

Transport ideology, modern urban planning and conservation movement in Scandinavian capital cities in 20th century

Laura Kolbe

Department of History, University of Helsinki, Finland

Although every capital is unique, they have many historical features in common. Comparative study can display both their uniqueness and the common elements they all share. My intention here is to introduce some aspects in the 20th century traffic planning and urban reaction towards it. 20th century was "the golden age" of metropolitan development in all Nordic countries and their capitals, those being Denmark and Copenhagen, Sweden and Stockholm, Finland and Helsinki, Norway and Oslo, Iceland and Reykjavik. Main concern is in the post-war period. Most capitals counted upon substantial urban expansion and big investments were made in communication systems like better undergrounds, harbours, motorways etc.

The issue is addressed through a two-part examination. Firstly, I will examine the pattern of "Nordic capitals" and present the unique network in between them. In the second part of the paper I attempt to examine municipal capital traffic planning and compare how, why and when the traffic ideology was developed in Scandinavia and what kind of reactions it created especially during the 1960s.

A central issue here, when we talk about capitals, is the relationship between the state, the municipality and public opinion. It is obvious that at every level of the urban history in Scandinavian these players have a relationship when it comes to capital planning, "urban question" and the image of number one city of the nation. The status of planning is high in Scandinavia. Public control exercised by a professional bureaucracy is well established in the North and has been at least since the 17th century. During the 19th century an effective system of municipal administration was created. Over the last fifty years political life in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland have been dominated by social democratic parties. It includes a great interest to the social control of land use and planning. The so-called "municipal planning monopoly" means, that municipalities must approve legally binding physical plans before they are ratified.

I Changing role of the city - horizontal relationships between Scandinavian capitals

International exchange has long played a big part in the history of urban planning. A great deal has been written about the “international planning milieu” especially by the turn of the 20th century, before the First World War, embodied in congresses, study trips, associations, exhibitions and competitions (urban planning and architecture). We know that many innovative elements in modern urban planning became a part of the international planning thought, like renewal model of Paris under Baron Haussman, English garden city idea, the influence of Camillo Sitte and city beautiful movement. We know some things about the big events of this milieu, but we still know very little about the networks of information between various cities, municipal councillors and politicians, planners and practitioners. The richness of different organized and free urban networks in Europe and also on the transatlantic and colonial level is still without further and deeper research.

The civil servants, policy-makers and architects in the Scandinavian capitals have closely co-operated with each other since the early 1900's. Nordic conferences and congresses, meetings, close networks, study journeys, publications and personal contacts were (and still are) important and regular between urban civil servants, politicians and other civic organizations in order to answer the “urban question”. National capitals of Scandinavian countries formed a unique and organized European network of information in 1923 in Stockholm. Fourteen years later 1937 a similar meeting was held in Copenhagen. During this period Nordic collaboration had made some progress, partly because of the growing threats from outside. The Second World War promoted a new sense of community among the Nordic countries, thus laying the foundations for the co-operative conference between the capitals. Next meetings were immediately after the war, in Stockholm 1946 and in Helsinki 1948. Since 40s, these conferences of Nordic capitals (NCC) have been held in every third year.

NCC has become a dynamic institution, and an essential part of late 20th century Nordic co-operation and feeling of unity. They are points of contacts where common urban issues are discussed and compared and where the diffusion of innovations is emphasized. The themes discussed have often had an administrative, technical, social, political or economic character, having a great influence on municipal urban planning and building in each capital. Until 1990s, every conference is well documented and they form a valuable source for how the “urban question” was answered during different decades. The NCC forms an interesting bridge between the local and international; it is an antidote to national urban histories, avant-garde movements or “great men” within planning history. To study the history of NCC cares more for ordinary urban knowledge, local powers and municipal practices.

