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**Copenhagen's "Return to the Inner City" 1990-2010**

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*Brownfields into Icons of Liveability*

A stroll along the harbour front boulevard Islands Brygge ("Iceland Quay") gives a glimpse into the most pleasant sides of post-industrial Copenhagen. The street is lined by recently completed four-to-six storey residences. Most display a modern design, but their plan and position at the block perimeter lets them blend smoothly into the ornamented late-nineteenth-century tenements in the wider area. Many offer spectacular views over the Copenhagen Harbour, the ten-kilometre-long sea arm that cuts through the middle of the city and forms the splendid natural harbour near the Sound that historically accounted for Copenhagen's wealth. The tower of the royal Christiansborg Palace, the seat of the Danish parliament, looms in the distance. There are leisurely walks along the waterfront, there are concerts to be enjoyed at the Islands Brygge Culture House, and there is the public Harbour Bath, which invites swimmers to take a dip in the once again clear water. While the Amagerbro district, of which Islands Brygge is a part, historically was one of the city's largest working-class quarters, the area now seems to be frequented by people from very different backgrounds.

<Figure 1 near here>

A few structures show that Islands Brygge has not always been a casual place. Disused quays and rails along the quay wall are remainders of the industrial harbour. Also a few former factory buildings and silos still remain. Some are well preserved and adapted to different uses. The **Gemini Residences** (2008, design: MVRDV) consist of three former grain silos. The **government offices** on Axel Heides Gade and Islands Brygge occupy several early-twentieth-century brick buildings with round arch windows and ornamented cornices. The most unpleasant structure only remains as a not-so-distant memory. The chloride-producing **Dansk Sojakagefabrik** (Danish Soybean Cake Factory) between Sturlasgade and Axel Heides Gade for decades contaminated the area with toxic emissions before being shut down in 1991 and subsequently demolished.

Islands Brygge is not the only example for inner-city rebuilding in Copenhagen. Since the 1990s, many central neighbourhoods have been thoroughly refurbished and redesigned into residential areas with high standards of living. In the former twilight districts **Nørrebro** and **Vesterbro**, new residences have been built on the gap sites left by neglect and "renewal"-related demolition of entire blocks. In other areas, particularly along the Harbour, former industrial lands have been redeveloped. They often offer attractive water views, and often integrating remainders of the industrial past. These include **Sluseholmen** in the South Harbour, **Krøyers Plads** in the Central Harbour, and **Amerika Plads** in the North Harbour, which will be discussed in the following section.

This article will show that the tortuous path from industrial decline to "regenerated city" was guided by the mutual influence of discourse, policy and architectural design. This can be read from the built form as well as from government documents, press clippings and the comparison with other European cities. In this respect it adds to some of the research of Copenhagen's redevelopment that in recent years has been carried out in the fields of architectural history, urban planning, and policy studies.<sup>1</sup> This article will also show that in

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<sup>1</sup> For recent policy analyses see Henrik Gutzon Larsen and Anders Lund Hansen, "Gentrification—Gentle or Traumatic? Urban Renewal Policies and Socioeconomic Transformations in Copenhagen" *Urban Studies* 45 n. 12 (November 2008), 2429-2448 or Hans Kristensen, *Housing in Denmark* (Copenhagen: Centre for Housing and Welfare, 2007). For research on recent housing architecture in Copenhagen see Florian Urban, *The New Tenement* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 85-102 or Bo Grönlund, *Homes, Ensembles, Cities, Housing Welfare* (Copenhagen: Kongelige Danske Kunstakademis Skoler for Arkitektur, Design og Konservering, 2014) [exhibition catalogue]. For "official views" on Copenhagen's "reinvention" published by government officials or related institutions see for example Jan Christiansen, *Arkitektonisk kvalitet 1975-1995* (Copenhagen: Boligministeriet, Bygge- og boligstyrelsen, 1996) and particularly Holger Bisgaard, *Københavns genrejsning 1990-2010* (Copenhagen: Bogværket, 2010).

contrast to regeneration projects in other countries Copenhagen's redevelopment yielded a comparatively socially mixed city with appealing public spaces and inventive architecture. This was facilitated by strong public authorities and by local and national politicians who only to a small extent gave in to the market-oriented ideologies that influenced policy in other European countries at the time.

### *The City of Multiple Functions*

The intellectual foundations of the "regenerated city" are to be found in the anti-functionalism criticism of the 1960s and 1970s, when authors such as Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, Christopher Alexander or Alexander Mitscherlich indicted modernist architects and urban planners for producing inhumane environments.<sup>2</sup> Popular expressions of this criticism included the many citizen protests against automotive infrastructure and tabula-rasa demolitions during the 1970s and 1980s.

Copenhagen's municipal policies at the turn of the twenty-first century were very much an outcome of these ideas. Arguably the most influential Danish contributor to the new positive image of urban life was Jan Gehl. Based on years of first-hand research about pedestrian movement and use of public space, his 1971 book *Levet mellem husene* (Life between houses) made a powerful argument for a pedestrian-oriented city of multiple impressions and informal encounters. His rise to international prominence happened twenty years later when his book was translated into English and published as *Life between buildings*.<sup>3</sup> By 2011 it had gone through six editions and was one of the key texts of post-functionalism planning. Gehl's office at the same time had become the most popular representative of what was internationally admired as a particularly Scandinavian approach to liveability and sustainability. Jan Gehl Architects not only evaluated the **Sluseholmen** development (2000-10, master plan by Soeters van Eldonk) and the conversion of the **Carlsberg Brewery** (2006, master plan by Entasis) in Copenhagen, but also became an exporter for "liveable cities" plans, working in places as diverse as Moscow, New York, San Francisco, and Mexico City.

<Figure 2 near here>

During the 1990s and 2000s Gehl's model of a dense, mixed-use city dominated by pedestrians and cyclists was often mentioned in Copenhagen's strategic plans and political programmes.<sup>4</sup> It also became an important element in the many rankings that put early-twentieth-century Copenhagen on the forefront of the world's most liveable cities.<sup>5</sup>

### *A Welfare State under Pressure—Regeneration in Nørrebro and Vesterbro*

Copenhagen's "return to the inner city," like that in many European cities, was the outcome of a welfare state under pressure.<sup>6</sup> It was not the architectural model of neo-

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. [1961] (New York: Vintage, 1992); Christopher Alexander, "A city is not a tree" *Architectural Forum* 122, n. 1 (April 1965), 58-62; Lynch, Kevin *The Image of the City*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960); Alexander Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> Jan Gehl, *Livet mellem husene* (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 1971), translated *Life between Buildings* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> See for example a 2002 article by Port Authority chief executive Henning Hummelose, a 2005 article by mayor Ritt Bjerregaard, a 2014 article by her successor Frank Jensen, or Henning Hummelose, "Kulturshok ved havnekajen" *Dagbladet Information*, 18 December 2002; Ritt Bjerregaard, "En ø af muligheder" *Dagbladet Information* 4 August 2005; Frank Jensen, "Boliger til alle kræver historisk opgør med markedstænkning" *Dagbladet Information*, 30 April 2014.

