



Danish Ministry of the Environment  
Nature Agency

The Danish planning system

&

The Greater Copenhagen area

Tobias Grindsted

# Denmark

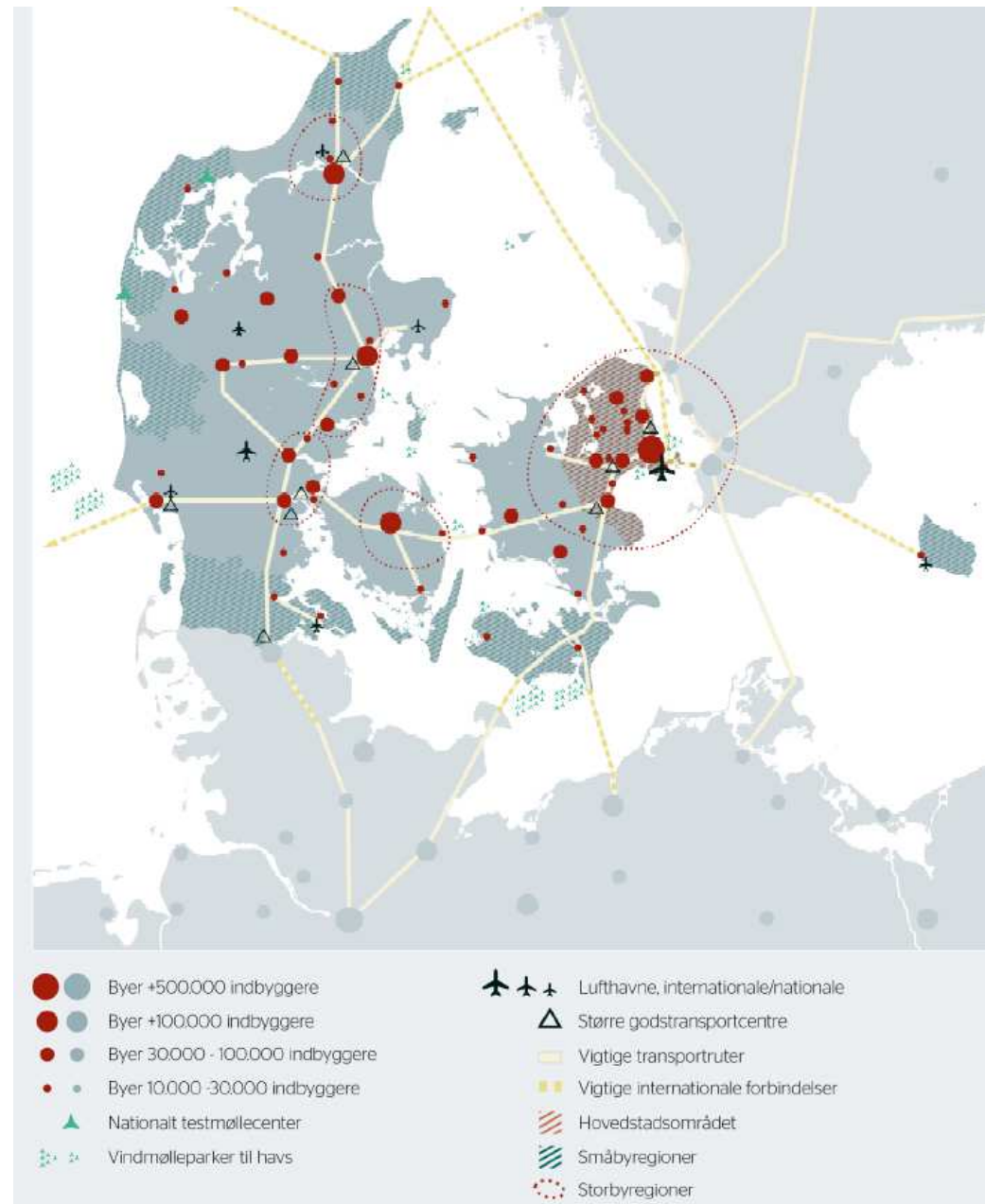
Population: 5,6 mio.

