

*National planning report
for Denmark*

*from the Minister for
Environment and Energy*

*Local identity
and new challenges*

Summary

2000



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Preface

Regional development and spatial planning

Planning for regions and local communities is becoming increasingly complex. More and more factors can influence local development and local spatial planning. Cooperation and partnership therefore comprise one of the most important starting-points for the future.

Throughout the 1990s, European and national planning has focused on a more polycentric network of cities and on reinforcing strengths through cooperation. Binding partnerships in city networks have created a division of labour between cities and have allowed city networks to act as one city in several contexts.

Several growth centres comprise the overall basis for regional transformation and development in Denmark. This has generated the need to renew the model previously used to apportion the contribution of each region to overall national development.

This summary of Denmark's national planning report expresses our vision of how environmental, economic and sociocultural factors can be better coordinated within a specific national and local geographical context with optimum interaction between the various private and public actors.

The report designates new national centres that have demonstrated in the past decade how cooperation generated by city networks can promote local development.

We are designating new national centres because we recognize that certain key cities, some of which may be city networks, are needed to set trends as locomotives in regional development. The national centres also assist in generating good relationships between town and country. This is a positive partnership in which cities have their strengths and the diversified rural districts have theirs.

Spatial planning is very important in this context. Local identity and local qualities are becoming the most important competitive parameters for the companies of the future. Considerations in planning relating to how cities are to be arranged and furnished, the location and conditions of economic activities, the relationship between urban and rural areas and the effects of all these factors on the environment are therefore essential for both business development and competitiveness but also for people's quality of life.

New business trends are also influencing spatial planning in Denmark. The future European Union Objective 2 (economic conversion) programme in Denmark integrates environmental considerations as one of its foundations. This means that sustainable development is being incorporated not only in relation to environmental sustainability but in a broader sense. Sustainability is also in focus in our national context. For example, the Ministry has indicated that the huge tracts of undeveloped land currently zoned for business in Denmark's municipal plans do not correspond to the future trends in business development. Further, legislative changes in retail trade mean that new land can be zoned for retail trade only in urban centres as a rule. This is intended to prevent urban sprawl and to promote the coordination of environmental, economic and sociocultural objectives.

Spatial planning can clearly assist in slowing the growth in the demand for transport and thereby reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Spatial planning is a long-term instrument, but if we use it sensibly, it can significantly influence the lives of future generations.

Denmark's national planning report follows the recommendations of the European Spatial Development Perspective, adopted by the informal European Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in 1999, on achieving balanced and sustainable development. The Government would like to initiate joint demonstration projects that will take on the central challenges of development. This will be carried out in close cooperation with the regional and municipal authorities.

I believe that increasing the coordination of regional policy and spatial planning is the way forward for Denmark and for Europe as a whole, to finding creative and improved solutions to the challenges of the future in regional and local planning.



Svend Auken
Minister for Environment and Energy

Balanced development throughout Denmark

At the threshold of the 21st century, Denmark is a well-functioning country in many ways. The parameters on which Denmark can base its transition to an information-based society include advanced physical infrastructure, a well-functioning educational system and a regionally based labour market.

Accessibility between Denmark's regions is good, and actually excellent in many places. The cities and towns reflect Denmark's historical and cultural development and offer services to the public throughout the country. Everyone has a wide range of services available nearby.

The delimitation between town and country and respect for the qualities of the countryside have maintained a distinctive landscape throughout Denmark. Efforts are being made at the national, regional and local levels to solve environmental problems and protect nature in Denmark. It is crucial that Denmark continue to cooperate to secure the common heritage.

Economic and technological development is more rapid than ever. No one can predict the significance of information technology – a digital Denmark – for individual people, for each town and region and for Denmark's position in the world. One of the greatest challenges is to integrate this global revolution and its effects into national and local perspectives.

The rapid changes in the global economy make it crucial for individual countries and regions to ensure, using such measures as spatial planning, that the distinctive characteristics of each region can be transformed into advantages in international competition. This is in focus in spatial planning at the European level and in other ways.

Spatial planning that considers the regional business structure can help to create economically robust regions that are environmentally sustainable. Closer interaction between business development and spatial planning can both strengthen strategies for business development and ensure that spatial planning is more dynamic and oriented towards the future.

In this national planning report, the Government of Denmark is focusing on the interaction between spatial planning and business development, transport and



Denmark's regions and cities vary in their distinctive characteristics and cultural development. Realizing the potential of these regions and cities requires close cooperation.

the environment based on extensive national debate in 1999. The national planning report thus serves as a framework for a binding dialogue between the state, the 14 counties, the 275 municipalities, business, interest groups and other partners.

1.1 Regional development

The main focus has been and still is how Denmark's individual regions can develop their distinctive characteristics. A key challenge is to realize the collective potential of all the distinctive characteristics in the various regions of Denmark.

