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Photo on the front cover: Sculpture: *Diagonal in Room* by Ingela Palmerts.
The sculpture is situated in an exhibition at Pilarne, a heritage and a beautiful cultural landscape on Tjörn at the west coast of Sweden. Photo: Magnus Rönn

NORDISK ARKITEKTURFORSKNING
NORDIC JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH

SYSTEMS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS SECURING THE FUTURE OF DANISH SOCIAL HOUSING

NEZIH BURAK BICAN

Abstract

Denmark regards social housing as a crucial tool for its welfare state and, thus, there is strict governmental control at national and local levels over the sector. For years, this sector has strived to keep the quality of existing stock through renovation, transformation, and/or complex regeneration activities. In addition, new settlements are recently built or integrated into larger urban development projects. For one following the recent spatial practices of social housing in Denmark, a pursuit for sustainability and liveability is evident. Based on a review of systems, policies and regulations circumscribing the Danish social housing sector, the current study questions how the underlying mechanisms control the spatial decisions related to social housing, how planning regulations, governmental policies address its practice and spatial quality and how the sector's historical evolution are all interrelated. In this sense, the present article discusses how such seemingly dispersed elements connect to each other to shape a sustainable future for social housing. Emphasising significant historical and social facts, this article provides a structured contextual outline of the Danish approach to social welfare and housing market, while highlighting critical local, national and international principles in place to secure the future and the quality of urban space within social housing settlements in the country. To this end, reference will be made to the discoveries of local actors, which render social housing a practical tool, in that a social housing settlement can

Keywords:
social housing, welfare state, Denmark, architectural quality, sustainability, liveability

be durable and affordable once it is built for liveability to secure future demand; that enhancing spatial quality can be a dependable means to regenerate an estate through holistic and participatory approaches; that new social housing can be instrumentalized to arrange social mix by innovative planning and architecture; and that architectural quality has the potential to transform a building into a self-promoting investment. The study concludes that the history of socio-economic survival in Denmark works hand in hand with that of social housing, which has been a means of sharing and cohabitation under the severe and unexpected circumstances of national economy and unrest. Moreover, in line with the expansion of the Danish economy, success of regenerative trials in recent years, and the growth of qualified architectural know-how, the sector has found its sustainability in further promoting spatial quality.

Introduction[1]

While some countries are on the verge of quitting subsidized rental schemes and moving towards private home ownership, Denmark continues to embrace social housing, regarding it as a major tool of the welfare state (Whitehead & Scanlon, 2007). The country ranks third among other European countries with its high proportion (21 %) of social housing – *almene boliger*[2] – after the Netherlands (30 %) and Austria (24 %). In two major cities, Copenhagen and Aarhus, the ratio is 28 % (Housing Europe, 2019).

Steady but complicated efforts have been made to preserve and secure the future of social housing stock. The advance of spatial quality has also become apparent in social housing implementations, including both regenerations and new buildings (Frandsen, Moller, Laurberg, & Vindfeld, 2013). The preservation of the existing social housing stock has been encouraged by national and local architectural policies to lengthen the lifetime of the deprived settlements. New housing schemes involve both private and social housing with high quality units to establish liveable and sustainable environments, to eliminate the risks of social segregation and to ensure the desired social mix within neighbourhoods. Local governments engage in partnerships with social housing associations and private-sector specialists in order to develop alternative innovative models to diversify the housing stock, in line with the changing demographics of Danish cities (Mortensen, 2018; Bican, 2020). Furthermore, the Danish urban geography has been undergoing an accelerated spatial change of quality as architectural practice becomes embraced as a form of international investment. The competitive environment of construction practice encourages better quality of architecture and planning and learns from the ongoing evolution of the local and international best practices, not to mention public building investments prioritizing high-quality architectural and urban design for more than two decades (Frandsen et al., 2013; Gemzøe, 2017)

1 This article is partly derived from the author's PhD thesis published in 2016 and enhanced with recent literature, further analysis, and discussion.
2 It is more appropriate to translate the term into English as "common housing" as the sector is open to all social groups and not restricted to those in need.

Assuming that this search for spatial quality supports the universalistic welfare ideals of the social housing sector, a documentary research is conducted to discover socio-political systems and regulations supporting the spatial quality of social housing, and further decipher the structural relations behind it. The study questioned how the web of interrelations among the regulatory mechanisms is woven and how the spatial practice of the social housing sector has become qualified. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to structuralize the findings of the study on the contextual regulative and systematic parameters supporting the sustainability of social housing and embracing spatial quality in Denmark. In doing so, implicit or explicit relations supporting or contradicting each other are briefly analysed and discussed. Methodologically, the article is based on a review of both local and national governmental policy documents, as well as legal regulative documentations, thereby providing a framework for recent spatial decision-making mechanisms behind social housing implementations. The focus here is on the pre-set criteria addressing the quality of implementations to ensure liveable and sustainable settlements.

In the interest of providing a comprehensible order of disclosure, this article follows a specific structure, which begins with the upper-scale engagements and continues down to more detailed regulations. Brief analyses and short discussions are made throughout the text to discover the embedded answers related to the research question. The disclosure, therefore, starts with highlights of the social welfare and spatial planning systems of the country under study, to provide background information. Then, it provides a brief history of Danish housing and describes how social housing evolved, what its current state is, and how it is governed and managed to sustain the system. Later, the paper addresses the national policies for architecture paving the way for recent advances in the quality of social housing practice. Before concluding, a supplementary section is provided to present the related quality-oriented public procurement regulations of the European Union (EU) affecting the Danish social housing practice in the 2000s.

Basics of the Danish social welfare system

The welfare state is a model in which a government takes responsibility to provide everyone in the society with the opportunity to benefit from housing, education, health, work, and social security at a minimum level defined by the society itself (Malpass, 2005). In Denmark, such public services are offered equally to all and to high standards, in line with the political approach of the welfare state. Following the approach, governmental financial structures, advanced employment opportunities and labour market and the public sector all come together to support the sustainability of the welfare society. A socially coherent welfare society is claimed to be a result of provision of equal opportunities for all

according to the bill of "Social Policy in Denmark" (Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration [MSAI], 2011).

In essence, the Danish welfare model depends on ensuring certain fundamental rights for all citizens "in case they encounter social problems such as unemployment, sickness or dependency" (p. 6). The social system in Denmark follows the principles listed below:

- *Universalism: equal social rights for all;*
- *Tax financing;*
- *Public responsibility;*
- *Possibilities of labour market affiliation: social services to secure a well-established connection between family and the work environments;*
- *Active social measures: flexible measures for changing needs and circumstances;*
- *Local community approach;*
- *Local scope of action: local autonomy;*
- *User influence;*
- *Comprehensiveness of the view; and*
- *Cooperation with other social players.*

MSAI, 2011

For effective praxis, the responsibilities of social welfare are shared among the ministries of the central government. Moreover, for a better and well-fitting execution of welfare tasks, the local governments serve as the major actors/tools within the system.[3] This is done by engaging other related public and private local actors, institutions, companies, etc. Financing of activities and provision of social tasks is executed through various funds, each of which has been established for specific needs (MSAI, 2011).

