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The Aarhus Story – a case study mapping interplays between architectural education, practice & government policies 1965-2010

Nørgaard, Tine

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Abstract

Based on mapping interrelations between architectural education, practice and government policies the history of the *Aarhus Cluster of Architecture* is presented as a case study discussing the impact of mobility and virtualization on architectural practice(-s).

Résumé

In the 1960ies growing general wealth and decentralization of stately institutions in Denmark was pivotal in the decision to break the monopoly in architectural education from 1754 maintained by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Hence, the Aarhus School of Architecture (AAA) was founded 1965 in order to meet demands for qualified staff in the increasing number of architectural offices outside the capital. Expanding rapidly from producing 20 candidates in 1970 to on average 120 candidates annually 1980-2000; 150 annually 2000-2005 AAA has established itself as a cornerstone in the construction of a cluster of architects' offices within ZIP-code DK-8000 Aarhus C.

During the 20th-21st century Aarhus population has grown from 10 to 20% of that of Copenhagen's. Only a 'kid brother' to a capital per status privileged by stately commissions, from their founding¹ offices located in Aarhus had to engage in commissions all over the country. As a *first mover* among the Aarhus-offices [Friis & Moltke](#) entered the international scene winning a 1st prize in the competition *Siemens conference center, Feldafing (D)* 1971. In the following 15 years the office executed a series of conference centers, three of which in the U.S. Simultaneously, facing a need to attract staff from abroad from the mid-70ies to the mid-90ies AAA had 8 nationalities represented on faculty. Concordantly, drawing on faculty networks AAA became renowned for its international profile.

Facing a general economic setback in DK during the 80ies and 90ies the by then established *cluster of architect's offices* founded by graduates from the AAA relied on the international outlook grounded during studies be maintained in their practice. Thus, in 2005 Aarhus could boast of being the home-address of 4 out of the Top 10 Scandinavian offices, and a higher density of architects relative to population than that of Manhattan – still, from 2003 onwards a new trend is noticeable: Graduates from AAA no longer settle in Aarhus, but in Copenhagen or metropolises elsewhere.

The paper/presentation relate to material published in Noergaard, Tine; Toft, Anders H., *Arkitekturklyngen i Aarhus*, publ. 2009 (in Danish only), Realdania Research/Center for Strategic Urban Research/AAA

Selected illustrations in separate file.

¹ The first officially termed *architects office* opened in Aarhus 1909.