II Railways, trams and a dream of a movable urban future

In the planning history of every city, there is a moment of transition into “the modern”. In the Nordic capital cities, that moment is closely linked to planning of modern rail traffic system and underground/metro. The development before 1914 in all Scandinavian capital cities has many common features. An administrative tradition of civil servant rule, an economic structure still oriented towards agriculture, a lack of capital, and a slow industrial and logistic take-off caused the urbanization process to begin late. This set-up situation changed when in the 1860s and 1870s cities started to grow and urban functions and structures became more specified. The pressures caused by traffic, new forms of production, social groups, trade, the educational

system and new urban life styles influenced planning in the late 19th century. Urban functions developed faster than urban or traffic planning.

All Nordic capital cities developed gradually to the cultural and political centers of their countries, the real capitals. The end of 19th century reforms of the municipal administration marked a change in urban planning. The city's administrative court became the central administrative body. The new city council consisting of liberal, enlightened and influential men of the community approved the urban plans and the construction rule. The shift from the central to the local level expressed itself in people's attitudes. The idea that a town should be planned before it grew - not after it - gained ground. Influence from the European metropolises was clear. In line with European models, those coming especially from Germany, the planning of the capital city underlined technological modernity, aesthetic dimensions, urban intimacy, historical and organic continuity instead of regularity and ready-made patterns of earlier periods.

The influence of municipal authorities over urban planning and the formation of a national profession of urban planning architects implied a first phase in the modern era. The trend was backed up by capital's development towards major cities, by population growth and by a varied social fabric. In the period between 1870-1914s all Nordic capital cities joined the international metropolis category. All cities started expanding outside their existing borders, when the first major industrial districts and ports came about. Another modernist turn towards local urban planning was seen in the years 1898 to 1918. The introduction of architect education meant very much for the birth of modern urban planning. The cities new authority for municipal planning, especially the Urban Planning Committees and city planning architects, got the assignment of reforming and making new urban plans, improving public transport between the central and the peripheral districts and taking measures for drawing up a master plan. The models were Sweden's new and progressive law on urban planning (1907). Urban planning shifted over from engineers to architects.

The building of railway was a first step in bringing modern transport technology into the city. The construction of railway was crucial. Railways made the modernization of urban ports possible. It was crucial, while all Scandinavian capital cities are located at the sea. The first railway stations were built in Copenhagen (1847), in Stockholm (1860), in Helsinki (1865) and Oslo (1864). The advantages of rail system were clear, and the need for planning of more effective rail network became evident. The local engineer Holger Hammerich made in Copenhagen the first plan for the city's complete rail system (1885). In this plan a part of the rail system was already underground. Stockholm's first ideas on planning underground were published in 1910. It pronounced the need for a special transport system, a suburban track. It was more than railway and tram. An idea - well known for Nordic civil servants, engineers and architects from London, Paris, Liverpool, Glasgow and Philadelphia - was central: to see the main demographical trends in urban development and plan the city for future. The variety of railway transport connecting center and suburbs at the regular time and speed, punctually and efficiently, were seen as ideals.

The second phase of traffic and urban planning had close connection with the land purchase policy and with the work of master plans for capital cities. The new suburban areas were planned either by municipal authorities or private landowners. These land companies took the initiative to plan modern suburban spaces or garden cities suited to a European capital city. A new feature in this kind of urban planning was the fact that in the land companies capital

was combined with technical skills and an architectural urban vision. An essential part of the planning was possible by connecting the areas to the city center with railway or tram.

The trust on traffic and urban planning was growing around 1900. Suburban tracks were built and the electrification of tram system started in every Nordic capital city. New tramlines were opened in Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and Helsinki connecting suburban areas to the city center. In all capital cities the planning of suburbs followed railway lines clearly indicating how modern urban living and traffic solutions were bound together. At the beginning the tram companies were private owned. In years 1905-1918 every capital city started to make preliminary master plans. An essential part was to find a solution to traffic problems. Two plans (Copenhagen, Helsinki) are very interesting from this point of view. In 1908 Copenhagen had an international competition for a master plan. The German city surveyor Carl Strintz won first price. The traffic arrangements were very modern with a radial railway connection around the old city center and transport lines connecting the old urban area with the new ones.