As one of the practical tools of social welfare, the social housing sector is a platform where the above-mentioned principles come together for an effective practice. In the following sections, one will see that much reference is given to these principles embedded within the primary policies, regulations and practice.

Danish spatial planning system for a liveable now and a sustainable future

Spatial planning is considered as the foremost ground to develop settlements sustainably by joining economic and social aspects, as agreed by the ministers responsible for spatial planning in the five Nordic countries (Ministry of Environment and Energy et al., 2001). According to the "Spatial Planning" document of the Ministry of Environment (ME, 2007a), the most recent Planning Act in Denmark was introduced on the 21st of

3 The Ministry report briefly discloses a basic legal framework related to local and central authorities within the country as follows: "Denmark is divided into five regions and 98 local-authority areas. Regions and local authorities are independent, politically controlled organisational units. Only the municipalities can levy taxes independently. The bodies charged with local political management – regional councils and local councils – are elected every four years in ordinary elections."

June 2007 by the ministry. The Act was published right after the local government reformation at the beginning of the same year, designating the largest share of planning responsibility to local and regional authorities (ME, 2007b).

The following quotation is significant for reflecting the primary approach of the planning policy, regarding people and life as the central focus:

> *People use planning to form the surroundings of daily life.*
> *Planning should be based on visions of how we want to live now and in the future and what we need to preserve from the past.*
> *Planning is both the basis for, and the concrete result of, policy-making.*
> ME, 2007b, p. 3

The quote is critical in that it describes how planning is regarded as a means to shape the settings of life, and that the centrality of sustainability setting is a vision both for current residents and prospective generations. Besides, it reveals how much value is attributed to the preservation of qualities of the past, which are to be sustained for the service/experience of future residents. It is, then, the "purpose" of the Act, which presents solid means to implement the aforementioned visions:

> 1. *Appropriate development in the whole country and in the individual administrative regions and municipalities, based on overall planning and economic considerations;*
> 2. *creating and conserving valuable buildings, settlements, urban environments and landscapes;*
> 3. *that the open coasts shall continue to comprise an important natural and landscape resource;)*
> 4. *preventing pollution of air, water and soil and noise nuisance; and involving the public in the planning process as much as possible.*
>
> ME, 2007b, p. 5

The Act not only promotes decentralized responsibility, but also requires public participation for each step of the planning process, stipulating the minimum rules and allowing planning agents to decide on the best means within their respective locality. This process applies on local, municipal, regional and national levels, together with a vertical dialogue and cooperation among authorities, who reserve the right to veto decisions by relatively superior authority in case of irregularities in upper-scale plans or policies (ME, 2007a). Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchical set of plans governing the planning system in Denmark. In what follows, each category of the plans will be briefly introduced.

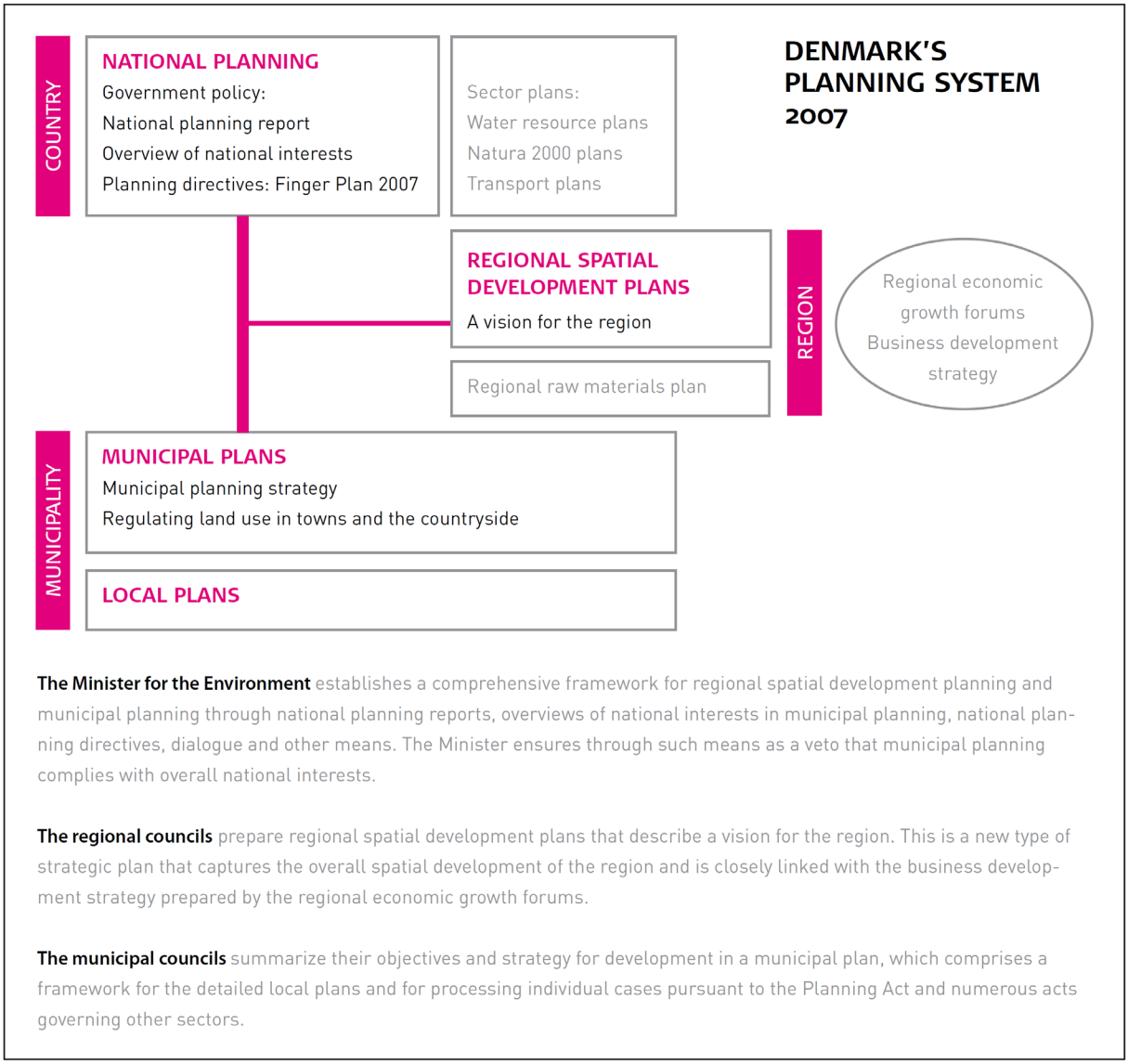

Figure 1
Denmark's Planning System
Source: Spatial Planning in Denmark (ME, 2007a, p. 9)

National Planning

National planning in Denmark was first legally outlined in 1974, and was fundamentally reformed and reinforced in 2007. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for preparing a planning report to set the overall framework for other regional and municipal plans following each parliamentary election (ME, 2007a, p. 8). The national planning report published in 2006 presented the following five goals in line with the planning reform:

1. *Rural and urban areas should be distinct.*
2. *Development should benefit all of Denmark.*
3. *Spatial planning should be based on respect for the identity of cities and towns, nature, the environment and the landscape and townscape.*
4. *Spatial planning and investment in infrastructure should be closely integrated.*
5. *Spatial planning should be comprehensive.*

ME, 2006, p. 5

Accordingly, the autonomy of local authorities was further enhanced, and these figures are assumed to establish detailed planning of their local regions. It should be noted that these municipal planning implementations are overviewed in terms of national interests, and published in the form of a report by the minister every fourth year (ME, 2007a, p. 8), thereby setting up a periodical control mechanism.