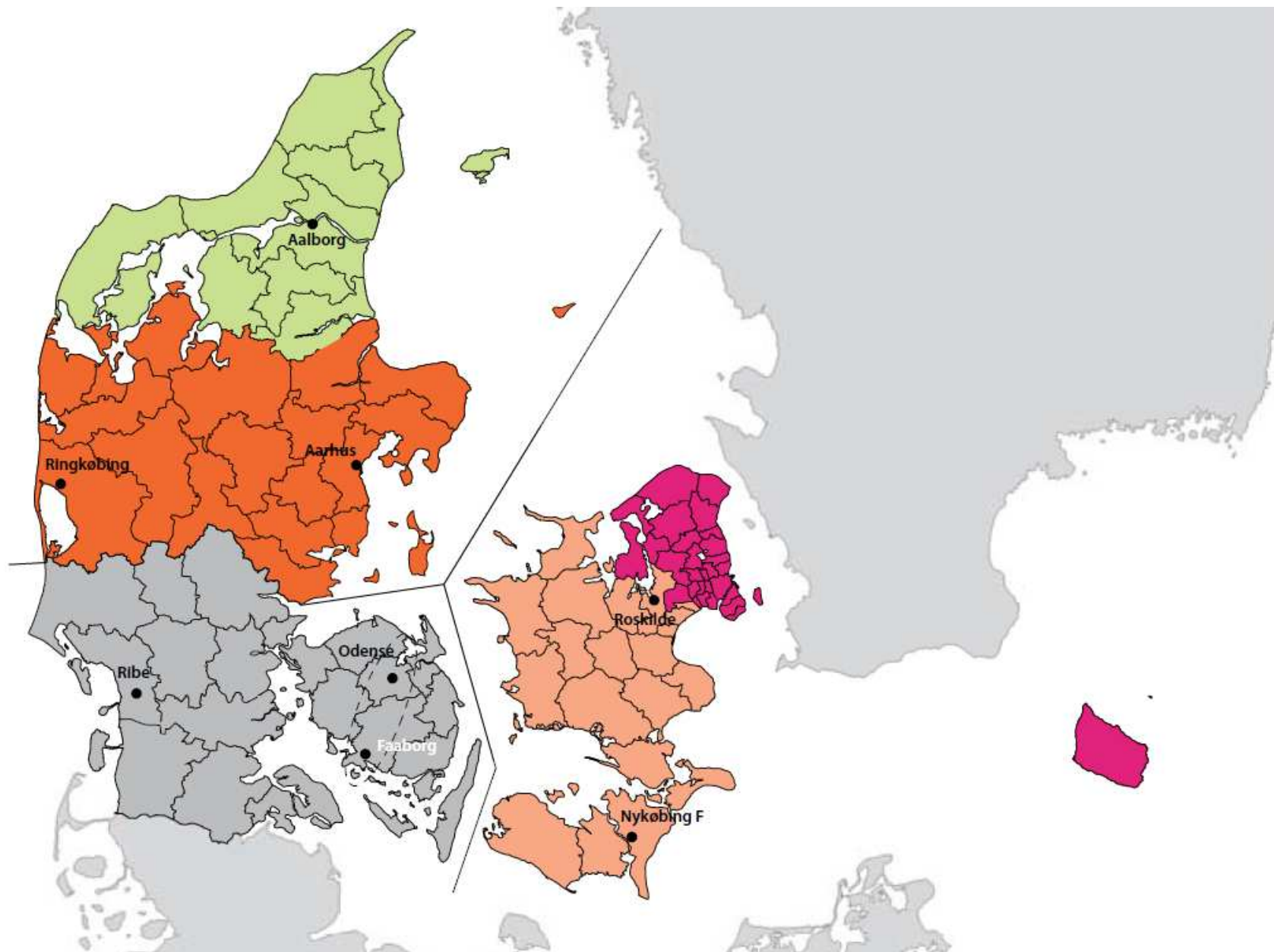
Municipalities: 98

Regions: 5

Major urban regions:

- Greater capital area
- Odense
- Triangle area
- East Jutland city region
- Aalborg





# The Danish planning system

- Current planning system (function, ideas and underlying principles) dates back to 1970-1975
- Main elements are:
  - *Zonation in 3 zones: urban zones, rural zone and summer cottage areas*
  - *2 tier planning system from 2007 (before 2007: municipal > county > state)*
  - *Detailed regulation of retail trade and coastal areas*



