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FOREWORD

Wars and natural disasters — such as earthquakes or climate-related hurricanes — often leave nations' cities in a horrendously battered state. There is a need worldwide for the reconstruction of millions of buildings, city districts — and often, entire cities. Historically, we have seen this — in recent times, after the World War II, after the earthquake in New Zealand, after the civil war in Lebanon, but also as part of the reconstruction of economically unstable developing countries and cities.

In this publication, we discuss the role of architects and urban planners in the reconstruction process, looking at the urban planning legislation in both Ukraine and Denmark, studying post-disaster recovery cases around the world, and considering the role of finance distribution during the recovery process. We try to put this into a critical context with a focus on whether the billions of money used in connection with reconstruction is also spent in a sensible way, i.e. in relation to whether they leave behind good and sustainable urban communities — cities for people. This applies to cities with affordable housing, necessary infrastructure such as water and sewage systems, but also roads and green areas. And this applies to broad and transparent funding that benefits everyone and that leaves new cities or districts in a state that looks like we have learned from experience and, so to speak, build on the shoulders of good or bad examples from the past.

Several Ukrainian architects focus on history and specific examples, such as the reconstruction of Warsaw and Dresden, but also on the reconstruction of Ukraine, e.g. in the period after the World War II and during the Soviet era. The need for this — to provide a roof over one's head — was strong and was characterised by modernism's urban development and housing construction through often large and centrally controlled expansion of districts with lots of closely spaced concrete high-rises, which did not always have an eye on the needs of good and humane surroundings. But it gave «a roof over your head» — in a hurry.

In the present situation and in our age, the question is whether this can be done differently. And can we take our time for that? Ukrainian architects and urban planners have — even before the Russian full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022 — discussed this with a focus on a more democratic (re)building and urban transformation of the cities and towns in the great country. The Ukrainian Association of Architects, several universities, and not least a «working group» connected to the Ukrainian Parliament have a focus on «The Urban Development Code of Ukraine». The working group has conducted good and thorough studies and conversations about this and about the structures that can lead to a different and more open and democratic view of the future cities and districts as well as, e.g., residential areas. The goal should lead to the revision of the applicable construction and town planning legislation. The work should also focus on the

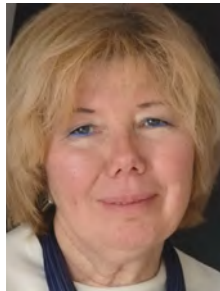
protection of cultural heritage and values of the old, often beautiful, city parts, where they have not been totally destroyed due to the war. The UNDRR «build back better» is in focus. And so is the necessity of sustainability — environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

In this context, the Ukrainian Association of Architects, universities, and city councils in Ukraine have reached out to Denmark. At the Architects' Association in Denmark, we have welcomed this and for two years worked together on a project we call «Democratic Reconstruction of Ukraine». The project has not only focused on the city Denmark promised to help with reconstruction — Mykolaiv, — but also on a more general support for a democratic reconstruction with a greater involvement of decentralised authorities (regions and municipalities) and, not least, citizens' influence via public participation in the reconstruction of Ukrainian cities. The Danish tradition for this is long and has left its mark on Danish cities both culturally and legislatively for more than half a century. In this publication, we review the Danish legislation and a case study for urban planning and development.

With the support from the Dreyer's foundation, Ukrainian and Danish architects, urban planners, politicians, and NGO's have discussed the necessary measures.

It is our hope that this publication will be used in praxis in the urban planning and development in the effort to rebuild Ukrainian cities in a democratic and sustainable way.

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Olena's work involves design and research on both the architectural and urban scales, currently focusing on urban spaces, heritage preservation, and historic city centres development. Olena Oliynyk is an author of more than 20 urban development projects for the regeneration of historic city centres in Ukraine, the United States, and Cabo Verde, many residential and public buildings.



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URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN EASTERN AALBORG: KICKSTART TORNHØJ AND RENOVATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING AREA KILDEPARKEN 2020 STRATEGIC URBAN MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DENSIFICATION IN SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL AREAS



Figure 1. Vision for the transformation: "Opening image" from the urban planning competition "City in Between" (Team Vandkunsten) (Aalborg Municipality. Realdania, 2016)

As in most of Denmark's larger cities, the expansion of Aalborg's suburbs took place during the 1960s and 70s, at a time when the urban planning ideal was a functionally divided city. The goal was clearly defined zones for housing, industry, and services, where different zones were linked together by an efficient road network, with the car as the dominant means of transport.

