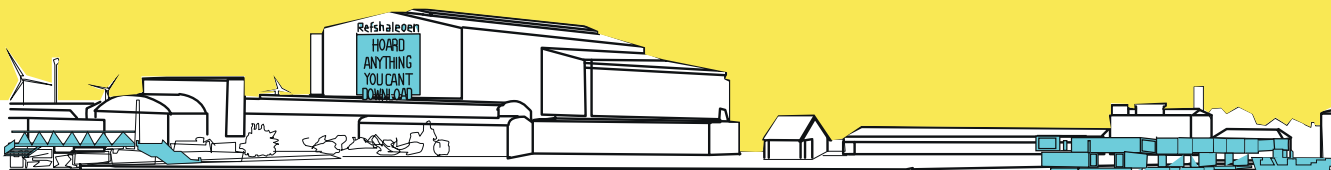


Politecnico Di Torino  
Master's degree : Architecture for Sustainability  
A.Y. 2025/2026

# **“ALMOST PUBLIC”: HYBRID GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATORY URBANISM IN REFSHALEØEN**

## **APPENDIX B - INTERVIEWS**



Supervisor: Prof. Daniela Ciaffi (Urban Sociology)

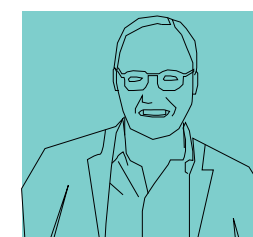
Co-supervisor: Prof. Antonio Di Campli (Urban Planning)

External Supervisor: Amaya Carina Steensma Tedder

Candidate: Chiara Monelli 313327



## 1. INTERVIEW CARSTEN RASMUSSEN (Refshaleøen Landowner)



CARSTEN  
RASMUSSEN

Development Manager  
Refshaleøens Ejendomsselskab

Chiara Monelli:

1. What do you do in your field, and what is your role in relation to Refshaleøen?

Carsten Rasmussen:

Refshaleøens had been a huge ship warf, and was a very, very big employment place in Copenhagen, there have been so many people out here, it was nearly a city, because they came here, they nearly lived here, because there were clubs and there were cantina and everything, it was a community with a lot of workers, but workers seen in a very old-fashioned way, you know, it was dirty, it was men primarily, and there was a lot of beers, and so it was also a little bit always behind the development of how the industry developed.

So, in the 90s, it went bankrupt, and it was because of, in Korea and places like that, they could build ships much cheaper and much faster. At the end, there was only 2,000 employees out here, there had been more than 10,000 employees out here before, and then four Danish pension funds, they bought the area, without knowing what could happen here, because it was not in their hands. In Denmark we have a so called a community plan, where Copenhagen municipality, they decide where can we do, actually, all development plans in Copenhagen, and before this location is in the community plan we can't do anything, but, yeah, we can do what we always have done, but we can't do new development before it's in the community plan. Every four years, you make a new community plan, and when you are in the community plan, registered as a new development area, then you are allowed to bring in proposals to make local plans, we call them, they are smaller, it's maybe for 100,000 or 200,000 square metres or less of buildings, where you are more precise about the roads, the content in the buildings, heights, road, different distances, and so on, green areas, there are a lot of things you have to be precise about.

Chiara Monelli:

I just read something about that there was a Refshaleøen in 2036 as a plan to redevelop.

Carsten Rasmussen:

We were nearly sure that in 24, we should be registered in the community plan, because we have started up a discussion with the municipality about what could happen out here. There will be a metro coming from the city, they have a stop down here, and there will be a stop here, and there will be two as we head on. When this decision was made for two or three years ago, we were sure that in 24, then we can actually begin, because then we knew that there would be this transport system from the metro, and it's very important for us, because it's quite difficult to arrive here in a car. But it didn't happen, because they have not found the financial resources for the metro. We have already written a programme for architectural competition, and they knew what we had to do. Actually, we have done a lot of discussions with the city.

**We had arranged meetings out here, where we invited the whole city to come and discuss the area, also with the tenants in our buildings out here.**

## Partecipation

Chiara Monelli:

How were citizens, tenants, and local stakeholders involved throughout the development process of Refshaleøen?

