

THE ROAD NETWORK AND THE URBAN-RURAL LANDSCAPE

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Thomas Juel Clemmensen

In Denmark, as in the rest of the Western World, a massive expansion of the road network has been carried out during the last sixty years. This expansion has occurred in connection with the realisation of the functionally separated city and the growing (auto)mobility that this extensive reorganisation of cities activated. Parallel with this expansion of the road network, there has been a continuous transformation of the relationship between the urban and the rural which compromises the notion of a clear boundary between these domains. This transformation can be explained as the evolution of an urban-rural landscape whose spatial composition can be characterised as a heterogeneous patchwork of urban and rural elements as well as hybrid forms (Sieverts et al. 2005). The connection between these two parallel processes is however relatively unrecognised by the professions and institutionalised disciplines engaged in the development of cities and landscapes. This lack of attention to the mediation, which infrastructures provide between nature, culture and the production of the 'city', is due to the fact that studies on road networks and other infrastructures have been neglected and dominated by technical, technocratic and historical perspectives (Graham & Marvin). In addition, road planning tends to be isolated from urban and landscape planning as a purely traffic-related and transport economical issue managed by road engineers and other specialists. This lack of attention to the connection between the expansion of the road network and the evolution of the urban-rural landscape, together with the narrow perspectives on road planning, places the road network at risk of becoming autonomous from urban and landscape planning. Without better integration, the road network can contribute to an unfortunate "splintering" of the urban-rural landscape (ibid.). As a symptom of the poor integration of the road network in connection with urban and

landscape planning, and its consequences for the character of the urban-rural landscape, a growing concern for “the aesthetics of mobility” (Houben) can be observed.

This dissertation intends to contribute to a better understanding of the connection between the expansion of the road network and the evolution of the urban-rural landscape, and to explore how the road network can be integrated with the future planning of the urban-rural landscape, in a manner that contributes to establishing coherence rather than splintering. In the dissertation this issue is addressed from an architectural perspective, which emphasises the physical dimension of planning. The dissertation directs its attention towards Denmark, where this issue is topical in the form of a proposal for significant expansion on the road network in areas with heavy traffic (Infrastrukturkommissionen) and ideas for long-term planning in connection with urbanisation along the motorway in Eastern Jutland (Miljøministeriet 2006a). With regard to these future developments, the research project aims to provide a nuanced contribution in relation to the traditional planning perspectives that typically characterise the professional discussion.

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By means of a critical interpretation of the planning perspectives regarding the relationship between city, road and landscape, as well as a study of how modern road systems influence the form of cities and their structural correlations, the research project centres its focus on an underlying paradox in regard to the contemporary culture of planning. On one hand, the evolution of ‘the modern city’ is being continued through the expansion of modern road systems. On the other hand, the idea of ‘the traditional city’ is being sustained through the implementation of the simple dichotomies of urban-rural and centreperiphery as a conceptual foundation in planning. In practice however, this logical contradistinction is either masked or ignored. In regard to this masking, the notion of ‘landscape’ as nature in contrast to ‘city’ as culture plays an important role (Corner, 1999). This aspect is addressed in the dissertation through a number of reflections in connection with the current discourse on “landscape urbanism” (Waldheim). This discourse seeks to establish the basis for a new dialectic synthesis between urban and landscape planning in which the landscape refers to a common frame for the urban and the rural.

Based on this alternative notion of landscape, the project studies the possibility of integrating the road network in the future planning of urban-rural landscapes. To this end an architectural investigation of the future planning in connection with urbanisation along the motorway in Eastern Jutland is presented. This investigation introduces an approach to



planning in which the road network functions as a platform for qualifying the unique character of the urban-rural landscape.

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