Significant traffic segregation with the layout of large overall car traffic roads and connected cul-de-sacs leading into various settlements meant, conversely, that settlements became isolated islands with no connection to the central common local city centre. The infrastructure typical of the period thus created mental barriers for the urban district's internal connections between the people and functions and played a decisive role in the district's lack of social cohesion.

In the urban transformation of eastern Aalborg, we have worked purposefully with the densification of strategically important connections and creation of a new attractive local centre — a central meeting-point in eastern Aalborg, where urban densification of functions and people is planned together with a connecting infrastructure. The goal for the transformation is a mixed urban fabric with a strengthened social cohesion and common neighbourhood identity based on a greater mix of functions and, for example, more diverse housing supply, where new functions are strategically fitted in relation to infrastructure that supports the flow of everyday life and meeting places. And: a link to the surrounding city.

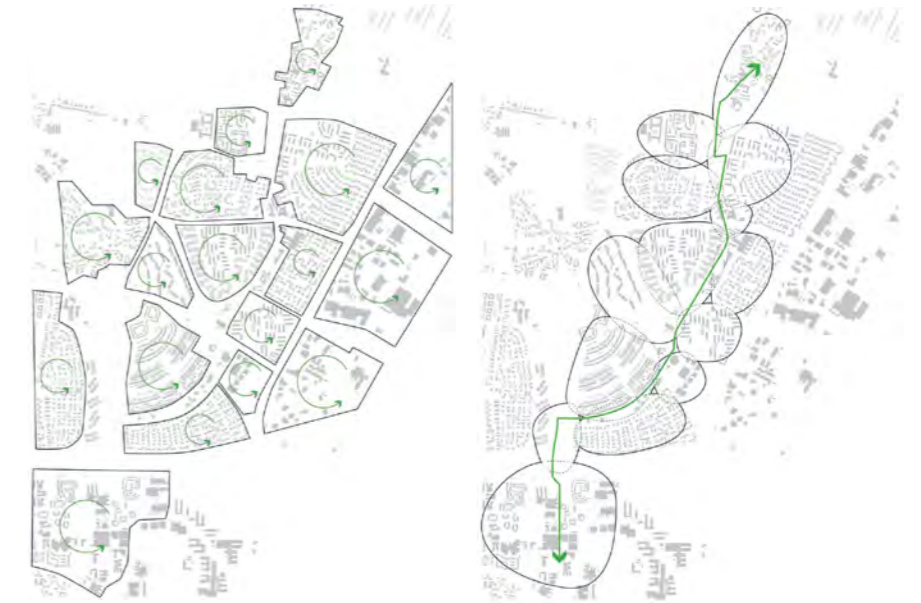


Figure 2. The Astrup path as the connecting element. Before — isolated islands. After — the islands opened up and connected (Aalborg Municipality. Realdania, 2016)

THE TRANSFORMATION METHOD: STRATEGIC URBAN MANAGEMENT WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT ACROSS ACTORS

If you look at the district's cadastral map, it is clear that such a fundamental redevelopment of the district's existing building structure and infrastructure is only possible if various landowners and primary actors commit to follow a common development direction — a common vision for the district's future transformation recognised by both public and private drivers behind urban development: the city council, the planning authority, and civil society. It's a long-term process based on visions, the will and the ability to exercise strategic urban management, and building a trusting collaboration space with room for several agendas.

The timing also proved opportune for a major urban transformation effort in eastern Aalborg — a "window of opportunity" arose when in 2009 the region decided to place a new "Super hospital" in the district. The decision is well in line with the fact that the district is Aalborg's / Northern Denmark's most important industrial business and knowledge area. Both the region's most important business port and Aalborg University are located here as strong anchors for a wide range of spinoff companies and workplaces. The new hospital has now created a secure basis for thinking about favourable synergy investments — public and private — which, among other things, include investments in a new light rail to the super hospital, expansion of the university and its research fields, establishment of new knowledge companies, and renovation of dilapidated residential buildings.



Figures 3 and 4. The densified centre of Tornhøj: before and after

In the pipeline, “investments worth billions” were a driver of the major urban transformation effort. On this background, it was politically decided to give priority to sustainable urban transformation of Aalborg East. The goal was to increase internal cohesion and ensure a better connection to the surrounding city. The primary players in the municipality and housing association had a desire to develop the district based on physical improvements and transformations, a clear vision for the transformation, and a belief that a collective boost could increase investment potential in the area.