When Helsinki's first city planning architect Bertel Jung had entered his office as a city planning architect 1908 he found that a master plan should be drawn up for Helsinki in the spirit of Vienna's metropolitan plans by Otto Wagner and the 1910 urban planning show in Berlin. The first comprehensive master plan for Helsinki that Jung made was based on population forecasts, as was then the practice in central Europe. Jung approved a high construction efficiency and population density for the historical parts of Helsinki, which in their turn prompted transport arrangements resembling Stockholm's local railways. The city expanded radially to the north-east and north-west. Areas planned for various purposes formed sectors widening from the center, with green areas in between. Later architect Eliel Saarinen presented in his Munkkiniemi-Haaga plan (1915) and Pro Helsingfors plan (1918) a master plan based on exact traffic analyses and diagrams. Housing, manufacturing and part of the harbor functions spread outside the city boundaries along richly ramified suburban railways.

2. Underground planning and metropolisation of the capital city

The First World War shattered the old world, destroyed cities and gave birth to new national states. No changes happened in Scandinavia except Helsinki remained the natural capital when Finland separated from Russia and became an independent republic in December 1917 in the shadow of the world war and the Russian revolution. Among the large problems in every capital city to be solved in the 1920s and 1930s were the railway matter, the housing problem and the planning of a new city center. A part of the urban development was to annex land to a city. This process continued in Helsinki and Oslo, as well as in Copenhagen and Stockholm.

From 1920 the municipality started to buy the private owned traffic, rail and companies. In 1920 the city of Stockholm brought the private owned *AB Stockholms SpÅrv%gar* (SS). The city of Oslo became finally owner of all private tram and rail lines in 1934. In 1945 the city of Helsinki was the main owner of *SpÅrv%gs- och Omnibus AB*. These shifts made it possible to start with the centralized urban traffic planning. The first real underground plans were made in 1920s and 1930s but without any result. The economic depression and the war delayed the realization of the planned traffic arrangements.

For post-war Europeans, the need for physical reconstruction and political renewal was obvious. New ideas within architecture and town planning were important in producing the

new forms of urban life - in many times they were needed in cities and towns destroyed by the war. Bombs did not destroy the Scandinavian capital cities but a heavy modernization started. The idea of post-war planning legislation was to improve the efficiency of local development planning, to extend its range beyond existing densely built areas and to create instruments for structure and general planning at the municipal and regional level.

In all Scandinavian capital cities "dynamic community development" and traffic planning were combined. The organization of metro and other transport, the provision of infrastructure, planning the suburbs and redesigning the city centers headed the list of priorities. Nordic policies were to combine democratic ideals, traffic efficiency and modern metropolitan image. With the creation of the city's public transport department, the arrangement of suburban traffic and transport became a hot political topic. In all cities metro planning became highly politicized by the strong social-democratic parties with great interest to the social control of land use. The traffic planning showed also an important social message: the need to be a democratic metropolis and efficient capital city.

Traffic problems were already discussed in the first post-war conference of the Nordic capital cities in 1946 in Stockholm. The only solution to be seen was rational and long time underground planning. In all Scandinavian capital cities the new traffic planning bodies made monumental metro plans in the 1940s and 1950s based on comprehensive analysis of both public and private needs. International metro planning ideal were transported to Scandinavia and public transport became deeply rooted in urban planning. An underground with rapid rail transport opened new dimensions in all cities. Systematic transportation ideology and the great urban renewal of the city center met each other.

A comparative analysis shows how easily the modern "dream metropolis" became a reality in post-war North Europe and how the capital cities closely followed each other's development in realizing this dream. The decentralized model and neighbourhood planning ideas - new residential areas were connected to a number of new local centres around the city centre - needed good traffic communications. New housing areas were to have no more than 10-15 000 inhabitants. These housing areas were grouped round a suburban subway station and adjacent there would be a "centrum" or centre, with generously dimensioned commercial and other services, a school and a sports field. It was proposed to have a relatively dense development of blocks of flats closest to subways.