# The zone system (from 1970 to present)

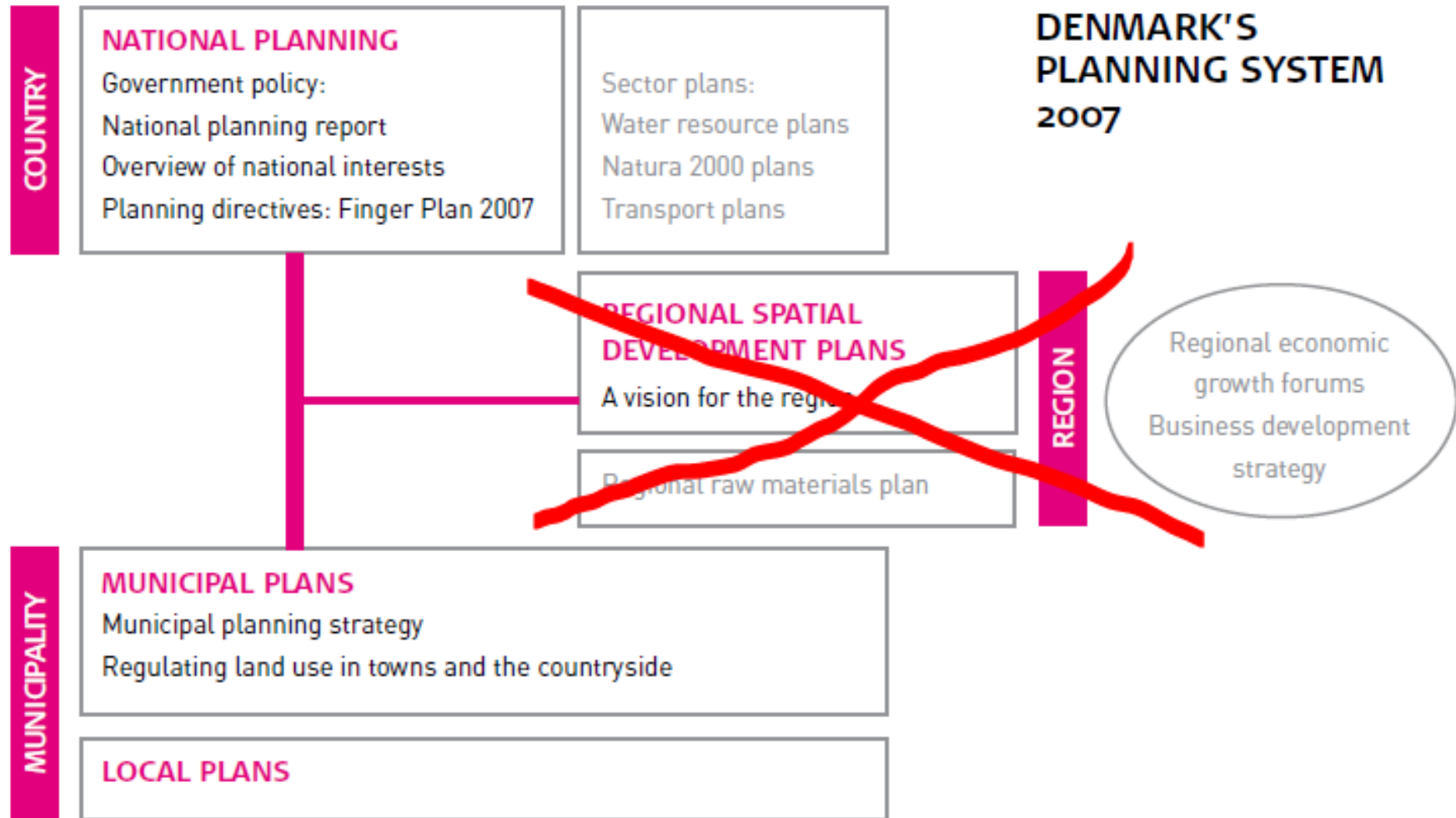


# The zone system

- Overall purpose is to distinguish between urban and land areas and to prevent urban sprawl and unplanned development
- Planning act reserves rural zone for agriculture and forestry
- Zone is administered by municipalities through rural zone permits or through local plans (*ex. for protecting smaller village environments, create recreational areas or technical installations*)
- Use of former agricultural buildings can happen to a certain degree without a permit (*rules have been loosened continuously to allow for more and more uses of former agri. buildings because of restructuring of the agri. sector*)



# The levels in planning



# State/national level

- National planning report: *overview of planning situation in Denmark and recommendations*
- Overview of national interests: *national planning goals, requirements and planning principles which municipals must adhere to and comply with, ex.*
  - State demands to concentrate urban development around existing urban areas
  - Planning must make optimal use of existing investments in infrastructure etc.
  - Municipal planning must not compromise designated landscape areas and must preserve an open country side
- Specific national planning directives: *used for planning issues of particular interest to the government, ex.*
  - *Planning for new summer cottage areas by the coast (only state can do this, municipals cannot to create new summer cottage areas with 3 km of the coast)*
  - *Planning for a new asylum center (in the situation where the government wants to use old army barracks as an asylum center but where the municipal are against the plans)*
- *Call in: the minister of environment can always overrule municipal planning and conduct the planning instead*