Carsten Rasmussen:

Very much... I don't think that any project had a more open process. All the city was invited, but of course, it's important for us also to be very close to our tenants, to tell them they don't have to be afraid, because we'll try to facilitate them the whole way through the development period. We did those kinds of discussions out here. We have politicians out here, we have architects, we have any people you could mention. And then we made this open call. First of all, we just asked people, **"Would you write something to us? Would you make a drawing or whatever?"**, And then we collected it in this book, and there are ideas from children's work. So, we have in here more than 100 different ideas, maybe ideas from other places, where they said you can also do something like that out here. It was quite lively, because it was from old people, from young people, from families, and also some professionals.

So, after that, we made this idea competition, where everyone also could come with an entrance, but there were certain rules. You have only one planche, you can have eight centimetres and 120, and we made five themes.

It was transformation work of the existing buildings, it was housing schemes, it was green regeneration, the culture. And then the fifth was an open theme, you can do whatever you want. And we have, and to our surprise, many of the big companies in Denmark, from big **COBE, Arkitema**, - all the big companies.

Carsten Rasmussen:

COBE also, which is one of the most important. So, after that, we honoured, I think, 20 projects that we have used in our own further work, when we wrote this programme. Then we took in ideas from that idea competition. And over there, we have four different vision points. Ex: we want to recognise the refs that you know today, when we have finished development. The next one is that we want to go ambitious into the new green and climate change debate that we have in this branch. And the next one is that we will develop spaces where it's possible to bring in nature, movement and strong communities, relationships between the people out here. And the last one is that we want to take out the best from Copenhagen.

And in Copenhagen, there's a lot of four and six floors high building and they have courtyards and that's the best areas in Copenhagen and where the young people want to live and hang out. So we made this programme and as I said, we were not in the community plan in 24, but we took the chance after a year delay and started off this competition in the autumn. And we right now have the proposals, the five proposals. And they are, of course, secret now.

When we made this programme, we also invited the whole branch, also international, if they could bring a team together, not only architects, also bring engineers, social anthropologists and so on. Then we will picked out five of those.

Carsten Rasmussen:

They brought in students also that have worked on this. Yeah. And then Arkitema. That's also a big company, Maybe not the best, but the biggest. And who else? Vandkunsten, and Third Nature. We pre-qualified those five I have told now. Okay. And we have five projects now on my table now. And we have a judge and we are writing right now what is good, what is bad. And we don't need to have a decision about a first winner and a second. We will still reflect on all five so that we can actually bring them together if we want to. Maybe we go with one, maybe we go with two. But that's what we're actually doing right now. And that's the most exciting thing to look into because we have so many ideas and now we can see it on paper how they have read this and done master plans for the area.

Chiara Monelli:

Could you describe your role and involvement in the development process of Refshaleøen?

Carsten Rasmussen:

I'm chief of the development plan. I'm in this jury where we also have two very well-known participants from the Danish architectural organisation. I'm also an architect. Some of the area is actually owned by a company in Copenhagen called By & Havn. They are owned by the municipality. So they are also part of our organisation. They don't play the same role as we do. They have a lot of other areas they're working on. We don't have anything but this. But that's where we are right now. And we guess that when we now can show this in presentations for the politicians and so on, then we can make a negotiation about having the allowance to go on with planning documents. So we hope that we, in three, four, five years, can begin to build the first buildings out here.

## About the city

Chiara Monelli:

2. How is Copenhagen approaching the redevelopment and transformation of former industrial and harbour areas today?

Carsten Rasmussen:

And as you probably know, we can swim in the harbour now. It was totally crazy and, without any discussion, that you don't have to bring yourself into the water 20 years ago. It was so polluted. Okay. So it's a huge change in Copenhagen. Now the water is clean. And it's a big swimming pool in the summer. It's crazy. It's difficult to go by boat because there's so many people swimming around the harbour. So it's been such a huge change. And from 1995 until now, Copenhagen is now a rich city. It was nearly bankrupt in 1995 and 1992. It was before they decided to go into the most pure areas to make renovations, make bigger housing schemes, put toilets into the flats and so on. And then everything changed very, very, very fast. So now the tourists begin now to come from the whole world and we are feeling like animals in a zoo. It's our own success. You just have to find a balance now. Okay. And the prices are going much up, so it's difficult for a student to live in Copenhagen now. Okay. So that's a very big discussion right now. How can we manage to build for young people, for those who don't have a very high wage.