Regional Spatial Development Planning

Regional spatial development plans have been developed by newly established regional councils since the reforms in 2007, and they are assumed to set visionary perspectives for future implementations of the local municipalities in line with the national policies. Municipalities, councils, businesses, the regional council and other relevant participating actors all cooperate to prepare the regional plans, whose targets comprise the regions' nature and the environment, recreation, business, tourism, employment, education, training and culture (ME, 2007a).

Municipal Planning

Municipal plans are prepared by municipal councils, thus reflecting local development policies. Basically, a municipal plan covers "a general structure with overall objectives for development and land use in the municipality; guidelines for land use; and a framework for the content of local plans for the specific parts of the municipality" (ME, 2007a, p. 19). An adopted municipal plan should be debated publicly, be in line with national and regional sector plans and not conflict with national interests. Besides, the Local Agenda 21, the UN's international framework for sustainable development, is a major requirement for the local councils to align their strategies accordingly, to set goals for avoiding environmental pollution and to promote sustainable urban development and regeneration (ME, 2007a).

Local Planning

Local plans, utilized by municipalities, are tools of direct invervention in the development of cities. Thus, they underpin the entire planning system of Denmark. Accordingly, all national and local strategies and related targets are solidified upon their implementation (ME, 2007a, p. 23). Local residents have a legal right to comment on proposals before

adoption. The contents and scales of local plans may vary. Among these, “use of land and buildings”; “size and extent of properties”; “roads and paths”; “location and size of buildings”; “building density and design”; “landscape features”; “connection with common facilities”; “conservation of buildings”; and “combining existing flats” are the most relevant subjects – to mention a few – which can be designated by the local plans for development of new and preservation of the old social housing settlements (ME, 2007a, p. 24-25).

Denmark, a country of 5.8 million (Statistics Denmark, 2019), cares much about its investments to sustain the country’s limited resources. Therefore, the planning system is designed to maximize the profit from these limited resources, and built on the assumption that a total advancement of the society will be good for all residents of the country. Additionally, it centralizes democratic participation, while comprehensive mechanisms of participation and strict supervision of the spatial practices provide consistency and harmony with the national interests and public opinion. Therefore, architectural or urban projects to be implemented are designed in such a way so as not to challenge any national and local policies, are realized in line with the upper-scale plans and are expected to receive public acceptance before coming into effect. In particular, the call for creating and conserving valuable urban structures and the emphasis put on the public involvement in the Planning Act both serve as a systematic basis to ensure qualified and publicly embraced urban practices, such as social housing implementations.

The public involvement takes place particularly during the local planning phase, and is a structural means to secure demand and provide social sustainability. To enhance such sustainability, many recent local plans for development areas, even in the very centre of the capital city, require a certain amount of social housing units designed against segregation. Consequently, the existence of such a systematic mechanism supporting social welfare ideals and planning priorities set a dependable basis for the social housing sector in Denmark. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual correlations within the system and policies outlined in this study.

The following inquiry discloses the fundamentals of the Danish social housing sector to further shed light on the socio-economic and organizational factors affecting the decisions for architectural and urban quality of settlements and dwellings. An overall historic and typological narrative is offered to elaborate the discussion.

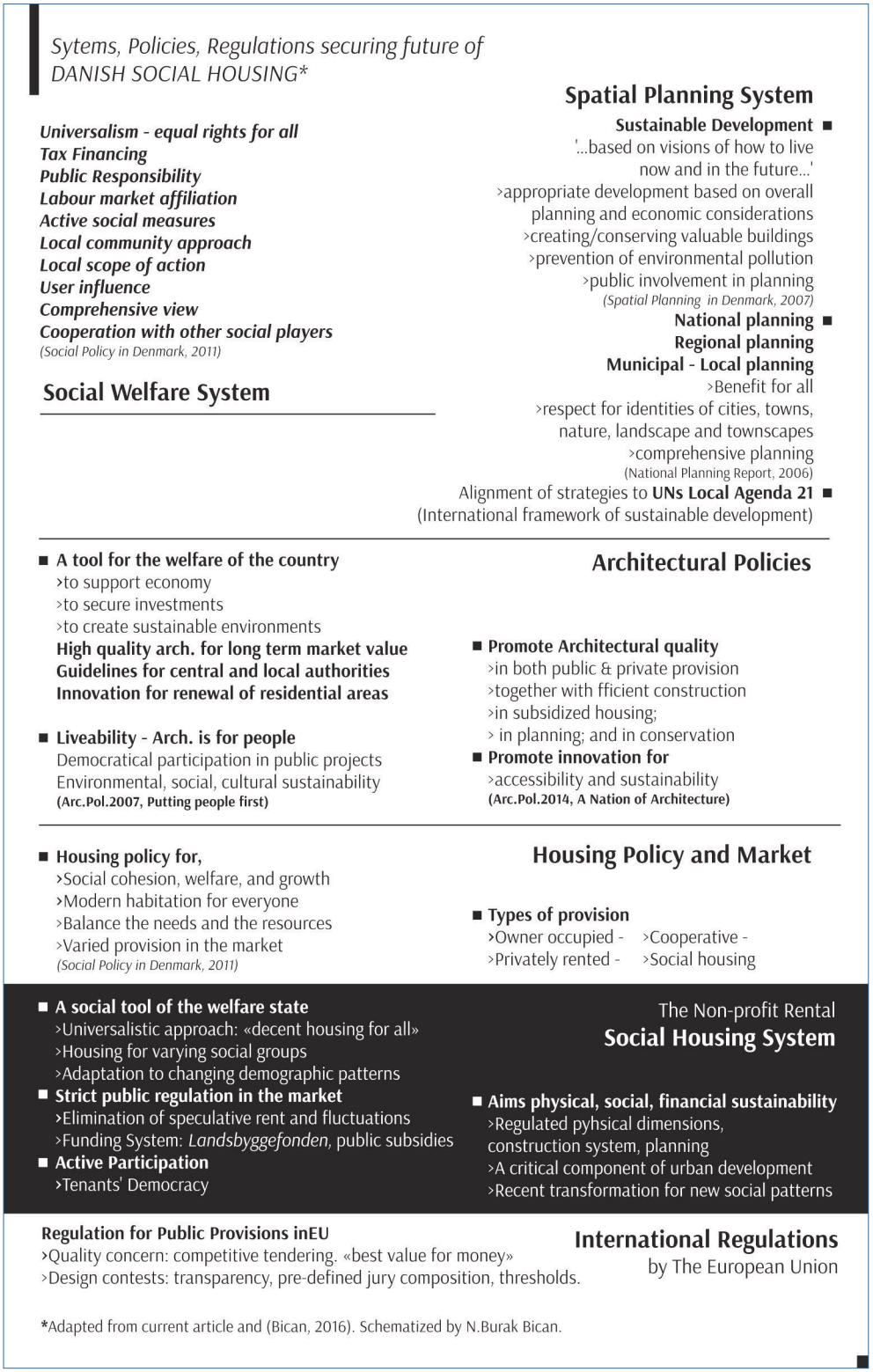

Figure 2
Systems, policies, and regulations securing the future of Danish social housing. Schematized by the author.
SOURCE: BICAN (2016)