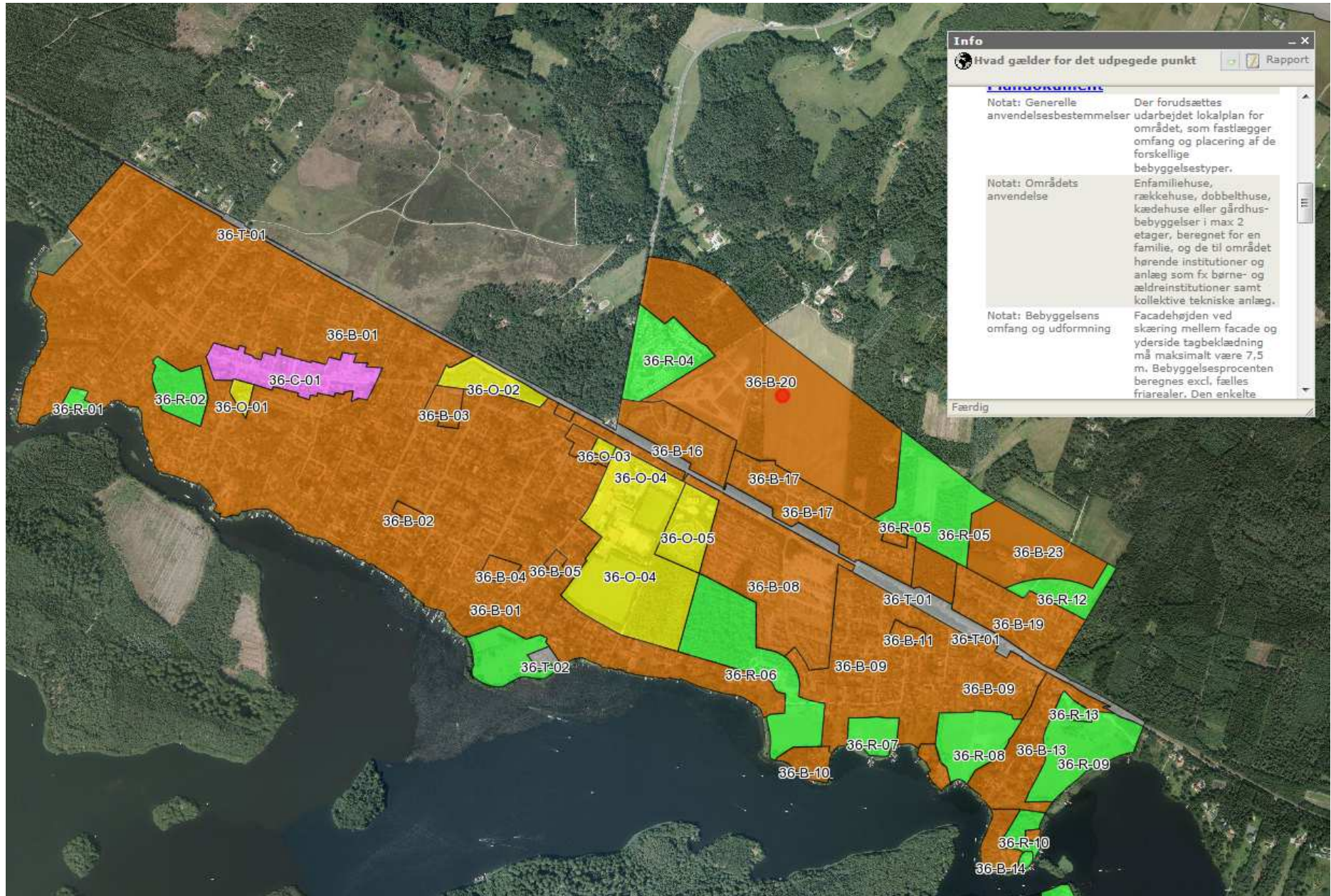


# Municipal level

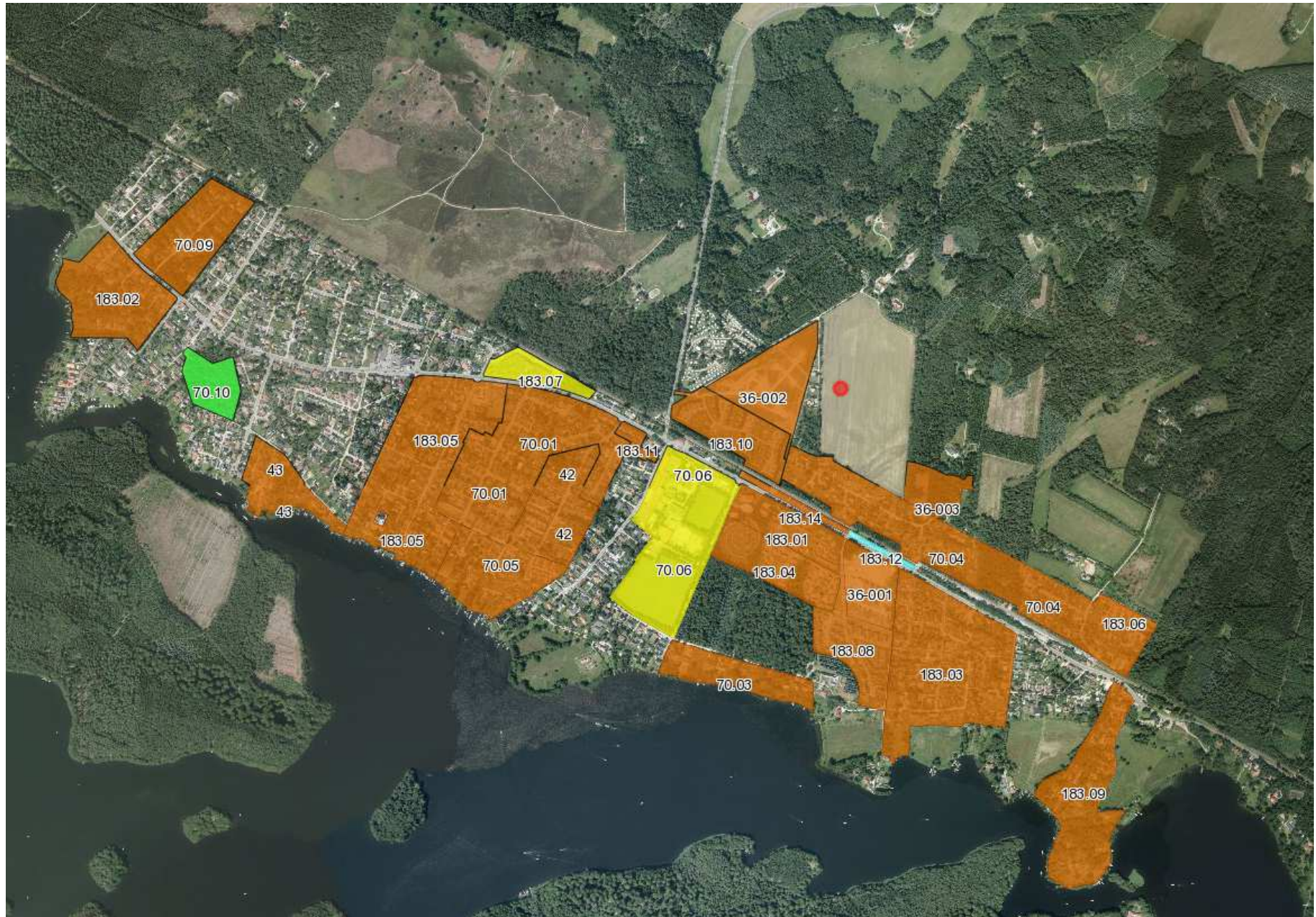
- Overall municipal plan
  - Guidelines for administration (*used primarily for rural zone permits*)
  - Framework for local planning (*must be made for a specific area before a local plan is made – establishes general land use, building specifications with that area and any requirements which must be implemented in the local plan, ex. certain technical requirements to secure groundwater from pollution*)
- Review of plan every 4 years (*it has become more and more common however that municipalities make ongoing adjustments to the plan or review certain themes in the plan instead of making an overall review*)
- Local plans
  - Must be in compliance with the municipal plan – if not then the framework for local planning in the municipal plan for that particular area must be amended before the local plan can be adopted
  - Local plans contain detailed provisions with direct legal effect to landowners with the planning area, ex. on use of the area, plot sizes, location and specific use of individual buildings etc.



