between public bodies and between public and private

agencies. In addition, the public sector has increasingly left its managerial approaches in favour of more entrepreneurial approaches (Harvey, 1989) focusing on promoting development rather than guiding it.

Thirdly, initiatives towards 'strategic spatial planning' seem to be inspired by work at the trans-European level aiming at developing the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). This is particularly true when strategies are produced to access EU funding (Healey et al., 1997). In particular in the UK, the idea of spatial planning embedded within the ESDP has influenced recent processes of 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level (Haughton et al., 2009) and furthered what has been labelled as a 'spatial turn' in planning (Harris & Hooper, 2004; Tewdwr-Jones et al., 2010).

It would be too single-minded to ascribe the recent initiatives towards 'strategic spatial planning' to external driving forces and general changes in society only, even though these driving forces seem to make up a substantial part of the claims made to promote these processes. In the literature, external driving forces are highlighted as the main driving forces behind the revival of 'strategic spatial planning'. In addition, urban regions seem to seek inspiration from each other, although it is not quite clear how the ways of making spatial strategies diffuse from one place to another (Healey, 2007).

The literature has been mostly preoccupied with understanding the external driving forces for 'strategic spatial planning', and it has even been noted that it is not clear to what extent initiatives towards 'strategic spatial planning' are a result of local responses to pressing problems (Albrechts et al., 2003). This perspective is in conflict with the claims made about 'strategic spatial planning' and its ability to 'solve' complex spatial problems.

Healey (2007) argues that 'strategic spatial planning' initiatives cannot be tied to particular processes of political and economic configuration. Instead, the process of 'strategic spatial planning' should be understood as a 'situated practice' which is deeply structured by the specific context (Healey, 2007), hereunder especially the planning culture (Healey et al., 1997) and institutional history. In order to understand the changing practices of 'strategic spatial planning', it is therefore necessary to apply an analytical frame which is sensitive to how both external and internal driving forces might clash with or reinforce each other in the field where new approaches to 'strategic spatial planning' emerge. An attempt to provide such a frame is presented in Figure 1.

The three Danish cases of 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational level have all been initiated by the Ministry of the Environment. The internal driving forces behind these processes are thus deeply embedded in national spatial policies. The analysis begins with the 2006 national planning report which articulates a *New Map of Denmark* - a new spatial logic for the Danish territory.