<sup>5</sup> For example the lifestyle magazine *Monocle* ranked Copenhagen as the "world's most liveable city" in 2013, online at <https://monocle.com/film/affairs/quality-of-life-survey-2013/> (accessed January 2018).

<sup>6</sup> See also Nan Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, Second Edition 1999), 60-123 or Florian Urban, *The New Tenement* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), particularly 283-4.

liberalism as it is sometimes claimed.<sup>7</sup> The new neighbourhoods were planned, promoted and partially financed by welfare state institutions. In Denmark these institutions since the 1980s came under pressure in light of decreasing funding and waning political support, but they were not dismantled as in other European countries. The pressure originated, on the one hand, from the shortcomings of some postwar housing policies, most significantly tabula-rasa urban renewal in the city centre and the creation of dull modernist schemes on the periphery, and on the other hand from the international rise of market-oriented ideologies brought forward by economists such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, and prominently implemented by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. In Denmark select market-oriented elements were introduced under the umbrella authority of state-led public policy. The state nonetheless retained the responsibility for housing its citizens.

How did the transformation come about? To understand Copenhagen's path towards inner-city redevelopment one has to scroll back to the urban crisis of the 1970s. Denmark's welfare state policies were highly successful with regard to the original goals, but less so with respect to certain unpredicted side effects. In the second half of the twentieth century Danish standards of living rose significantly and for many citizens the dream of a modern flat or a small house in the suburbs was fulfilled. A tightly knit safety net protected citizens against illness, unemployment or homelessness, and as the gap between rich and poor decreased the working classes gradually blended into a middle class society. At the same time some of the comprehensively planned modern neighbourhoods on the periphery turned into ghettos for the less successful, while urban renewal policies in the city centre reinforced decay, and radical squatters accused welfare state officials of destroying valuable living space. These processes were reinforced by deindustrialization and a dwindling tax income in the wake of the 1973 Oil Shock. By the early 1980s the City of Copenhagen was virtually broke, adding financial hardship to an already tarnished image.

What followed was a period of austerity nicknamed *kartoffelkur* (potato diet). Starting under Conservative Prime Minister Poul Schlüter (in office 1982-93) public spending was cut and welfare state institutions were forced to restructure. State-financed housing construction dwindled to almost zero, as the City of Copenhagen had to cut down expenses.

In the 1990s the downward spiral was reversed. This was the time when Copenhagen's course was set towards rebuilding the inner city. Jens Kramer Mikkelsen succeeded Egon Weidekamp as mayor of Copenhagen in 1989, and although both were Social Democrats and defenders of a strong state Mikkelsen followed a slightly more market-oriented approach than his predecessor. During his term in office from 1989-2004 metropolitan policies started to be directed towards economic growth and entrepreneurialism and no longer towards redistribution and control.<sup>8</sup> He nonetheless upheld state authority over matters of planning and housing construction. The influence of private capital was kept in check by a strong planning framework, and municipal institutions took a lead in newly established partnerships with private actors. Also the construction of public housing was resumed by the late 1990s.

Hence "neoliberalism" would be a misnomer for the Danish growth policies at the turn of the twenty-first century. Deregulation was very limited and manifested mostly at the level

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Marshall, *Waterfronts in Post-industrial Cities* (London: Spon, 2001), Jasper Rubin, "San Francisco's Waterfront in the Age of Neo-Liberal Urbanism" in Gene Desfor et al., eds., *Transforming Urban Waterfronts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); 143-65, Sue Brownill, *Developing London's Docklands—Another Great Planning Disaster?* (London: Paul Chapman, 1990); Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Entrepreneurial policies were for example laid out in the reports by the Metropolitan Commission, *Hovestaden: Hvad vil vi med den?* (Copenhagen, Ministry of State 1989) and the Würtzen Committee, *Udvalget om Hovedstadsområdet Trafikinvesteringer* (Würtzen udvalget), *Forslag*, Copenhagen, 1991. Later some of the key welfare state institutions were restructured. For example the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, whose incorporation in 1947 had heralded the heydays of public housing, was dissolved in 2001. See also Henrik Gutzon Larsen and Anders Lund Hansen, "Gentrification—Gentle or Traumatic? Urban Renewal Policies and Socioeconomic Transformations in Copenhagen" *Urban Studies* 45 n. 12 (November 2008), 2432.

of urban development and in the privatization of state firms, but not, for example, in the large-scale privatization of public housing. It is thus fair to say that what Mikkelsen in the year of his appointment called the necessity “to sleep with the enemy”—to be favourable with private investors—did not entail the sell-out of the welfare state that many leftists had feared.<sup>9</sup>

A second popular misconception is that the “return to the inner city” was a sudden U-turn in urban design policy. Rather the opposite is true, as Copenhagen’s small-scale residences came about gradually, and the first regeneration projects were an indirect outcome of the old comprehensive demolition policies.

In the Nørrebro neighbourhood, subject to decades of “slum clearance” and since the 1970s a hotspot of the squatter movement that resisted these policies, the plots left by the demolitions were rebuilt with structures that somewhat resembled the old city. Although harshly criticized by the protesters the new prefabricated buildings were at least in theory designed to emulate the destroyed nineteenth-century tenements. They were four-to-six-storey walk-ups along the block perimeter with white windows and brick façades. An example is **Blågården** (1979-81, Kooperativ Byggeindustri KBI).<sup>10</sup> It is situated next to the former squatted adventure playground Byggeren whose clearance by the police in 1980 marked the peak of Copenhagen’s squatter movement.<sup>11</sup> The violent clashes between municipal authorities and squatters notwithstanding, Blågården exemplifies that the city at the time in fact had adopted some of the squatters’ urban design principles, namely the acceptance of the inner city as a place for living and the recognition of the traditional block pattern with the medium-rise tenement typology.

<Figure 3 near here>

When the national *Lov om byfornyelse* (Law on Urban Renewal) put an end to tabula-rasa renewal in 1983 and forced Copenhagen’s municipality to adopt “gentle” regeneration based on participation and conservation, urban design did not have to be reinvented.<sup>12</sup> The latest generation of tabula-rasa projects such as Blågården no longer promoted the automotive city of tower blocks, but was already based on density, medium-rise blocks and a mixed-use neighbourhood supporting pedestrian traffic.

The Vesterbro district, situated south of Nørrebro, was the first area in which inner-city rebuilding was to take place without demolitions and forced relocation. By the early 1990s Vesterbro was one of Copenhagen’s poorest districts, with the lowest sanitary standards and a high percentage of immigrants (19.4 per cent, as opposed to the Copenhagen average of 7.2 per cent in 1989).<sup>13</sup> The Vesterbro *handlingsplan* (Action Plan) was passed in 1992 and set the stage for “careful renewal” based on architectural historical research.<sup>14</sup> It was generally understood that the bad example of Nørrebro should not be repeated.<sup>15</sup>

The Vesterbro Action Plan aimed at process-oriented regeneration and close collaboration with the inhabitants. The goals included and creation of social spaces through landscaped courtyards and green streets. Physical solutions were only developed step by step and at significantly smaller scales. Buildings on the inner portions of the blocks were preserved

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<sup>9</sup> Jens Kramer Mikkelsen in 1989, quoted in Karsten Ifversen, “Københavns byfornyelse er teknisk og tør på skrift” *Politiken* 22 August 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Marius Kjeldsen, *Industrialized Housing in Denmark* (Valby: Danish Building Centre, 1988), 66-69; “Det grønne Nørrebro” *Arkitekten* 81 n. 21 (1979), 493-495.

