



# Urban Planning for Transformation

Lessons from medium sized cities in the Baltic Sea Region

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Socio-Economic  
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Cities of the Baltic Sea  
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### Front cover photo

Waterfront development in Randers. Randers is a typical example of a city purposefully developing its central areas towards the waterfronts. On the southern riverbank of the Gudenå River, a conversion of a former industrial zone into a combined business and city park has begun. This conversion was planned for several years but actually started when the local bank Kronjylland decided to build a new domicile in the area.

## • Turning problems into solutions

Transformation of urban economy and urban functions also means change of urban land use. On urban sites, former industrial, service or commercial functions close down and new ones appear. The job of urban planning is to facilitate this process of land use conversions.

Land use conversion is certainly not without its problems, but it can also help initiate development, especially when the land consists of attractive urban sites close to the centre or along the waterfront. The art of urban planning is to identify the potentials rather than seeing the problems of an obsolete urban site. This is what happened when Nakskov turned its defunct shipyard into an industrial and environmental park, when Nyköping turned its closed down military airport into a commercial airport and integrated a former commercial harbour area into the city centre, when the military base in Norrtälje was converted into a campus and housing area and when Sillamäe transformed a military production site into an industry and business park. The examples of problems kicking off new developments are manifold in the MECIBS cities.

### Porosity

In Randers, the city planners realised that urban transition made urban space *porous*, due

to the empty building sites appearing all over the city. They altered their planning attitude from monitoring *growth* to facilitation of *conversion*. About 1300 building sites suited for housing were identified within the city.

### Change of planning

During periods of urban growth, spatial planning focuses on allocating land and the rational land use zoning of urban functions. During periods of urban transition, urban planning deals with the conversion rather than allocation of land. Its task is the stimulation rather than regulation of urban growth. The task of the urban planner has changed very much, from reacting to growth to action for growth.

### Spatial visions and concepts

Spatial visions are used by urban planners as tools for finding and communicating ideas for the future development of an industrial site, empty military barracks or inner city areas. Not only is the building site subject to new visions, the entire city is made an object for the creation of a new identity. In those cities profoundly affected by transition, the former identity as an industrial city can be transformed into a new identity, e.g. as a metropolitan suburb.

## • Three regions

Spatial concentration of urban functions creates different situations in metropolitan, self-sustaining and peripheral regions.

### The metropolitan »suburb«

In metropolitan regions, the scope of planning is open and optional due to the fact that cities in the hinterland of large regional capitals may play new roles in the metropolitan urban system as sites of production, centres of culture and events, and as places for living. Several options are open to these cities, as is the question of their role and identity. They develop

new housing concepts to try to retain families in the community and to attract new households from the nearby regional or national capital. They also try to improve their attractiveness by constructing new event centres and waterfront developments.

### Regional centres

Cities in medium sized self-sustained regions tend to focus upon the transition of the economic base of the city and region. Commonly, such regions tend to meet the challenges of globalisation by functional and economic specialisation and to emphasise their role in the global economy. Thus, they tend to clarify their identity and they focus their planning on the modernisation of industrial areas and on planning sites for new business parks and knowledge centres.

### Peripheral cities

Peripheral cities are usually smaller and, hence, most vulnerable to economic transformation. Usually, they try to restore the impacts of change and to renew their reputation as cities suitable for industrial production or to enter the economy of tourism. Within this scope, urban planning in the peripheral MECIBS cities has focused upon restoration and improvement of industrial sites and their infrastructure rather than changing industrial sites into new land-use functions.