THE PROCESS, STEP BY STEP

2010 - 2011: National and local think tanks — for our suburbs in general and for eastern Aalborg

As mentioned in the introduction, the dilapidated suburbs were at the time a recognised major national challenge, which is why our ministry / the state in collaboration with the philanthropic fund Realdania teamed up to establish a national think tank regarding the special challenges and potentials of the suburbs. The aim was to achieve general recommendations for a more sustainable urban development in the suburbs; at the same time, municipalities were offered support to establish local think tanks across local actors and landowners. The mayor and the municipal director of Aalborg took the initiative to establish the ThinkTank for eastern Aalborg consisting of leading decision-makers and owners from the Region (hospital), the University, the port, Novi (science and business park), and the district’s Business Network and housing companies. The work ended up with a charter / declaration of intent on the shared will for shared change, with the aim of seeking synergy in the many current large investments, both public and private, “across land registers boundaries”

2011 - 2012: Town planning competitions “Suburbs of the Future” / “City in Between” in Aalborg

Realdania then helped to carry out town planning competitions in a number of Danish suburbs in order to get visionary, specific, and context-based suggestions on how the suburbs’ urban development can become more sustainable — the planning competition in eastern Aalborg was called “City in Between”. In writing the program, we built on the Thinktank collaboration and used the competition process to invite to further dialogue about the district’s development potential — a dialogue with local actors, landowners, decision-makers, as well as citizens and those professionally interested. The winning proposal clarified the necessity of both strategic urban management and a strategic approach in urban development in order to implement a visionary transformation, with a sufficient format to be able to



generate a positive spiral of change. It was recommended to point out and support a joint physical opening feature as a kickstarter of the change, which will be able to attract further private and public investment around the joint densification ambition (Realdania, n.d.).

2013 - 2019: Kickstart the suburb 2.0 / Kickstart Tornhøj: preliminary study and a joint overall plan

The Realdania foundation then invited to a partnership project — financing 50% — with municipalities that were interested in implementing a physical “kickstart” urban space project: initially in the form of support for carrying out a preliminary study and an overall plan for the transformation, based on trustful dialogue with involved landowners and actors. Aalborg municipality submitted the “City in Between” competition’s proposal for a new condensed district centre near the tunnel in Tornhøj, and the commitment process resulted in a joint overall plan for the district centre’s densification — of course across cadastres. This provided a basis for the municipality’s subsequent preparation of a local plan with new building options, infrastructure principles, etc. Simultaneously, static and design studies were prepared regarding the design of a new and wider tunnel as the central element of a kickstart urban space project that could attractively manage to establish and connect central meeting places in the neighbourhoods, north and south of the tunnel (Aalborg Municipality. Realdania, 2016).

The local plan has subsequently given an opportunity for new construction of a number of different densification projects by various developers, including the municipality itself (institutions), housing associations (public housing), and private developers (retail, private housing, etc.). At the same time, the urban space project Kickstart Tornhøj has been completed, and the district has got its new centre including attractive meeting and accommodation spaces. As an important part of the urban space project, the former path for soft traffic users, Astrupstien, has been upgraded to a new main street, north-south in the district, with space for a smaller collective bus connection. In 2020-21, a test trial with a driverless bus has been carried out to support the district’s internal mobility — unfortunately, the legislation does not yet allow for the permanent driving of this type of vehicle (Aalborg Municipality, 2016).



Figures 5 and 6. The tunnel before and after

Establishing a platform for involvement and collaboration has been an absolute central organizational strategy to drive the transformation. Initially, in relation to the Thinktank work, leading decision-makers discussed and committed themselves to pursuing the work of unlocking the district's potential across individual agendas. This circle still contributed in the phase with the urban planning competition, now expanded to also involve actors like representatives of the district's associational life, various municipal administrations, as well as the civil society, residents etc., who all were invited to different dialogue meetings in the two-phased competition process.

In connection with the kickstart preliminary study, a cross-cutting coordination group was set up, consisting of relevant actors, landowners, and representatives of all municipal administrations. In this forum, the dialogue and negotiations about the opening image and overall plan took place between the project management and advisers. In addition, various bilateral meetings took place with landowners/actors. Parallel project efforts were also established with a high degree of repetition in management and project management, which ensured a common perspective and understanding of the whole across the board.

Relating to the urban space project Kickstart Tornhøj, a partnership agreement was concluded between the municipality and Realdania, and a steering group was set up, consisting of Realdania, Aalborg Municipality and Himmerland Housing Association — the latter owns large residential areas next to the kickstart area, at the north, named "Kildeparken 2020", which at the same time underwent a major renovation plan of approx. 1000 dwellings (affordable housing) (Kildeparken 2020, 2024).



CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

A number of different citizen involvement activities, workshops, and meetings have taken place during the project period, e.g. "We Create Ourselves" project and a "maker project" where students from a district elementary school have designed and made furniture and installations in 1:1 scale for the new urban spaces. Maker-activities and cooperation resulted in permanent MakerSpace 9220 location in the Tornhøj Citycentre.