Danish Housing: Recent History and the Market

A comprehensive social idea underlies the housing policies in Denmark. According to a ministerial report in 2011 on the country's social policy, the fundamental purposes of these policies can be summarized as follows:

- *The housing and urban policies ensure social cohesion, welfare and growth in society*
- *All groups in the Danish society have a possibility to find modern habitations that are appropriate, given their needs and economic resources*
- *A well-functioning and varied housing market.*

MSAI, 2011, p. 26

In Denmark, the housing quality and living conditions are relatively higher than most other countries. Not only well-to-do residents, but also the least economically placed can embrace sound housing conditions. In addition, nearly two thirds of the citizens live in their own homes. Although long and cold winters necessitate lengthy and expensive heating, nearly all households can afford this utility – which is ensured by the subsidies provided by the welfare economy, high standards set for building insulation and overall efficiency of the heating system (Kristensen, 2007; European Commission, 2020).

Below, a brief history of Danish housing is presented to provide a perspective focusing on the past experiences of the country, and to better grasp the following sub-sections on the alternative types of housing provision models.

Evolution of Housing in Denmark in the last century[4]

Prior to WWII, housing was a critical subject for Danish politics. After the war, the problem of housing became a predominant factor in parallel with the ideals of a welfare state. For this reason, taxation became the major source of subsidies and the largest average residential area per person among the EU countries, which may still be regarded as the locomotive of the Danish welfare society.

The State considered various ways of housing provision for people in need during the last century. Building and housing associations, special schemes to support the construction of housing for families with many children, subsidized social housing and council housing for particularly vulnerable groups were some of the means to meet the need. Alternative policies of taxing and funding for housing were also adopted to manage the problem and catalyse on-going provisions.

In the five-year period of WWII, housing shortages increased considerably, paving the way for extremely high prices. Because the local authorities could not meet the demand through provision of social housing,

4 The source of information under this sub-section is *Housing in Denmark* (Kristensen, 2007, p. 7-17) unless otherwise is indicated.

housing associations assembled to overcome the problem. The consequent establishment of the Ministry of Housing – *Boligministeriet* – in 1947 was a critical strategical and political move towards a solution. Additionally, the Housing Subsidy Act – *lov nr. 235 af 30. april 1946* – and the Rent Act – *Lov nr. 251 af 14/6 1951* – served as additional and supplementary governmental steps forward. In particular, the Housing Subsidy Act, offering loans for all housing types in the market, contributed significantly to the operation of social housing associations and companies.

Denmark's economy was basically dependent on agriculture in the post-war years, and almost half of the population were farmer settlers living in rural areas. Beginning from the second half of the 20th century, the strong trend of industrialization gained further velocity, resulting in urbanization, which continued until the 1980s. In accordance with the growing economy, increasing wages and growing wealth in the society, people became eager to buy their own houses in the 1960s. Thus, many single-family houses were constructed in line with the rising demand. Obviously, it was economically more advantageous for one to buy one's own house rather than living in a rental property. Such a trend channelled investments of many residents toward home ownership. However, given the circumstances, it became hard to find tenants to inhabit existing social housing settlements.

Many workers from abroad - particularly of eastern origin – were welcomed to extend the labour force of the country in the post-war years. Moreover, Denmark experienced the highest rates of dwelling construction per year between 1966 and 1975, when not only private, owner-occupied buildings, but also many social housing estates were built. In fact, "the largest and best-equipped social housing units ever built" (Kristensen, 2007, p. 15) were constructed mostly on the outskirts of the towns and cities during those years. However, it was the recession in the Danish economy caused by the first oil crisis in 1973, which not only resulted in serious unemployment, but also stopped a majority of housing investments.

For various reasons, most people did not prefer to live in social housing estates built during those years. As a result, settlements with many unoccupied flats faced serious building damage, physical decay and social incidents. However, the most critical result was a visible segregation of the society. While low-income groups, mostly comprising immigrants, refugees, and socially marginalized people, dominated the social housing estates, middle-class and mostly nuclear families relocated to single-family dwellings. To overcome the problematic conditions, physical and economic amendments were made as an initial step; however, they failed to put an end to the major social problems, deprivation, and segregation. Until the 1980s, the approach of renewal in Denmark involved demolitions and re-building. New construction followed large-scale

demolitions of urban districts, which caused discontent in society. By the 1980s, this attitude was replaced with urban regeneration, which was legally enacted in 1983, and the first implementations of which took place in the outer part of the capital city until 1995. The City Committee, composed of various ministerial representatives, published a comprehensive action plan in 1993; however, despite aiming to fight the problems in social housing settlements within five years, even this plan failed to stop the ongoing problems.

In the early 2000s, subsidies were argued to be impracticable, and private financial support called for urban regeneration projects. Soon afterwards, although construction activity in the housing market continued with a rising trend, the prices of dwellings increased significantly. Presumably, the main reasons were the "continuous worsening of social and ethnical segregation problems in the social housing sector", and the resulting increase in the "demand for owner-occupied dwellings" (Kristensen, 2007, p. 17).

Since the mid-2000s, many local governments have begun to collaborate with social housing associations in comprehensive regeneration projects, mainly in larger cities such as Copenhagen and Aarhus. This period coincides with the introduction of the Planning Act in 2007. These projects included not only pure physical implementations of renovation, but also took social actions to centre stage to encourage integration, and to build up sustainable and liveable cities. Besides, new housing construction aimed towards meeting the expected increase in the need for housing in the coming years was planned to ensure a social mix within the localities (The Municipality of Copenhagen [TMC], 2015). Presently, local governments define quotas for social housing for newly planned areas to eliminate possible social segregation beforehand. Quotas are also applied to small-sized dwellings, housing for students and the elderly. Moreover, new typologies are encouraged through collaborative schemes for housing associations, architectural offices and local governments (Bican, 2020) For a better understanding of this concept, what follows includes the major types of housing, before discussing Danish social housing in more depth.

Types of Provision in the Danish Housing Market

According to 2007 figures, some 2.7 million residences were available in Denmark (Statistics Denmark, 2020a). The types of housing provided within the market can be classified into four groups:

- *Owner Occupied Housing (Ejerboliger)*
- *Private Rental Housing (Private udlejningsboliger)*
- *Cooperative Housing (Andelsboliger) and*
- *Social Housing (Almeneboliger)*

Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs [MHURA], 2014a

Below, brief information is provided as to the types of housing to clarify the logic behind and methods of operation within the different typologies. One has to note that each has different qualities due to continuous changes in the needs and ideas on good dwelling and quality of life within the Danish welfare society (Ærø, 2004).