Distinctive characteristics do not arise in a vacuum at the local level. They are historically embedded in the local buildings, local natural resources, the state of the local environment and in people's knowledge and local identity. In addition, the qualifications and occupational structure of the labour force vary between regions.

Realizing the potential of the distinctive characteristics of each region requires close cooperation between municipalities, between towns and especially between towns and rural districts. Each town must play a special role in the continuing development of the distinctive characteristics of the region.

Nevertheless, every town or municipality cannot and must not do everything. It may sound abstract, but the key to a stronger division of labour between towns and between town and country is an appropriate balance between competition and cooperation. This balance can be based on the geographical development of business. A better sense of and improved knowledge of business development can contribute to ensuring that regional and local characteristics can be developed and converted into competitive advantages at the international level.

History shows that the geographical distribution of business specialization is very stable over time. The clothing industry in the Herning-Ikast area, furniture in Salling, toys in Billund, mobile telephony in Nordjylland County and the pharmaceutical industry in Greater Copenhagen are good examples of this.

The Government considers it important to be aware of how to maintain and develop regional and local strengths and, in addition, how to ensure that new potential is developed based on the historical, geographical and cultural background of a region.

Interaction and specialization

The state, the counties and the municipalities strive continually to map the regional and local strengths and competencies. The regional programmes for business development and the production of business reports for Greater Copenhagen and for Jylland & Fyn are examples of this.

The Government considers it crucial that spatial planning take account of variation in the competencies in Denmark's regions. This means that the business potential of the distinctive regional characteristics should be more integrated into future regional and municipal planning. The counties and municipalities should think regionally across administrative boundaries. Spatial planning should be more strategic and thereby strengthen the development of each local area.

The decisive factor is obtaining knowledge on the business competencies of a region. The starting-point for this is analysing the geographical specialization of business. However, specialization is not enough. Business specialization does not comprise a regional strength until business sectors or groups of businesses have developed unique competencies and advanced knowledge within companies that are socioeconomically important for the region. This is a prerequisite for influencing regional development.

The Government will work towards creating a regional and local basis for deepening the interaction between spatial planning, business policy, transport and the environment. This can enhance the coherence between regional business policy and regional and municipal plans.

Planning as an active instrument

Spatial planning is an important component of regional and local dialogue. It can become a key factor in developing regional competencies. Planning is carried out in close cooperation with the public through an established process.

The process comprises political discussions, public hearings and dialogue with numerous partners. This planning process is well suited to disseminate, to promote good ideas and to help to concretize the regional strengths. An important side effect of the spatial planning process is that the involved public achieves ownership of the final plan. This ownership is felt not only by the councillors who have adopted the plan but also by citizens, interest groups, business and other partners. This is decisive for achieving consensus in support of a plan and in implementing the plan.

Planning should continue to result in land-use plans focusing on where various functions are to be located in the region and in local communities. The plans must ensure that the regions function well and preserve their assets. Nevertheless, planning is also largely a process of dialogue on objectives, means, balancing interests and a framework for future action. This process can be incorporated in the interaction to develop strategies for regional spatial development. The regional plans are produced based on an overall assessment of development in each county. The regional plans can describe and prescribe action as prerequisites for fulfilling the development strategies adopted. The local base and support are therefore decisive for implementing a plan. Strategies should be formulated across county lines, because their influence can extend far beyond the county boundary and must be based on the special premises and competencies of each region. Strategies can be incorporated into the deliberation of the plans and can be made more specific in the final plans. This allows active local intervention in influencing the course of spatial development and striving to achieve the objectives of the regional plan.

Plans and planning processes should therefore still be made as active as possible. There is room for improvement in formulating strategies to promote broad dialogue on the plans.

Improving urban planning

When the dynamics of business interact with spatial planning, the classical focus of urban planning on a comprehensive perspective is disturbed. Globalization, internationalization and information technology networks place spatial planning in a new context.

The urban planning of the future will include the planning basis of today, but planning will also become more a process of the spatial development of cities and towns and finding a balance between renewal and preservation.

1.1

Balanced development throughout Denmark

Regional development

The inherent character and cultural capital of a town or district create local identity and are therefore crucial for planning; the reason is that the way that planning toys with the characteristics and symbols of a place becomes part of the potential for local business development and the distinctive local characteristics.

The interaction between municipal planning and the regional competencies will still plan the functions of a town. Spatial planning should still make the town and its neighbourhoods function well economically, socially and culturally.

Nevertheless, planning should also improve the aesthetic qualities of neighbourhoods and towns and contribute to ensuring that the land use, furnishing and architecture of an area express the diversity that characterizes Denmark. This will also ensure that planning strives to maintain and develop distinctive local characteristics. One of the future challenges for municipal planning will be to give priority to form and aesthetics in urban planning and to downplay the classical focus on the spatial delimitation of city functions.

