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Planning Aarhus as a Welfare Geography: Urban Modernism and the Shaping of ‘Welfare Subjects’ in Post-war Denmark

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Planning Aarhus as a Welfare Geography: Urban Modernism and the Shaping of ‘Welfare Subjects’ in Post-war Denmark

This article investigates how governmental power in the emerging Danish welfare system operated through transformations to the urban geography. The focus is on two concrete cases, namely two regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area published in 1954 and 1966. By functionally dividing the city into spaces for work, housing, consumption, transportation and recreation, these plans aimed to knit certain behavioural patterns into the everyday life of the urban dwellers and thereby promote the becoming of a particular social order and subjects. This demonstrates how the emerging welfare state worked proactively in these decades, reconfiguring urban space in the nexus between welfare, modernism and affluence. Moreover, the article addresses the outcome of the plans, seeking to explain their unsuccessful trajectory by approaching them at the intersection of the local, national and transnational. In order to approach the complex relationship between welfare and urban space, the article proposes ‘welfare geography’ as the primary analytical category. Bridging perspectives from governmentality-studies and critical human geography, this category is designed to study how welfare as a ‘dispositif’ is geographically assembled from multiple perspectives, comprising planned, imagined, material as well as lived dimensions.

Keywords: Regional planning; urban planning; urban modernism; welfare state; welfare geography; governmentality; post-war; Aarhus; Denmark
Introduction

In the decades following World War II, cities all over Western Europe underwent radical transformations. Public authorities, often in collaboration with private entrepreneurs, launched and realized extensive plans for urban futures. By focusing on elements such as infrastructure, housing and consumerism, planners effectively reconfigured the spatiality of cities and thereby adapted urban life to the societal norms of the emerging welfare states. In this period, Danish society underwent a similar transformation materialising in new modes of consumerism and a middle class of unprecedented size. As an integrated part of society, cities changed profoundly, and new urban spaces dominated by decentralism and modernist ideals gradually emerged. This space was not the result of chance, but to a great extent it was one of urban planning, slum clearance and inner-city redevelopment. Factors such as legislative initiatives, the establishment of a comprehensive bureaucratic framework and economic growth all contributed to the emergence of urban planning as a distinct profession especially among architects and engineers. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the ambitions and aspirations of Danish planners reached unprecedented heights, materialising in multiple plans seeking to regulate different levels of urban society from the planning of entire urban regions down to the design of the particular apartment block.

This notwithstanding, we know little of the political rationalities that informed and structured urban planning in post-war Denmark. In the substantial research literature on the history of the Danish welfare state and society, the focus has

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1 See for example: Ward, Planning the Twentieth Century City; Klemek, Transatlantic Collapse; Gold, Practice of Modernism; Hall, Cities of Tomorrow; Wakeman, Practicing Utopia.

predominantly been on the more traditional social and political history of the welfare state. This literature portrays the period at issue as the ‘golden age’ of the Danish welfare state, in which the universal social services system was created.\(^3\) Even though an increasing awareness towards the pivotal role of cities in the reshaping of Western societies in this period can be identified within international research literature, the role of both the city in general and urban planning specifically is largely ignored in Danish research.\(^4\)

This article addresses this gap by investigating how governmental power in the emerging Danish welfare society was implemented through transformations to urban geography. More specifically, the article aims to illuminate how urban planning in the 1950s and 1960s came to work as a tool of governance facilitating ‘welfare’ and the shaping of ‘human subjects’. Empirically, focus is on two concrete plans for the Danish city of Aarhus, namely two regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area published in 1954 and 1966. These have, in contrast to the Finger Plan for Copenhagen (1947), been the subject of little scholarly attention. Nevertheless, as this article will demonstrate, they represent clear-cut examples of how modernist principles on planning intertwined with contemporary rationalities of welfare in post-war Denmark.

In order to approach the complex relationship between ‘welfare’ and urban space, the article proposes ‘welfare geography’ as the primary analytical category.

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\(^3\) Petersen et al., *Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind III*; Petersen et al., *Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind IV*; Kolstrup, *Velfærdsstatens Rodder*; Kolstrup, *Den Danske Velfærdsmodel*.


Invented for this particular study, the category combines insights from the interdisciplinary field of governmentality-studies and critical human geography and thus should not be mistaken for the socio-economically informed ‘welfare geography-approach’ developed by geographers such as David M. Smith in the 1970s. Even though both the field of governmentality-studies and critical human geography offer tools for exploring the relationship between space, power and social life, (urban) historians, so far, have rarely applied them in the same analysis.

To bridge these perspectives, the category takes its departure in Michel Foucault’s notions of ‘power’ as dispersed in society and of ‘governmentality’ as the ‘conduct of conduct’, encompassing not only governmental attempts to regulate the behaviour of others, but also the fostering of individual practices of self-governance. As formulated by British historian Patrick Joyce, this approach entails ‘a move away from the idea of a static and monolithic social order to the idea of social ordering as a fluid, open and many-stranded activity.’ In other words, it enables a broader and more nuanced definition of ‘welfare’ than just social policies and legislations posed by the state. Rather, ‘welfare’ is defined as the broad range of processes through which social

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citizenship\textsuperscript{9} has been negotiated, produced and reproduced in the modern Danish welfare society. The category of ‘welfare geography’ connects Foucault’s key terms to the notion of space as ‘socially produced’, developed by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre.\textsuperscript{10} The aim is to establish a critical awareness of how space ought to be approached not merely as a physical thing, but as a ‘socio-spatial dialectic’ dynamically forming the relations between things.\textsuperscript{11} This perspective gives space explanatory potentials, as it can provide insights into aspirations, social and cultural patterns, norms and power hierarchies of different times. As such, it becomes possible to explore not only how human activity has shaped urban space, but also how urban space actively has configured and shaped social processes, facilitating and reproducing certain norms and power structures.