Owner Occupied Housing (Ejerboliger)

The category has a share of 58,7 % of the market (Statistics Denmark, 2020b), and basically consists of two different physical establishments: single-family houses and freehold flats. More than two out of five dwellings in Denmark are single-family houses[5], which can be basically defined as 'a building for a family surrounded by a garden'. For Kristensen (2007), this is the most desired type of housing for Danes, where they feel most free and have the highest chance for customization. Additionally, nearly one out of ten houses are freehold flats that have been a part of the housing market since the housing agreement in 1966, whereby purchasing flats in multi-storey housing blocks was allowed.

5 The category consists of owner occupied, detached or semi-detached single-family houses.

Private Rental Housing (Private udlejningsboliger)

Private rental houses have a share of 8,9 % of the housing stock (Statistics Denmark, 2020b). The category has experienced an upward trend since the last decade. It consists of apartments in multi-storey buildings, single-family and terraced houses. For Kristensen, social housing could not be 'a serious competitor' for the sector because of the related disputes; indeed, many people even preferred to pay more to live away from such annoying conditions (Kristensen, 2007). Nevertheless, recently new local and central spatial regulations have been put into practice to eliminate the negative socio-economic stigma over the social housing sector, although not all of them have proved to be efficient enough and have received criticism (Housing Europe, 2019).

Cooperative Housing (Andelsboliger)

The first appearance of cooperative housing was at the end of the 1800s, when they were considered as a means of social housing. This approach is based on a collective/shared ownership within which mutual decisions are made democratically. In practice, it is the 'in-between' alternative in the market to ownership-based and rental properties. Cooperative housing makes up only 7,5 % of the existing stock (Statistics Denmark, 2020b).

Social housing (almeneboliger)

has a share of 20,6 % of the Danish housing stock. This category will be introduced in more detail under the following heading. 4,3 % of dwellings are composed of other types of housing.

Fundamentals of Danish Social Housing and its distinguishing features

Social housing in Denmark simply denotes "housing for rent provided at cost prices by not-for-profit housing associations" (EFPCSH, 2015). According to the Federation of Social Housing Organizations in Denmark [BL] (Danmarks almene boliger, 2014), social housing, being a major component of the Danish welfare state policies, offers accommodation for residents of different groups with varying needs. Dwellings are available for families, the young, the disabled and the elderly. The sector's target is described as providing "affordable and decent housing for all in need hereof, and to give tenants a legal and decisive right to influence their own living conditions". For BL, this statement puts forward the aim of the sector as "a non-profit sector that aims at being both financially, physically and socially sustainable and well-functioning".

Strict public regulations are effective on many issues such as management of estate economies, physical dimensions of units, constructions and activities organized by associations. Within an urban planning scale, the local authorities are liable for decisions about the number and location of social housing within the cities. Thus, for BL, social housing may be regarded as a critical component of urban development plans (Danmarks almene boliger [BL], 2014).

In fact, social housing has a relatively short history when compared to the rest of the housing stock in Denmark, because only one out of fifty units of social housing was constructed before WWII, and over 50 % of the existing stock has been constructed in the last fifty years. Today, there are around 7.500 social housing estates and 700 housing associations nationwide. (Table 1)

Table 1
The number of housing estates/departments based on information from three sources.

The social housing sector	Realdania 2007	BL – 2013	Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs – 2014
Housing estates/departments	7.909	7.000	7.500
Housing associations	771	550	700

Historical Background of Non-profit Social Housing in Denmark[6]

The very first idea of providing non-profit social housing for the vulnerable classes in Denmark appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century. In those years, poor housing and sanitary conditions paved the way for cholera epidemics. As a result, philanthropic societies initially took over a social role to help those in need (Richter-Friss Van Deurs, 2017). At that time, low and open housing estates were constructed

6 The source of information in this section is Housing in Denmark (Kristensen, 2007, p. 32-35) unless otherwise indicated.

contrary to the high and dense estates of the private sector.[7] Throughout the world war years, responsibility for social housing was solely assumed by building associations, cooperative societies and philanthropic societies. However, the Danish government contributed to them by ratifying the first Danish act on subsidies for non-profit housing associations in 1933, in an attempt to provide decent accommodation for low-income groups.

7 During the same period, some trade unions and employers also initiated housing associations as "open and low-rise" housing for their members.

Today's system of social housing in Denmark has its roots in the period after WWII, when policies toward a welfare state were actively centred round the housing problem. The general legal basis for the subsidies and organizations – not much different than the framework today – were established in 1946. This became a crucial step toward a solution to the increasing need for housing in the coming years. As a result of this effort, during the two decades between 1960 and 1980, 10,000 dwellings were built each year, reaching a total of nearly 200,000 units. However, they were large and accommodated primarily low-income immigrant households such that there appeared certain social accumulation nodes within the cities. In time, this resulted in segregation followed by social and ethnic problems within the country.

Present state of Danish Social Housing

In the *Almenebolig* or "common housing" system, there is no restriction for applicants to be registered on waiting lists of housing organizations to avoid segregation, as public dwellings were accessible to all segments of the society[8], and specific rules are applied to ensure social variety (Braga & Palvarini, 2013). Besides, following the welfare state's universalistic approach, a decent quality of housing at an affordable price for all citizens is now more sought after.

8 Only Sweden and the UK follow this principle in Europe.

Together with that of the Netherlands, Denmark's system is based on a non-profit sector (KAB, 2008). In contrast, in Sweden, municipal housing companies are mainly in charge. These systems typically preserve themselves by ensuring access to quality and affordable housing for all, and the sectors' rental control mechanisms prevent speculative price fluctuations in the market (Braga & Palvarini, 2013). Strict regulations are adopted to eliminate speculation risks. According to the financial model, rents only include operating, maintenance and capital costs, while governmental subsidies, which are provided for constructional expenses, exclude costs for maintenance and management (BL, Facts and Figures, 2014; BL, Non-profit Housing for Everyone, 2015a). Recently, the government has adopted amendments to the Planning Act to ensure a varied choice of good flats throughout the city and a balanced composition of residents. This makes it possible for the municipalities to require that up to 25 percent of the total housing stock be reserved for social housing in new urban development areas, along with other areas without an applicable local plan (Pittini, 2019).

Finance and Funding

As mentioned previously, social housing started as a philanthropic model, but since then its financing developed into a model collaboratively funded by the state, local authorities and tenants. Although shares of the contributing parties have changed over time, from 2008 onward, the distribution scheme below has been in place instead (Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs [MHURA], 2014b):

- Tenants' lease premiums: 2 %
- Municipal basic capital: 14 %
- Mortgage loans: 84 %

Basically, a housing organization initiates a new estate either by new construction or by renovating the existing housing. Municipalities not only transfer direct grants for basic capital, but also provide subsidies for loan re-payments, thereby reserving the right to decide the number of new estates within their localities. Additionally, they can legally allocate one in four units of each estate to those in urgent need. Lease premiums are paid by the residents after they move in. The basic capital is provided in the form of interest-free and amortisation-free loans by the municipality. Mortgage loans make up the basic share of the construction cost as defined by the joint decisions of the ministries of social affairs and economics. As a rule, the state subsidizes the difference between the residents' payments and the total payments. It should be noted that there is a maximum acquisition cost – introduced in 2004 – to keep the expenses and rents within reasonable levels. Basically, the collected rents from the households of social housing estates are distributed to various public funds to balance the finance and development of the social housing sector, and to prevent any possible problems beforehand. The first fund is called the "Disposition Fund" and is utilized for the immediate financial necessities of individual estates. The second, the "Building Defects Fund" or *Byggeskadefonden,* serves as a form of "insurance scheme". The National Building Fund (*Landsbyggefonden* or LBF) is the third funding mechanism, which utilizes three financial subagents to transfer the collected resources back to the sector. The fund is allocated to "grants for renovations", "social and preventive measures", "funding for demolitions", "changes to infrastructure", "support towards running expenses" and "new construction grants" (MHURA, 2014b).