In close coordination with Kickstart Tornhøj and the overall plan for the Astrupsti-connection seen as the district's new connecting main street north / south in eastern Aalborg, Himmerland Housing Association has implemented an ambitious comprehensive plan for the renovation of approx. 1000 homes in the "Kildeparken 2020" neighbourhood located next to the new city centre at Tornhøj.

The residential buildings consisted exclusively of affordable housing for rent: based on the Danish public housing legislation, they are built with municipal co-financing with the aim of ensuring affordable housing for all. The housing organization behind is a non-profit company, which is only set up to manage, build, rent out, and maintain the housing (also allowed to carry out very few related activities within the strict limits overseen by municipalities). The funds in the company are in fact the tenants' money, which is why special resident democratic regulations have been developed to ensure the tenants' influence on renovation, maintenance, etc.

The homes in "Kildeparken 2020" were built in the 1970s and needed major physical renovation. Furthermore, almost since the development's start, a negative storytelling had arisen around the eastern Aalborg, which due to various systemic social challenges had turned into a place you moved to if you had no other options. The storytelling caused difficulties in renting out the flats — though there was a great satisfaction among the residents living in the neighbourhood, it was impossible to attract new / more resourceful residents from outside.

"Kildeparken 2020" and Himmerland Housing Association have been extremely important partners in the urban development effort — right back from the Thinktank and to the realisation of the urban transformation, there has been a mutual interest in the municipality and the housing association in reversing the negative urban development spiral to ensure an attractive urban transformation from monofunctional housing district to a mixed used urban area that can attract more and resourceful residents, workplaces, services, etc.

Furthermore, Himmerland Housing Association has been interested in attracting (private) investors — for two reasons: to be able to ensure a more diverse supply of housing, and to ensure a larger public and private service offering. In its capacity as a non-profit company and its self-perception as not only a housing organization, but also a significant driver of urban development in the district, the housing association has acted as leverage in terms of being able to attract new players to the area. For example, they have subdivided and sold plinth plots inside the public housing developments to private investors building private apartments buildings. They have also carried out joint tenders with private investors and together realised a new mixed development with public housing, private housing, and construction of a larger grocery store (Aalborg Municipality, 2014; Aalborg Municipality, 2015; Aalborg Municipality, 2017).



Figure 7. Girls from an elementary school produced deck chairs for the new urban space

RESULT



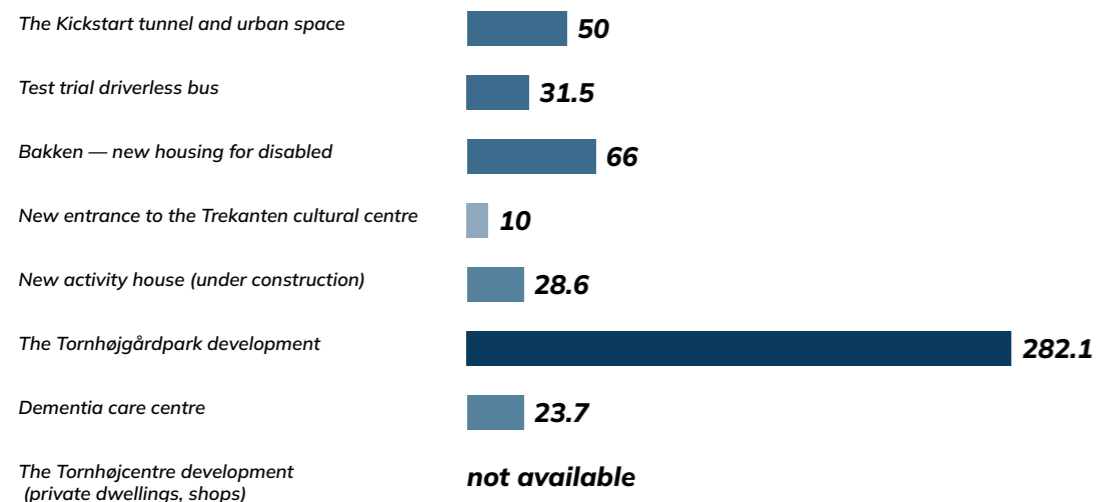
Figures 8, 9, and 10. Urban spaces and the tunnel — before and after

More than 10 years of cooperation on sustainable transformation of the exposed urban and residential area have made a difference. With joint help, a strategic densification of the district has been carried out; the district — Aalborg East — has gained its attractive centre and has succeeded in attracting new investors, functions, workplaces, and citizens. Overall, it has created an attractive framework for a more mixed and safe urban district with a positive identity, also seen “from the outside” by the surrounding society. The area’s connectivity has been strengthened, both internally and to the surrounding city, as well as locally in the new local city-centre; the physical and functional densification has contributed to the greater use of and more stay in the urban spaces north and south of the tunnel.