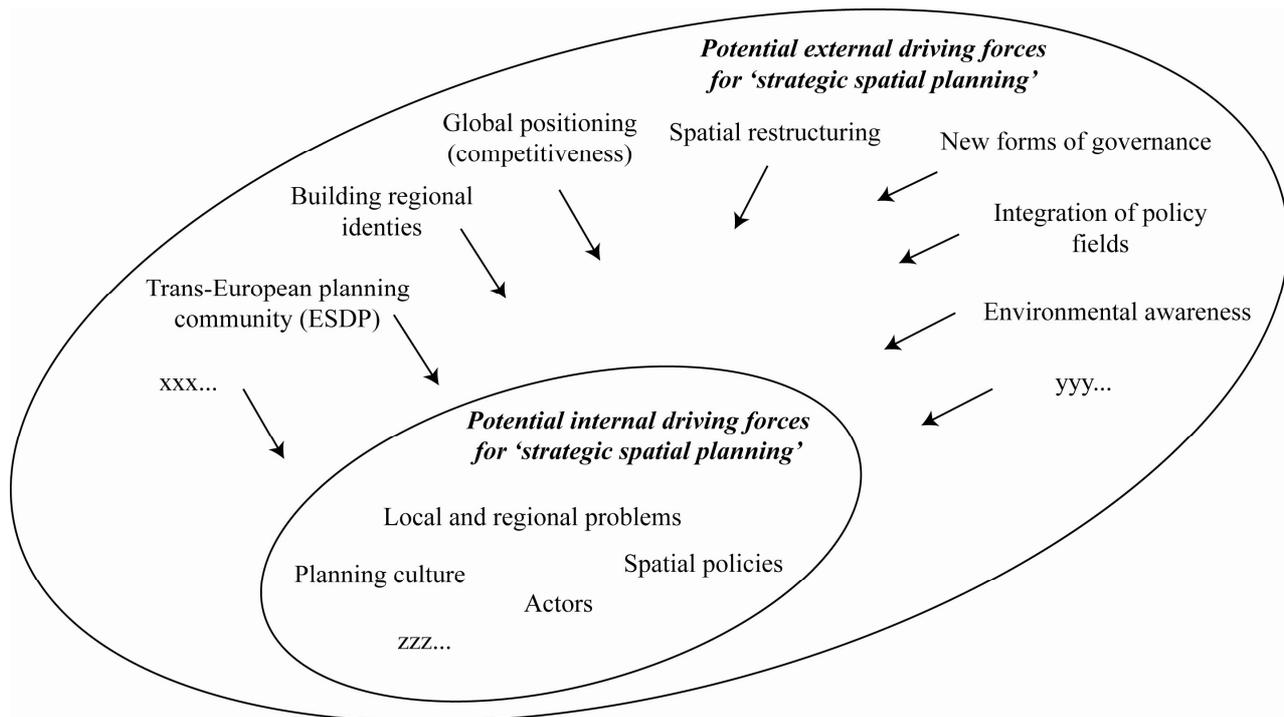


Figure 1: Analytical framework for analysing external and internal driving forces for changes in 'strategic spatial planning'

3. The 'New Map of Denmark'

Denmark has a strong tradition for spatial planning at the national level. Since 1975, the Ministry of the Environment has prepared national planning reports describing the national spatial policies and the general development in the Danish society. One of the core ideas has been the aim of equal development throughout the entire country. This policy has been accompanied by the concept of a 'hierarchy of cities' inspired by the German *central place theory* (Christaller & Baskin, 1966).

By the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, national spatial planning was linked to growth policies. The aim was now to turn Copenhagen into a Nordic growth centre by, among others things, building a bridge across Øresund, developing the new urban settlement of Ørestad on the isle of Amager close to the international airport, and connecting Ørestad to the centre of Copenhagen with Denmark's first metro line. In other words, the aim was to develop the Øresund Region. The key assumption behind these development projects was that a reinforced Copenhagen would benefit the entire country (Ministry of the Environment, 1992).

This new Copenhagen-centric planning approach was legitimised by changes in the national planning act, where the objective was changed from focusing on securing equal development to promoting appropriate development. Promoting Copenhagen as an international metropolis was regarded as Denmark's only chance to survive in a more and more globalised society. The changes we now see in Danish spatial

planning towards centralisation of socio-economic activity and differentiated spatial strategies have been under way since the beginning of the 1990s, with globalisation as the main driving force.

The national planning report from 2006 articulates how wider changes in society lead to new challenges for spatial planning in a Danish context under the heading “*The world is opening up – spatial planning must contribute to preparing Denmark for change*” (Ministry of the Environment, 2006, p.8). This heading is followed by Figure 2 which illustrates how globalisation processes lead to new challenges for spatial planning.



Figure 2: How globalisation influences and changes the prerequisites for ‘strategic spatial planning’ in Denmark (Ministry of the Environment 2006, p.9)

The national planning report also articulates a *New Map of Denmark* consisting of two metropolitan regions, the Greater Copenhagen/Zealand Region and the Eastern Jutland Region. The entire island of Zealand is now seen as a single commuter area to the Greater Copenhagen Area, an area where people live and commute to Copenhagen. The Eastern Jutland Region is seen as a developing million city ‘pulled together’ by a highly developed infrastructure (motorway and railway) and good accessibility (Ministry of the Environment, 2006). The *New Map of Denmark* is presented in Figure 3 along with the national spatial policies for each region.