<sup>11</sup> A first hand account from the squatters’ perspective can be found in Per Bregengaard and Ulla Søgaard Thomsen, *Erfaringer fra Byggeren* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Mjølnær 1982).

<sup>12</sup> For an evaluation see Hans Skifter Andersen et al., *Evaluering af lov om byfornyelse* (Copenhagen: Statens Byggeforskningsinstitut, 2002), 24-7

<sup>13</sup> Hathumar Drost, “Stadterneuerung in Kopenhagen” in Harald Bodenschatz, Erich Konter, Michael Stein, Max Welch Guerra, eds., *Stadterneuerung im Umbruch* (Berlin: Institut für Stadt- und Regionalplanung der TU Berlin, 1994), 254.

<sup>14</sup> This research was published in a “neighbourhood atlas”: Miljøministeriet Planstyrelsen, *Bydelsatlas Vesterbro* (Copenhagen: Københavns Kommune, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Ulla Lunn, “Bungalow og Bellevue” *Dagbladet Information*, 26 April 2005; Sven Kindt, “Vesterbros forvandling” *Arkitekten* 102 n. 18 (August 2000), A2-A14.

and the overall density was not changed.<sup>16</sup> The plan included a rent ceiling to prevent the driving out of the old population. In the following fifteen years, most old buildings were modernized and equipped with showers or bathrooms.

An example of new tenements built on gap sites is the **Prangerhus** (1997-98, Nova 5) on Halmtorvet 26-30. Deriving from a 1994 competition "Infills and Urban Renewal" the five-storey perimeter-block building is a modern interpretation of the historic tenement. It features a conspicuous beige concrete façade with two round windows on the top floor and a sheet-metal roof. The balconies with grey aluminium doors accentuate the corner situation; the 46 flats were partially built with open plans. Also the infill on **Absalonsgade 36-44** (1997-98, Nielsen & Rubow) is an inventive interpretation of the tenement type.<sup>17</sup> The building has glass bay windows, conspicuous cornices and rusticated tiles on the semi-basement like some of the old buildings on the block.

<Figure 4 near here>

Another argument for the continuity of Copenhagen's urban design politics is the fact that the controversial *tabula-rasa* renewal of Nørrebro in the 1970s was paralleled by uncontentious small-scale projects that could be considered "historically conscious." A few are situated in the *Indre By* (Inner City), the area of the seventeenth-century old town, and particularly its eastern portion, the former sailors' and shipyards' district of Christianshavn. Examples include **Kaysergården/ Nybodergården** (1975, Ib and Jørgen Rasmussen) and **Olfert Fischers Gade** (1977-79, Kooperativ Byggeindustri KBI) in the Inner City's northern portion and **Det Hvide Snit** (1977, Erik Møller) in Christianshavn. They show an influence of the Italian rationalists such as Aldo Rossi or Vittorio Gregotti, as well as of the principles brought forward by the International Building Exhibit (IBA) in West Berlin (1979-87). Historical typologies were adapted to contemporary needs. Functionalism was ditched in favour of typological continuity and local precedents. Historicist or neo-classical design was the exception, but most architects acknowledged the significance of the past.

<Figure 5 near here>

The planning history of Nørrebro, Vesterbro, and the Inner City shows that Copenhagen's "regeneration" was a steady development that originated in the inconsistencies of urban renewal, or more precisely in the reaction to the undesired side effects of comprehensive modernist planning. Although based on gradual policy change, the "return to the inner city" upheld several characteristics of the old modernist city building strategies: the goal to build humane, citizen oriented neighbourhoods, and the tools of master planning, housing subsidies, and tight building regulations. The historically inspired new tenements of Nørrebro and Vesterbro, at first glance, might look very different from the modernist blocks in the peripheral districts of Brøndby and Avedøre, yet the underlying principles nonetheless have more in common than one might think.

#### *Neo-liberal Experiments—Kalvebod Brygge*

The 1990s saw what the journal *Arkitekten* described as "the winds of globalization blowing over Copenhagen."<sup>18</sup> Under the national government of Social Democrat Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (in office 1993-2001) Copenhagen engaged in privatization of public property and at the same time presented itself increasingly in the international arena. Prestigious construction projects were intended to update the city's infrastructure and contribute to an improved image. These included the **airport extension** (1982-98), the **Metro** (planned since 1992, the first line opened in 2002), the **Øresund Bridge** (1995-2000) that connects Copenhagen with Sweden across the Sound, the projects for the European Capital of Culture in 1996 such as the **Arken Museum of Modern Art** (1996, Søren Robert Lund), and particularly the "dense suburb" **Ørestad** (started in 1992).

Ørestad was also a key project for inner-city redevelopment. For its construction the joint municipal-national Ørestadsselskabet (Ørestad Corporation) was incorporated in 1992,

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<sup>16</sup> Jens Clemmensen, "Vesterbros arkitektoniske omdannelse sammenlignet med Nørrebros" in Asger Olsen, ed. *Arkitektonisk planlægning i by og landskab* (Copenhagen: Dansk Byplanlaboratorium, 2012), 33-35.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Sofus Rex, "Globaliseringens vinde blæser over København" *Arkitekten* 109 n. 1 (2007), 73-74.

which subsequently became a major player in inner-city redevelopment and would remain for the following decades. The Ørestad Corporation sold public land to private investors, particularly along the Harbour, and also functioned as a client for some major redevelopment projects.<sup>19</sup> Since 2004 it was directed by former mayor Jens Kramer Mikkelsen. In 2007 it was merged with the Port Authority to form the corporation By og Havn ("City and Port"), which promoted Harbour redevelopment at an even greater scale.

In the Danish context the Ørestad Corporation is often seen as part of a typical private-public-partnership strategy of the neoliberal era, whereby economic growth was to be generated by private actors as a result of public "seed funding."<sup>20</sup> Compared to projects in other countries, however, the Ørestad Corporation stood out as working on certain welfare state principles. Although operating for profit it was jointly owned by the City of Copenhagen and the national government, and in principle responded to their strategic goals, such as public transit, comprehensive planning, and provision of housing for all.