If you take a look at the municipality’s investment in the urban space project by the tunnel, the kickstart-investment measured in Danish crowns — although being a central piece in the broader positive urban development spiral — has contributed to attracting significantly more investment for private housing, business, and public construction, which far exceeds project funding itself. However, the biggest, central investment that the municipality has contributed is the time and willingness to exercise urban strategic leadership.

Investments in the Kickstart Tornhøj-area

Estimated amount in millions DKR (based on Aalborg Municipality data)



LEARNING POINTS — EXTRACT FROM CURRENT EVALUATION ¹

Holistic and strategic urban management

The project has largely succeeded through holistic and strategic urban management, which has been a decisive factor for both attracting investment and synergies realised between different efforts. The Kickstart project is shaped and run as part of a broader urban strategic vision regarding uplifting the eastern Aalborg, socially and physically. In support, an extensive involvement of actors across the municipality’s departments, landowners, investors, housing association, civil society, and others has been carried out.

Financial sustainability

The project has succeeded in attracting very significant investments to the area from both the municipality (in its capacity as developer) and external actors. The Kickstart project has been a contributing factor, as professional ambitions, cross-functional collaboration, and the holistic vision for the area’s development have made it attractive to invest for private investors and the municipality itself.

Social sustainability

Overall, urban transformation has contributed to strengthening the attractiveness and safety of the area, positive identity, and a more varied and resourceful mix of residents.

Architecture

Physically, functionally, and in terms of urban planning, the project has succeeded in transforming an unsafe and dark tunnel and path connection into a more aesthetic, inviting, and safer urban space. A good densification of functions has been created in the area as well as on adjacent registers and service functions, and the possibility of meeting and staying in the urban space has been strengthened. With the grip of the path, previous functional segregation in the area of Astrupstien (the main street coupled with a condensed district centre around the tunnel) has been broken up, and internal mobility and connection to the outside has been strengthened.

¹ The evaluation “Kickstart Tornhøj i Aalborg Øst — Læring og erfaringer fra realiseringsprojektet [Kickstart Tornhøj in Aalborg East — Learning and Experiences from the Implementation Project]” is done in 2023, led by the Realdania fund; not yet published.

SUBURBAN MATERIALS AND AESTHETICS

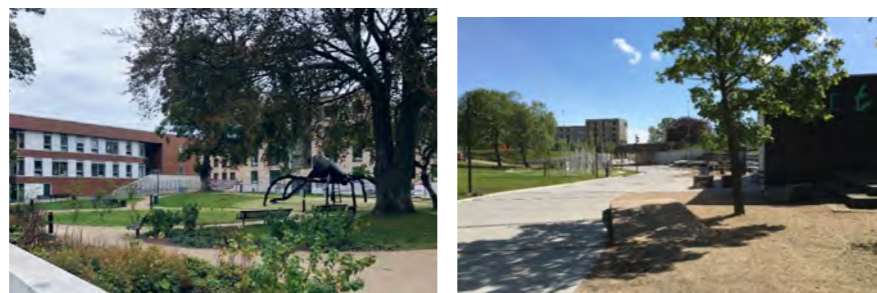


Figures 11, 12, and 13. Materials and atmosphere

The new tunnel is built in white and smooth concrete with rounded wooden edges to make the tunnel welcoming and beautifully designed. Throughout, the aim has been to create an aesthetic and inviting urban space that appeals to a broad target group and can be consumed and used flexibly depending on the user and needs. In addition, important existing landscape qualities in the area have been preserved, e.g. the blood beech from the old farm garden. Coating is in line with the surroundings, though a bit more sophisticated in brushed concrete.

To the south, a worn out / half empty shopping centre has been demolished and a new development has been built that mixes centre functions (grocery, sandwich bar, dental office, etc.) on the ground floor with private rental housing above. Where an older farm used to be, new housing development with a municipal housing offer (32 homes) and 146 homes in a mix of public and private rental has now been built, as well as another new grocery store, a recycling shop, and a cafe. Overall, this has increased both the number and diversity of functions in the district and thus created more opportunities for residents in the area to stay and meet, as well as more jobs locally. Next to the city centre, a new dementia care home for 72 people has been build — including 100 workplaces.

To the north, an institution for people with brain damage has been established, “Bakken”, with room for 36 residents, and a new activity centre is currently being planned for construction.



Figures 14 and 15. Pictures from the areas (south / north)

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