In a methodological perspective, the analytical category ‘welfare geography’ enables a study not of how urban space historically has reflected the social order of the Danish welfare society, but of how urban space \textit{actively} has influenced and been influenced by patterns of social conduct, norms and values of that society. In this way, it is designed to grasp how welfare as a ‘dispositif’ was geographically assembled from multiple perspectives, comprising planned, imagined, material as well as lived dimensions. Below, I approach the production of urban space by analysing two specific urban plans, thereby restricting my focus to one specific way of conceptualizing space. In other words, I seek to study how a particular type of ‘welfare geography’ was envisaged and produced as a ‘space of representation’, which, in Lefebvre’s terminology, constitutes ‘the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic

\textsuperscript{9} See for a definition of ‘social citizenship’: Marshall, \textit{Citizenship and Social Class}.
\textsuperscript{10} Lefebvre, \textit{Production of Space}.
\textsuperscript{11} Soja, \textit{Seeking Spatial Justice}, 18.
subdividers and social engineers.' In this context, I do not seek to identify the ‘mastermind’ behind the plans, but rather to study how they can be understood as activities of governance.

The article consists of three analytical parts. To provide a background for the analysis of the two plans at issue, the first part outlines the characteristics of the Danish urban planning system. The second part then focuses specifically on the two Regional plans for the Greater Area, analysing how these were conceived as a specific type of ‘welfare geography’. The third part addresses the outcome of the plans and evaluates what this can tell us more broadly about the relationship between urban modernism and the Danish welfare society in the last half of the 20th century.

**Urban Planning and the Danish Welfare State**

In Denmark, the development of urban planning followed a similar trajectory to many European nations. Before the acceleration of industrialization, urban planning primarily served military strategic, sanitary and representative purposes. With the rapid urbanization following the establishment of the Free Trade Act in 1862, Danish urban planning increasingly became a tool to regulate industrial, infrastructural and social issues. As such, planning initiatives in the late 19th century predominantly reflected the liberal order of the bourgeoisie.

This changed during the first half of the 20th century in close connection with the gradual expansion of the Danish welfare state. National legislation on urban planning,

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12 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 38.
13 For an overview, see: Ward, *Planning the Twentieth-Century City*.
however, was not conceived overnight but was the result of an ongoing process. Civil servants already emphasized the need for urban planning in 1918 as a tool to solve the prevalent housing shortage. In 1921, the independent institution ‘The Danish Town Planning Institute’ was established with the declared purpose of promoting interest and research in urban planning. In 1925, the Danish government passed the first national legislation on urban planning, granting local municipalities the jurisdiction to develop urban plans based on certain directives. This, however, proved to be highly ineffective, since it only made urban planning optional for the municipalities. Finally, on the 29th of April 1938 the Danish government, headed by the Social Democrats, passed the Planning Act of 1938, making urban planning mandatory for every borough with more than 1,000 inhabitants. By providing municipal authorities with both guidelines and professional assistance to prepare the plans, this legislation represented a landmark and proved to be pivotal for the subsequent development of Danish urban planning. Due to the outbreak of World War II, the Planning Act of 1938 was, however, not effectively implementable before the post-war decades.

As well as the war, in larger Danish cities such as Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen, municipal borders and interests also posed a challenge for urban planners. The urban region of Aarhus, for example, counted no less than seven municipalities until 1970. Although the borough of Aarhus constituted the central municipal base of the region, the surrounding municipalities still possessed a relatively high degree of

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16 See: Bramsnæs, “Boligkommissionen af 1918”.
17 Madsen, Skæv og National, 184.
18 Gaardmand, Plan over Land, 20.
20 Gaardmand, Plan over Land, 24.
autonomy on a broad range of matters including urban planning. This situation motivated the passing of the *Act on Urban Regulation* in 1949 that introduced new planning tools for inter-municipal cooperation and thus the realization of comprehensive plans for the largest Danish cities.\(^{21}\) However, as will be shown in the next part of the article, the municipal border structure still posed a challenge for planners in Aarhus throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

These legislative initiatives were of no practicable use without an adequate bureaucratic framework ensuring the continuing implementation and maintenance of the former. Therefore, in order to cope with the challenges arising from the increasing governmental involvement with urban space, a comprehensive bureaucracy gradually emerged, comprising a broad range of institutions dealing with different aspects of urban environment. 1947, in particular, was pivotal for the institutionalization and professionalization of the governmental involvement with urban space in Denmark. In November, the newly elected Social Democratic government established a ‘Ministry of Building and Housing’ (from 1949 it was renamed the ‘Ministry of Housing’), and with this followed both a designated office handling all urban affairs, including urban planning, housing and slum clearance as well as an independent research institution for construction research.\(^{22}\) These initiatives can be seen as both a reaction to the identification of urban space as a site of governmental intervention and a catalyst for new governmental initiatives on the area.

Before proceeding to the concrete plans, it is necessary to briefly address the Danish version of ‘urban modernism’. As argued by urban historians Simon Gunn and James Greenhalgh, architectural historians in particular have tended to reduce the

\(^{21}\) Ibid. 38-39.

category of modernism to a canon of architects and buildings. Nonetheless, as evident in the work of, for example, Congrès Internationale d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), modernist planners were also highly engaged with town planning. At the centre of the famous ‘Athens Charter’ of 1933 was the ‘functional city’ which laid out a set of principles for town planning, dividing the city into spaces for work, residence, recreation and circulation. As this analysis will demonstrate, the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus area approached the urban geography through a similar conceptual framework. Thus, both the plans systematically divided urban space into designated areas for housing, industry, infrastructure, public institutions and recreational areas. However, as many notable scholars show, urban modernism was by no means a homogenous phenomenon. Instead, modernist principles of planning found expression and were implemented in various degrees in many parts of the world during the post-war decades. In post-war Denmark, planners mainly looked to their Nordic neighbours and to the Anglo-American world for inspiration. Still, although particularly Swedish modernism served as an important source of inspiration, Danish cities were not reshaped to the same extent as their Swedish counterparts. This was partly due to the fact that the Danish state never took an equally dominant position in the planning system. As architectural historian Arne Gaardmand emphasizes, urban planning in post-war Denmark relied significantly on the initiative of local actors.