The two metropolitan areas transect the new administrative regions established as part of the structural reform. The new administrative regions have been created mainly for health care purposes and have limited planning authority. These regions are therefore largely disregarded as appropriate scales for spatial planning, and the Ministry of the Environment has turned its focus towards the functional urban regions highlighted in the *New Map of Denmark*.

The recent changes in Danish spatial planning should also be seen in connection to the structural reform in 2007. In this reform, the Danish planning system was reduced from a three-tier to a two-tier system. The counties were abolished and the planning authority for the rural areas were transferred from the counties to the municipalities, which at the same time merged into larger units and were given greater latitude in relation

to spatial planning. At the same time, the Ministry of the Environment has tried to reinforce its position in the new spatial reality without a regional level, by proclaiming that it will be more involved in spatial matters of national interest (Ministry of the Environment, 2006). The structural reform can in terms of spatial planning be interpreted as decentralization and centralization in one.

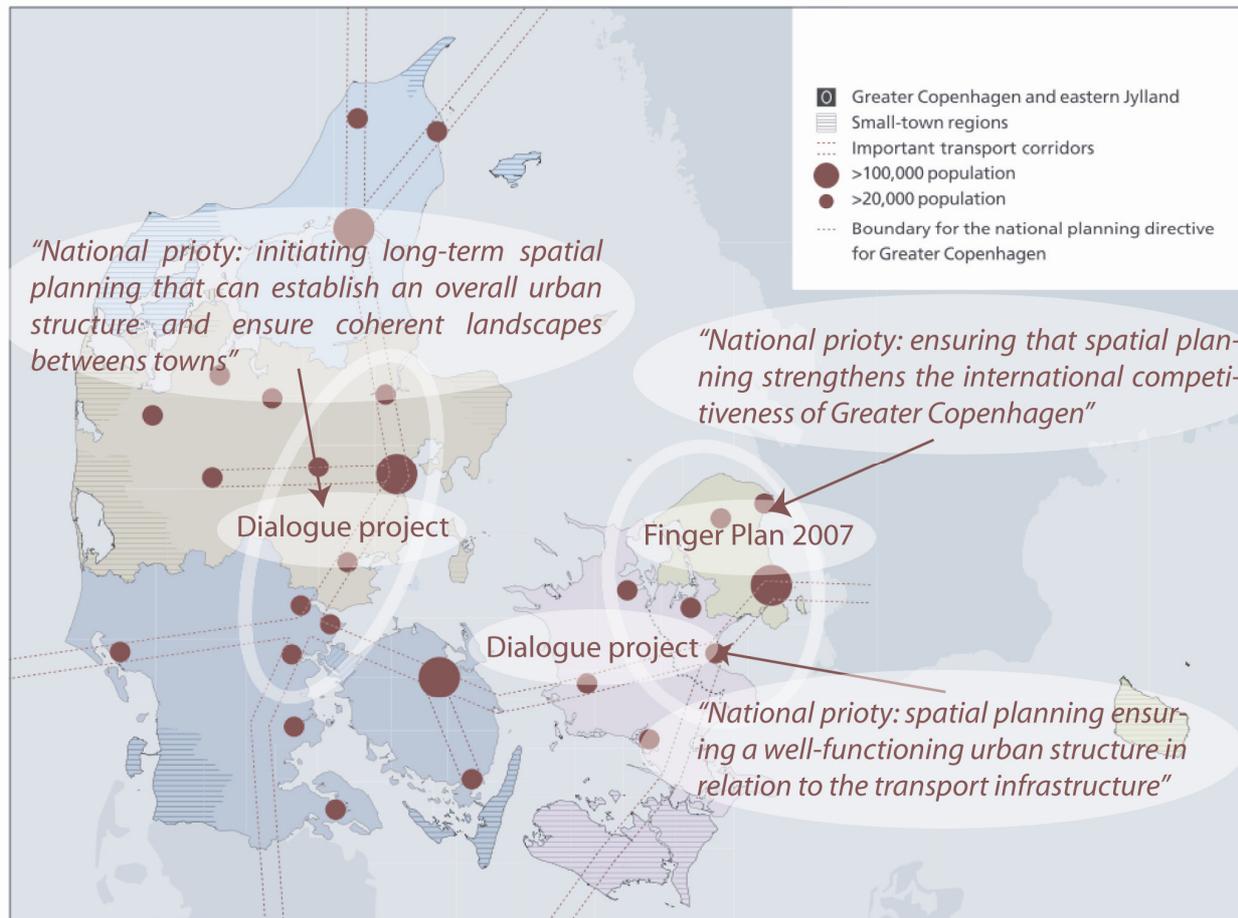


Figure 3: National spatial policies for Denmark's two metropolitan areas (Ministry of the Environment 2006, p.15, own annotation)

In connection to the structural reform, the Ministry of the Environment was concerned about whether the municipalities would be able to live up to their new tasks, or whether urban development and local growth ambitions would be prioritised at the expense of the environment and landscape, resulting in increased urban sprawl. In addition, the increasing population and economic growth in the two metropolitan regions have caused concern within the Ministry about a potential blurring of the boundaries between urban and rural areas. The 2006 national planning report therefore articulated a need for strengthening spatial planning in the two metropolitan areas.

The Ministry of the Environment's new planning approach focused on *differentiation*. The 2006 national planning report divides Denmark into five categories, in which spatial planning is customised to the specific needs of each category. These categories are the Greater Copenhagen Area, Region Zealand, the Eastern