Chiara Monelli:

3. What is the role of these areas in the future of the city?

Carsten Rasmussen:

It's already done, as you say, maybe they're ready. Yeah. The most important thing now, if the public discussion is to build a little bit more fast now and maybe a little bit more cheap and smaller so that we can house those people that are actually attractive to have in the city, those who bring activities into the city, not those who have a lot of money that just sell their big, big house north of Copenhagen and in their late years, they move into Copenhagen because they're nearly the only one that can afford to buy something right now.

So the discussion is very large and it's all over Europe in the big cities. How can we still have social housing and those things in a proper way between all the other things? So that's what also we are looking into. How can we make a percentage of different prices and so on, so that there will be a diversity of people. I don't know if in all of this, **can we talk about gentrification?** Yeah. Is it a risk? Yeah, of course it is. And of course, in our project, we have 100,000 existing square metres and we have tenants out here that don't have any money. Some of them, we have some that are quite rich companies. We have three stars, a Michelin restaurant out here. But we also have people try to develop new things about food and so on. They don't have money now, but they can go on and maybe be huge years to come. But **we try to support them.** They don't pay the same rent out here. And those who pay a high rent, sometimes they say to us, it's crazy, "our neighbour doesn't pay as much as we do" But then we just tell them that we have you when you came out here, you are not huge, you don't have any money. We have you at that time. And now you have to pay a market price because we have to bring new entrepreneurs in out here. So that's what we are trying to do in our existing buildings. And our owners, the four pension funds have said that we can continue with that. **We can lose some money some places because we can gain them other places.**

## Governance & Participation

Chiara Monelli:

4. Do you think there is a participatory process in decisions about refshaleoen's development? (e.g., meeting with the Refshaleoen community)

Carsten Rasmussen:

I mean, there is **co-administration/work** because the co-work goes on at many levels because we only have these old documents that we can do what we do now. We can continue doing that for a long period if we want. But we can't do anything more than we do now, because we don't have this document, the municipality plan and the local plans that actually tells us how much we can build and pay for infrastructure. The municipality also try to figure out how many people will be in Copenhagen 10 or 20, 30 years from now. And then they begin to point out different areas where can we actually build for them. And there, this is a huge potential, but it's maybe not needed just the next five or six years. But we try to push because we think that we have a kind of potential now. We have done all this work, so we think it's the right time to bring this area in. So it's possible for us already now to discuss with the Kommune, and also at the director level, because they also want to know about this area and how we work.

So when we have announced this competition, for example, then they are not a part in the judge, but at every meeting we have, we have the city architect, he's sitting there, the head of architecture in Copenhagen. And we have one from what's called economy in Copenhagen, and we have those from the techniques and building techniques. I guess there are five or six people coming to every meeting. So even that we are not allowed to do anything yet, and we are not in the commune plan, they know it will happen soon. So they actually participate in what we're doing. So it's quite, I think that we feel that because we have done all this preparing of the area, this is a big, big report about what we have to be aware of out here before we do anything. And this is an explanation about how they have used the buildings out here, how they have expanded and so on. Because we have done that, and because we have this discussion out here with the whole Copenhagen, and a lot of people have been out here, I think they see us as an ambitious partner in the future. So they also now invest in being here when we're doing things. So if you have to tell about how we work together with the municipality, then there are these formal steps that you have to get them interested. And after that, we can come in this kommune plan every four years, they do the new one. And after that, you can make the planning documents for each area out here. So there are some steps and some formal things. But as I said, they are already discussing it with us now. So that's all for informal relationships. Okay, so there are planned meetings. Yeah, we can just meet them at the town hall and they are also coming out. So they invest also hours in knowing more about this area.

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Chiara Monelli:

5. What makes Refshaleøen different from other areas like Nordhavn or Sydhavn?

Carsten Rasmussen:

Out there, it's **By&Havn**, which is owned by the municipality and a little bit of the state. Okay, so it is... I think that's a discussion for itself.

They are owned 95% at the **municipality**, 5% of the **minister of finance**. And when they do things and earn money, the money goes back to infrastructure. It nearly pays our metro. So they are commercial, even they are owned by the municipality. But every Danish crown they made, they go to infrastructure in Copenhagen.

They have a structure plan for it, but it's a very, very huge area. But they also made Ørestad, if you know about that.

But it's in the 90s now, maybe in the beginning of the 20th century, it was just like that. When we had our metro, it was the last station and where they also cleaned the metro and so on. So when it had to go out there, nearly on Brownfield, they planned to make a part of the city out there. But in a scheme that has failed a little bit, it's not the nicest place in the world. Here the metro repairing station is, so there's different metros out there. It is a strip through this green area, But it's not very city-like, it's just unique buildings that are not related to each other. But there's also a lot of big, big companies out there with the Danish broadcasting, the Danish radio is out here, and big banks and so on. But there is also housing schemes are out here, big indoor hall for 15,000 people and so on. And there is some projects made by BIG BJARKE INGELS GRUOP, the Danish studio.