24 See: Le Corbusier, Athens Charter.
25 See for example: Ward, Planning the Twentieth Century City; Hall, Cities of Tomorrow; Wakeman, Practicing Utopia; Urban, Tower and Slab; Swenarton & Avermaete, Architecture and the Welfare State.
26 See: Banke, Den sociale ingeniørkunst, 121-130; Gaardmand, Plan over land, 20-22; Ward, Planning the Twentieth-Century City, 206-209.
27 Gaardmand, Plan over land, 25
state made urban planning mandatory and promoted certain forms of planning through especially the offices of the Ministry of Housing, the formal responsibility for developing the initial planning proposal lay with the local authorities. In post-war Aarhus, it was thus the municipal authorities that initiated and developed the two plans for the entire urban region. As the next part will show, these plans did not only converge with the emergence of the welfare society, but they were examples of how the urban geography was operationalized as a tool of governance in order to realize this society.

Planning Post-war Aarhus as a Welfare Geography

The aim of this part of the article is to analyse how the urban geography of Aarhus was conceived as a ‘welfare geography’ in the two regional plans for the Greater Aarhus area from 1954 and 1966. The analysis proceeds in four steps. In the first section, the two plans and their overall objectives is presented. Focusing primarily on their biopolitical dimensions, the second section then seeks to demonstrate how these plans can be understood as activities of governance. The third section explores the content of the plans by identifying and itemizing the different elements of the ‘social order’ or ‘recipe for welfare’ that these plans were conceived to reproduce. This section will lay the groundwork for the fourth and last section in which the ‘subjectifying’ dimensions of the plans will be discussed.

The Regional Plans for the Greater Aarhus Area

In the last half of 19th century, the city of Aarhus developed from a small trading- and port town in Eastern Jutland with less than 8,000 inhabitants into the second largest city in Denmark after Copenhagen, surpassing cities such as Odense, Helsingør and
Aalborg. The growth continued during the first half of the 20th century, and in 1950 the urban population had reached 153,000 inhabitants.\textsuperscript{28} As the second largest city in Denmark and as a city in rapid growth, Aarhus’ future development constituted a key concern for public authorities on both a national and local level. Population growth as well as the general increase of affluence in Danish society required new solutions for infrastructure, housing, industry and consumerism. To meet and facilitate this development, the local authorities set out to develop comprehensive plans the future spatiality of the urban region.

The first regional plan for the Greater Aarhus area was the result of the work by a committee established in 1949 by representatives from Aarhus City Council and six of the surrounding municipalities. The Social Democratic mayor of Aarhus, Svend Unmack Larsen (1893-1965), served as chair of the committee that, in addition, was assisted by professional staff from the City Engineer and City Architect’s offices as well as experts in the form of economists and lawyers.\textsuperscript{29} In practice, the committee primarily coordinated the work and tried to secure consistency by providing guidelines and attending to structural matters. The actual preparation of partial plans was delegated to the individual municipalities, and their drafts were subsequently compiled and adjusted to meet the objectives of the overall plan. [Figure 1. here]

The final version of the plan was published in 1954. It worked with a timeframe until 1965, predicting that the urban population would increase with approximately 25% during this period.\textsuperscript{30} Operationalizing central elements of the \textit{Planning Act of 1938}, the plan outlined both a so-called ‘disposition plan’ and a ‘long-term plan’ for the urban spatiality.

\textsuperscript{28} Christensen, “Storby i provinsen”, 218.
\textsuperscript{29} Storåarhus-Kommissionen, \textit{Egnsplan for Storåarhus,} 5.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 15-19.
region. In the ‘disposition plan’, the planners divided the urban geography into three zones: an inner zone where the main expansion was planned to occur, a transitionary middle zone and an outer zone that was to be exempted from settlement until 1966.\(^{31}\) To realize the plan, the individual municipalities were to develop and submit a detailed disposition plan, in which they categorized the geography of their respective municipality in accordance with the three zone-types, to the Ministry of Housing, which then determined whether this was in alignment with the overall objectives of the plan.\(^{32}\) The disposition plans not only restricted the municipalities, but also private builders and housing cooperatives by equipping the public authorities with power to demolish any buildings disputing the guidelines.\(^{33}\) In addition to the disposition plan, the planners drafted a long-term plan, focusing on the future structure of the urban region. Whereas the former demonstrated good collaboration between the municipalities, the long-term plan, by being very noncommittal, reflected geopolitical issues caused by the existing municipal structure. Hence, the 1954 plan proposed not only one, but four possible scenarios for the future development of the urban region and imposed no formal obligations on the municipalities. All of these scenarios projected that the urban population would reach 200,000 by 1965. The proposals suggested to concentrate the main development either in ‘planet cities’, in the western outskirt of Aarhus or north and south of the city. As a fourth option, the plan proposed a scenario combining these three, and this was the one preferred by the committee itself.\(^{34}\) [Figure 2. here]

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 59.

\(^{33}\) Lauridsen, “Byens Rum”, 14.

\(^{34}\) Storårhus-Kommissionen, Egnspelan for Storårhus, 60-63.
Because of its noncommittal character, the municipalities concerned agreed to postpone the 1954 plan. Instead, they decided to establish a new committee in 1961, once again with the mayor of Aarhus, now the Social Democrat Bernhardt Jensen (1910-1978), serving as chair. Their plan for the Greater Aarhus Area, focusing on the urban development until 1980, was published in 1966. By attending to the spatial structure of the urban region and by consisting of both a disposition plan and a long-term plan, the form of the 1966 plan very much resembled its predecessor. However, in many ways the new plan was also more comprehensive, ambitious and rich in detail. First of all, the plan covered a larger geographical area than its predecessor, and thus more municipalities were involved in the planning process. Secondly, the planners articulated the objectives of the plan far more explicitly. As something new, the future urban geography of Aarhus had to meet four specific requirements: ‘valgfrihed (freedom of choice), tilgængelighed (accessibility), klarhed (clarity) and overskuelighed (transparency)’. Third, the planners had become more ambitious regarding the future development of the urban region. This was particularly reflected in the long-term plan. To meet the expected rapid growth in population and its effects on especially the urban infrastructure, the committee abandoned the idea of the monocentric city. The plan predicted that the population in the entire growth area would increase from 233,444 in 1961 to approximately 315,000 in 1985. Though the city centre of Aarhus was still supposed to serve as the main service centre and area of growth, the planners also