Jutland Region, medium sized town regions located outside the metropolitan areas, and the peripheral areas (Ministry of the Environment, 2006). The new differentiated planning approach is combined with an increased focus on dialogue between the national and the municipal level, as these now are the only major actors in Danish spatial planning. The aim is to produce national spatial policies with regional characteristics (Ministry of the Environment, 2006). As part of this policy, the Ministry of the Environment initiated three new processes of ‘strategic spatial planning’ in the two metropolitan areas, see also Figure 3:

- Preparation of a *national planning directive* for the Greater Copenhagen Area (a new Finger Plan) in order to strengthen the international competitiveness of the Greater Copenhagen Area
- A *dialogue project* in Region Zealand in order to ensure a well-functioning urban structure in relation to the transport infrastructure
- A *dialogue project* in the Eastern Jutland Region in order to initiate long-term spatial planning that can establish an overall urban structure and ensure coherent landscapes between the towns.

The aim of these processes of ‘strategic spatial planning’ is to introduce some kind of spatial logic at the subnational level. This ambition should be seen in connection to the limited planning authority of the newly established administrative regions, and a national scepticism towards the municipalities’ ability to live up to their new role.

The next three sections analyse the three processes of ‘strategic spatial planning’ individually. In particular, the main driving forces behind the processes will be explored.

4. The Greater Copenhagen Area

There is a strong tradition for spatial planning at the scale of the Greater Copenhagen Area. The famous Finger Plan, prepared in 1947, has had a great impact on the spatial structure of the urban region although the plan was never formally adopted by the National Government. Instead, the plan (or more precisely the ideas behind the plan) has lived its life at the regional level through various metropolitan institutions and their variants of the Finger Plan. The last metropolitan institution, the Greater Copenhagen Authority, known in Denmark as HUR (Hovedstadens Udviklingsråd) was abolished in 2006 as part of the structural reform. Before its abolition HUR prepared the last regional plan for the Greater Copenhagen Area in 2005.

As part of the structural reform, 2/3 of HUR’s tasks were transferred to the municipalities in the Greater Copenhagen Area, while 1/3 were transferred to the national level. In practice, this meant that 1/3 of the regulations in HUR’s regional plan from 2005 were transferred into a national planning directive, titled *Finger Plan 2007*. In addition, it was written into the national planning act that the future spatial planning in the Greater Copenhagen Area must be based on the principles behind the Finger Plan.

