

# SUMMARY

The book “Københavns genrejsning” – The Reconstruction of Copenhagen – focuses on the most intensively built-up part of Denmark. An area measuring 10 by 10 kilometres that is more or less made up of one municipality – the City of Copenhagen. The city has played – and plays – an important part in the history of Denmark. What happens here is and has been of great significance to the whole country.

Over the past 25 years, Copenhagen has undergone a dramatic transformation. Since the 1980s, it has risen from being an impoverished, run-down city inhabited primarily by elderly people and industrial workers to a dynamic, expansive city inhabited by the younger generations and experiencing rapid growth in the service and creative industries.

This development is not solely a result of the national boom from the early '90s to the onset of the financial crisis in 2008, but also of a political will to change the status of the city.

Throughout Europe, there was a growing awareness of the function of the city as being one of society's prime generators of growth and prosperity. By the late '80s, it was generally recognised that as engines of growth, the cities had now become equally as important as the nation-state. Seen from a Danish perspective, this meant that the country's only metropolis would have to undergo a transformation.

During the late '80s and the early '90s, this view became more and more pronounced with the majority of politicians, both local politicians around the country and more broadly in the Danish Parliament.

## **The theses of the book**

What are the parameters behind Copenhagen's success? The book demonstrates that an alliance between the State and the city was – and still is – of great importance, both in a European context and internally, in Denmark, as a national engine of growth.

The book seeks to validate its five main theses, all seemingly major driving forces behind the city's material success.

Thesis 1 is that the development is the product of a necessary political clout based on an alliance between the State and the city. An alliance which laid the foundation for private investments. Based on history, it appears that such an alliance is indeed required to bring about growth in the city.

Thesis 2 is that a case-by-case approach will inevitably frighten off investors. It is crucial, therefore, that an overall strategy is developed and adhered to for a number of years. Local planning is required to make investors see the long-term perspectives of their investments and

to reassure them that the development areas are actually moving in the direction recommended by the overall plan.

Thesis 3 is that architectural development plans stimulate and attract both public and private investments.

Thesis 4 is that municipal investments and development agreements are effective tools, in regard to both urban renewal and transformation of disused industrial and harbour areas.

Thesis 5 is that long-term investment in infrastructure, including the Metro, is needed in order to maintain the development impetus.

The book demonstrates that a timely proactive effort, in terms of strategy and planning, meant that Copenhagen was well prepared when the boom eventually hit the city.

So whereas Copenhagen used to be stagnating, with no part in the growth that other cities and suburban municipalities experienced in the '80s and '90s, the capital by the Millennium had developed into a dynamo of growth, not just for the city itself but for the entire country. In the course of a few years, Copenhagen's share of the bulk of commercial construction in the metropolitan area rose from less than 10% to around 25%.

### **The significance of planning**

Planning is traditionally seen as a link between the plan and the politicians; and with the Planning Act reform in the '70s, public hearings were introduced, thereby making it easier for the public to follow the physical planning.

This understanding is, in many ways, out of date.

There are many more players involved in the various interactions which determine the planning of the city. In random order, these are: investors, media, developers, citizen groups, various ministries at state level and non-governmental organisations, both in the commercial and the environmental fields. All these groups can, moreover, be subdivided into various players with often divergent interests. It is then up to the municipal administration to coordinate the various interests and prepare them for a political decision; a decision which will inevitably favour some of the parties at the expense of others. It is, therefore, the politicians' responsibility to provide reliable planning and leadership in order to enable the city to compete with other cities.

In the '80s, the mayors of Copenhagen were not yet ready to take on this task, but during the years from 1990 to 2006, local politicians came to realise the importance of taking responsibility in order to attract investments to the city.