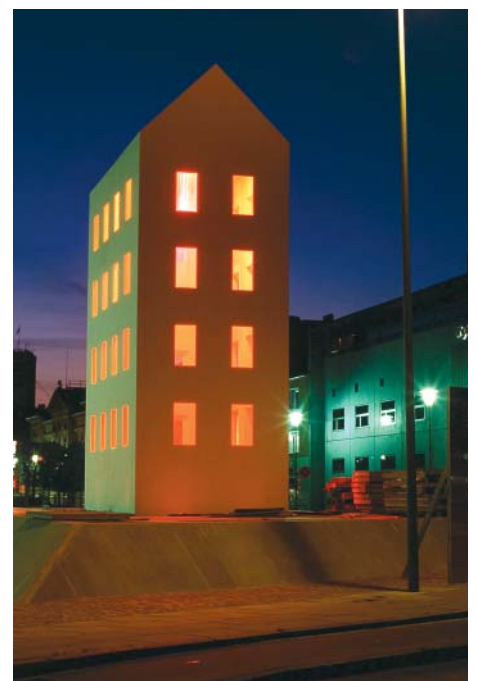
## • Urban identity projects

During periods of fundamental change, several of the MECIBS cities have taken initiatives to enhance or redefine their urban identity and to improve their image.

### Land-use conversions in Randers – 31 examples since the early 1980s

About 50 % of the conversions are situated in or close to the city centre, and about 50 % were due to the closure of industrial production. Only two conversions gave rise to business services, whereas 15 gave rise to centres and services and 14 to housing. The conversions indicate that Randers is transforming into a new role, i.e. from an industrial city into a commercial and residential city – keeping in mind, however, that the 31 examples represent only 3 % of the total urban zones of Randers.

New land use	Area in hectares	Number of projects
City centre / service	34	15
Residential	51	14
Business service	5	2
Total conversion (planned and realised)	90	31
Conversion from former industrial land use	47	14



Position of the city	Scope	Role and identity	Urban planning
Metropolitan region	Optional	Changing	Housing concepts Event centres »Waterfronts«
Independent regional	Focused	Clarifying	Business parks Urban centres
Peripheral region	Restricted	Renewing	Industrial parks Tourism projects

*Three perspectives of urban planning.*

Several of the efforts related to the creation of an urban identity take their point of departure in the urban environment of the inner city and the built cultural heritage of the city. City centres are places where these attempts are naturally focused, and where the local identity is condensed.

Kuldiga, endowed with a well-preserved historical centre, is now a candidate on the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. Other MECIBS cities endowed with historical heritage are Sillamäe (Stalinistic-style architecture), Pskov (important historical monuments) and Kronstadt (the old military marine port). Jüterbog has for some years made efforts to restore its medieval city center.

### • Inner city development

Inner city development has become a core issue of urban planning in restructuring cities. In the city centres, the local identity and image are condensed, they are the »business cards« of the cities, reflecting the vitality and the social atmosphere of the city. Further, urban restructuring is first and foremost making attractive sites in the inner cities available. Thus, it has become a principle in most MECIBS-cities to

start urban planning from the inside, i.e. from the city centre and subsequently move outwards.

In Lappeenranta, the centrally-located old bus station, situated in an area heavily burdened by car traffic, will be transformed into a new multi-use Centre Gallery integrating housing, office space and commercial space together with a new multi-use concert hall. The total area of building rights is 22 000 square meters of floor space. Bordering the central Church Park and the administrative centre, the new buildings will establish a more coherent, pleasant pedestrian environment towards the other central areas and will also improve the cityscape at the junction of two main entrance roads.

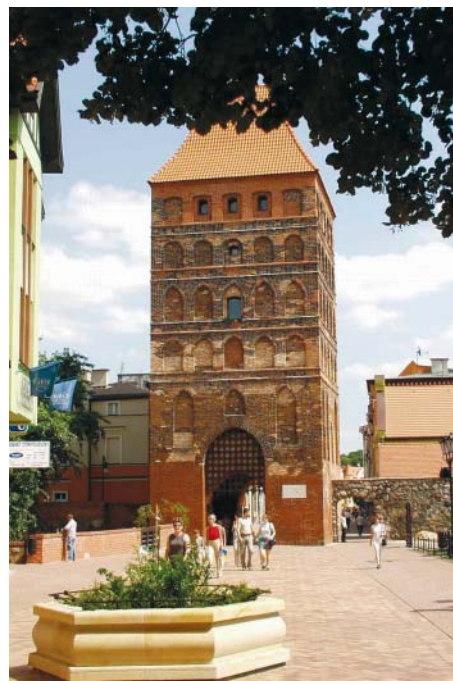
Several MECIBS-cities are located along rivers, lakes or sea shores. In many cities, it has become a planning principle to »draw the city to the waterfronts«, many of which have been used for industrial production, port functions and military functions, hence being more or less closed areas. The cities located in the metropolitan regions are experiencing the highest pressure on new attractive urban areas.