Along those lines the City of Copenhagen in 1995 set the objective of designing "attractive buildings near urban amenities" and attracting families with young children to the city centre.<sup>21</sup> As a first step it commissioned master plans for the Harbour area—Islands Brygge/Havnestad (1995, PLH Arkitekter), South Harbour/Sluseholmen (2000, Soeters van Eldonk), North Harbour Amerika Plads (2000, West 8) and a volume study for the Inner Harbour around the Opera House (2000, Henning Larsen). These plans were exhibited in the 2000 show *Arv og Vision* (Heritage and Vision) at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>22</sup>

This does not mean that municipal policy was always in the public interest. Particularly in the early years there was trial and error, and redevelopment at times yielded unsatisfactory results. The most widely quoted negative example was the first to be completed: **Kalvebod Brygge** (1996-2006, various architects), situated on the harbour front southwest of the Inner City. Buildings included the **Hotel Marriott** (1999-2001, PLH Arkitekter) and **Nykredit Headquarters** (1998-2001, Schmidt/Hammer/Lassen) and the shopping centre **Fisketorvet** (1999-2001, Kieler Architects). Critics bemoaned the usual shortcomings in corporate urban design, which derive from the desire to maximise profit: cheap architecture and exaggerated density in combination with insular buildings and deficient public spaces. Journalist Allan de Waal described Kalvebod Brygge as composed of "long, sad office blocks and hotels, so close to each other that one can barely see the water."<sup>23</sup> Filmmaker Jørgen Flindt Pedersen spoke of "junkspace and lego bricks" and blamed the "pseudo-public" municipal Port Authority for abusing its power and not acting in the public interest.<sup>24</sup> Given that city-owned land had been given away cheaply to promote private investment, citizens were particularly angry that there was no noticeable gain for the public.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Ti års moleræs" *Dagbladet Information* 3 August 1998.

<sup>20</sup> Stan Majoor, "Progressive Planning Ideals in a Neo-liberal Context, the Case of Ørestad Copenhagen" *International Planning Studies* 13 n. 2 (2008), 103; Karin Book, Lena Eskilsson, and Jamil Khan, "Governing the balance between Sustainability and Competitiveness in urban planning: the case of the Ørestad model" *Environmental Policy & Governance* 20 n. 6 (2010), 382-84.

<sup>21</sup> Københavns Borgerrepræsentation, *Tipunktsprogrammet* [10-points programme], passed on the City Council meeting on 1 June 1995, reprinted in Holger Bisgaard, *Københavns Genrejsning 1990-2010* (Copenhagen: Bogværket, 2010), 80.

<sup>22</sup> Peder Duelund Mortensen, ed., *Arv og vision: Udviklingen i Københavns Havn* (Copenhagen: Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole 2000) [exhibition catalogue]

<sup>23</sup> Allan de Waal, "Suset på Kalveboderne" *Dagbladet Information*, 11 March 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Jørgen Flindt Pedersen, "Junkspace og legoklodser på højkant" *Dagbladet Information* 10 December 2002. See also the answer by Henning Hummelrose, CEO of the government owned Københavns Havn (Copenhagen Harbour Agency) from 1997-2005. "Kulturshok ved havnekajen" *Dagbladet Information*, 18 December 2002. Hummelrose stressed that the same rules of building permits etc. applied for the Harbour Agency as for everybody else.

<sup>25</sup> Allan de Waal, "Suset på Kalveboderne" *Dagbladet Information*, 11 March 2011.

*Policy Change Predated Economic Recovery—Islands Brygge*

Many of these shortcomings were avoided in the rebuilding of the **Islands Brygge** neighbourhood that was mentioned above. Situated across the Harbour from Kalvebod Brygge it was planned a few years earlier, completed a few years later and eventually more favourably reviewed. The **Harbour Bath** (2002, Bjarke Ingels/Julien de Smedt) to date is a postcard motif. The image of the old town skyline with leisurely bathers in the foreground jumping into what two decades before was more akin to a toxic sewer is emblematic for Copenhagen's successful overcoming of industrial filth and the creation of a clean and liveable city centre. The project also kick-started the career of the then 28-year-old Bjarke Ingels who in the following years arguably became Denmark's first international "star architect." The **Islands Brygge Culture House** (2000, Johan Fogh/ Per Følner) hosts jazz and rock concerts and evidences the municipality's goal of promoting cultural activities previously underrepresented in the former working-class district—and eventually became a venue that made the area attractive as a middle class neighbourhood. Together with the influx of creative industry and other small specialist businesses offering high-value niche services Islands Brygge became an emblem of the "new tenement city" that resonates waterfront developments all over Europe.

Islands Brygge also shows that postmodern rebuilding predated the post-industrial economy. It was not the IT or tourist industries that pushed for a different built environment, but the interplay of discourse, design and policy that created an environment that eventually proved to be favourable for the new economy. The three factors originally were not aimed at economic development, but rather at creating a more liveable city. While the significance of macro-economic shifts for urban transformation is undeniable—the end of traditional manufacturing lies at the bottom of the shift towards a post-industrial city—the Copenhagen case similarly evidences the importance of local policy and discourse for the ways economic change translated into a transformation of the built environment.

Islands Brygge in the early 1990s possessed all of the characteristics that made it prone to post-industrial regeneration. It was a working-class neighbourhood. It was favourably located in close proximity to the old town, with pleasing views to the Harbour, and also adjacent to Copenhagen University. At the same time it was riddled by economic decline and cut off from the water by a belt of crumbling industrial estates. The historic buildings were four-storey late-nineteenth-century tenements with historicist façades of the kind that all over Europe since the 1970s became increasingly fashionable.

Albeit economically disadvantaged, Islands Brygge's inhabitants formed a tightly-knit community committed to fighting the sell-out of their neighbourhood by real-estate speculators. An example for this struggle was the controversy over investor Klaus Riskær Pedersen, whose company bought up large portions of the housing stock before bankrupting in 1991 amidst allegations of fraud and corruption.<sup>26</sup> His activities gave rise to concerted community protest, which was channelled, for example, in the monthly community magazine *Bryggebladet* (incorporated in 1993).

The rebuilding of Islands Brygge came about as a sequence of post-industrial redevelopment projects. The first was the area around the already mentioned Danish Soy Cake Factory between Sturlasgade and Axel Heides Gade. The **Havnstad master plan** (1995, PLH Arkitekter) set the scene for the redevelopment of the factory site and its vicinity. It combined the tower-in-the-park model with the traditional nineteenth-century city, adding perimeter block buildings to freestanding blocks surrounded by greenery. The connection to the waterfront was crucial; so was the inclusion of select former industrial buildings and the harmonic transition to the nineteenth-century tenements in the wider area. The plan was awarded the 2007 Danish Urban Planning Prize, and served as a reference point for the goals that at the time were pursued all over Europe: regeneration of former industrial waterfronts, creation of combined residential and recreational neighbourhoods, and an awareness of local history. Although the architects were not selected in public competitions but picked by the developers there were many quality

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<sup>26</sup> "Sammenhold" *Bryggebladet* (Copenhagen) 1 n. 2 (27 April 1993); vic [abbreviation] "Riskær i skærsilden" *Bryggebladet* (Copenhagen) 1 n. 4 (25 May 1993), 10, both online at <http://www.bryggebladet.dk/artikelarkiv/03/> (accessed September 2015).

buildings.<sup>27</sup> These include **Håndværkets Hus** (2001-02, Arkitema), **Bryggens Have/Kajplads 24** (2004-06, Kim Utzon), **Fionia Hus** (2003-04, Kasper Danielsen), the three adjacent buildings **Kompasset** ("Compass"), **Sekstanten** ("Sextant") and **Lanternen** ("Lantern") (2004-07, Schmidt/Hammer/Lassen), or the **Eksercerpladsen Flats** on Artillerivej 112-120 (2006-07, Kieler Architects).  
<Figure 7 near here>