## About Refshaleøen today

Chiara Monelli:

6. What role do temporary activities play here?

Carsten Rasmussen:

Very, very early we decided together with our owners that we will try to the 100,000 square metres that I have out here, this will still be here after. Okay, yeah, it is a big decision, also difficult. Yeah, and that's both a discussion about the content and that what we think is an attraction. At Reffen, we have so many weird people out here that make a lot of crazy things and it's very good. The other thing is the climate thing about keep what we have, 100,000 square metres, maybe with a lot of new square metres inside also. So maybe the 100,000 is at the end 200,000 square metres.

**And we have surveys where we have asked all our tenants, how do you see yourself in 2, 5 and 10 years? Do you think you are a part of our full development out here? Or are you just here before we build because you don't want to be here later on?** And I think it's 85% of them have said that they would like to see themselves as a part of our further development. Okay, it's a difficult thing. Yeah, and that's good for us. And that's something before I came here also, I think they have been very good at out here, they have tried to create the functions out here. So that actually, I think they could have food and beverage everywhere out here. And they have just limited that because we need also a carpenter, we need also a painter, we need also a theatre. So we have not tried to maximise what we could actually earn or rent out. **We have tried to make this mix of people because the mix of people also can, they actually help each other.**

So that when a theatre needs a new scene, they use the carpenter out here. If there's a big conference for those who make music out here, they use maybe facilities over at the museum. So they try to eat after the same cake, everyone out here. It's a good relationship. And that's something that we will try to do also in the future. But it's different, you talked about unification. Yes. Because some of our buildings out here, they cannot be heated in a proper way. If we have to make LCA, for example, they will fail everyone out here. We can't have disabled to come into our rooms. And I guess also we have a lot of fire problems and so on. And now the municipality is beginning to look into what's actually happening out here. So we are asked to make a big wall so that there will not be fire there going there. And we have to do ramps for everything. So in that perspective, we need to spend a lot of money suddenly to do things that actually are in the rules and the law. But until now, no one has looked out here. People have come to us and said, we can see you have a building down there. We can just take it. You don't need to do anything for us because we can do it ourselves. So there's a lot of things that now have to be right, everything. Then it's going to be more expensive. Maybe they have to pay a higher rent. And the thing could maybe change a lot out here. But we will try to work against it all the time. And another thing about keeping the building out here is that we actually think that it makes a structure for the coming areas because we have a kind of cross here. Two axes. Yeah, we have. So we can see it now in the five projects.

It's easy to try to develop something there. So it's a given structure for the city. And it's quite efficient, actually, because we can, for example, in this street here, try to do more activities in the ground floors. So it's going to be a very lively street here without cars. But that's exactly also where we will start with making a local plant. This is the structure area, but this is the first step we are going to look into. And that's also the green area you have been looking at. So that we can do something with the street down here, make it attractive. We can do nearly a brownfield work out here. And here we have to fit in between existing buildings. And then the metro will be at the end of its time. And everyone has also, all five teams have proposed that from these big buildings here and out here, it's going to be the big, big park that we have now. A big, big outdoor. It's from there and out here. Instead, this canal for the ship will be removed, will be integrated. Yeah, they use it. Thank you. That's because that's history. That's about how they took the ship from here, brought them down to this basin or dock, and then further out.

**Also about the houseboats, all of these will live with the redevelopment. Because I think the houseboats, some are permanent, other are temporary.** All of these are otherwise. The question is, **the final redevelopment includes the temporary occupation.** Now, how many years can we actually see from now? But if we have to develop all this area that we have here, we will finish in 2050. And maybe street food is not the thing in 2050. No one knows. So all our tenants, they have only three years of contracts. And many of them have been here for 20 years now. So they know that we are interested in negotiating when we are getting closer. But it will be difficult for us if we can't change location. For example, street food. We know now that there will be a bridge with bikes. It will land there. It will change this area very much. And maybe also, if this is the first area that we develop, maybe you also should then bring this in play. There will be a connection. So maybe you say, it's trucks and so on. Maybe Reffen should go there or they should go there to try to make a new space exciting. They've been there for several years now, but maybe they know, maybe we will ask them. But we will still have them out here until maybe 2050. The question is, that place where the market is, okay, now there is the market, maybe in 2050 there will be no, but that place will be planned to be temporary, even if there will be another activity. **Not defined, a not defined space.** Is it possible? Yeah, I can see in the proposal that we have, there is actually one that really says that only space here, there is **no programme**. Because we don't know now. I think they have shown there could be circus, there could be a green garden like we have down here, because maybe that can't be there for many years now. They can maybe be there, so you can go and grow things there, you can eat there.