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38 Møller, Egnsplan for Århusområdet 1966, 30-46.
proposed new self-sufficient centres located in the urban periphery in order to relieve some of the pressure on the inner city.\textsuperscript{30} \textbf{[Figure 2. here]}  

However, as it had been the case with the 1954 plan, the main features of the 1966 plan were not realized. The two plans represent how local authorities in Denmark envisaged the future urban development in the post-war decades. But, what were the political rationalities informing the plans? What type of ‘welfare geography’ was the future Aarhus supposed to become? The next three sections provide answers to these questions.

\textit{Biopolitics and the Governance through Space}

When Foucault defined the term ‘governmentality’, he explicitly identified ‘population’ as its target.\textsuperscript{40} Instead of ruling over land and territory, modern forms of governance seek to regulate the behaviour of the people inhabiting the territory, and this includes attending to the preservation of the population as a biological entity. The concept of ‘biopower’ began to appear in Foucault’s works in the mid-1970s, characterising a form of power that he perceived to have emerged in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and comprised ‘an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations.’\textsuperscript{41} Concerned with the conservation and optimization of the population as a biological entity, biopolitical governance is mainly exercised through studies of birth rates, mortality rates and social as well as mental dispositions of population groups. As this section will demonstrate, biopower was integral to both of the plans analysed and must be seen as fundamental for the transformation of the urban

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 18-30.
\textsuperscript{40} Foucault, \textit{Sikkerhed, Territorium, Befolkning}, 116-117.
\textsuperscript{41} Foucault, \textit{History of Sexuality}, 140; Foucault, \textit{Society Must Be Defended}, 239-64.
region of Aarhus into a ‘welfare geography’.

The target of both regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area was to improve conditions for traffic, industry, housing, recreation and the distribution of welfare services. However, these improvements only served as means to achieve the overall objective of the plans, the improvement of urban region inhabitants’ living conditions. In this way, both plans had ‘population’ as their target, and in the 1966 plan this was explicitly articulated as its main goal: ‘to create the best possible conditions for all the inhabitants of the area.’

Yet, in order to create such living conditions, the planners had to produce ‘knowledge’ about the specific population inhabiting the area. Therefore, in preparation of the plans, the local authorities invested a significant amount of energy in compiling statistic material elucidating the demographic composition of the urban region. The primary findings were included in the final plans, but in order to obtain an adequate understanding of the extent of this work, focus of this analysis must be directed towards the appendixes of the two plans.

In connection with the 1954 plan, the involved municipalities drafted an appendix focusing on the economic and administrative conditions in the urban region of Aarhus. Interesting in this context are not so much the specific findings in the appendix, but rather its overall objectives and methods: What types of knowledge were pursued? And how was the urban population categorized? Following a review of the historical development of the municipal and geographical structure of the region from the mid-19th century until present time, the appendix presented a comprehensive and detailed overview of both the current and expected demographic conditions of the urban region.

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42 Møller, *Egnplan for Århusegnen 1966*, 10. This is my translation.
43 See Storårhus-Kommissionen, *Økonomiske og Administrative Forhold*.
44 Storårhus-Kommissionen, *Økonomiske og Administrative Forhold*, section I appendix 1-5.
For example, the section on housing did not only address the quantitative development of the housing stock, but also issues such as rent level, family structures and the overpopulation of apartments.\(^{46}\) Moreover, the appendix provided a comprehensive overview of both the occupational distribution and provision of social services to retirees, unemployed, orphans and recipients of poor relief within the urban region.\(^{47}\) By attending to topics such as gender, age, birth and migration rates as well as to the employment, income and social conditions of both the urban region in general and in between municipalities, the appendix provided the planners with a highly detailed and precise picture of the economic, social, occupational and biological dispositions of the population.\(^{48}\)

The local planners produced similar knowledge in preparation of the 1966 plan. In January 1963, representatives of the regional planning committee presented a program for its preparation. The first phase of this process was titled \textit{Preliminary investigations, predictions and goal} and aimed to clarify the main objectives of the plan as well as compiling its scientific framework.\(^{49}\) This included investigations of both the natural environment of the area and its industrial, infrastructural and demographic preconditions. As was the case with the 1954 plan, this involved studying not only previous and estimated population growth, but also the distribution and developments in terms of household, gender, age, birth rates and occupational statuses in the population.\(^{50}\) These investigations then served as the scientific framework which the

\(^{45}\) Ibid., section II-X.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., section III appendix 1-19.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., section VI appendix 1-8 and section IX appendix 1-5.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., section II-X.


\(^{50}\) Ibid.
committee determined and formulated the main objectives for the future development of the urban region.

The Danish urbanist John Pløger argues that modern planning has generally worked as a 'tool to clean, shape, order and create a healthy and well-conditioned population'. As shown above, both of the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area was conceived with precisely this purpose in mind. The planners did not merely aim to control a geographical territory, but rather to regulate and optimize the population inhabiting this territory. To do so, a comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the urban population, including its economic, social and biological dispositions, was required. In this sense, biopower constituted an important tool to make the population potentially governable. However, biopower was not only essential for the preparation of the plans. The plans themselves can also be seen as examples of biopolitical governance, as they were conceived to ensure that a healthy population would inhabit the urban region of Aarhus in the future. As the next section will show, this entailed transforming the urban region into a certain type of ‘welfare geography’.

The Social Ordering of ‘Welfare’

Expressed concisely, the primary goal of the plan is to create the best possible conditions for all the inhabitants of the area. This is a political or ideal target which can also be formulated in such a way that every individual must have equal access to all the benefits that the big city offers without having to experience the downsides which the big city also contains.