# Framework for local planning as seen in the municipal plans



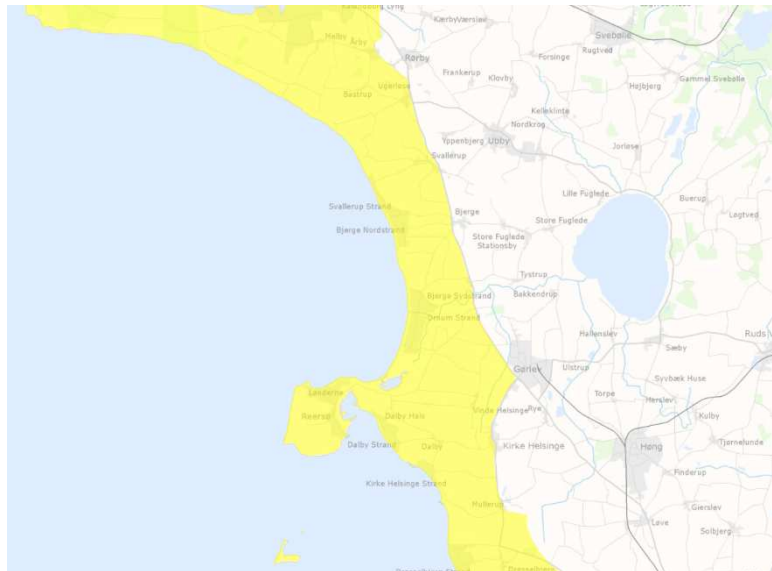
# Local plans within the framework



# Special provisions in The Planning Act

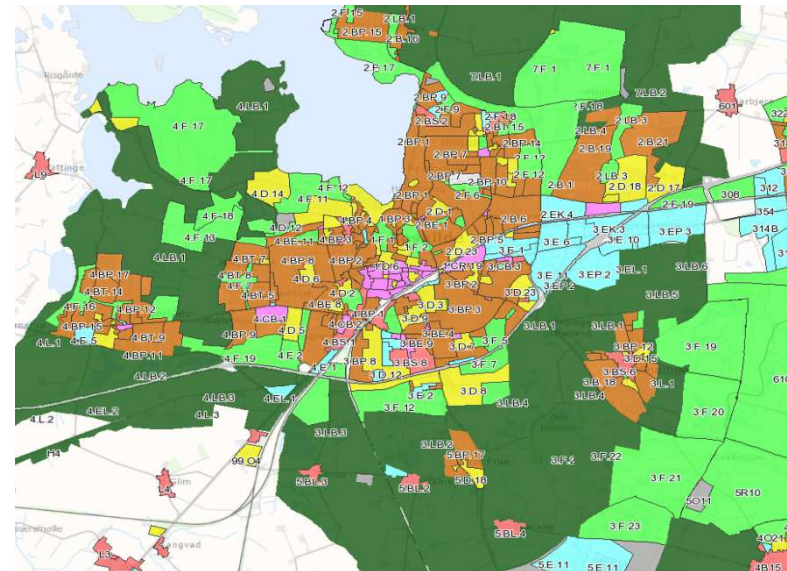
## Coastal zone management

- 3 km special planning zone
- Restrictions on urban growth and installations in the rural zone
- Special planning related or functional justification needed

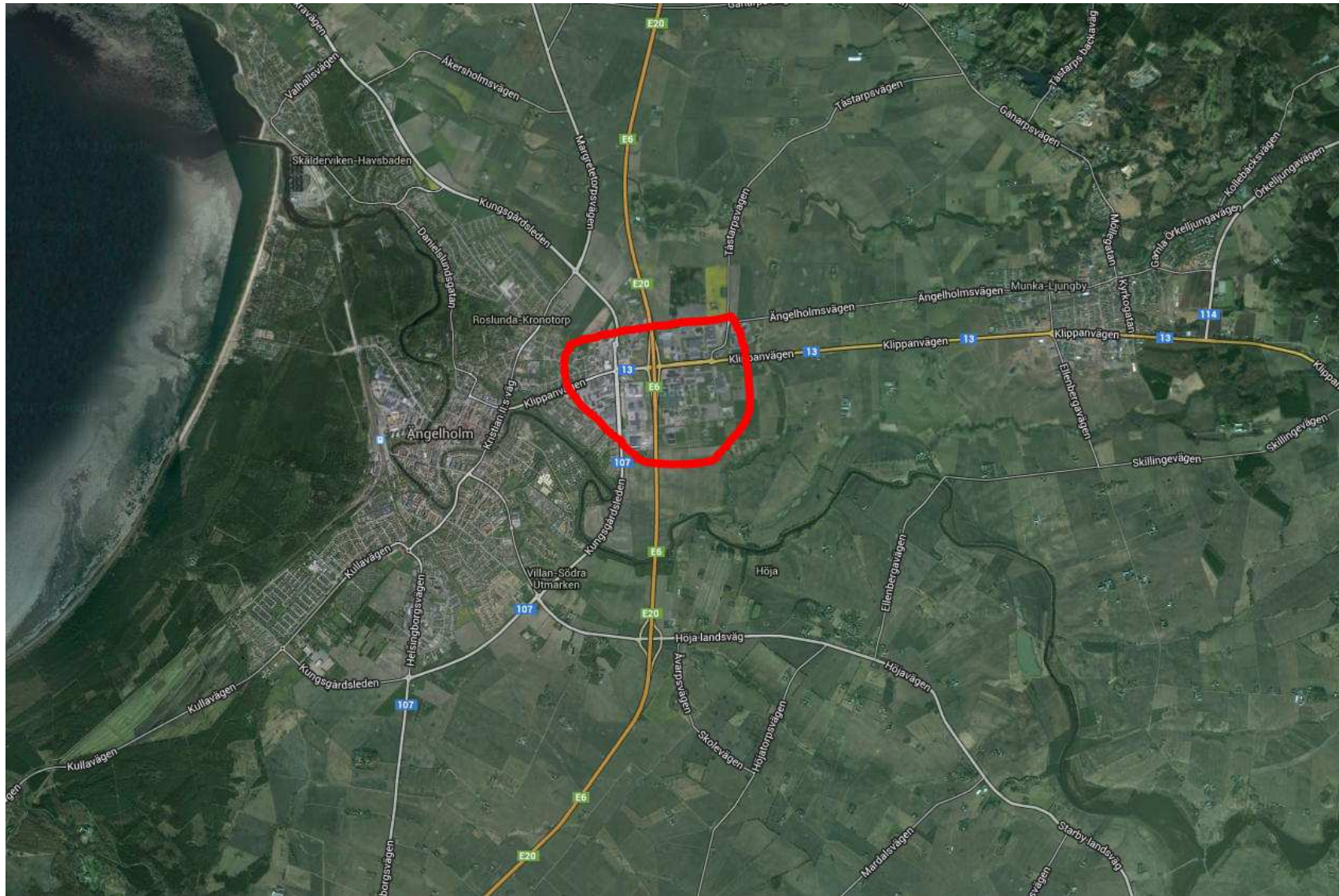


## Retail trade

- Retail stores must as a general rule be placed in town centers or in district centers to support life and quality in the cities
- Restriction on shop size (3.500 m<sup>2</sup> general stores and 2.000 m<sup>2</sup> specialty shops)
- Retail store must have a population catchment area corresponding to the size of the retail area