Carsten Rasmussen:

The problem often with the temporary things, when they grow to be a success, they very often become not temporary any longer, but something that we have to keep exactly there, exactly as it is. And that maybe it's going to be less dynamic then. Yeah. If all temporary things are going to be something that we just keep and keep and keep. Because in Copenhagen, where all the industrial areas that you asked about before, when they left, but there was still no plans, exactly like here, then different entrepreneurs and young people, they invented these areas. And then the citizen began to come out there to see what they did. They maybe did small restaurants on boats or something. And they have always tried to bring people to new places of Copenhagen, see how big potentials there are. And some of them, they have moved for five or six or seven times because they don't want to be there when it's going to be too polished, when the new development plans are being physical. Then they think, now we go to a new Europe area where there's a little more rough and so on.

## Festivals

Chiara Monelli:

7. What is the role of large events, such as festivals (e.g. Copenhell), in the identity and development of Refshaleøen?

Carsten Rasmussen:

Yeah, this festival that are the most known out here, the metal festival in Copenhagen. It can't be here for 10 or 20 years, but it can be here. I guess we have given them now five years. They really use a very, very, very big area and they're very well organised. It's professionals that are doing that and it's a huge success and we love it too. But when we start up, we have to... Even when we start up here, we know that we need to have facilities for building trucks and materials and so on. So until now, we have said, I guess, four years they have still that can make this kind of festival. Then we also have, we have O-Days there. We have something called Carousel in this green area there. And that's crazy because that's the most beautiful area on the island nearly, but it's also the most polluted area that we have. But I guess we also have Distortion. It's also a big festival and Carousel is a small, it's a techno so in this kind of forest with light and everything. That will not be possible when we start here to have festivals because we will have so many problems with those that... Okay. And so on. But out here for many years, we can do and we can push it even further out so we will try to have, still have events out here and concerts and festivals and something that we also discuss sometimes. It's when we have to invent the buildings out here, we have these big halls out here, crazy big halls here. This hall is exactly the same size as a football lane. Maybe that could also be a concert hall on the long term. So it's going indoor. So maybe O-Days can be moved in here. Yeah, because it's a part of our DNA to have music out here.

Chiara Monelli:

How the people, the residents in Refshaleon are involved in this concert or are private? The who? For example, the residents in here, they can go free to this festival or not?

Carsten Rasmussen:

Out there, it's **By&Havn**, which is owned by the municipality and a little bit of the state. Okay, so it is... I think that's a discussion for itself.

They are owned 95% at the **municipality**, 5% of the **minister of finance**. And when they do things and earn money, the money goes back to infrastructure. It nearly pays our metro. So they are commercial, even they are owned by the municipality. But every Danish crown they made, they go to infrastructure in Copenhagen.

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3. INTERVIEW MAINE GODDERIDGE (Henning Larsen Architects)



Associate Design Director  
Henning Larsen

Chiara Monelli:

1. First of all, Who are you in Hennin Larsen Architects and What are you doing in practical?

Maine Godderidge:

So, I work as Associate Design Director for Urbanism. This means that I am typical involve but with this role, I am not only focused on projects but I am also connected with outside world and I can look for new projects and new clients, new opportunities. I am typically in a leading role in an urbanism team, So often we see that is a kind of combined role.. to Project Management and to lead the design.

And when we come to the example of Refshaleøen, it was a competition that lasted for about six months. I was alone in the first month to plan the process: setting up the economy, setting up team roles, and designing a process like how do we collaborate.

We were six companies in my team:

- We partnered with another architecture studio **ADEPT** to share the urban design workload.
- **BC architects** were focused on case studies on transformation, materiality and so on.
- **Rambøll** for all the engineering work, coastal protection, mobility and all of those things.
- We added an historian **Thomas Tram Pedersen** (from **PLANSCAPE**). He knows everything about the story of the place, his expertise was invaluable in answering our specific historical queries.
- a Placemaker, the Placemaking firm is called **Volcano**. we can see in the competition brief that we didn't have to do so much about it so we did not involve them but if we will be the full team to hopefully engage in the future work.