It can be argued that Finger Plan 2007 was produced to legitimise and make sure that spatial planning at the regional level in the Greater Copenhagen Area would continued after the structural reform and the abolishment of HUR. The overall spatial structure and the regulations in Finger Plan 2007 remain largely similar to HUR's 2005 regional plan, although a few regulations have been changed.

The national planning report highlights that it is a national priority to increase Copenhagen's international competitiveness. In the process of preparing Finger Plan 2007, the idea of being competitive in an international context merged with the aim of maintaining the overall spatial structure seen from an environmental perspective. In a press release, Finger Plan 2007 was published under the heading: "*New green Finger Plan secures sustainable growth in the Capital Area*" (Ministry of the Environment, 2007, press release, own translation).

The scale of Finger Plan 2007 remained largely similar to the scale of HUR's regional planning despite the fact that the *New Map of Denmark* highlights the entire of Zealand as one metropolitan region. Even though expanding the scale of the Finger Plan was briefly discussed, it was believed that such a process would require too many changes too fast and would probably not gain the political support needed.

The Finger Plan was produced by the Ministry of the Environment through what can be characterised as a rather topdown planning process. The meetings set up with the municipalities during the process were used to inform the municipalities about the future Finger Plan. What is more interesting is that the Finger Plan process was accompanied by smaller dialogue projects between the Ministry of the Environment and the relevant municipalities where it was discussed how to elongate or round off the 'fingers' in the spatial structure.

5. Region Zealand

With a point of departure in the 2006 national planning report, the Ministry of the Environment initiated a dialogue project with the 17 municipalities in Region Zealand and the administrative Region Zealand. The three parts signed a mandate in August 2008. The mandate highlights that the aim is to:

"promote a sustainable and living region with high accessibility, good growth conditions and living towns. This must be done through cooperation on physical planning and traffic infrastructure, where the location of traffic generating functions such as residences, businesses and institutions is thought together with possibilities for public traffic service." (Ministry of the Environment 2008b, mandate, own translation)

The idea of the 'Zealand Project' emerged in the Ministry of the Environment within a small group of planners involved in the discussions of 'extending the fingers' in the Finger Plan process, and the idea was written into the national planning report. The project was originally only intended for the municipalities

located outside the Greater Copenhagen Area, but the scale of the project was expanded to the entire Region Zealand when the administrative Region Zealand entered the process. The 'Zealand Project' is therefore carried out at the same scale as the administrative region, but in a somewhat parallel track.

The 'Zealand Project' is organized as an informal planning process based on voluntariness and dialogue. The aim of the process has been to create a spatial logic where urban development supports the railways in the region. The process has remained rather technical as most of the dialogue has taken place between planners representing the involved parties. The process builds largely on the belief that the core ideas in this spatial logic are transferred into the relevant levels of planning through generating ownership amongst the participants in the process.

This format has created a space where municipal planners can participate and discuss more freely without worrying too much about their political backing. However, the process has not been entirely free from politics which is clearly evident from the spatial strategy produced. This strategy distributes urban development only within each municipality and not across the entire region.

How the 'Zealand Project' will continue has still not been decided, however the involved parties have agreed to meet every six months to discuss how to implement the spatial strategy into municipal planning. This discussion has already started with preparation of an ideas catalogue providing inspiration for the municipalities through best practice examples from Denmark and abroad.