Case from Sweden: Big retail center outside a small provincial town – could not happen in Denmark since retail trade must be located in city centers or district centers

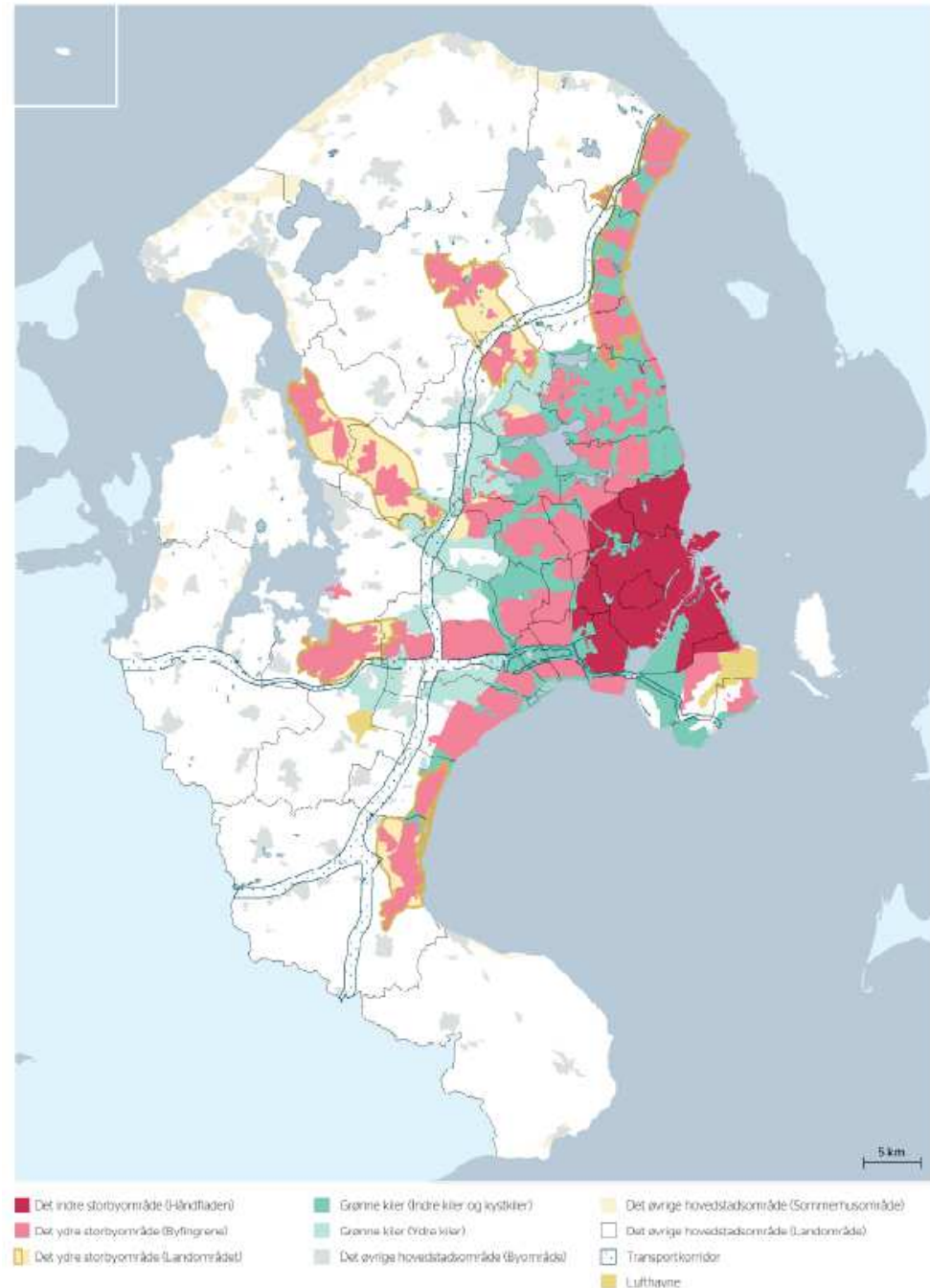


## Some challenges for spatial planning

- Demographic trends – growth is concentrated around very few of the major cities/city regions making it harder to secure economic growth for all regions/municipalities
- Challenging of planning principles to satisfy individual businesses – ex. expansion of business/industrial activities outside of urban areas
- Pressure for short term economic growth: benefits of spatial planning - often long term - does not reach political levels or are overlooked
- National interests in spatial planning can be hard to communicate on the individual municipal level and in a local context
- The Planning Act is under continued scrutiny for hindering economic growth – we try to direct focus from the individual business to the entire society
- The countryside is changing – fewer people employed in agriculture. How can we make good use of leftover buildings etc. without compromising planning principles and without bringing urbanisation to the countryside?

## The Fingerplan – a national planning directive for greater Copenhagen

- Originates from 1947 and has provided the underlying "mindset" for the urban structure in the capital region
- A general need to control the urbanisation
- You can't separate the elements in planning – traffic, residential, business and recreational areas all connected
- Varying impact - first regional plan from early 70's downplayed the *palm* and *finger* structure
- From regional plan to national planning directive in 2007