My role during the competition was primarily focused on designing the collaborative process. In the beginning, I structured our workflow: determining the number of workshops, setting up weekly milestones, and defining the communication strategy...

Once the production phase began, my focus shifted to design management. I ensured we were making strategic decisions, staying aligned with the competition brief, and that every team member's contribution was meaningful and goal-oriented.

While I wasn't the primary person for sketching or technical drawings, I acted as the 'glue' for the team. I believe that true collaboration requires physical proximity; that's why the other architecture firm joined us in our office. By the end, we had a dedicated, co-located team of 12 people, which was essential for a project of this complexity

Maine Godderidge:

Everybody works on deep into it, we do not necessary work together.

## About the city

Chiara Monelli:

2. How is Copenhagen working today on former industrial and port areas?

Maine Godderidge:

I would say all architects in Copenhagen are somehow involved in this transformation, because it is such a massive movement. It is something that just happens. There is a report that is just been publish by Rambøll that I can share with you, that is called "Copenhagen way"

It is a major ongoing shift. In the 1990s, it was very industrial. It was super polluted. The water body was totally polluted and there was a political will to change it, but under this kind of umbrella of political direction there are so many projects. Like now everybody knows that Copenhagen is ambitious when it comes to liveability. But it was not a given, before it was to be more industrial.

Everybody has this kind of pride in the journey that Copenhagen has done, that I think Copenhagen loves to highlight.

When I grew up you cannot swim in the harbour and now you can; My mom used to be a lot in Copenhagen when she was young, but since then she have not been a lot and When I got this job in Copenhagen I told her that this office was in Vesterbro \_\_ this area and thought it was a joke.. Because she was used as Vesterbro only as prostitutes and drugs.

So Gentrification has been fast in the last 20 years.

Chiara Monelli:

3. What is the role of these areas in the future of the city?

Maine Godderidge:

Oh that is super a good question!

Because the geographical position of Refshaleon will link the city to Lynetteholmen. It will be much more central, now it is in the periphery but it will be in the centre. In the competition brief, it was described as a future centre of the eastern harbour area.

If developed well, it has the potential to combine the best qualities of other districts like Nordhavn, (other districts), .. I dream that it could become like the "Best of".

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Chiara Monelli:

4. What makes Refshaleøen different from other areas like Nordhavn or Sydhavn?

Maine Godderidge:

It is different because people from Copenhagen have strong relationship with it, they all feel strongly about it.

There are other areas, like Amager Fælled, where people also feel strongly, but I would say even more so for Refshaleøen.

Everybody has memories from Refshaleøen. Everybody has been there because it is a destination— people go there, they do not necessarily live there. It is not part of daily life but everybody has been to LA BANCHINA, everybody been to REFFEN, everybody has been to CC, ecc..

People love this Raw, this genuine. When everything becomes too curated and perfect, people start to feel detached. I think people feel connected to the “rawness”.

I think Copenhageners in general like the ROW. Even in how they dress, there is a preference for something less polished.

Chiara Monelli:

5.1 Is Refshaleøen the only area with this raw character?

Maine Godderidge:

I am sure there are probably other areas, but Refshaleøen is the biggest and most successful example.

I think also it is a little bit far away, but still within reach, you can go there. I think its geographical position makes it the “sweet spot”. You need to make a small effort to go there, which means you avoid the most casual tourists.

For example in Nyhavn, the colorful, very curated tourist destination, and Strøget the main shopping street, those places are a bit too obvious for Copenhageners, because that is where all the tourists go.

So, if you are willing to make a little more effort, you go to Refshaleøen instead.

## About Refshaleøen today

Chiara Monelli:

6. What role do temporary activities play here?

Maine Godderidge:

I think in Refshaleøen are absolutely crucial. Without them, people would not know Refshaleøen, it would just be an abandoned industrial silhouette somewhere.

“I think activation is key; it is the reason why people care, and why people care is key to becoming a good area”

The landowners also understand this, everybody knows that is special but is also very strategic. The landowners are not doing it because they think it is fun only, they probably do think that is fun too, they are doing it because they know that land value goes up. A very clear example (for temporary activities ) is Papirøen, because Reffen market used to be there, 10 years ago, and it used to be called Copenhagen Street food. And it took this kind of industrial island that nobody knew, you know, It’s just there. It’s just some wasteland. and the market made this piece of land famous. It made it the most visited part of Copenhagen. It was in an industrial hall, so they were indoors, but it was the same style, the same concept and everything. It was such a genius use of a temporary land.