### • Housing

Cities located in the metropolitan regions try to compensate for the decreasing importance as centres of local industrial labour markets by enhancing their role in regional housing markets. This is done by launching new, attractive and often lifestyle-tailored housing concepts for a housing market which is no longer just local (e.g. Nyköping, Norrtälje, Randers and Kronstadt). Other cities are trying to respond to changing housing demands and developing new housing concepts (e.g. Salo, Kokkola, Lappeenranta, Jüterbog). These tendencies have been followed by new tasks and ideas in local housing and city planning.

For cities outside the metropolitan regions, it is difficult to use housing as a competitive *advantage*. Rather, it is used as a means of

Due to the presence of Nokia Mobile Phone Ltd., Salo has a pronounced surplus of jobs and hence a background for attracting commuters to settle down in the city. Thus, Salo has planned a new Viitannummi garden suburb containing 2000-3000 inhabitants, some 3 km south of the city. Besides the Viitannummi housing project, Salo is actively developing high quality local public services in order to hold on to the existing inhabitants and to attract new settlers. A premium example is the city's multi-faceted sports park. Situated only 500 meters from the central market square, it offers the multi-use Salohalli arena for different types of indoor sports with seats for 3000 spectators, swimming hall, indoor ice rink, tennis hall, squash hall, and even riding stables and a golf course.



*Randers City Gates. Red Fall by Ingvar Cronehammer. In the early 1990s, Randers initiated a combined art and urban planning project for the city centre. 13 sculptures symbolise the city gates of the former 13 radial roads connecting Randers and the hinterland. (Left)*

*Kokkola. The historical wooden town constitutes an excellent example of Finnish building traditions in the coastal towns. For many years, however, this tradition was not very well-known in Finland, and hardly appreciated by the local inhabitants. As an attempt to raise the valuation of the area, city planners constructed new street lighting for the whole area using costly crafted, traditionally formed lamps and pillars. (Middle)*

*Chojnice. For some years, Chojnice has emphasized inner city development and started a comprehensive modernization and restoration of the city centre. (Right)*



Regional housing in Randers. The Skovsyrevej housing area. (Left)

Brandholmen, Nyköping. New housing concepts are breaking with the former »solution« of three-storey apartment blocks. These dwellings are built to attract families from Stockholm and the environs. They appeal to lifestyle preferences and the unique qualities of the archipelago. (Right)

keeping the existing key groups satisfied with their living in the city, and to certify that if job opportunities are there, lack of quality housing and high quality local services will not create obstacles for potential in-migration.

### • Event-centres

The »new economy« involves the globalisation of production. In addition, entertainment and culture are a strong new economic element. Most of the MECIBS cities try to take part in this development. A special feature of the event economy is the unique event, i.e. events that are new and may help to provide a »brand« for the city. New urban facilities are planned for these events. Thus, Nyköping has built a *Nyköping Rosvalla Event Centre*, a multipurpose centre for sports and large concerts. Jüterbog has turned a former sports stadium into a unique roller skating centre, and a few years ago, Randers built a tropical zoo. The most costly event centres are concentrated within the metropolitan areas. In peripheral regions, as well, event facilities are being planned for. Thus, Nakskov set up facilities for open air concerts when building a new waste handling centre, and in the former Saksköpings sugar factory nearby, facilities have been constructed for highly ambitious art exhibitions in combination with a business park.