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51 Pløger, “Foucault’s dispositif”, 64.
52 Møller, Egnsplan for Århusegnen 1966, 10. Author’s translation.
With these words, the planners summarized the main principles of the 1966 plan. They encapsulate how the latter was conceived to facilitate the becoming of a particular ‘social order’ through a reconfiguration of the urban geography. This section seeks to identify and delineate the main elements of this ‘social order’ by examining the ideals for everyday life envisaged in the two plans.

A first point is that both plans expected that leisure would become an increasingly important part of the everyday lives of the urban dwellers. The planners attempted to facilitate this by ensuring that recreational areas were equally accessible for all inhabitants of the urban region. This included green areas in the form of parks and forests as well as playgrounds, sports grounds and areas reserved for allotment gardens. The latter were given high priority in both plans, and as part of the 1966 plan the planners even produced a special appendix focusing specifically on the importance of allotment gardens. In this appendix, the planners defined allotment gardens as an essential accessory to especially the older housing stock in the inner city, as the residents inhabiting these dwellings typically had very limited access to recreational spaces. The topic was also addressed in connection with the construction of new mass housing estates in the urban periphery. Here, the planners emphasized the importance of integrating green areas as well as other types of leisure amenities such as swimming baths into the estates. Thus, the planners’ engagement with recreational spaces can be seen as a way of interpreting the future behaviour of the inhabitants of the urban region

54 See Møller, A6: Kolonihaverne i planlægningen.
55 Ibid., 3.
in the light of contemporary expectations of the emergence of ‘the leisure society’.\textsuperscript{56} Both plans predicted that the urban population, as it gained more leisure-time, which was perceived as an unquestionable certainty, would be increasingly interested in using different types of recreational spaces, and therefore the plans had to facilitate this.

Besides illustrating an increasing societal awareness towards the role of leisure, this shows how the planning of the welfare city presupposed a confrontation with the spatial environment of the industrial city. This also found expression through other governmental activities such as slum clearance. Concurrent with the preparation of the regional plans, the public authorities demolished and redeveloped notorious slum areas in Aarhus such as Nygade and Østre Møllesti.\textsuperscript{57} As in most parts of the Western world, Danish planners construed unhealthy housing as poison for the urban population, and, as a possible antidote, new recreational spaces were needed. In this way, the planners also sought to reinterpret the relationship between nature and the city, combining the best from both worlds in a new ‘urban nature’. The idea of combining the best elements from city and nature in order to escape the ‘evils’ of the industrial city, was, however neither new nor a Danish phenomenon, but had dominated urban planning in Europe since at least the turn of the century. In this sense, the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area echoed the famous British planner and urbanist Ebenezer Howard’s aspiration of merging the best elements from urban and rural life in the ‘garden city’.\textsuperscript{58}

Secondly, the plans envisioned the future inhabitants of the urban region as mobile. Both plans focused heavily on ensuring an infrastructure capable of handling

\textsuperscript{56} See for example: Andersen, \textit{Arbejderkultur i Velfærdssamfundet}; Wagner and Brühéze, “Det europæiske Fritidsmenneske”; Wagner, “Rise of Autotourism”.

\textsuperscript{57} Thomsen, \textit{Danske Byer blev revet ned}, 86-107.

\textsuperscript{58} See: Howard, \textit{Garden Cities of To-morrow}; Howard, \textit{To-morrow}. See also, Pinder, Visions of the City, 29-57.
the substantial pressure of the expected increase in private car ownership.\textsuperscript{59} This was especially evident in the 1966 plan, which, as something new, introduced ‘commuting’ as an everyday activity for the urban dwellers. By establishing a more efficient road network, the plan pursued a reasonable balance between workplaces, housing and recreational areas, limiting the commuting time to maximum 30 minutes.\textsuperscript{60} In order to ensure this balance, the planners divided the road network into five categories. These categories were ‘boligveje’ (housing roads), ‘stamveje’ (regular roads), ‘fordelingsveje’ (distribution roads), ‘primærveje’ (primary roads) and ‘motorveje’ (motorways).\textsuperscript{61} By doing so, the planners not only sought to expand the capacity of the road network, but also to facilitate different types of mobilities on different levels. At one scale, the housing roads ensured that cars could access and park within the residential areas. These roads also had to accommodate other types of mobilities, cyclists and pedestrians, and facilitate a safe environment for children in particular. Thus, they were to be limited to a maximum speed of 20-30 km/h and be equipped with both bike lanes and sidewalks. In addition, the residential areas were to be interconnected through a comprehensive path-system dividing paths into ‘boligstier’ (housing paths), ‘kvarterstier’ (neighbourhood paths) and ‘hovedstier’ (main paths), ensuring a consistent separation of driving and walking traffic.\textsuperscript{62} At the other end of the scale, motorways were to ensure a swift and unproblematic transfer both between different parts of the urban region and to other parts of Jutland. Besides facilitating private car ownership, the planners aimed to advance the mobility of the urban population through


\textsuperscript{60} Møller, \textit{Egnspolitik for Århussegnen 1966}, 25 & 152.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 133.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 136.
an improved public transportation system. Instead of establishing a new urban railway network, as had been done in order to connect Copenhagen with its suburban hinterland, the planners chose to rely on a significant expansion of the bus network in the Aarhus region. In both plans, the planners highlighted this solution for its flexibility, as it allowed local authorities to continuously readjust the bus routes and thereby patterns of mobility in accordance with the ongoing development of the city. While the bus routes were adaptable to changes, the road network on the other hand had a more permanent character. In this context, the planners, especially in connection with the 1966 plan, were greatly concerned with the risk of underestimating the future growth in society – both in terms of the economy and population size in general and private car-ownership specifically. [Figure 4. here] This shows how a notion of mobility, movement and growth permeated how Danish planners approached the urban geography in the 1950s and 1960s. In other words, ‘mobility’ functioned both as a lens through which Danish planners envisaged society and as a governmental tool to regulate the behavioural patterns of the urban dwellers.