It made Papir Island from something that people didn’t care about to something that was right in the centre. At the end of this time period, there was a pedestrian bridge connecting the central city to this. So those two things, like physical connectivity and mental connectivity, they were just aligned. I think that was a total success and a great timing for the land owners. Because then they could sell the plots, to, of course, a fantastic price.

Chiara Monelli:

7. Do you think these activities are temporary or will they be considered in the development?

Maine Godderidge:

I think temporary activation has become almost a standard approach in ambitious municipalities. Because they know that it creates mental accessibility and it creates visibility. It is also a way for them to test what works.

“For example, street food, it worked. Maybe we can do something about street food that is permanent. They can see who the user groups are.” It gives to the municipalities some kind of information and data with a low risk, so they are going to continue doing that, I am sure.

I think as they develop, what will typically happen is that the temporary activation will move out.

“It will always be on the fringe of what is coming next”.

However, I think in Refshaleøen, since this has become such a vital part of the identity of Refshaleøen, I think, or I suggest in our proposal for the competition, we suggest that they keep some areas that are unprogrammed. And that is dynamic.

I can tell you one example of what we did in the competition proposal: We left the axis between the big hall out towards the sea, where there's this big dock, we left that as an open space. From this space out to that space, we created a really big, you could say, park or plaza somewhere in between.

And then we said that this dock, we're not designing what's going to be in it. Because we trust the process. We think that there should, instead of setting a design, we set a process.

We propose that there's a three-month schedule rotating for the dock's use, overseen by a curator. For example, for three months, there might be an exhibition or an art installation. For the next three months, it's like a “flea market” (Pop-up Market). It could even be returned to the water for a period.

“This is our way of embracing the unique culture of Refshaleøen, accepting that we don't have all the answers. We want to move away from the idea of the ‘all-knowing’ architect. It's about making room for the creativity of Copenhagen.”

That was our way of saying that we could have built up, as they asked for a dense development, but we chose to leave a massive space for unprogrammed use instead.

Chiara Monelli:

7.1 Is this a new practice? Because usually, in masterplans, everything is defined and given a specific function.

Maine Godderidge:

It depends on how the brief is formulated. Sometimes clients want a clear design, and sometimes they're more open.

In this case, I think the client — the landowners — were interested in this approach. But I mean, we haven't heard the feedback from the jury yet. We have no idea what they think yet. At the mid-review, they seemed interested, but they also had some concerns. It is always a risk not to define everything — leaving freedom is always a risk.

At the same time, Refshaleøen may appear spontaneous, but it is actually curated and requires a lot of work and intelligence from the people managing it.

The landowners own all the buildings, and they have strategies to balance costs for tenants. If a tenant brings a strong creative value to Refshaleøen, they get a lower rent. So that's a tool that they use, an economical tool used to curate the area's identity.

So it is not something that happens by itself — it is a result of careful decisions and collaboration. For example, places like La Banchina are great, but it is also important that the landowners support them and allow them to exist to be great. They have a good taste and they are able to understand who can make Refshaleøen better. It is really a kind of teamwork.

## About Governance

Chiara Monelli:

8. How do you work with the municipality and private actors? How do you manage this relationship?

Maine Godderidge:

We usually work for private clients, but private development is always dependent on the municipality, because they are the ones who ultimately approve or reject projects.

And for example, in this competition for Refshaleøen, BY&HAVN, they are part of the municipality, we can say, (because) they are in the jury together with the landowners. So without the goodwill and without the collaboration from the municipality, the project cannot happen. It is essentially a partnership.

**As designers, we need to understand both sides — the private interests and the public interests — and balance them.** It is also a strategic process. For example, if we think the client is mainly concerned with cost, we might emphasise economic efficiency.

But if we think that the municipality will never let this happen if we don't go for an ambitious biodiversity strategy, then we focus on that.

**So it is about carefully reading the brief, understanding the stakeholders, and even researching their positions.** What's the common debate? How do they earn their money? What's the political statements that will make them proud in the future? Yes, try to balance. It is a very interesting process anyway.