### • New knowledge functions

Urban planning is actively involved in planning for new knowledge functions for business and citizens. In cities like Herning, Lappeenranta and Kokkola, all situated in independent regions, new knowledge centres are being set up in order to meet the needs for the development of local business clusters. In Nyköping and Norrtälje, situated in the metropolitan regions, efforts are focused upon the establishment of education centres or campuses in order to attract young citizens.

In Herning, the outsourcing of the textile

industry was balanced by upgrading the textile industry in the value chains of production. Herning established a new business and knowledge park, Birk Centerpark, built to house several knowledge centres, schools and business companies.

The closing of the Swedish Air Defence 3<sup>rd</sup> garrison in 2001 left Norrtälje with a very large empty zone close to the city centre. Due to recent national investment in the reconstruction of the military barracks, the buildings were in good condition. The municipality of Norrtälje took over and decided to convert the military barracks into a campus for education and business. The open part of the area, covered with trees and endowed with a coast line, is suitable for conversion into an attractive housing area.

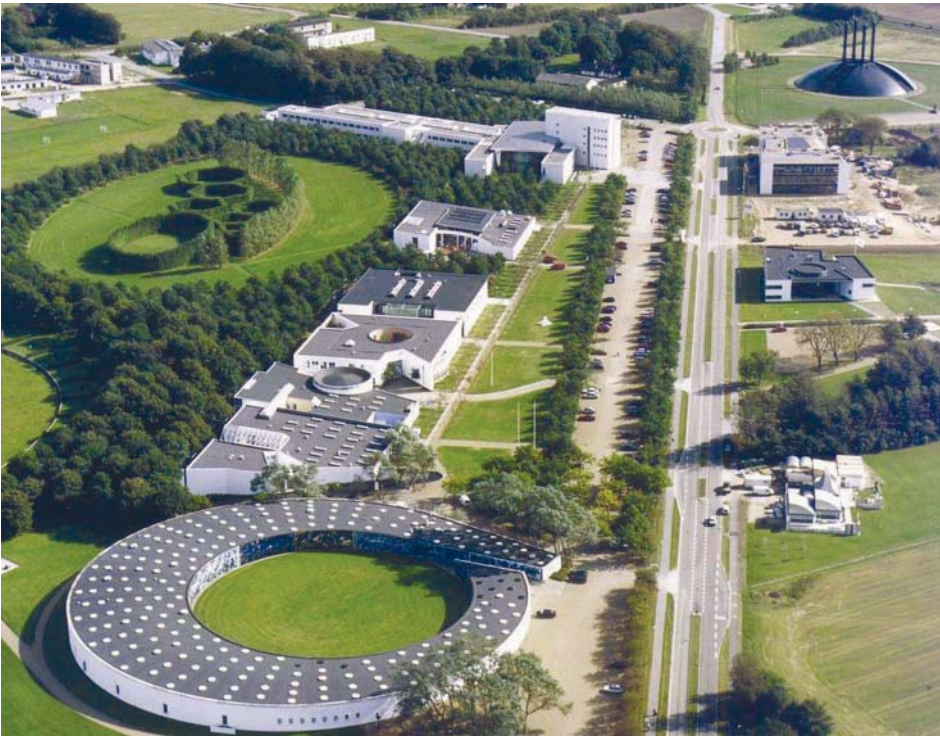
### • Industrial parks

The planning of new industrial parks has not been a major priority in the MECIBS cities. In Herning, the new Herning-Ikast Industrial Park was planned for industrial expansion, but due to the outsourcing and changes in the character of the local industry, only a few new companies have located in the area. Rather than planning for industrial expansion, the cities depending on local industry will focus

on the need to modernise the industrial areas. This was the case in Nakskov and in Kokkola. In both cities, planning efforts dealt with the establishment of infrastructure and the facilitation of symbiotic relations between the companies in existing industrial areas. In Nakskov, a practically new industrial area was constructed after the closure of the former shipyard. A detailed master plan was prepared as a means of integrating public utilities and private companies in functional and often symbiotic relationships. Part of the plan was the construction of a logistics area for handling goods and products for maritime transport. In Kokkola, the Ykspihlaja port and industrial area has been modernised as a result of efforts by companies and initiatives taken by the city of Kokkola. The most important initiative was the modernisation of the port functions via the establishment of an All Weather Terminal. As in Nakskov, this logistics function has been established to facilitate the functioning of the industrial area. Both cities have been involved in in-situ experiments of cleaning contaminated land. Thus, in both industrial zones, experiments with bio-technological cleaning of earth are integrated into the development of the two zones.



