Case Study
Copenhagen, Denmark

Copenhagen is the capital and largest city in Denmark, with a growing urban population and is becoming a strong cultural and economic centre with the largest airport in Scandinavia. Its own unique neighbourhoods and characteristics contribute to the diversity of the city’s culture and urban fabric. Copenhagen is a prime example of a successful polycentric urban network that is increasing the diversity and wellbeing of its residents. During the 1940s the municipality began a new strategy for urban development in greater Copenhagen. The ‘Five-finger Plan’ consists of five transport corridors along which the city planned to grow. The idea is organized to optimize the space so there is little traveling distance from urbanized areas to green ones. Polycentric model were used to break up the urban density to benefit the citizen with low commuting time and a diverse practice of space.

Figures

| Area (m²) | 34.07 |
| Population 2010 (million) | 678.873 |
| Density (sq m) | 16,000 |
| Number of districts | 10 |
National governance at a local level
Copenhagen’s parliament and government set the political and economical goals for the city, but the allocation of resources for their achievement are put into place by voluntary negotiations at the local level. Reducing the uncertainty of the central government is also the main focus of participation in local decisions. Because the governance system of Copenhagen is controlled mainly at a local level, the overall stake of citizen implication is relatively high.

Economic and spatial similitude
Currently Copenhagen municipality has different plans to contract the expansion of existing metro lines throughout the city. These plans have been made in collaboration with the municipal governments of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg. Cityringen will be completed by 2018. This circle line will be a 15 km underground railway in downtown Copenhagen, the “bridge quarters” and Frederiksberg. Cityringen will have seventeen new underground stations, taking less than 24 minutes to travel all around the city. The purpose of this new line is to reduce the travel time and better connect the city—complementing its polycentric nature.

Citizens, drivers of democracy
In Copenhagen the citizens are the drivers of the polycentric development through schemes such as the ‘Citizens Advice’ service, employed by the council to make it easier to lodge complaints for the users, citizens, traders and businessmen. This independent body helps to give people a voice outside of the city of Copenhagen administrations, committees and mayors. And the city authorities are paying attention! Recently, the mayor of the city, Ritt Bjerregaard emphasized “Copenhagen belongs to the people who live there – the citizens own their city and our democracy is based on consideration, enthusiasm and the will to create a better life both for one self and for one’s neighbour.”

Consequently, Copenhagen represents a fitting example of how a polycentric urban scheme can aid in the success of a democratically and spatially comfortable environment, providing the opportunity to listen to citizens at a local level. The spatial structure of the city is easily accessible through the use of transport links, which are essential in a thriving multi-centred city. Apart from efficiency and mobility in a city, a well connected transport network links otherwise isolated social groups and thus prevents segregation.
or additional problems such as poverty or lack of employment. Additionally, in Copenhagen the emphasis on bike friendly routes and environments eases much of the responsibility of policy in encouraging citizen participation in the urban daily life and provides new possibilities and infrastructure for polycentricity and city participation.

More info
2. Statistics Denmark http://www.dst.dk/
3. http://www.kk.dk/sitecore/content/Subsites/CityOfCopenhagen/SubsiteFrontpage/CityCouncil/CityAdministrations/CitizensAdvice.aspx