Strategic municipal planning

Denmark's Folketing (parliament) has repealed the previous requirement that each municipality revise its municipal plan every 4 years. Each municipal council will now be required to prepare a strategy for municipal planning in the first half of the 4-year local election period.

The strategic planning document provides an opportunity to actively use municipal planning as a political instrument in an era in which broad political ownership of municipal plans is more important than ever.

One of the main features of the legislation adopted makes the required revision of municipal plans more flexible so that they can be adapted to the local needs and desires. Introducing revision based on geographical area and specific themes will provide new opportunities to involve the citizenry in planning.

The legal requirement for preparing a planning strategy is based on the premise that municipal planning should extend beyond land-use management. A municipal plan is one of several strategic means that can be used to determine how to take advantage of the local development potential and how to take on new challenges.

The municipalities need to think regionally and internationally when they prepare a spatial development strategy for the municipality. If the municipalities draw on the regional pool of competencies, municipal planning will reflect the municipalities' strategy in relation to the overall regional development.

It is important that spatial planning take account of variation in regional competencies and qualities. The distinctive characteristics of local areas are embedded in the area's buildings, natural resources, history and people in the form of knowledge and local identity. The photograph shows the corporate headquarters of Bang & Olufsen in Struer.



Active municipal planning will therefore be a good instrument in examining options for the future and preparing a coherent strategy for the spatial development of a municipality based on a local perspective.

A new view of rural districts

Similar to Denmark's cities and towns, rural districts have useful strengths and distinctive characteristics.

Creating self-reliant development leading to a diverse population and a solid economic base can be difficult in some rural districts; other rural districts face urgent challenges, such as environmental or social problems. Rural districts also

need to integrate the local competencies with the existing but not yet exploited opportunities.

Some rural districts serve as a new type of suburbs to cities. In such districts, the activities of the nearby city or town interact strongly with those of the district. Town and country are closely linked in many regions and are mutual prerequisites socially, economically and culturally. Their respective opportunities for development are often closely linked. The spatial development perspectives for town and country should be examined as a whole across geographical, social, economic and other boundaries.

In general, the problems and opportunities of rural districts vary based on economic, social and natural factors, including their location in relation to large urban areas.

The Government therefore wants self-reliant development in rural districts to be based on regional and local premises and competencies.

The counties and municipalities have an important role in carrying out planning and offering services in rural districts. This planning should attempt to ensure self-reliant development in rural districts for settlement, workplaces and services, so that life in the countryside is not based on passive transfer payments.

Dwellings in rural districts should be adapted to the various needs for owner-occupied, rental and cooperative housing, which will ensure a diverse composition of the population in rural districts.

Regarding business in rural districts and thereby also employment, the development of new types of business that could appropriately be located in small towns can play an important role for smaller urban communities and thereby also for rural districts.

Nevertheless, it is important that business development in rural districts not have negative environmental or other undesired effects. Not all types of business can be located in the small towns and villages of rural districts. Many types of company depend on location close to similar businesses or specific types of business and will therefore have to locate in towns. Some types of business cannot be located in rural districts for environmental or other reasons. These must be located in urban districts zoned for business that are appropriately located and planned to meet such needs.

Development in rural districts depends on the individual region and the characteristics of the region. Promoting geographical dispersion of population and economic activity is important for regional development.



This does not mean that new settlement should be sprawled. Regional and municipal plans should continue to ensure that urban development takes place in conjunction with existing urban communities to keep the open country free of development.

This is required to continue to uphold the qualities that make settling in and living in the countryside attractive. The Government wants to maintain these qualities.

From expansion to use

Among the businesses of the future, the winners will be the companies that manage to take environmental and social responsibility. This provides new opportunities to attach a more specific content to the desire for sustainable development.

Close dialogue with local businesses can create the basis for more long-lasting development of Denmark's cities and towns and especially its landscape. Nevertheless, this places a whole new set of demands on spatial planning and how it is used in regional development.

Growth in jobs is a high priority in all parts of Denmark. One way this priority is expressed is through the large amount of land zoned for business development in many parts of Denmark.

Instead of contributing to regional business development, however, the large tracts of land zoned for business can have the opposite effect. Land is a mere passive input into business development. It is extremely difficult to influence the location choices of companies solely through the availability of greenfield sites.

The Government finds it important that the present land zoned for business correspond more closely to businesses' demand for land. The demand for business sites varies according to region depending on which distinctive characteristics and strengths are given priority in regional development. The demand also varies according to the type of business.

It is therefore decisive that the sites available for business reflect the changes in the structure of business and especially the strategies for business development the municipalities and counties have launched to generate regional development.

It is understandable that physical infrastructure plays a decisive role in regional consciousness. Building new roads gives the impression that one is well prepared for international competition.