Thirdly, the plans depicted the future population of the urban region as consumers. Hence, they designed the urban geography to facilitate new patterns of consumerism in relation to private car-ownership, housing and everyday consumer products. Both plans mapped out significant areas reserved for both single-family houses and mass housing complexes which, to a great extent, were to be self-sufficient in terms of supermarkets and shopping malls. In a Danish context, the period of 1957-

73 is widely referred to as ‘the great party’ as Danish economy in these years, like so many counterparts throughout the Western world, witnessed an unprecedented growth. In 1959, Danish economy grew by eight percentage, and in 1964 alone it grew by 11\%.$^{65}$ This economic upswing affected society in a multitude of ways. First and foremost, it contributed greatly to the transformation of Danish society into a society of affluence, as average wages tripled during this period.$^{66}$ The plans clearly reflected this development, as the planners approached Aarhus as a space of activity, economic prosperity, circulation and technological innovation. However, a clear development between the two plans can also be identified in the way in which they approached the question of consumption. This, for example, found expression in the priority given to the planning of new mercantile centres. While the 1954 plan mainly prioritized the planning of spaces of traditional industry, the 1966 plan dedicated an entire section to the topic of retail trade.$^{67}$ According to the planners, the rapid increase in retail trade was one of the main reasons why the idea of the monocentric city had to be abandoned. Instead, as mentioned above, new self-sufficient urban centres had to be established in order to relieve the massive pressure on the inner city that had followed from these new consumer patterns.$^{68}$ In this way, the urban geography should not only accommodate the emergence of the affluent society, but also serve as a motor in the economy itself, ensuring the continuation of economic growth. $^{[Figure 5. and figure 6. here]}$ On another note, the plans also promoted new ways of consuming time and space. By dividing urban space according to function and by integrating commuting as well as

\begin{itemize}
\item $^{65}$ Wium Olesen, “Velfærd og Kold Krig”, 454.
\item $^{66}$ Petersen et al., $Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind I$, 17.
\item $^{67}$ See Møller, $Egnsplan for Århusegnen 1966$, 88-104.
\item $^{68}$ Ibid., 18-25.
\end{itemize}
new leisure activities in the spatiality of the city, the plans came to facilitate new forms of urban temporalities. The urban dwellers were supposed to live in one place, work somewhere else, go shopping a third place and spend their leisure-time in a fourth place.

Lastly, both plans aimed to ensure easy access to public institutions such as nurseries, kindergartens, schools, hospitals and municipal offices. These were to be located in the proximity of especially residential areas, thereby being equally accessible for all of the inhabitants in the urban region. In general, the period at issue witnessed a significant investment in the public sector organized around the provision of welfare services in relation to social security, education, health care and to some extent housing. As argued by various Danish welfare historians, it was in this period that Denmark developed into both an affluent society and a welfare state. The convergence between welfare services and affluence, particularly found expression through the practice of urban planning. In the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area, these elements intertwined in the same ‘welfare geography’ contributing to the becoming of the same ‘social order’. By integrating public institutions into the spatial structure of the city, the two plans not only reflected the contemporary expansion of the public sector, but also contributed actively to the integration of new welfare institutions into the daily life and routines of the urban dwellers.

An urban geography comprising these elements would, according to the planners, ensure that all inhabitants had equal access to the benefits of the city without having to suffer the consequences of its downsides. By promoting equal access to

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70 See Kolstrup, *Den Danske Velfærdsmodel*, 153-204.

housing, recreational areas, public institutions and consumption, the planners thus aimed to create what architectural historian John Gold defines as a ‘new sociability.’ In this context, the plans were both reactive and proactive. On the one hand, they were reactions to structural changes in society connected with economy, technology and state welfare. On the other hand, they contributed actively to the realization of these changes by restructuring the urban geography accordingly and by interpreting the specific content of urban life in the welfare society.

**The Shaping of ‘Welfare Subjects’**

By disseminating this ‘social order’ through the urban geography, the planners turned the geography of Aarhus into a ‘subjectifying space’. In Foucault’s thinking, the process of being ascribed identities by others as for example ‘insane’, ‘healthy’ or ‘criminal’ can be regarded as an act of ‘subjectification’. Through numerous such acts, every society continuously engenders certain types of human subjects and social groups. In this process, however, the individual is not simply a passive background onto which identities can be ascribed. Rather, subjectifying processes of governance implicate that the individual actively internalizes the ascribed identity and the associated patterns of social behaviour.

In the post-war decades, the emerging Danish welfare state operated through numerous channels in order to subjectify the population into particular types of welfare citizen. In the existing Danish research, scholars have predominantly investigated this process through either political decision-making or the laws and institutions of social

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73 See for studies on processes of subjectification: Rose 1999, *Governing the Soul*; Dean, *Governmentality*; Huxley, “Geographies of Governmentality”.
However, as shown above, urban planning can also be understood as such a channel. By promoting specific patterns of social behaviour – from consumerism to a certain leisure mentality – the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area contained profoundly subjectifying dimensions. Both plans presupposed that an unprecedented middle class would inhabit the urban region in the future, and thus none of the plans distinguished between social classes or particular classes’ right to the city. This egalitarian objective was – not surprisingly – even more evident in the latter of the plans, since this was conceived during the zenith of the economic upswing in the 1960s. Clearly articulated as the main objectives of this plan, its aim was to promote a new urban geography characterized by freedom of choice, accessibility, clarity and transparency. As formulated by political sociologist Mitchell Dean: ‘regimes of government do not determine forms of subjectivity. They elicit, promote, facilitate, foster and attribute various capacities, qualities and statuses to particular agents.’ In the same way, the regional plans were not attempts to force the urban dwellers to act in particular ways, but rather they produced an urban space that would increase the chances for such behaviour to emerge. As such, the restructuring of urban space became a tool to ascribe the urban dwellers certain lifestyles and install them as responsible, autonomous agents with the capacities and abilities to realize their potentials and become good citizens.