Profile of Residents

The social housing sector in Denmark accommodates over 985,000 residents, and in each dwelling 1.8 people live on average (Danmarks Almene Boliger [BL], 2020).[9] The sector is mostly associated with people of low-income, unemployed, single individuals or single parents. This is because social housing provides cheaper alternatives and dwellings are smaller in size, when compared to other major types of housing. Moreover, most of the households contain either immigrants or their relatives

9 The general average household in the country is – 2.2 people.

(Andersen, 2010, p. 297) at a percentage within the sector equalling nearly three times the country average. For Kristensen (2007), social selection developed in the market is the reason behind this concentration. In particular, the estates from the 1960s and 1970s period have been housing many immigrant families and their relatives. During that time when social housing attracted many single individuals, many couples with children also bought and moved into single-family dwellings.

The critical social fact is that the family patterns in Danish society have changed since the 1970s. For instance, middle-income households – singles or couples – with children demand large affordable dwellings in the capital city-centre, as the growing economy calls for educated people for emerging industries such as IT and chemistry. Moreover, as the cost of living increases, many tend to live with others and refrain from living by themselves, whereas those living alone are still in abundance compared to the 1970s figures. In recent years, precautions have been taken to limit segregation. This is regarded as a 'social responsibility' undertaken by the sector. Hence, the concept of social mix is now a state-of-the-art phenomenon as indicated by researchers and specialists (BL, The Residents, 2015b). Today, alternative ways of overcoming this major problem are still being sought (Christensen, 2015). In 2018, the Danish Parliament passed a plan requiring housing estates to reduce the share of social housing for families, particularly in the "roughest ghetto areas", through "heavy densification with new private housing units, demolition, sale or split and reclassification of family flats as student or senior housing" (Pittini, 2019, p. 60). The plan involves other strict social measures, coupled with punishments and sanctions; however, there are still problems waiting for further solutions, as the estates are already crowded and still have long waiting lists.

Participation, Organization and Actors

The social housing sector basically consists of housing estates or departments, denoting physically and economically feasible settlement for individuals. Tenants' democracy remains at the core of the management system. Thus, residents of each estate elect a residents' board liable for the organization of their settlements, and operating their estates according to the decisions made by the residents themselves. Furthermore, the boards of the estates come together and elect a superior board, a form of the assembly of representatives. It is noteworthy that local municipalities are also represented in the assembly, but the tenants retain more seats, which means that they have the final say (BL, Social Housing Sector, 2014; BL, Non-profit Housing for Everyone, 2015a; Kristensen, 2007).

Housing Organizations (Associations)

In Denmark, there are over 500 housing associations in varying scales; the largest ones may manage hundreds of estates (BL, Social Housing Sector, 2014). A social housing organization is a formation approved by

the municipal council to function as a social housing company. Only accredited housing companies can act on the basis of non-profitmaking housing organizations (§ 1) (MBBL, Law on Social Housing, 2013). The purpose of the social housing organizations is defined as providing appropriate housing with reasonable rent and suitable living conditions for everyone in need (§ 5 b). Consequently, a social housing organization should ensure appropriate, modern, social, economic and physical standards for the dwellings it manages; work toward achieving the best quality for either construction or renovation of social housing by the public funding support; and work toward promoting "a well-functioning occupants' democracy" (§ 6). The organizations' acquisition or disposal of properties requires approval of the municipal council (§ 26-27).

Depending on the legal basis, housing organizations in Denmark are also responsible for the social activities in the estates. In particular, the European Commission (2013) strictly recommends that social protection systems respond to peoples' needs, simplified and better targeted social policies and the upgrading of active inclusion strategies in the member states in its social investment package. For BL, activities related to education, employment and health designed for children and youth are to be undertaken, as they are considered as the means of 'breaking negative social cycles. This indicates a will of compliance with the commission's regulations.

Municipalities – Local Councils

Local councils subsidize housing organizations to develop new social housing settlements for new divisions or estates. Additionally, they are in charge of each division's or organization's operations within the locally-defined legal frameworks (MHURA, 2014b, p. 10).

The National Building Fund (Landsbyggefonden or LBF)

The LBF, established in 1967, not only denotes a financial fund in the social housing system, but it also is the most effective funding institution in the sector. It financially supports the sector and provides high-quality guidance for the subsidiary organizations. The fund itself accumulates financial resources in the form of compulsory contributions from legally defined estates and payments after repaid mortgage loans (MHURA, 2014b).

Transformation of Deprived Settlements

The Danish government's strategic document attributes the ghettoization problem to "development of areas, which are physically, culturally, socially and economically segregated from the other parts of the society" (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandrere og Integration / Ministry of Immigrants and Integration [MFII], 2004, p. 7). According to the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs (MSAI, 2011), the problematic conditions are being solved with various instruments. In this respect, the cooperation of

local governments and housing associations can help tackle the problems, while the rules to govern socially deprived areas include specific regulations for tenancy, financial support, improvement of building stock and the surrounding areas, as part of an integrated urban regeneration strategy (MFII, 2004; Programbestyrelsen [PB], 2005).

In Denmark, a series of renovations took place from the 1980s until the early 2000s, amounting in no concrete results. According to Bech-Danielsen et al. (2011), the reason behind this failure was that no effective analysis was made to understand the discourse of architectural and planning-based grounds for those problems. For Holek and Bjorn, physical intervention supports regeneration of housing neighbourhoods, and provides them with a new life. Nonetheless, they underline that neither physical intervention nor sole social effort would suffice in the absence of the other (Bjørn, 2008, p. 4).

During the recent decade, Danish state authorities have taken the transformation of the social housing districts more seriously than ever because of their direct relation with the social segregation problem. Therefore, local governments and housing associations have been encouraged to act for regeneration programmes, covering both the physical amendment of the settlements through renovation and social support to activate integration and eliminate segregation. Consequently, intensive regeneration projects have recently managed to overcome these two aspects of the current problems, and the pioneer projects have been internationally recognized. They include re-arrangement of apartment units due to changing social patterns; new facilities for new institutions for the young, children and the elderly; innovative solutions for environmentally sustainable settlements; new designs for public spaces; and integrated architectural and urban precautions for more secure estates (Bech-Danielsen et al., 2011; Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2017). Such comprehensive works aim to elongate the lives of the settlements and provide physical, social, cultural, and economic sustainability.