A second portion of Islands Brygge was **Ny Tøjhusgrunden** ("New Armoury area," early 2000s, various architects). The "New Armoury" was a nineteenth-century military facility on the northern tip of Islands Brygge, facing Christianshavn and the Old Town. The old military buildings had been gradually demolished since the 1970s; the last structures came down in 2001. The architecture of the new development is diverse. There are the steel-and-glass-façades of the three office blocks on the north side of Weidekampsgade: **SimCorp Building** (2006-09, Dissing & Weitling, Signal, Schønher), the **Kommunernes Landsforening** ("Association of Local Authorities" Architects Group Aarhus, MAA Architects 2001-03) and the **Deloitte Building** (3XN Architects, 2005). Across the street, on the south side of Weidekampsgade, there is the development **Kommandantens Gård** (2005-6, Arkitema) with brickfaced six-storey perimeter block buildings that on their southern side open towards a newly built system of canals on a former railway area. The buildings contain 186 owner-occupied flats with white balconies; some of them have roof terraces. A little further east, also on the south side of Weidekampsgade, there is **Admiralens Gård** (2007, Hvidt & Mølgaard) with similar dimensions and brickfacing as Kommandantens Gård. The buildings with 108 owner-occupied flats have a sheet-metal faced top floor and balconies with glass banisters. Another few metres further east along Weidekampsgade there are the residential developments **Ny Tøjhus I** and **Ny Tøjhus II** (2004-05, Vilhelm Lauritzen), which each consists of three buildings around an open courtyard. Like on Kommandantens Gård and Admiralens Gård the courtyards open to the canal and are fitted out with playgrounds and greenery. In contrast to the former two developments most flats are in cooperative ownership.

Islands Brygge exemplifies how densification and the focus on the inner city became mainstream in Copenhagen's urban design policy in the 1990s. This included supporting the presence of young people and middle classes in the central districts, to whom conservatives referred as "economically sustainable population."<sup>28</sup> Pushed by government-sponsored housing, schools, and leisure facilities, by the 2000s the demographic profile in the area changed, and the share of families in Islands Brygge increased. Also some principles of postmodern planning were implemented more widely than elsewhere. This includes functionally mixed neighbourhoods, orientation towards pedestrian and bike traffic, good public transport, and amenable public spaces.

#### *Block Structures and Strong Planning Authorities—Sluseholmen*

Another widely-praised harbour front redevelopment project was **Sluseholmen** (2005-09, master plan by Soeters van Eldonk, buildings by Arkitema, Kasper Danielsen, Hvidt & Mølgaard and others), which was developed soon after Islands Brygge and also received the Danish City Planning Award (in 2009).<sup>29</sup> It is one of the few developments in contemporary Europe where a nineteenth-century-style closed block scheme was not merely completed or restored, but designed from scratch on a formerly unbuilt site. Not only this, but also a network of canals was carved out, giving the new neighbourhood a small grain, an individual character and an overall harmony unmatched in most other new developments.

<Figure 8 near here>

The unusual form derived from an unusual constellation of actors: strong planning authorities committed to take a lead on urban design, and a master planner who did not

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<sup>27</sup> Søren Nielsen, architect with Vandkunsten, conversation with the author, 6 May 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Henrik Gutzon Larsen and Anders Lund Hansen, "Gentrification—Gentle or Traumatic? Urban Renewal Policies and Socioeconomic Transformations in Copenhagen" *Urban Studies* 45 n. 12 (November 2008), 2433-34. See also the 2005 Housing plan Københavns Kommune, *Boliger for alle—boligplan for Københavns Kommune 2005-2008* (Copenhagen: Københavns Kommune, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Press release on the Dansk Byplanlaboratorium website, dated 1 October 2009, online at <http://www.byplanlab.dk/byplanprisen/2009> (accessed July 2015).



shy away from establishing a framework that many others would have perceived as an imposition on architects' creativity. The Dutch architect Sjoerd Soeters had made his name with the redesign of Java Island in Amsterdam's Eastern Harbour (master plan 1990). The former industrial area became a traffic-calmed dense urban neighbourhood with bike-oriented small streets and rows of quirky multi-storey houses along the water. For Sluseholmen he devised a similar master plan in which individual distinction took a backseat vis-à-vis visual harmony and the creation of an urban atmosphere. Buildings were designed by different architectural offices, but plan and size were prescribed, as well as façades, materials, and window distribution. The result was a neighbourhood that convinces by its harmonious and at the same time diversified visual impression. While the façades were mostly modern they were designed with a limited amount of permitted permutations, and like in Copenhagen's nineteenth-century neighbourhoods they coalesced to a visually appealing entirety.

Municipal initiative was crucial in the genesis of Sluseholmen, as the master plan was not decided in a competition but directly commissioned by the municipality. Soeters remembers receiving a phone call from planner Dan Christensen who asked for the design of "another Java Island" in Copenhagen Harbour.<sup>30</sup> The consequence and overall harmony of the scheme to a large extent derived from this specific remit.

Soeters's master plan comprised the entire southern portion of Copenhagen Harbour.<sup>31</sup> Sluseholmen comprised the southern edge of this scheme, but it was the only portion that was realized according to the plan. The development comprises six new blocks separated by canals that are connected to the Harbour. There are visual similarities not only with the master planners' Java Island Plan, but also the historic centre of Amsterdam, or that of Venice and other historic harbour cities. The four-to-six-storey buildings are lined up along a traffic-calmed canalside streets, as in Amsterdam, or directly along the canal, as in Venice.

The neighbourhood was designed along the principles of pedestrian orientation, social mixture, neighbourly proximity and leisure orientation. In the courtyards private gardens alternate with public greenery. The small roads encourage walking and cycling. The canals and quays allow for mooring sailboats and rowboats in close proximity to the homes. There are restaurants, a rowing club, and a nautical museum. The **Coral Bath** (Danielsen, 2012), like the Harbour Bath on Islands Brygge, celebrates the conversion of the Harbour from contaminated backwater to attractive leisure area. The Venice-like canal views from the homes support this reinterpretation—as everywhere since the late twentieth century "waterfront" no longer connotes filth and physical toil but glamour and the abodes of the privileged.

Sluseholmen is a middle-class neighbourhood and does not house the city's poorest. The household income of 534,000 Danish crowns (about 78,000 euros) is significantly higher than the Copenhagen average of 338,000 crowns (about 45,000 euros, all 2013 figures). Also the share of owner-occupied flats (46 per cent compared to 19 per cent Copenhagen average) is higher and that of publicly owned flats (*almene boliger*) lower—11 per cent compared to 20 per cent Copenhagen average.<sup>32</sup> Such signs of social privilege gave rise to much criticism.<sup>33</sup>

But on the other hand the area is certainly mixed. 22 per cent of the inhabitants are classified in official statistics as "workers at the basic level" (Copenhagen average: 33 per cent).<sup>34</sup> Also the share of non-ethnic Danes among the inhabitants, 19 per cent, compares to the Copenhagen average of 22 per cent.

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<sup>30</sup> Sjoerd Soeters, conversation with the author, 5 May 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Soeters van Eldonk, Plan for the Sydhavnen area, published in Kim Dirckinck-Holmfeld, "København i vandet" *Arkitekten* 102 n. 18 (August 2000), 7.