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74 See for example: Petersen et al., Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind I; Petersen et al., Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind II; Petersen et al., Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind III; Petersen et al., Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind IV; Petersen et al., Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind V; Petersen et al., Dansk Velfærdshistorie Bind VI; Kolstrup, Velfærdsstatens Rødder; Kolstrup, Den Danske Velfærdsmodel.

75 Møller, Egnspplan for Århusegn 1966, 13.

76 Dean, Governmentality, 43-44.
As historian Rosemary Wakeman argues, ‘it was not the towering spectacle of capital cities that captured the postwar imagination so much as the futurology of the ordinary.’ To a great extent, the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area reflected this by displaying how ‘welfare’ was produced in the 1950s and 1960s, not just as social policy, but as a new way of life. In this sense, the plans also demonstrate how the social citizenship of the urban population was negotiated, to follow T.H. Marshall’s definition, as a double-edged sword. According to Marshall, a social citizenship is what ensures the freedom of citizens both negatively and positively. One the one hand, social citizenship prevents the citizens from being exposed and subjected to the unpredictable mechanisms of the free market. On the other hand, it enables them to realize their potential in society by providing the sufficient material resources and social security.

By seeking to ensure equal access to housing, recreational areas, public institutions and consumption, the regional plans transformed the urban region of Aarhus into a new type of ‘welfare geography’ that ensured both the negative and positive aspects of the social citizenship of the urban dwellers.

**Urban Modernism as a Marker of (Failed) Welfare?**

The two regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area display how urban planners in the 1950s and 1960s envisaged the future order of Danish society through a lens of urban modernism. However, as noted before, the long-term projections of neither the 1954 plan nor that of 1966 were realized according to plan. In this last part of the article, I address the unsuccessful trajectory of the plans and reflect upon what this can tell us more broadly about the relationship between modernist planning and the Danish welfare

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77 Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia*, 49.
society in the second half of the 20th century. An explanation for the outcome of the plans, I argue, can be found at the intersection of the local, national and international.

At one level, local structures hindered the implementation of the plans. As noted before, geopolitical struggles between the involved municipalities constituted a significant challenge for the planners. One the one hand, for the largest municipality, Aarhus, regional planning represented a tool to gain further control with its hinterland. By functionally dividing the urban geography into spaces for housing, industry, leisure and infrastructure, the plans reinterpreted the balances of the urban structure dissolving old urban entities and thus eliminating the need for the existence of multiple municipalities. The smaller municipalities, conversely, aspired to share in the economic growth facilitated by urban planning, but without having to lose any significant autonomy. This specifically found expression in the reluctance to engage in long-term planning exhibited by representatives of such municipalities during the planning process. By proposing four scenarios for the future of the urban region, the long-term plan of the 1954 plan was a perfect example of this.

The long-term plan of 1966 plan, in contrast, reflected good collaboration between the municipalities. Proposing the establishment of self-sufficient centres in the urban periphery, the plan represented a clear-cut solution for the spatial design of the future urban region. Still, these centres were never realized, and, once again, local actors played a central role. The plan projected the construction of two so-called B-centres, located respectively in the northern and south-west periphery of the main city centre. The projected B-centre south-west of the city was disrupted by the local housing association Brabrand Boligforening. In the early 1960s, the housing association purchased a significant part of arable land in the small municipality of Brabrand-Årslev, and, in 1967, construction of the modernist mass housing estate Gellerupplanen
commenced. In the 1966 plan, the municipality of Brabrand-Årslev was only to constitute a small C-centre, yet this fundamentally changed with *Gellerupplanen*. Designed to house 15-20,000 residents and complete with amenities for leisure, culture, consumption and public institutions, the estate obviated the need for the projected B-centre. 79 Today, the only remnant of this centre is the housing estate *Bispehaven* which was planned in the late 1960s to meet the expected population increase in the northern vicinity of the centre. 80 The other projected B-centre of the 1966 plan was similarly disrupted by the activities of local entrepreneurs. In 1971, the locally based retailer *Dansk Supermarked A/S* opened the 9000 m² shopping mall *Bilka* thereby fundamentally changing the conditions for retail trade in the entire urban region. Strategically placed at an infrastructural junction in the north-western periphery of Aarhus, *Bilka* not only minimized the need for additional shopping facilities in the area, but it also came to work as a focal point for urban development in the 1970s and 1980s. 81

Several Danish scholars identify the functional division of the urban geography as one of the main characteristics of the Danish welfare city. 82 In this sense, the two regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area exhibit many characteristics of Danish urban planning in the 1950s and 1960s. Although these plans were only partly realized, the alternative solutions disrupting the plans, especially the meticulously planned *Gellerupplanen*, did not represent any break with this planning ideology, but rather the

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79 See: Høghøj, “Betonjunglens genealogi”; Høghøj & Holmqvist, ”Betonen blev belastende”.
80 See: Nygaard, *Tag over hovedet*, 148-156.
82 See for example: Kiib, “Consumption Landscapes”; Frandsen, “Snork City Blues”; Pedersen, *Arkitektur og plan*. 
zenith of urban modernism in Denmark. However, the belief in modernist planning as a tool to shape society was coming to an end. From the late 1960s onwards, Danish planners and architects increasingly started to question various aspects of modernist planning and architecture. Seeking to stimulate a break with what he perceived as the dominant paradigm within planning and architecture, architect Jan Gehl (1936-) published his famous *Life Between Buildings* in 1971. Inspired by critical scholars such as Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) and Gordon Cullen (1914-1994), Gehl attacked both the top-down perspective that, in his view, characterized modernist planning as well as the consequences this had for human life. Concurrently, various Danish sociologists and psychologists employed at national research institutions such as the Danish Building Research Institute (SBI) and the Danish National Institute of Social Research (SFI) began to scrutinize the social and psychological consequences of modernist planning and housing in particular. Combined with the repercussions of the economic recession accelerating from 1973, such publications contributed not only to a widespread rejection of modernist principles of planning in Denmark, but also to an increasing distrust in urban planning as a tool of social engineering. Thus, by the mid 1970s urban plans as ambitious as the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area were no longer developed in a Danish context. Although neither Gehl nor any of the other scholars addressed the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area specifically, their work reflects a contemporary shift that, to some extent, can explain why no efforts were undertaken

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83 Høghøj, "Betonjunglens genealogi”, 52-55.
84 See: Gehl, *Livet mellem husene*.
86 Larsson & Thomassen, "Urban planning in Denmark”, 47-49.
either to revive the objectives of the 1966 plan or to develop new ambitious plans for
the urban region.