Campus Roslagen, Norrtälje. The education programmes are developed in close co-operation with universities and business companies. Campus Roslagen offers universities in Luleå, Stockholm and Uppsala arenas for recruiting and enrolment of students. In cooperation with Stockholm University and the enterprises COOP, IKEA, ICA, STATOIL and Hennes & Mauritz, the Nordic Retail College has been established and offers training in economics and finance for those working in the retail sector.



*Birk Centerpark – a centre of knowledge and business. The core of the Birk Centerpark is the textile-related educational and developmental institution TEKO and the management- and export-oriented Engineering and Business College (HIH). Around these institutions lie a number of business-related institutions, such as the Danish Textile and Garment Association, three knowledge centres for, respectively, subcontractors, wind energy and hydro energy, a business incubator and the local business council. The siting of a student dormitory next to the Centerpark gives it a campus-like ambiance, and the area's identity is strengthened by the art exhibition and the imaginative architecture.*

### • Obsolete areas

The restructuring of former urban functions and companies is in some instances causing severe problems in transforming obsolete land. For some cities, like Herning, the modest scale and dispersal of conversion sites contributed to a smooth transition of sites and buildings into new uses. For other cities, the vast scale of areas in transition and the very sudden nature of the changes have led the cities to very difficult situations. Jüterbog is a very pronounced example. In a city of 13,500 inhabitants, its conversion areas are one of the largest in Germany. Sixty per cent of the land area, totalling more than 10,000 hectares and 38 % of the urban area, had been used for military purposes, as home to more than 70,000 Russian soldiers before their withdrawal. At first, the city hoped to restore and integrate most of the former military area with the city. However, these plans faced several problems related to the environmental problems of the area, the high amount of investments into the buildings needed, the absence of any services in the area, the negative image, and a kind of zero-sum game competition situation between the old city centre and Jüterbog II. The city is now focusing all its revitalization efforts on a small part close to the railway station, and only a very small part of the total military conversion areas will be recycled and revitalized. The city is also trying to create a distinct identity for this part of the city, to construct more services and leisure facilities for its residents and to connect it to nearby open landscapes.

### • Tools

Urban transformations have caused fundamental changes not only on the issues of planning but also in the planning process. During periods of stable urbanization and growth of the cities, urban planning sought to regulate growth by allocating new land for various purposes. During restructuring, the goal of planning is now to create growth and to identify new uses for already used sites and buildings. At the same time, the planner has had to take a more active and networking role in the process and to develop new planning tools.

In the MECIBS cities, we found various examples of these new tools. Lappeenranta region developed a »growth centre regional land use strategy« in which knowledge, culture and tourism, housing and traffic became key areas for targeting investors, visitors and local residents. The strategy also makes use of profiling the inhabitants in order to broaden the scope of housing options in the region. New concepts for regional land use were created. Among these is the »quality corridor« along the main regional transport networks, within which the major parts of the growth should be located. The main »blood vessel« of the corridor, the national highway number 6, has been

*Lappeenranta regional growth centre land use strategy: The main blood vessel of the quality corridor, the national highway number 6 has been named Saimaa know-how route with the aim of getting a unified outlook with the help of e.g. publications, activities, and environmental art.*

designated the »Saimaa know-how route«, which seeks to achieve a unified outlook with the help of publications, activities, and environmental art.