<sup>32</sup> Københavns Kommune and Gehl Architects, *Bydesign i København—Erfaringer fra Sluseholmen* (Copenhagen: Københavns Kommune, 2013), 25-26. These figures refer to the City of Copenhagen without the enclave Frederiksberg.

<sup>33</sup> See for example Allan de Waal, "Betonen i vores hjerter" *Dagbladet Information* 2 July 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Københavns Kommune and Gehl Architects, *Bydesign i København—Erfaringer fra Sluseholmen* (Copenhagen: Københavns Kommune, 2013), 25-26.

While a middle-class neighbourhood such as Sluseholmen is different from the ideal of an egalitarian society that had once been so prominent in the Danish welfare state it is still far away from the conspicuous social polarization inherent in the gentrification of central London or New York. Compared to these international examples the Danish strategy of state-led planning has certainly led to greater social equity.

### *Subsidized Dwellings*

The social composition of Copenhagen's "regenerated" neighbourhoods relies on planning instruments which have changed over time. Denmark has been governed by strong public authorities since the early twentieth century, and state-subsidized authorities are still the main drivers of residential construction.<sup>35</sup> Rent control legislation is still in place, as the default option for Copenhageners is the "rental flat," constructed by a housing company or, as in old tenements, by a private individual who owns an entire building.

Owner-occupation of individual flats (not single-family houses) is still a comparatively new phenomenon in Denmark. This is reflected in the language. The term for a non-rental flat, *ejerleilighed* (literally "ownership flat," usually translated as "owner-occupied flat") suggests a flat in which owners plan to spend the rest of their lives, as buying-to-let or the idea of a "housing ladder" is not widespread. Legally possible only since 1966, it was not until the 2000s that politicians considered flat ownership as a possible second pillar of urban housing.<sup>36</sup> In 2013 only about 19 per cent of Copenhagen's homes were owner occupied, a figure that was considerably lower than in London or New York. 33 per cent were cooperative flats, 20 per cent "public buildings," 26 per cent "private rentals" and 2 per cent others.<sup>37</sup> Homeownership and house prices are also far less prominent in public discourse than they are in Britain or the US.

At the same time private entrepreneurs have retained limited influence in the housing sector.<sup>38</sup> It seems that particularly one, comparably small regulation has proved effective for sheltering Copenhagen's tenants against the fluctuations of the international capital market. People who are not residents in Denmark, including foreign companies, are generally banned from buying real estate.<sup>39</sup> This restricts the purchase of Copenhagen's flats by international investors with no ties to the city.

State control over housing is taken for granted, to the extent that the Danes never felt the need to establish "social housing" in the sense of state subsidized units available only to low-income residents. *Almene boliger* (public buildings) have always been available to the whole population, and living in them as such has never been a marker of social disadvantage. They accounted for 16 per cent of Copenhagen's housing stock in 2011. They are generally built and owned by non-profit housing associations and subsidized by the taxpayer through the *Landsbyggefonden* (National Building Fund).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Sasha Tsenkova and Hedvig Vestergaard, "Social Housing Provision in Copenhagen" paper presented at the European Network for Housing Research conference in Toulouse in 2011, online at [www.enhr2011.com/sites/default/files/Paper-Tsenkova-WS07.pdf](http://www.enhr2011.com/sites/default/files/Paper-Tsenkova-WS07.pdf) (accessed April 2015), 14.

<sup>36</sup> Hans Kristensen, *Housing in Denmark* (Copenhagen: Centre for Housing and Welfare, 2007), 50-51.

<sup>37</sup> Københavns Kommune and Gehl Architects, *Bydesign i København—Erfaringer fra Sluseholmen* (Copenhagen: Københavns Kommune, 2013), 25-26. See also <https://www.statistikbanken.dk/> (accessed January 2018).

<sup>38</sup> Kathleen Scanlon and Hedvig Vestergaard, "The solution, or part of the problem? Social housing in transition: the Danish case" Paper presented at the European Network for Housing Research conference in Rotterdam, 2007, p. 2. online at [vbn.aau.dk/files/13669230/W12\\_paper\\_Scanlon\\_Vestergaard.pdf](http://vbn.aau.dk/files/13669230/W12_paper_Scanlon_Vestergaard.pdf) (accessed April 2015). See also Erik Nygaard, "Senfirsernes Boligbyggeri" *Arkitektur DK* 36 n. 1-2 (1993), 2.

<sup>39</sup> Exceptions have to be approved by the Ministry of Justice. The latest affirmation of this provision is laid down in the order nr. 265 of 21st March 2014 of the 1984 *lov om erhvervelse af fast ejendom* (Law on the purchase of real estate), online at <https://www.retsinformation.dk/> (accessed September 2016).

<sup>40</sup> Kathleen Scanlon and Hedvig Vestergaard, "Social Housing in Denmark" in Christine Whitehead and Kathleen Scanlon, eds., *Social Housing in Europe* (London: London School of Economics, 2007), 45-47.

Copenhagen's housing provision nonetheless underwent some changes during the late twentieth century. First, "council housing" (municipally owned flats) was largely abolished in 1994. As part of a debt-restructuring agreement between the bankrupt City of Copenhagen and the national government the city passed its 20,000 flats to the state-owned property company TOR. Most of them were subsequently sold to the tenants. The state-financed housing programmes, however were soon resumed after the austerity period, and kicked off again at the turn of the twenty-first century.<sup>41</sup>

Between 1975 and 2000 Denmark vigorously promoted *andelsboliger* (cooperative buildings) as a way to have the cake and eat it—to create a sense of ownership among the inhabitants without allowing for speculation that destabilizes the housing market elsewhere. At the time new legislation subsidized such cooperatives and also mandated that any private house to be put on the market had to be first offered to the inhabitants to form a cooperative. Policy changed in 2000, when subsidies for cooperatives were gradually phased out and prices for cooperative flats were deregulated. This led to a sharp price increase for such flats in attractive areas.<sup>42</sup> However, there is still no distinction in terms of architectural design between cooperatives and "public buildings." In the 2010s about 31 per cent of Copenhagen's homes were in cooperative ownership.<sup>43</sup>

The restructuring of the welfare state, to a certain extent, has led to a greater differentiation into "better" and "worse" housing and to an acceptance of these differences in public policy. But it has not, as for example in Britain or the US, put tenants in a position of vulnerability and marginalization vis-à-vis homeowners, and it has also not led to gentrification processes as harsh as in those countries.

#### *Rebuilding the North Harbour*

Following similar principles as in Islands Brygge and in the South Harbour the municipality decided to revive several portions of the North Harbour. The first to be completed was **Amerika Plads** (2000-10, West 8) on the area of the former Frihavnen ("Free Port"). Like Sluseholmen it derived from the master plan of a Dutch architect. Adriaan Geuze and his Amsterdam-based office West 8 opted for a looser urban fabric than Sluseholmen, with no strict block structure, and different buildings that often have a convincing design but do not always harmonize with each other. Examples are the copper-clad 16-storey office building **Kobbertårnet** ("Copper Tower," 2002-04, Arkitema), the grey residences **Fyrtårnet** ("Lighthouse," 2006-07, Lundgaard/Tranberg) with conspicuous protruding volumes, and the white six-storey residence **Nordlyset** ("Northern Lights", 2004-05, C. F. Møller) with elongated windows and loggias. Although less strictly master-planned the development nonetheless shared basic principles with Sluseholmen: it became a mixed district with dense residences, shops, workplaces and leisure facilities; it celebrates the post-industrial waterfront theme and the urban qualities of the site, and it is orientated towards pedestrians and public transport. It is also located near the current, comparatively small working port. The view of ships at least in the distance therefore adds to the maritime character.