## **Goals and principles of the Fingerplan**

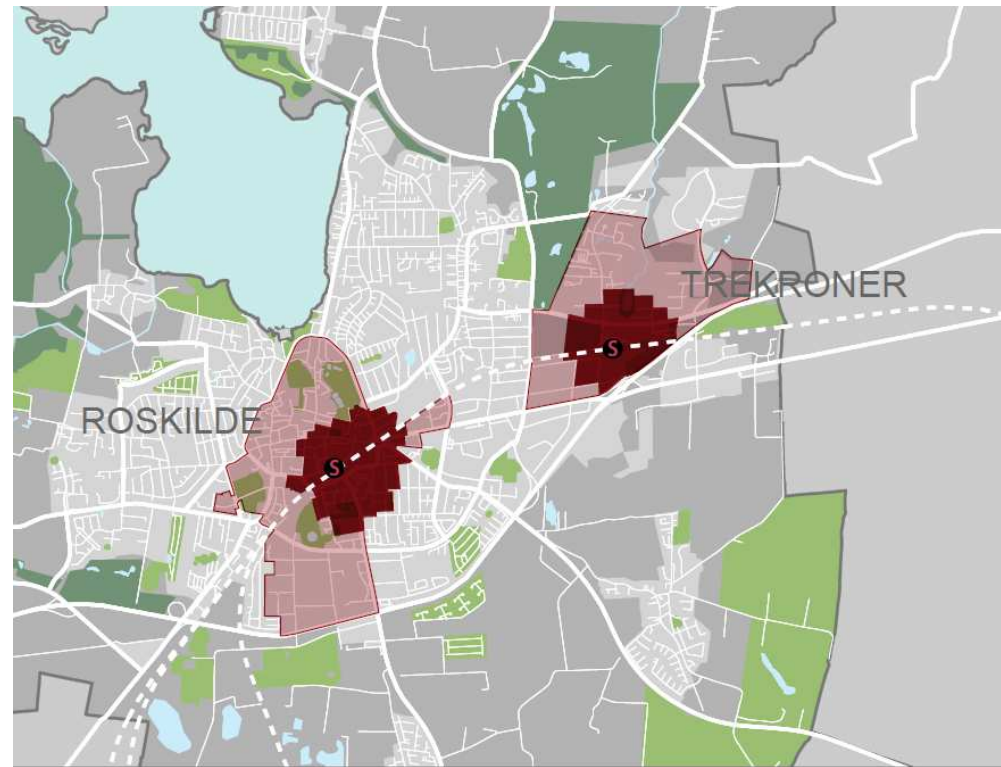
- Prevent urban sprawl
- Ensure coherence between urban development traffic infrastructure, public transportation and outdoor recreational areas
- Promote renewal and intensification of existing urban areas and limit land consumption for urbanisation
- Reduce resource and energy consumption in transport sector
- Balanced development through the region