A less explicit but still useful tool is found in Kokkola. The slow-down of growth in Kokkola posed the question of how to plan if there is little or no need to build anymore? How to improve the still visually and functionally fragmented and incomplete cityscape in the central areas of Kokkola? The planners started by considering how much building capacity and needs would remain in the city centre – i.e. how many »pieces of the puzzle« were available for the development of the centre. The planners took a more proactive role. In order to awaken the »sleeping possibilities«, they began designing projects for private companies. This initiative proved effective, and many of the unused areas of the centre are now occupied by new buildings functionally and visually suited to the strategic ideas of the city centre development.

In Randers, a special planning procedure was developed for the planning of a new exclusive housing area »Skovsyrevej«, with a high architectural standard. Most local planning regulations were replaced by an »idea catalogue« and a call for good architecture.



## • Lessons

1. Urban planning is an instrument for enhancing and adding new aspects to the urban identity. This includes architectural heritage, urban public space and new architecture. When dealing with urban identity, planners should focus on those urban qualities that are unique for their city. They should try to create a distinct image for outsiders and an urban identity which can appeal to the inhabitants.
2. Urban transition makes cities vulnerable to new urban development, especially development within the inner cities. To fully acknowledge this development potential, it is recommended that these be registered and mapped as a point of departure for constructing inner city development strategies.
3. To promote reconstruction of existing urban sites, planners should enter a dialogue with land-owners by drafting and visualising the development options and possibilities of individual sites.
4. New housing concepts are developed to attract households especially in the cities in the metropolitan areas. However, it should be acknowledged that in peripheral cities, housing follows local needs rather than life-style concepts.
5. In any city, those families moving in will want to rent an apartment or buy a cheap house for the first period to see if they will settle permanently. Therefore, cities should consider providing »first housing« for incoming families.
6. Many cities have established or planned for event centres. To an increasing extent, the centres are built up on the basis of unique concepts. Often spatial planning helps to make event-centres unique rather than just copies of centres elsewhere.
7. The integration of knowledge functions in medium-sized cities is a core issue. Knowledge integration involves planning and design of new sites as well as renewal of old ones: business parks, knowledge centres, educational centres, institutions and campuses. The variety of economic and institutional background for the knowledge centres calls for individualized rather than common solutions. However, it should be considered whether it is convenient to integrate especially educational functions as part of inner city development in order to strengthen urban life.
8. Urban planning has taken up the challenges of modernising those cities which remain dependent on industrial production. This includes the modernisation of infrastructure in general and common facilities such as logistic centres and even the facilitation of industrial symbiosis.
9. Transformation of cities has caused changes in the methodology and focus of urban planning. This includes changes of focus:
  - From demand to supply;
  - From functional space to unique space;
  - From urban expansion to planning from the urban inside;
  - From protection of to profiting on territorial resources;
  - From goals to concepts;
  - From reactiveness to proactiveness;
  - From the self-contained actor role to the active facilitator in a collaborative network.

## MECIBS

This folder summarizes the findings of a case study carried out as part of the Interreg IIB project *Medium Sized Cities in Dialogue Around the Baltic Sea (MECIBS)*.

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**Aim:** Within the overall objective to foster balanced spatial development by sustaining the development of medium sized cities the project aims at: (1) understanding urban restructuring based on comparative and concrete examples, (2) forming recommendations for the interplay between local and national strategies based upon a bottom up process, (3) forming recommendations within an integrated perspective on economic, environmental and social development and (4) forming a network of medium sized cities to facilitate exchange of experiences and mutual learning.

**MECIBS partners:** GERMANY: Leibniz-Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning; DENMARK: Municipalities of Randers and Nakskov; Chamber of Commerce and Industry Herning-Ikast-Brande; Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning, KVL (lead partner); Dep. of Marketing, Southern Denmark University; Dep. of Geography, University of Copenhagen; SWEDEN: Municipality of Nyköping; Dep. of Regional Planning, Royal Institute of Technology; FINLAND: Municipalities of Salo, Kokkola and Lappeenranta; Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Helsinki University of Technology; NORDIC COUNTRIES: Nordic Centre for Spatial Development, Nordregio, Stockholm;

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**More information:** [www.MECIBS.dk](http://www.MECIBS.dk)



Medium Sized Cities in Dialogue  
around the Baltic Sea

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