<Figure 9 near here>

Several other neighbourhoods followed similar principles. North of Amerika Plads, the vast North Harbour area began to be rebuilt in the mid 2010s, starting with the **Århusgade Quarter** (planned since 2005, finished in 2013, master plan for the wider area by the offices COBE, Sleth, and Polyform). Directly across the Harbour from Amerika Plads, in the extreme eastern portion of the Inner City area, the former shipyard area **Refshaleøen** is planned for redevelopment. The peninsula and former island was the site of the shipyard Burmeister & Wain, once the builder of innovative merchant ships and marine diesel engines, which declared bankruptcy in 1996.

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<sup>41</sup> Holger Bisgaard [chief planner of Copenhagen], *Københavns genrejsning 1990–2010* (Copenhagen: Bogværket, 2010), 33-34, 76-89 and conversation with the author, 15 September 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Hans Kristensen, *Housing in Denmark* (Copenhagen: Centre for Housing and Welfare, 2007), 46-48.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 46-51.

### *Pitched Roof Skyline —Krøyers Plads*

Maybe the best example for the “Copenhagen way of waterfront redevelopment” is the rebuilding of **Krøyers Plads** (planned and built 1998-2017). It involved ambitious private investors, self-confident municipal politicians, international star architects, and an unruly populace. Eventually Krøyers Plads became a modest and comparably democratic architectural project that responds to the historic context but nonetheless opens the former industrial waterfront for new groups of users.

The two-block area borders the Harbour in Christianshavn and is situated across the water from Christiansborg Palace. Originally occupied by a shipyard, Krøyers Plads fell into disuse in the 1990s. In 1998 it was taken over by the municipal real estate company Freja Real Estate, after the (repeatedly reorganised) Royal Greenland Trading Department had abandoned the land. The wider district had been “discovered” by squatters and non-conformists in the 1970s—the famous Christiania Freetown in the north-western portion of Christianshavn was established in 1971 in a former military precinct—starting a process in which the area eventually became fashionable. From 2001 Krøyers Plads housed the fancy beach bar Luftkastellet (“Castle in the Air”), where patrons could enjoy the Old Town view in a convincing beach atmosphere, surrounded by 117 tons of sand imported from Western Denmark. At the time the municipality started the planning process, envisioning an iconic project by an international designer.

The first designs were sculptural glass skyscrapers nick-named **Little Manhattan**, drawn in 2003 by the Dutch architect Erick van Eggeraat, who, among others had made his name with the futuristic irregularly shaped office tower **The Rock** in Amsterdam (2002-09). The “Little Manhattan” design was commissioned by Freja Real Estate and supported by the municipality. In essence, the design comprised loose references to international upmarket waterfront developments, such as New York’s Battery Park City or London’s Canary Wharf.

The plans sparked a big controversy, since many considered them luxury buildings exclusively for the rich. Eventually 11,000 citizens signed a petition against what they believed to be exchangeable icons of commercial power, accusing the municipality of “selling common values” and deferring to the power of private actors.<sup>44</sup> In 2005 the City Council gave in and rejected the project.

The next design proposal was also somewhat exclusive, but in a different way. It was commissioned by the Swedish firm Nordic Construction Company (NCC), which a year earlier had bought the land from Freja Real Estate to realize van Eggeraat’s project. After van Eggeraat’s project was rejected NCC collaborated with the three Danish star architects Bjarke Ingels, Henning Larsen, and Kim Utzon, who presented a group of three quirky solitary buildings with expressive modernist façades around a public square. NCC nonetheless sold the land again soon, this time to a newly formed subcompany of the American Carlyle Group. At the same time the City Council discussed the different proposals, including the rejected one by van Eggeraat.

The new landowner nonetheless declared bankruptcy in 2010. Through compulsory auction the land was sold back to NCC, who drew up a new plan with the local offices Vilhelm Lauritzen and COBE. This plan was eventually approved by the municipality.

**Krøyers Plads Housing** (2010-15, Vilhelm Lauritzen/COBE) was somewhat less spectacular than the previous design proposals. It consists of three irregular-polygon-plan buildings that are built around a dock. Two face the Harbour with their short side and one with its long side. All three have brown, brick-faced façades. The “long one” has large portions of glass that provide spectacular views over the Harbour. The sophisticated slanting roofs with irregularly distributed windows of different sizes are the most conspicuous design element, interpreting historic architecture and particularly the warehouses in the area in a modern way. The low-energy construction reflects Danish ecologism. The public spaces around the new buildings communicate openness and

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<sup>44</sup> Jon Stephensen, “Ramt af Brian Nielsen-syndromet” *Dagbladet Information*, 23 September 2004. The author, an architect by training, is the director of the Theatre Aveny-T. See also Peder Duelund Mortensen, “Boligen som vare—The home as a product” *Arkitektur DK* 48 n. 8 (December 2004), 578.

accessibility. They are carefully landscaped and include a wooden walkway along the Harbour with steps that allow for bathing in the former dock.

<Figure 10 near here>

Despite the historical references the wider Krøyers Plads area reflects early-twenty-first century culture in which regenerated industrial neighbourhoods cater to the educated middle classes. The three buildings house, among others, the wine bar and restaurant Nærvær and the fancy supermarket Føtex Food. The adjacent building on the dock contains the internationally famous restaurant Noma, the Cultural Centre Nordatlanten and the Icelandic embassy. The **Dansk Arkitektur Center** (Danish Architecture Centre) was established in the historic Gammel Dock ("Old Dock") building two blocks southwest (remodelled 1986, Erik Møller), and the **Arkitekternes Hus** (Architects' House, 1997, 3XN) is home of the Danish Association of Architects next door. The area is popular among Copenhagensers, and at the same time also caters to the increasing amount of tourists visiting the Danish capital.

#### *Gentrified Neighbourhoods?*

The visible changes in Copenhagen's inner-city neighbourhoods are often described as gentrification. In the late 2010s, Copenhagen's central districts, including Nørrebro, Vesterbro, Islands Brygge and Christianshavn, are characterised by renovated historic buildings, inventive infills, fashionable bars, shops and restaurants, and the visibility of hipsters and "bourgeois Bohemians." Many other aspects nonetheless contradict the Anglo-American image of a gentrified neighbourhood. In absolute terms these areas are still far from being rich. On the contrary—for example if Nørrebro were a municipality of its own it would be the poorest in Denmark.<sup>45</sup> This suggests that a considerable share of long-standing working-class residents has remained even two decades after the first regeneration plans.