The overall course of Danish housing history in the last century is intertwined with socio-political catastrophes and economic crisis, such as epidemics, world wars, oil crises and other modern economic congestions of the capitalist economy. Considering that the initial steps towards social democracy in Denmark were taken in the nineteenth century, the thorough embracement of social welfare ideals, particularly after the world wars, could be regarded as a post-traumatic reflex of a small-sized nation. However, the essence of the ideals remains intact, although subsequent global economic pressures necessitated a stronger engagement in the global economy and called for capital growth later in the century. Through such a period of instability, the social housing sector maintained its crucial role, partly for being an affordable choice in

the market for many residents, partly its temporality providing a secure option until one finds a better dwelling, partly for being a controllable social instrument for governments to accommodate the labour force and partly for being a tool of modification of social distribution across urban space to fight against segregation. Under these circumstances, the social housing market has always found a reason to exist within the Danish borders. Together with this, the sector has created a strong know-how, an almost natural attachment to Danish daily life with collaborative routines, a strong base of tenants' democracy and recently, a better way to socially, economically and physically regenerate itself, thanks to the experience of decades-long striving for rehabilitation.

The following section dissects the mutuality between the national search for architectural excellence and the benefits of social housing practice taken out of it. The inquiry is based on the country's architectural policies, introducing how the policy documents approach the issues of spatial quality, public works and architectural heritage to contribute to recent social housing practices.

Danish Architectural Policies: Quality, Heritage and Social Housing

Denmark has been developing its architectural policies since 1994. The policies both provide frameworks to enhance the physical condition of the built environment and seek architectural aesthetics, as well as setting methodological guidelines to utilize architecture to support the economy of the country. Housing is among the major issues taken seriously and is referred to at great length within architectural policies, by accounting for the largest element of the built environment. According to the policies, the quality of architecture is regarded as a contributory factor securing the investments, by creating physically, socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable living and working environments.

In Denmark, the first two architectural policies were published in 1994 and 1996; the former primarily focused on architectural quality and was proposed by Ministries of Culture, Environment and Finance. Within the policy, architectural competitions were promoted for public projects; the latter with the name *Arkitektur 1996*. Upgrading the proposal of the previous one, the policy recommended competition both for public and private sectors' provisions, specifically asking for the participation of younger architects (Kazemian & Rönn, 2009). After these two, more comprehensive policies were published in the last decade. Below, the two recent policies are briefly presented. Their features and recommendations for better housing environments in line with the welfare state's primary guidelines are highlighted as well.

Architecture Policy in 2007: "A Nation of Architecture"

This policy is the first comprehensive architectural policy in Denmark prepared with the co-operation of several ministries in collaboration with agencies and organizations (MC, 2007). According to the government's announcement, the reason for setting an architectural policy at a large scale depends on a perception that regards architecture as a setting for life and growth in Denmark and a tool for the country's welfare. Thus, the policy is claimed to be a product of a search for quality in architecture, which is believed to be the culture's primary mode of communication. Moreover, it sets guidelines related to consciousness for architectural quality, not only for the central governmental institutions, but also for local and regional authorities.

Corresponding to the search for quality of life, growth and prosperity, the policy outlines its targets as follows:

1. *Greater architectural quality in public construction and development*
2. *Promoting private demand for architectural quality*
3. *Architectural quality and efficient construction must go hand in hand*
4. *Innovative architecture must create healthy, accessible and sustainable buildings*
5. *Greater architectural quality in subsidised housing*
6. *High priority on architectural quality in planning*
7. *The architectural heritage must be maintained and developed*
8. *Better conditions for exports of Danish architecture*
9. *Danish architecture must have a strong growth layer*
10. *Danish architectural studies must be among the best in the world*

MC, 2007, p. 11

Among the goals set for the architectural policy in Denmark, those focusing on architectural quality in public works (01), subsidized housing (05) and architectural heritage (07) directly match the focus of the current study. Below, the intentions of the goals set for these will be highlighted for a thorough understanding of the related context.

Quality of Architecture in Public Works

According to the policy, it is logical to invest in high-quality architecture as the most economical option when its long-term market value is considered. Such an approach also paves the way for the satisfaction of inhabitants and contracting authorities. Besides, prioritization of high-quality architecture in public works sets an example for private provisions. Thus, it is considered as a way of promoting architectural quality through the architecture itself (MC, 2007).

Following the path of its predecessors, the policy presents architectural competitions for public works as a precondition for growth and development. The policy states its preference of invited competitions to pre-set the limits for resources - time, labour and money for instance - to be consumed both by organizers and competitors (Kazemian & Rönn, 2009, p. 3; MC, 2007, p. 45).

Quality of Architecture in Subsidized Housing

The policy reserves a separate section for subsidized housing. The text emphasizes that "[t]he housing and urban policy is designed to support social coherence, welfare and growth in society and ensure well-functioning cities and urban areas so that they are attractive to live and work in" (MC, 2007, p. 28). Moreover, it encourages innovative implementations for the renewal of residential areas, emphasizing their significance for quality, efficiency and productivity. Presenting a set of financial assets to be allocated for the innovative schemes within social housing, the policy argues that innovative thinking and experience-gathering should be maintained to promote the power of architecture at a higher level.

Maintenance and Development of Architectural heritage

The policy expresses a strong will to maintain and develop "architectural heritage", the preservation of which is crucial for the overall quality of the built environment. Calling for strengthening expertise within the subject area through education, research, and strong archival studies, it underlines the avoidance of unsuccessful conversions/renovations damaging the originality of the inherited values. The policy also stresses the preservation of original architectural expression for its "value as a witness to cultural and architectural history" (MC, 2007, p. 36), and it assigns the duty of creating remarkable townscapes to public authorities, developers and owners. Moreover, local councils have the right to specify and demand certain architectural qualities to provide conditional support for urban renewal projects. They may also provide extended support for "buildings that are worthy of preservation" and for "protected buildings in order to preserve architectural heritage and the original expressions of the properties" (MC, 2007, p. 29).

Highlights from Architectural Policy 2014

In 2014, the Danish Ministry of Culture published an updated architectural policy entitled *Putting People First* (MC, 2014). It continues from the point where the previous one left off, but puts more emphasis on liveability by focusing on the people and the society. The foreword sets a benchmark by stating that "architecture is for people". It defines architecture both as an art-form which artistically interprets the meaning of being a human being, and as a solution for fundamental needs of humanity. Thus, the major goal of the policy is presented as "to give all, especially children and young people, access to experiencing the architecture's creative world, and to gain insight into how architecture affects us as human beings" (MC, 2014, p. 6).

Following such a motto, the policy addresses four conceptual grounds to describe its concerns. The first objective is the introduction of architecture to people of different age groups, from childhood to adulthood, to attract them towards the field, and to encourage them to democratically participate in public projects. Secondly, the policy highlights the relations between architecture and democracy by presenting the means for integrating architectural priorities in municipal plans and encouraging citizen participation in local decisions. The third, architecture's critical relation with sustainability, is introduced in terms of its environmental, social and cultural aspects. The policy presents this critical relation from a liveability perspective. Finally, the contribution of the country's architectural industry to the Danish and international economies is emphasized by focusing on quality, innovation and international potential.