6. The Eastern Jutland Region

Eastern Jutland was for the first time articulated as an urban region in the national planning report 2006, which highlights how Eastern Jutland is developing into a functional conurbation along the urban corridor from Kolding to Randers with more than 1 million inhabitants. There is therefore a need for an overall spatial plan for the urban region. In a press release, the Minister of Environment at the time stressed that:

"We need an overall plan for the Eastern Jutland urban ribbon. In the area, we are facing the huge challenge of handling urban growth and investments in improved infrastructure. Urban development and location of residences, workplaces, shopping centres and institutions are crucial for the transport need and thus investments in infrastructure. Urban development and traffic must be thought together. And then there is a special task to protect the huge landscape values, which makes Eastern Jutland attractive to live and work in." (Ministry of the Environment, 2008a, press release, own translation)

The 2006 national planning report highlights two key future challenges for the Eastern Jutland region: 1) securing the quality of the Eastern Jutland landscape, hereunder limit urban sprawl and prevent Eastern Jutland from developing into an urban ribbon, and 2) secure the infrastructure and dealing with congestion issues. One of the key issues in the urban region is the location of business areas along the motorway. These

areas are on one hand very attractive for businesses due to their high accessibility, and on the other hand they generate a lot of local traffic on the motorways and have a negative impact on landscape characteristics (Ministry of the Environment, 2006).

The 'Eastern Jutland Project' has similar to its twin project in Region Zealand been organised as a dialogue project between the Ministry of the Environment and the municipalities. The only difference seems to be that the two administrative regions in Eastern Jutland only play a marginal role in the project, as the Eastern Jutland Region transects these administrative regions, which complicates the governance relations further in Eastern Jutland.

The first phase of the 'Eastern Jutland Project' did not result in an overall spatial plan as highlighted in the press release. Instead, a rather broadly formulated vision was published which included a range of different topics not part of the initial setup. Most likely this change was caused by a 'greater political sensitivity' in Eastern Jutland which led to a need to broaden the perspective in order to find common ground for the project. The very spatial perspective pursued in the 'Zealand Project' has in Eastern Jutland been compromised.

7. Driving Forces behind the Changes in Danish 'Strategic Spatial Planning'

It was stressed in section 2 how the changes in Danish 'strategic spatial planning' can be understood through an analysis of the external and internal driving forces behind these changes. The analysis of the external driving forces was explored through an analysis of the 2006 national planning report, which highlights how globalization leads to a need to rethink 'strategic spatial planning'. This focus includes an increased focus on the scale of urban regions, both in terms of positioning these in the global economy and dealing with complex spatial issues such as promoting public transportation and limiting urban sprawl.

At the same time, spatial planning at the regional level has been weakened as a consequence of the structural reform in 2007. The processes of spatial restructuring take a different trajectory in Denmark compared to many other European countries where spatial planning at the regional level has recently been reinforced. In Denmark, the structural reform was mainly launched to strengthen the Danish healthcare system, especially the public hospitals. This predominant focus left other regional issues such as spatial planning in the background. The driving forces behind the recent changes in Danish 'strategic spatial planning' should thus be found in general restructurings in the Danish society and political priorities of policy issues in other sectors.

In order to limit the weakening of regional planning, the Ministry of the Environment initiated new planning processes at the subnational scale in specific 'needy' areas. These areas were defined in the *New Map of Denmark* as being Denmark's two metropolitan areas. As these regions transected existing and previous administrative boundaries of planning, new scales of planning had to be created. The structural reform and

the changes in the Danish planning system provided an arena on which discussions on a *New Map of Denmark* were legitimising. These discussions were put in the centre of the 2006 national planning report, which made the planning report a powerful tool and reference point for the various processes of strategy-making at the scale of urban regions. The *New Map of Denmark* is a strong metaphor for how planning practitioners and academics think about spatial planning today. The map sustains the reference point and legitimisation for the strategy-making processes which take place at the sub-national level.

It is interesting to note that even though the dialogue projects represent new experiments of spatial strategy-making based on dialogue and informal agreements, the issues that these processes are concerned with remain somewhat the same as when the Finger Plan for the Greater Copenhagen Area was prepared in 1947. The main issues such as controlling urban growth, preserving green recreational areas, creating a foundation for a strong public transportation, and limiting congestion seem to be the ongoing issues which spatial planning has tried to solve since the beginning of the 20th century. The Danish cases illustrate how these issues today are not only found in the Greater Copenhagen Area, but also in the rest of Zealand and in Eastern Jutland.