The rejection of urban modernism, however, did not occur in a national vacuum. As convincingly demonstrated by historian Cristopher Klemek, this process was a transnational and transatlantic phenomenon. Fuelled by the work of the British ‘Townscape-movement’ and Jacobs in the US, among others, a critique targeting both the aesthetic qualities as well as the social and cultural ramifications of modernist planning gradually emerged from the late 1950s onwards. As Klemek argues, these early critics were only harbingers for a critique that gradually but irreversibly developed into the ‘conventional wisdom’ from the late 1960s onwards. As argued above, these perspectives translated into a Danish context, for example through the work of Gehl, and thus came to influence the shaping of public opinion on modernist planning and architecture in Denmark. Paying very little attention to both the small urban dimensions as well as existing social and cultural communities in the city, the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area were quintessential examples of the type of top-down planning that both Jacobs and Gehl opposed. In other words, the two plans represented a way of conceptualizing the city that – locally, nationally and internationally – was on retreat before their objectives could ever be realized.

So, what can this development tell us about the relationship between urban modernism and the Danish welfare society in the last half of the 20th century? It shows that while modernist planning principles served as a prism through which planners in the 1960s and 1960s envisaged the future social order of the Danish welfare society, this changed profoundly in the 1970s. Urban modernism no longer served as the solution to

88 Ibid., 210.
urban problems, but instead the spatial outcome of modernist plans increasingly constituted a problem in itself. This was particularly the case with modernist mass housing estates such as Gellerupplanen and Bispehaven that gradually came to symbolize the social underbelly of the otherwise increasingly affluent Danish welfare society. This suggests that even though modernist planning did not live up to societal expectations, the spatial outcome of the plans continued to function as a ‘welfare geography’. Yet, instead of the good life, urban modernism came to symbolize the opposite. This, I argue, reflects the close ties between large-scale urban planning and the emergence of welfare societies in the Western world after 1945 – both from a planning perspective in the 1950s and 1860s and during the crisis of the welfare state in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Concluding reflections**

By analysing how the regional plans for the Greater Aarhus Area from 1954 and 1966 transformed the urban geography of Aarhus into a ‘welfare geography’, this article demonstrates how urban space, through the practice of urban planning, came to function as an instrument of governance negotiating, producing and reproducing the social citizenship of the urban dwellers in post-war Denmark. The objectives of the plans were to be realized through a transformation of the urban geography, and in this way their success relied on the premise that urban space could contribute actively to the generation and formation of a specific social order.

The regional plans for the Greater Aarhus area exhibit how a specific conception of modernity, urban modernism, circulated transnationally and became appropriated

within national and local contexts. In a Danish context, the usage of modernist principles in urban planning reflects how notions of ‘welfare’ entwined with an expectation of increasing affluence. Not only did the plans presuppose that the living standards of the inhabitants would increase, but they also aimed to transform the urban geography itself into a lubricated machine that could ensure continued economic growth. This particularly found expression through the reconfiguration of the urban infrastructure, the installation of new consumer patterns and the creation of recreational areas. It also shows how a sense of growth, fluidity and circulation became integrated in the ‘governmentality of welfare’ prevailing in these decades, permeating how the urban geography as well as its inhabitants were envisaged by Danish urban planners.

Thus, the article provides insights into the political rationalities informing post-war urban planning in Denmark. By seeking to ensure equal opportunities for every citizen in the form of equal access to housing, recreational areas, public institutions and consumption, the planners envisaged the future social order of the Danish welfare society through a lens of urban modernism. By doing so, they also contributed to the shaping of ‘welfare subjects’ as certain behavioural patterns were knitted into the spatial structure. By living in this ‘welfare geography’, the inhabitants were supposed to internalize its way of life and reproduce it. In this way, the plans also functioned as biopolitical instruments seeking to improve and maximize the capacities and liberties of the population of the urban region.

Furthermore, the article examines how the two regional plans – both from a planning perspective and in terms of realization – were embedded in a broader contextual framework. At one level, they reflected the ambitions of local planners and politicians. On another level, they were the result of the legislative and bureaucratic framework of the emerging Danish welfare state. Finally, they were part of an
intellectual planning movement, typically characterized as ‘urban modernism’, that both developed and was rejected transnationally. By focusing on both consistency and discrepancies between the international, national and local levels, this concluding part has attempted to demonstrate the necessity of a comparative geographical approach that includes multiple contexts when studying the history of post-war urban planning. In so doing it also stresses the potential of expanding ‘welfare geography’ as an analytical category applicable to other national and local contexts.

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**Figure 1:** The four options proposed in the long-term plan in the Regional Plan for the Greater Aarhus Area 1954. See Storårhus-Kommissionen, *Egnsplan for Storårhus,* 60-61.

**Figure 2:** The Regional Plan for the Greater Aarhus Area at display at Aarhus City Hall in 1968. Photographer: Kjeld Walther

**Figure 3:** The proposal for a new and more comprehensive public transportation network in the urban region of Aarhus. See Møller, *Egnsplan for Århusegnen 1966,* 153.
**Figure 4:** As these figures demonstrate, the planners looked abroad for inspiration to integrate new modes of consumerism into the spatial structure of the city. The figure on the left shows an American shopping mall located in New York, and the figure to the right illustrates a range of shopping malls from Sweden. See Møller, *Egnsplan for Århusegnen 1966*, 106 and 145.

**Figure 5:** In order to relieve the pressure on the inner-city, the long-term plan in the Regional Plan for the Greater Aarhus Area proposed the establishment of new self-sufficient centres, thereby promoting the emergence of a polycentric urban structure. See Møller, *Egnsplan for Århusegnen 1966*, 24.