The two policy documents published in the 1990s primarily aimed to encourage high-quality architecture at the national scale, suggested a competitive environment as a method for this and called for the participation of younger Danish architects as an intermediary means to developing architectural know-how at the national level. To that, later policies in the 2000s added that this advanced know-how could be an item for international export at a time when the young architects of the 90s started to be globally recognized[10]. Consequently, for the last two decades, a sharp rise of high-quality works has followed across the urban space of major cities, including several affordable social housing structures designed or renovated by well-known Danish architectural companies, such as BIG, COBE, C.F. Møller, 3XN, SHL, Henning Larsen and others.

10 Until the 2000s, there were only a few architects designing major buildings abroad, such as Jorn Utzon and Henning Larsen, who became forerunners for the later generations.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the start of initial comprehensive social housing regeneration schemes matches the period of architectural policy engagements in the early 2000s. The competitive environment set the stage for major regeneration schemes initiated by several municipalities and supervised by outstanding architectural offices, thus supplying many problematic social housing estates with high-quality solutions, namely *Gyldenrisparken*, *Albertslund Nord, Mjølnerparken, Finlandsparken, Vejleåparken*, and *Ådalen* (Bech-Danielsen, et al., 2011; Bican, 2016; Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2017). Consequently, a reciprocal relation with the declared architectural policies and the raising of quality in the new and old social housing estates in Denmark has become apparent. Although this mutuality does not require an absolute conditionality, it can be argued that the national awareness for architectural quality and the rise of high-quality social housing provision are not totally coincidental contemporaries.

European legislation to secure quality of public provision

Being a member of the EU, Denmark follows the legal frameworks and regulatory recommendations of the Union, which has a certain set of rules for the public services of the member states. Social housing in Denmark, strictly controlled, regulated and supervised by public authorities, is also subject to its regulations, directly or indirectly. The primary document regulating public works and services is the *Directive 2014/24/EC of The European Parliament and of the Council of EU* (2014), which has repealed the previous, Directive 2004/18/EC (2004). The directive is critical in setting rules for procurement of public works, and there are specifically-designed legal principles and procedures to secure the quality of the works.[11] For instance, the directive sets specific rules for the process of architectural competitions. These rules cover regulations on competition notices, jury composition and decisions and shortlisting of competitors (in limited competitions) (Articles 73-74-80/3).

Since 2004, public contracts above a certain value are required to be held through EU-wide competitive tendering with transparency and equal treatment of all tenderers, to ensure that a contract is awarded to the tender offering the best value for money. Such a method is advantageous for procurement of architectural services, which needs the ensuring of quality aspects (2004). During the last decade, many local initiatives in Denmark have adopted architectural competitions supported by negotiated procedures as being consistent with the recent directives (Bican, 2016). Such a procedure is also recommended by the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) as the most suitable means to ensure the most qualified and economically advantageous contract for the public authorities (ACE, 2004; ACE, 2014). The recent best practices of the social housing sector have implemented high standards for procurement processes, which included double-phased competitions bearing a negotiated procedure, specified experience and reference requirements for pre-elimination of architect candidates, and evaluation and awarding criteria designed to support "the economically most advantageous tender" (EMAT) (ACE, 2004, p. 7).

Nonetheless, when spatial quality is considered from a social housing perspective, the EU legislation cannot solely be the fundamental reason to secure the future of social housing in Denmark. However, its simultaneous appearance with the ambitious Danish architectural policies may have served as additional support for the rising quality of social housing provision in recent years.

11 In the Directive 2004/18/EC, there was a specific article covering 'design and construction works of a subsidized housing scheme' because of its bearing large scale and complex solutions. Nonetheless, the new directive, 2014/24/EC, does not cover specified rules for the scheme. It should be noted that the directive 2004/18/EC had required all contracting authorities to set architectural competitions for projects equal to or exceeding EUR 249.000. However, there is no specified threshold for that in the latest directive of 2014.

Discussion & Conclusion

The implementation of social housing in Denmark is dependent on both co-related policies, which are actively modified according to changing social, economic and physical conditions, and on the systems that are relatively fixed, based on long-term ideals and goals of the society. This study has attempted to reveal the implicit components of these systems and policies, specifically addressing the means of spatial quality and the decision-making mechanisms for sustainable and liveable social housing environments in Denmark. These systems and policies provide a background to define the methods for varying implementation mechanisms, among which are participation, conservation, planning and architectural design.

As can be seen in Figure 2, there is not a strict top-down hierarchical order where the upper system governs all others below; on the contrary, the systems, policies and regulations reciprocally affect, refer to, and provide feedback to each other. It should be noted that the scheme purposefully highlights the regulations that contain specific content on spatial quality and sustainability. For instance, traces of the social welfare approach can also be seen in spatial planning systems, architectural policies, evolution of the housing sector and, finally, in the principles and mechanisms guiding the social housing sector. Likewise, the spatial planning system attributes its ambition for setting rules for 'how to live now and in the future' to the people/society-centred perspective of social welfare. The system assigns central power to local and regional authorities to be guided by the principles of local community and the local scope of action of the welfare state. Consequently, the architectural and housing policies of the country base their search for equality, quality and sustainability upon the welfare and planning systems, while setting the frameworks for execution in the social housing sector. The specified regulations of the EU on public procurement processes have a direct effect on the quality of final products of spatial implementations. Therefore, quality and sustainable solutions in social housing in Denmark demonstrably have roots in the systems and policies the state and the governmental authorities have set.

Denmark, a relatively small country in size and population within Europe, has strictly embraced the paradigm of social welfare since the post-war years; it devotes its limited resources for a sustainable future, and it supports and develops its institutions of welfare for the thorough advancement of the society to carry its potential as far as possible. In doing so, the social housing sector has been regarded as one of the institutions serving all members of the society and, as such, much effort has been made not to allow it to be downgraded under any conditions. Nevertheless, there is still an on-going struggle against segregation due to its relative affordability and resulting concentration of low-income, ethnic, and other marginalized groups in the society. The analysis here

reveals that enhancement of the spatial quality in recent years has been embraced as the primary means to secure the future of social housing. This is supported by a strong political will, systematic arrangements/regulations for the sector, engagement of actors at multiple scales of spatial production, financial resources, and proactive measures to respond to the evolving and diverse demands of the residents over time.

Moreover, as the country regards architecture as a long-term and highly profitable investment, the overall lift of the quality of social housing is regarded as a mutually beneficial goal for several stakeholders, including the local and national governments, housing associations, construction sector and residents. The reasons vary; over the years, local actors and the sector's stakeholders discovered the following practical advantages beyond affordability: (1) a social housing settlement can be more durable once it is built for liveability to secure future demand; (2) enhancing spatial quality can be a dependable means to regenerate an estate through holistic and participatory approaches; (3) new social housing can be instrumentalized to arrange social mixing by innovative planning and architecture; and (4) architectural quality has the potential to turn a structure into a self-promoting investment.

All in all, the history of social-economic survival and progress in Denmark work hand-in-hand with that of social housing, which has been a means of sharing and cohabitation under the severe and unexpected circumstances faced by the national economy and related social unrest. Moreover, in line with the advance of the Danish economy, the success of regenerative trials in recent years and the growth of qualified architectural know-how, the sector has found the means to further enhance sustainability and spatial quality.

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