Also other demographic changes do not suggest an excessive influx of yuppies or "double-income-no-kids" households. For example in Vesterbro the percentage of children under 14 has nearly doubled between 1991 and 2006.<sup>46</sup> This is even more than in the whole of Copenhagen, where the rise has been 50 per cent between 1980 and 2015.<sup>47</sup> It shows that the long-standing pattern of young people moving to the suburbs when founding a family has been reversed, irrespective of social class. Many observers perceive this as a positive development.<sup>48</sup>

In Vesterbro the share of owner-occupied flats has stayed low at 11 per cent. The influx of higher income groups is noticeable, for example evidenced by the increase in cooperative housing, which has risen from 33 to 52 per cent at the expense of private tenancy. But the fact that these newcomers prefer cooperative dwellings over homeownership suggests that they are not necessarily what the Anglo-American literature would refer to as "affluent middle classes."<sup>49</sup> Along those lines it is hard to call Vesterbro or Nørrebro gentrified, as both are still rather mixed.

In the Danish context the changes nonetheless were strongly debated. The goal of the welfare state since the postwar period had been a classless society, and any step in the direction of social differentiation was necessarily perceived as a backlash. Leftists thus connected the shiny new neighbourhoods in the city centre with the increasing concentration of marginalised groups in the peripheral tower block estates of the 1960s.

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<sup>45</sup> This was pointed out by the mayor of Copenhagen, Frank Jensen, in 2014. Frank Jensen, "Boliger til alle kræver historisk opgør med markedstænkning" *Dagbladet Information*, 30 April 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Henrik Gutzon Larsen and Anders Lund Hansen, "Gentrification—Gentle or Traumatic? Urban Renewal Policies and Socioeconomic Transformations in Copenhagen" *Urban Studies* 45 n. 12 (November 2008), 2444.

<sup>47</sup> See for example Sanni Jensen, "Københavnske børnefamilier skrotter forstadslivet" *Berlingske Tidene* 21 March 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. See also Julie Elmhøj, "Undersøgelse: Ny arkitektur sænker kriminaliteten i udsatte områder" *Dagbladet Information* 28 August 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Henrik Gutzon Larsen and Anders Lund Hansen, "Gentrification—Gentle or Traumatic? Urban Renewal Policies and Socioeconomic Transformations in Copenhagen" *Urban Studies* 45 n. 12 (November 2008), 2444.

Against this background the Vesterbro Action Plan was criticized as deluded, and its commitment with social inclusion fallacious, since in reality it led to a small but noticeable increase in social polarization.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, municipal and national housing policy in general was criticized for not addressing sufficiently the problem of social polarization.<sup>51</sup> To the Danish, it seems, it was little comfort that in international comparisons their country was still exemplary with regard to its degree of equity and social integration.

The critical evaluation of Copenhagen's regeneration policies also has to be seen against the background of a wave of right-wing populism that caught Denmark in the early 2000s. Under prime minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's successor, Anders Fogh Rasmussen (in office 2001-09), and his Liberal-Conservative government anti-immigrant legislation was passed, the Eurosceptic movement gained support, and Denmark lost much of its image as an open and liberal country. At the same time leftist critics increasingly warned against the erosion of the welfare state.<sup>52</sup> While the polarization of society into rich and poor is still far less than for example in Britain or the US it is increasing, and is thus considered a problem that has not only a negative effect on urban design, but also on society as a whole.<sup>53</sup>

#### *Conclusion: Reinvention rather than Recovery*

The period between 1990 and 2010 saw the transformation of Copenhagen's formerly industrial areas into vibrant parts of an economic and cultural metropolis. Post-functional architecture tied in with economic policies that broke up a stagnant system while not comprehensively abandoning the achievements of the welfare state, and not jettisoning state control over planning.

This transformation is often described in a vocabulary of renewal. Planning official Holger Bisgaard summarized it as *Københavns genrejsning* (Copenhagen's recovery).<sup>54</sup> Other observers spoke of revival, regeneration or renaissance, and frequently connect the new city to positive aspects of the pre-modernist nineteenth-century city. The truth nonetheless seems to be more complex, as nineteenth-century elements such as block structures and industrial remainders, were mostly aesthetic components that added to a twenty-first-century agenda. The "regenerated city" is a built environment, which, although not in the first instance created for the new middle classes, in many ways responded to their needs and the demands of the post-industrial economy. In a particularly way it caters to well-educated individuals and families employed in the creative and information industries even though they are only a minority of inner-city dwellers.

This new built environment evolved from a connection between discourse, policy, and architecture. The model was the city of multiple impressions and functional mixture, of incremental change and aesthetic harmony, of urban dwellings and face-to-face encounter, and of blurred boundaries between work and leisure. The urban policies for Vesterbro and Nørrebro, and the rebuilding of Islands Brygge, Sluseholmen and the other Harbour areas were based on those principles.

Copenhagen's inner city nonetheless evolved very differently from equivalent districts around central London, New York or San Francisco. One should not imagine an unfriendly takeover of latte-macchiato-sipping dotcomers, bankers, or fashion designers, pricing long-standing residents out of their neighbourhoods. The Copenhagen case shows that local policy can make a difference. The strong municipal authorities and the ongoing welfare state principles in Denmark sparked much smaller social upheavals than urban regeneration in Britain or the US. Also Copenhageners criticized gentrification, but they were not faced with the erosion of social housing and price rises for flats of several hundred per cent over a few years.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 2438-42. See also Allan de Waal, "Betonen i vores hjerter" *Dagbladet Information*, 2 July 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Malin Schmidt, "Sådan kan man bo, hvis man har et valg" *Dagbladet Information* 25 April 2008

<sup>52</sup> Peder Duelund Mortensen, "Boligen som vare—The home as a product" *Arkitektur DK* 48 n. 8 (December 2004), 573-5.

<sup>53</sup> Jan Christiansen, *Det ny København—stadsarkitektens optegnelser 2001-10* (Copenhagen: Strandberg Publishing, 2015), 294.

<sup>54</sup> Holger Bisgaard, *Københavns genrejsning 1990-2010* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Bogværket, 2010).

Hence, whether or not Copenhagen's return to the inner city been successful depends on the standpoint. Critics decry the driving out of some of the less privileged from the city centre, the increasing social differentiation, and the fact that urban planning is no longer first and foremost directed at justice and equity.<sup>55</sup> Such statements obviously have to be put in the context of Denmark's comparatively egalitarian society. There is also criticism of an approach whereby urban qualities in the new neighbourhoods often remain at the level of aesthetic impression—particularly when density and social mixture fell short of the expectations.

On the other hand there is no doubt that Copenhagen's inner city in the 2010s displays a level of urban life and dynamism that was unimaginable during the crisis of the 1980s. Copenhagen's "return to the inner city" was also an exemplary transformation that combined architectural and social policies to reuse former industrial and harbour sites and to create attractive neighbourhoods in the city centre. From this perspective, "Copenhagen's recovery" was certainly a success.

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Figure 10: The "long building" on Krøyers Plads (2011-15, Vilhelm Lauritzen) (author).

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<sup>55</sup> Jan Christiansen, *Det ny København—stadsarkitektens optegnelser 2001-10* (Copenhagen: Strandberg Publishing, 2015), 294.