### **History can be divided into three waves**

The first wave covers the period from 1990 to 1997, when a great number of decisions were taken about public investments in Copenhagen based on the committee report *Hovedstaden – hvad vil vi med den?* The initiative belonged to Prime Minister Poul Schlüter and the chairman of the Social Democratic Party, Svend Auken, but the municipality joined in, and, for the first time ever, the state and the municipality sat on the same committee. The formation of an alliance between the city and the State regarding the development of Copenhagen was pivotal to the first wave, which counted the decision to build a Metro and have it financed by the sale of building sites in Ørestad as one of its major achievements.

Other landmarks were the decisions to invest in national cultural and educational buildings. Add to this the governmental decisions to build a bridge to Sweden and to enlarge the airport, which are both crucial to growth in Copenhagen as well as the rest of the country. Instilling confidence takes time, however, which is why local politicians had to spend most of the '90s building an investment climate of trust in the city.

The second wave comprised a series of private commercial investments in Copenhagen which were initiated in the second half of the '90s. The propensity to invest returned, with the developments at Langelinie and Kalvebod Brygge as the first examples. Unemployment declined, and the city was increasingly characterised by the younger generation. The great urban renewal effort at Vesterbro and the many courtyard renovations became necessary to make young people stay a little longer in the city. Meanwhile, housing construction reached a historical low because of the de facto freeze on new social housing.

The third wave was sparked off by 9/11/2001, which curbed commercial construction. Instead housing construction got going. The municipality developed a housing policy which focused on the promotion of redevelopment in the year 2000, and, at the same time, plans were prepared for the Copenhagen harbour area. The city thus succeeded in establishing a strategy accompanied by a plan for the time which prepared the way for investments in housing construction. Foreign planners and architects came to Copenhagen to give their personal interpretations of the city's urban fabric. The period was characterised by the development of many disused industrial areas, and by increased investments in childcare institutions and leisure facilities.

The third wave petered out with the economic crisis in 2008, but by then the investors' confidence in the new lord mayor, who took up of-

face in 2006, was already subsiding. At the city hall, the negotiating climate deteriorated once more, and the market became flooded with new projects – a lot more than were needed.

### **Architectural urban development and the polycentric city**

During the '90s, a number of national cultural institutions profited from notable extensions, among these the National Gallery of Denmark. The period also witnessed the thorough renovation of Vesterbro, which ensured that this typical piece of 1890s urban design was preserved for posterity. From the late '90s onwards, a large number of solitary dwellings were built throughout the city. Quite a few of these are noteworthy and of architectural value, e.g. the Ferring high-rise in Ørestad and Aller's headquarters at Havreholmen. However, the majority of commercial buildings did not contribute much to the city's overall design. Notable exceptions are Spinderiet in Valby, the buildings at Amerika Plads and, to some extent, also the development in Kalkbrænderihavnen. Other parts of the city which have contributed to a modern cityscape are primarily large housing developments such as the one designed by Entasis at Rentemestervej and the buildings encircling the old HT-plot at Ørnevej. These created the framework for vibrant city life while adding green oases to the neighbourhoods.

More than anything, the city's water (harbour) has become much more important over the past 20 years. First, the harbour planning has provided guidelines for waterfront development, with Sluseholmen as the most striking example. Second, the Copenhageners' relationship to the water has changed; whereas the water was previously used mainly for commercial purposes, the Copenhageners now swim, bathe, sail and row in the harbour and in Øresund, and at the same time more and more people walk and cycle along and across the water. The result of the Nordhavn competition very much builds on lessons learned from the development of Sluseholmen and the inhabitants' use of the water.

Many opinion formers have called for a more classical approach to urban design, as opposed to the solitary buildings of Modernism. In addition to Slusehavnen and the Nordhavn project, Carlsberg may be mentioned as a promising example of modern sustainable urban design. As a supplement to the inner city itself, local planning has succeeded in generating several new city centres. These are reminiscent of the '50s, when the city had a population of around 750,000 and an intense city life was lived in the dense urban districts with their shop-