In addition, the idea of an overall spatial structure with supports urban development in close proximity to trains stations has merged with the recent discourses on climate change and reduction of CO²-emissions. The implementation of Finger Plan 2007 for the Greater Copenhagen Area and spatial strategy for Region Zealand have both been justified by reduced CO²-emissions and been subject of strategic environmental assessments.

At the same time, there is strong political ambition to strengthen the two metropolitan regions' international competitiveness. In the Greater Copenhagen Area, the focus on competitiveness does not seem to contradict the strong spatial regulation and environmental focus. In the Eastern Jutland Region, the two ambitions are perceived as being more contradictory. So far the strong focus on competitiveness and persistent growth ambitions have prevented the dialogue project producing a spatial strategy able to regulate the urban development in the region.

8. New Scales of Planning and New Forms of Governance

The 2006 national planning report articulates a Denmark consisting of two metropolitan regions. The two metropolitan regions do not correspond with the newly established administrative regions nor are there any metropolitan institutions to coordinate the urban development in these regions. On the contrary, the regional level was dismantled as part of the recent structural reform. The Ministry of the Environment had therefore to create their 'own regions' suitable for 'strategic spatial planning' at the subnational scale.

These new scales of planning are placed in-between existing levels of planning and carried out in a somewhat parallel track to the administrative regions' spatial development plans. The spatial strategy-

making in Eastern Jutland and Region Zealand shares a lot of similarities to what has been referred to as *soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries* (Haughton et al., 2009). The Greater Copenhagen Area resembles a slightly different case, as the area has a long and famous tradition for spatial planning at the regional level. However, spatial planning in the Capital Area has also been reinforced as part of the structural reform, as the planning authority now lies with the state.

It is evident that the state plays a significant role in these new experiments of ‘strategic spatial planning’ at the scale of urban regions. These urban regions can therefore also be understood as *new state spaces* created through a particular state spatial selectivity (Brenner, 2004a), or what the Ministry of the Environment refers to as differentiated development (Ministry of the Environment, 2006). ‘Strategic spatial planning’ initiatives are being customized to fit each individual urban region and the existing planning cultures. In fact, it can be argued that the existing planning culture and tradition for regulation determine the planning approach applied in each case.

At these new scales of ‘strategic spatial planning’, new forms of governance are emerging as spatial strategy-making at these scales does not fit easily within the Danish planning system. As no tradition for spatial planning exists at the scale of Eastern Jutland and Region Zealand, new planning approaches have been developed. Dialogue projects have been created with the Ministry of the Environment and the municipalities as the major players. These initiatives towards ‘strategic spatial planning’ are informal and build on voluntariness and whatever the partners in the processes are able to agree on. Implementation of the spatial strategies into municipal planning builds largely on the ownership and feeling of regional responsibility created through the processes of ‘strategic spatial planning’. These processes of spatial strategy-making seems to share a lot of similarities with the recent theorisations of ‘strategic spatial planning’ in the planning theory literature (Albrechts, 2004; Healey, 2007; Salet & Faludi, 2000; Sartorio, 2005).

In the Greater Copenhagen Area, the planning authority for regional planning has been transferred to the national level. The urban region is now governed by a national planning directive prepared by the Ministry of the Environment. Even though the Danish municipalities were given increased power and planning authority as part of the structural reform, the municipalities in the Greater Copenhagen Area are experiencing an increased state regulation of their planning. These municipalities experience the structural reform as a centralisation rather than a decentralisation.

Even though ‘strategic spatial planning’ in the Greater Copenhagen Area has been carried out in a rather topdown fashion, smaller dialogue projects and cross-municipal co-operations exist and are emerging within the Capital Area with the Ministry of the Environment as partner. This illustrates how new approaches to spatial strategy-making do not only replace old planning practices, but these seem to co-exist, clash and supplement each other in a messy picture of what it means to be doing ‘strategic spatial planning’ in practice.