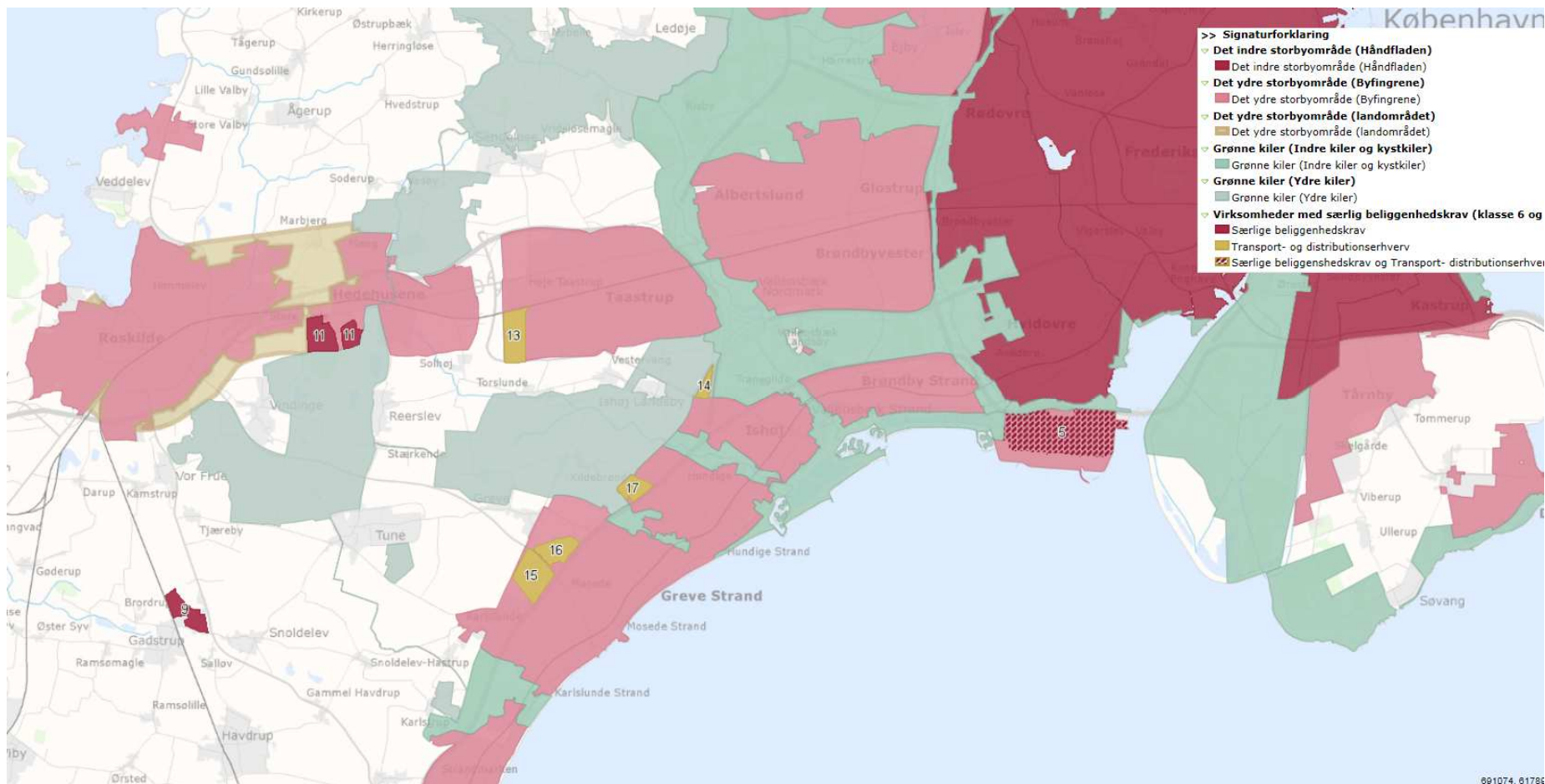


## Main elements of the Fingerplan

- 4 geographical zones
- Development along the major "arteries" of public transportation
  - Approx. 1 km on each side to insure coherence between urban areas and public transportation
- "Station proximity principle" (adopted in 1989)
  - Passenger generating business activities must be placed close to railway and metro stations (future also light rail stops) but not bus stop
  - Offices with more than 1.500 m<sup>2</sup> must be placed with 600 meter walking distance from stations or 1.200 meters if action is taken to promote use of public transportation, ex. limited parking spots
- Green wedges between the "urban fingers"
  - Reserved for recreational activities
  - No planning except for recreational areas
- Outside "palm" and "fingers"
  - Only local significance by municipal centers or rounding of existing urban areas
- Succession provisions can be used to insure regional balance – an area can only be permitted to develop after other areas have been developed

## Station proximity principle





1954



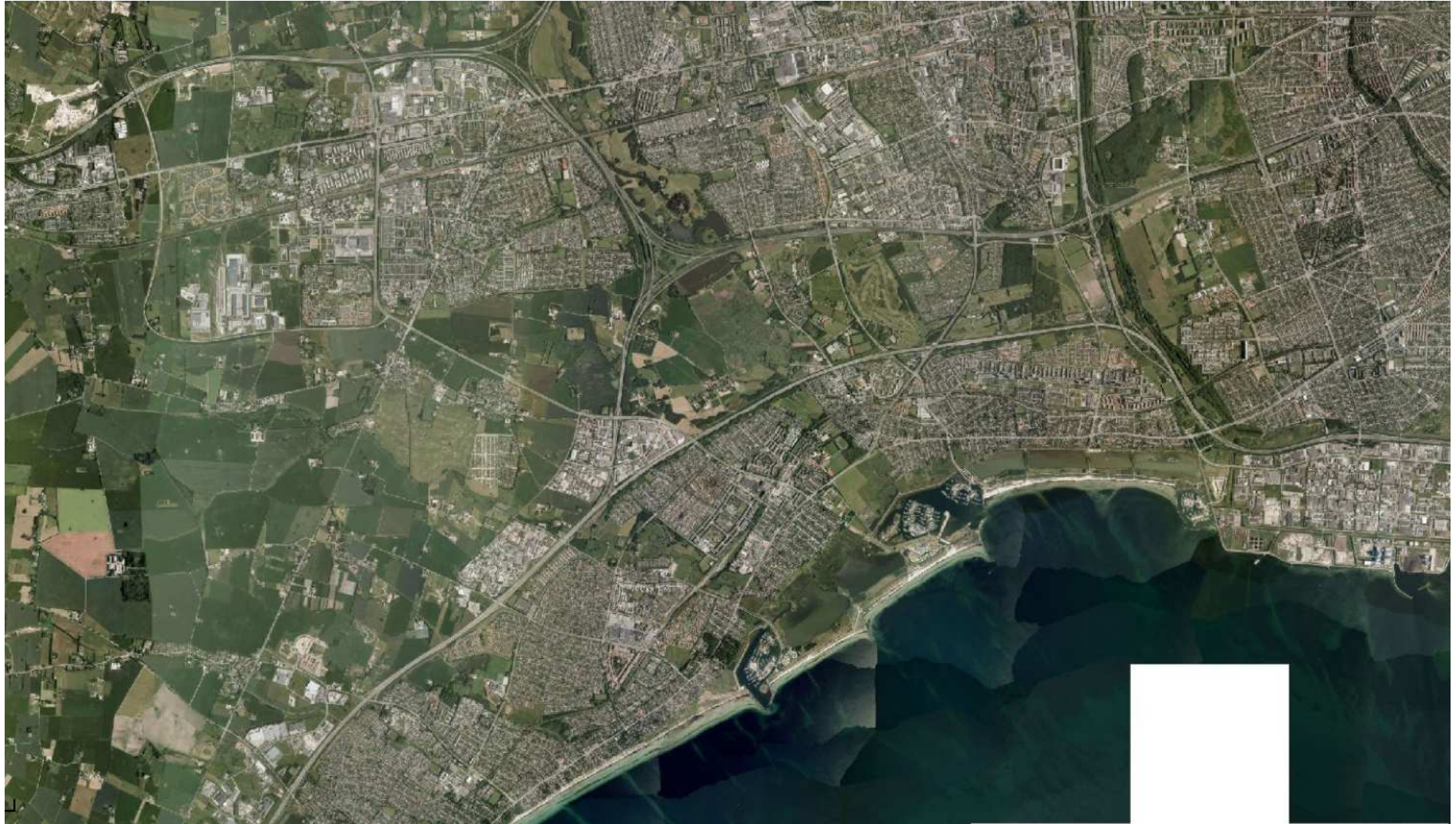
2012



1954



2012



## **How is the fingerplan managed?**

- Municipal plans must comply with the fingerplan
- The Nature Agency supervises the planning in all municipalities – Fingerplan is an extra legislative level that municipalities in the capital region must insure compliance with
- The Nature Agency can veto any municipal plan that it thinks does not comply with the Fingerplan
- Lots of dialogue with individual municipalities, ex. in current project where the green wedges between to of the fingers need to be expanded



## Some challenges for the capital regional planning

- Imbalance in regional development and optimal effect of investments
- Traffic investments in road infrastructure counters efforts in Fingerplan to pull more people from car transport to public transportation
- Good radial network of railways but lacking infrastructure connecting diagonally – more station coverage for north/south traffic
- Insuring that green wedges expand as the city erxpands
- Pressure on the green wedges to accomodate more functions – if the Fingerplan had not been there the capital area would without a doubt have fewer and more dispersed green areas