ping streets and numerous large and small shops. This vibrant life disappeared during the '60s and '70s with the radical change in shopping patterns. However, the intense commercial life has now returned in several districts, where the city's immigrants in particular have contributed to the current wide variety of shops. Added to this is a cultural life which takes place in many parts of the city today, cropping up in Valby (Valby Torvene), at Østerbro (Østerfælled Torv) and at Vanløse Station, where city life has been stimulated with large investments in the retail trade and municipal investments in cultural activities. Other parts have benefited from urban renewal and urban regeneration – the so-called kvarterløft – as at Vesterbro where city life is enjoyed at Sdr. Boulevard and in the small streets around Istedgade, Kødbyen and Enghave Plads. And also at Nørrebro where the city life centres around Skt. Hans Torv and Blågårdsgade, at outer Nørrebro around Jægersborggade and Stefansgade and at Amager in Holmbladsgade and around Amager Bio in Sundby. These 'new' spots appeal especially to 'career people' and the growing young community who enjoy life in the city, while other commercial centres such as Field's and Fisketorvet appeal more to the traditional Copenhageners.

Many of these new meeting places are modern versions of the small-town idylls of the '50s; here people meet and enjoy each other's company – having lunch at the cafés, just like they did in the '50s when going to the bakery or the post office. These places, therefore, present an identifiable image to many people. If this trend is to be continued, new initiatives are required from the municipality, and one such initiative is the blocking of Nørrebrogade for through traffic.

### **A sustainable Copenhagen**

The development of the past 10 years has made the city economically sustainable, and, thanks to the housing policy followed, it has also become more socially sustainable. As a consequence, the capital now has the strength to take on the quest to become one of Europe's most eco-friendly cities.

The average Copenhageners' CO<sub>2</sub> footprint is only half of the average Dane's, which is 10 tons. There are two reasons for this. First, the communal heating and power supply means that Copenhagen has a very low CO<sub>2</sub> output compared with other European cities, and, second, the city's dense fabric has resulted in a traffic pattern which is very different from the rest of the country; local traffic planning has succeeded in making the Copenhageners cycle to and from work as well as in their spare time.

Projects like the one in Nordhavn – which was made public in the spring of 2009 – and Carlsberg, point towards an ecologically more sustainable Copenhagen. But unlike Ørestad where the public transport system, with the Metro, preceded the urban development, there are as yet no definite plans to precede the development of Nordhavn with rail connections. However, the plans for Copenhagen generally point towards a more eco-responsible future. A comparison of Copenhagen's climate plan and the ambitions of other cities will show that a vigorous effort is required if Copenhagen is to aspire to the title of 'world-leading eco-metropolis'. This effort will have to build on a coordination of climate plan, architectural policy and local planning in order to succeed.

It is also crucial for the future development that there are enclaves of inexpensive dwellings scattered all over the city. Until now, the municipality has been able to achieve this by making room for social housing with small units in, for example, Ørestad Nord, Havnestad and Sluseholmen, where social housing has been combined with privately financed rental or owner-occupied accommodation. By pursuing a strategic planning policy and tailoring it to the present, and by developing plans that inspire confidence, the municipality has succeeded in boosting residential construction, without commercial construction coming to a complete standstill.

After 10 years of growth, a transformed city now faces new challenges. The city will have to decide whether to keep looking for an expansive development or to start adapting its planning policy to the new economic situation – whether to gamble on a progressive strategy with large new areas of urban development, with the economic consequences this might have, or to concentrate on finishing the ongoing development projects.

If the vision of a sustainable Copenhagen is to be fostered, a long dedicated process is required, over several election periods. The Copenhageneers and their local politicians must look after the city which is only theirs on loan. After the election in 2009, Copenhagen now has a new lord mayor and the administration must therefore develop a new strategy for the city's future. A strategy which will have to be agreed upon by the parties at the city hall and by the State and the city. And this is the secret, when it comes to both urban planning and local politics.

The policy of the past 20 years has made Copenhagen both more socially and economically sustainable. The challenge now is to also make it one of the most eco-friendly cities. Here lies the primary task for the coming 10 years – in conjunction with making Copenhagen active as an engine of growth, nationally as well as internationally.