The key characteristics of the three processes of ‘strategic spatial planning’ analysed in this paper are presented in Table 1. The table highlights the new scales of planning and new forms of governance emerging along with the external and internal driving forces behind these changes in Danish spatial planning.

	<i>Scale of strategy-making</i>	<i>Form of governance</i>	<i>External driving forces</i>	<i>Internal driving forces</i>
<i>Finger Plan 2007</i>	Former metropolitan area	State-led planning through a national planning directive	Spatial restructuring and abolition of metropolitan institution Global positioning of the Capital City Sustainable development and climate change	Legitimization of existing planning at an existing scale by a new authority Legitimization of existing planning through competitiveness and environmental agendas
<i>Region Zealand</i>	Scale equal to the administrative Region Zealand	Informal spatial strategy-making building on voluntariness and dialogue	Spatial restructuring and abolition of the regional level Zealand as one commuter area for the Greater Copenhagen Area Sustainable development and climate change	Promoting the foundation for a more developed public transport by centralizing urban development in the bigger towns in the region Unresolved tension: what about the rural areas?
<i>Eastern Jutland</i>	Soft space transecting new and old administrative boundaries	Informal spatial strategy-making building on voluntariness and dialogue	Spatial restructuring and abolition of the regional level Eastern Jutland developing into an urban ribbon Articulation of a new metropolitan region	Growth ambitions Preservation of the landscape/growth management Congestion issues/new infrastructures

Table 1: Overview of the three spatial strategy-making processes

9. Conclusion

‘Strategic spatial planning’ in Denmark is currently in a transition period. The recent changes should be understood as a consequence of external driving forces such as globalisation and spatial restructurings. However, in the Danish case these processes of restructuring have led to a dismantling of the regional level in Danish spatial planning rather than the reinforcement currently experienced in many European metropolitan regions. As a consequence, the Ministry of the Environment has invented new scales of planning and new forms of governance in order to reintroduce ‘strategic spatial planning’ at the subnational scale.

These new processes of ‘strategic spatial planning’ aim at drawing up spatial logics which coordinate urban development and infrastructure planning. The driving forces behind these processes are, partly a preoccupation with international competitiveness, increased concerns about the environment and climate change and national spatial restructurings, and partly, regional spatial problems such as increased congestion and urban sprawl. As a response to these challenges, processes of ‘strategic spatial planning’ are increasingly being customised to fit the specific needs of each region. This involves also drawing up of new scales of planning and new forms of governance.

Danish ‘strategic spatial planning’ seems to follow two trajectories. 1) Danish initiatives towards ‘strategic spatial planning’ increasingly take place outside the planning system in *soft spaces* where the boundaries are determined by the public institutions involved. Here, spatial strategies are produced through cooperative processes between the Ministry of the Environment and municipalities building on voluntariness and dialogue. So far the spatial strategies produced through these processes include very few structuring elements. It is therefore questionable what effect these strategies will have on the municipalities own planning, and to which extent these strategies are able to respond to the regional spatial issues experienced.

2) ‘Strategic spatial planning’ at the subnational level is increasingly carried out as a state exercise with the aim of producing strong topdown regulations for municipal planning. This planning approach is regarded as the only appropriate means to coordinate urban development and deal with the increased spatial issues at the subnational level, as the regional level has been abolished from the Danish planning system.

Danish ‘strategic spatial planning’ is currently in a defining moment. Whether the Ministry of the Environment will follow one path or the other seems to depend on the political climate and/or the success of the recent dialogue projects. The success of these processes will determine the destiny of Danish ‘strategic spatial planning’. There is an urgent need for a critical investigation of the recent changes in Danish ‘strategic spatial planning’ in order to understand the implications of these recent changes. Has the strong tradition for ‘strategic spatial planning’ in Denmark finally come to an end?

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