The decision day of metro planning became one of the turning points in modern urban and local history. In Stockholm the 17th June 1941, in almost middle of the Second World War, the City Council reached one of most important decisions to build the subway system (*tunnelbana*). It was a bold decision since no city of the same size had attempted a similar venture up to that time. Abroad it was considered that a population of one million was the minimum to be able to support a subway system - and the population of Stockholm was only half of that. As Yngve Larsson, the City of Stockholm Vice-Mayor in charge of city planning put it: "The possibility of being able to transport sufficiently many Stockholmers between their homes and their places of work is in fact....the basic precondition for the solution of the housing question."

Oslo and Helsinki had many features in common. Both cities were merged with the neighbouring municipalities (1946, 1948), with new urban and suburban areas for planning and housing. This annexation brought urban planning into a new era, where both capital, regional, metropolitan and suburban planning could be seen a whole. Municipalities in both capitals

prepared during 1950s a general traffic plan, based on zoning, suburbs and regional centres. In the 1950s and 1960s, around 200,000 new city-dwellers were housed primarily in suburbs, the planning and construction of which changed the old rural landscapes around the city thoroughly. In Oslo the building of underground system started in 1954 (*T-banesystemet*) and in Helsinki in 1969 (*metro*). From a European perspective, metropolitan areas of the Scandinavian capital cities received an exceptionally spacious and scattered urban structure. A disintegrated block structure and closeness to nature became prevalent in suburban planning. The idea of "organic decentralization" was applied much in the spirit of early 19th century plans.

An underground with rapid rail transport was planned and realized in all capitals starting from the year 1950. New urban and/or traffic planning bodies were established. Master and traffic plans as well as traffic researches and land-use and traffic surveys of the period reflected the general spirit of the 50s and 60s: a complete clearance of the old blocks and a comprehensive redevelopment, high plot ratio, motorway through central areas, clearance and redevelopment of old urban structure replaced by technically and hygienically defective modern housing. In Copenhagen there were several general plans, the Finger plan (1947) for the development of greater Copenhagen, the preliminary General Plan by the municipality of Copenhagen (1954) and a regional plan approved by politicians (1962, 1973). Stockholm is a prime example in the North, and in Europe as a whole, of the vast transformation of a city centre under the auspices of the municipality with its structure plans *Generalplan 1952*, *City62* and *City67*. Even Reykjavik's Master Plan (1962-1982) was also region-wide traffic survey and traffic forecast declaring "every household should have its own automobile" -spirit with tree high-ways running east-west of the city.

2. Modernism and conservation movement - preservation as priority?

The discussion behind the transportation ideology and the systematic urban renewal was highly political; an issue not yet researched in detail in planning history. The modernistic dream did not value local history. The creation of a modern City-centre meant in all cases at least a partly demolition of the urban structure. A new dimension was present in the planning, with sources of inspiration coming from the USA. Big-city dreams were combined with desire to attract private companies. Given an attractive centre, business activities would be drawn to a city. In all Nordic capital numerous old buildings were destroyed to make way for modern constructions, usually close to the central traffic areas, like railways stations and main thoroughfares. The key word was urban renewal (*sanering*). In the city centre concentrated a considerable building activity with new offices, business premises etc. The most noticeable example comes from Stockholm. With the subway system as a battering ram and support from new expropriation legislation a three hundred year old urban structure, *Klarastaden*, was ground to dust to make way for the creation of a modern city.

Conservation movement was a reaction to the results of this dramatic modernistic transformation. The Scandinavian capitals give an excellent possibility to analyse this complex relation between planning, progress and modernism and conservation, heritage and nostalgia. The municipal policy of clearance and redevelopment, as it was being practised in Nordic capitals, gradually roused ill-will and opposition. In this regional network frame it is interesting to study how partly national, partly international actions to preserve "heritage" influenced planning in Scandinavian capitals. This process included by two aspects: the evolving framework

of legislation and a changing social, economic and cultural concern on architecture and urban landscape.

Modernism and preservation movement nourished each other. Identification of the first phase - the rise of public interest in conservation - is obvious. It occurred already during the post-war period, initially responding to the concerns of a minority elite within the field of intellectuals, urban culturally oriented middle-classes and specialists within the field (history, museums, heritage societies). During the post-war rebuilding era, many of the wooden and stone buildings from the 19th century had been destroyed or converted for other functions in the name of business and efficiency. Attention was focused on threats to specific buildings and monuments. In the 1960s there were many conflicts whether or not to preserve certain valuable buildings - and soon even certain culturally valuable sites. Anxieties about the changes caused by rapid growth and the criticism expressed from 1968 on by the New Left were directed against the ideals of efficiency and the dominance of transport planning, in favour of historical values.

A general hypothesis is that municipalities in all Scandinavian capital cities wake up rather late. During 1950s and 1960s the city administrations had prepared lists over historic buildings. Some committees were established for analysing possibilities to preserve and renovate parts of the historic city centre, especially the "Old City" (Stockholm). First conservations plans were made and building rights were limited. Important is when the public opinion finally changed. In all capital cities there was usually one important turning point, which affected to the local opinion and caused a conservation movement. In Helsinki it was the case *Wooden K%pyl%* (1967-70), in Oslo it was the old urban parts of *Rodelokka, VÅlerenga* and *Kampen* (1969-1970), in Reykjavik (1969) historic areas in the city centre (east side of Laerkgatan), in Stockholm (1970) it was the fight for alms in *Kungstr%dgÅrden* (building a metro station below) and in Copenhagen (1973) fight for the free city of *Christiania* (former military barracks). Active pressure groups consisted of intellectual and student organizations, city museums, artists, cross-political local historic and urban societies, "pedestrians" (against traffic movement), architects and intellectuals in 68-movement and youth movement. Capital city media - newspapers - played a central role.

The question of conservation first appeared in NCC Reykjavik agenda in 1973 under the title "Preservation of buildings with historic and cultural interest". Six years later the same issue was discussed in NCC's conference in Helsinki 1979 and the theme was now "Clearance and renovation of historic quarters". A clear shift occurred from separate buildings to city quarters. The change in attitudes happened at the same time when the political movements were strong, with mixed elements of regional nostalgia, folklore, vernacular and urban heritage combined with the idea of Nordic architecture and milieu values as a source of inspiration. Therefore it was no surprise that NCC discussed the preservation issue in 1973. The capitals reported of their present local situation. Little had been done and some aspects were clear. The linkage between conservation movement and municipal planning was still weak, but politician took now this relationship seriously. The legislation was undeveloped and could not prohibit the demolition of historic buildings and quarters, which were private owned. Holistic concern with heritage issues was still weak but the concern for historic quarters was growing. Financial support from local and national government was minimal. Modernist movement and belief in traffic planning was strong in all countries - "A living city is not a artificial museum" - attitude was strong.

A change was to be seen. Partial city plans in 1970s presented measures to reduce the number of flats that were used as offices in inner parts of capitals. The 1980s saw an ambition to revive the historical parts of the Nordic capital cities and soon also the master plans listed historical milieus worth preserving. By 1999, many thousand buildings had been preserved in local city plans in all Scandinavian capital cities.

During the years 1950-1980 Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo entered a metropolitan stage of development for good. The hierarchical system of local centers and services were joined by new development targets and zones logistically based on the car traffic and public transport network. Planning took was in the 1990s more consideration towards urban historical vales. Old factory and warehouse areas, ports, waterfront and even water areas have been planned to become housing areas, and the revitalization of the historic centers has continued. These changes were mainly carried out in local government's agenda although participation by residents is today expected. The biggest problem in the early 2000s has been that the provision of unplanned ground is running short. The transport issue will be central in planning the 21st century capital city in Scandinavia.

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