Maine Godderidge:

I think the municipality here also knows that they cannot do everything themselves, and they know that it's getting better if they invite ambitious landowners. They put pressure on the landowners. There is usually a negotiation process behind the scenes, where both parties align on shared goals.

## About Festivals

Chiara Monelli:

10. What is the role of large events, such as festivals (e.g. Copenhell), in the identity and development of Refshaleøen?

Maine Godderidge:

I think the role of those festivals is that it's really good and nice for Copenhagen to have a pretty central area where they can just go and be noisy.

This is quite rare.

However, as the area develops and more people start living there, it will become more difficult to host such events in the same way.

The landowners currently allow a certain number of noisy events, and in Refshaleøen they aim to maintain a more cultural and lively atmosphere.

But they also acknowledge that if we build a million square metres there where people live and their kids, then you cannot have Copenhell. Urban development is always changing.

So now Copenhagen is there because they can be there. Festivals may move elsewhere in the future — for example to areas like Lynetteholmen. This reflects the nature of temporality: activities shift over time.

However, you can learn a little bit from it. For example, having a place where you can gather lots and lots of people, that's a valuable asset for a city.

That's something we try to build in our proposal, even though it's a dense fabric.

## SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

### About Maine Godderidge:

Chiara Monelli:

1. In your competition proposal, how did you approach the existing identity of Refshaleøen?

Maine Godderidge:

Yeah, of course. I think it influenced everything we did. We started by asking: what makes Refshaleøen unique? How can we ensure that this creativity and atmosphere remain in the future?

For example, we kept everything that was also part of the brief, but we also maintained surfaces, for example. And we tried to, also in the new build, make room for community activities, shared uses, and workshops.

For example, we proposed a typology with a tall ground floor that belongs to the neighbourhood, where they can do different activities. We also identified several “experimental plots”, where people are encouraged — or required — to continue experimenting with new ways of building and living.

This is where people can continue or have to continue to experiment; you can't use standard building methods. This supports and welcomes the kind of curiosity that is part of the DNA of Refshaleøen. The approach was both physical and programmatic.

We also studied the architectural language, although it appears chaotic, if you look carefully, there are recurring elements: rhythms and some kind of silhouettes. There is the scale shifts from the really big to the really small. We tried to reinterpret these qualities in the new design.

Chiara Monelli:

1.1 Is working with existing buildings a new approach for you?

Maine Godderidge:

The interest in reusing existing buildings has increased significantly in recent years — especially in the last three years.

For example, earlier plans for Refshaleøen proposed keeping only a few buildings. I don't remember the exact number. Maybe they say we keep four. Whereas this take just a few years later, they said everything should be kept if you don't have really strong arguments to take it away. This reflects a broader general shift that we're seeing in the business towards reuse.

Maine Godderidge:

But I think why it hasn't been done that much previously, it's because it's been cheaper to build new and more easy due to regulations, costs, and risks.

Because you don't really know when you start scraping the surface of an old building. It's hard to put in your Excel sheet. You don't know exactly how much you need everything and so on. Which makes the whole system to be like, to push it away. But that's why it's so important when there is a rule.

I think, for example, in Refshaleøen that they said that they have to stay. Okay. And then that's just a given.

However, policies are changing, and there is increasing pressure to retain existing structures.

Chiara Monelli:

2. What were the main design challenges when working on such a large and undefined area?

Maine Godderidge:

Now It was actually a little while ago we finished this. Main design challenges. I think one of the main challenges was making the project feel like Refshaleøen.

How do we do this in a way that feels like it's related?

At the same time also transforming it into a functional city. Because Refshaleøen has to change because it's going to be a real city now with mixed use.

**It's not only a destination anymore.** So I think that was tough. When we initially applied traditional urban block structures, it did not feel right. We had to find a new typology that could support everyday life while still belonging to the existing context. We struggled a little bit with designing the waterfront. We landed in a very good place, I think, for the edge towards the water and so on. **How do we do that in a way that doesn't feel too fancy? How do we create a city that feels like Refshaleøen?** We wanted to maintain the raw character, including materials and spatial qualities.

There was also a major infrastructural challenge related to a temporary soil transport road along the Øresund. Although temporary, it is expected to remain for around 30 years, making it a significant constraint. We explored solutions such as covering it with a tunnel, but it remained a complex issue.

Chiara Monelli:

3. What new elements did you aim to introduce with your proposal?

Maine Godderidge:

We aimed to integrate a continuous learning process into the project.

These developments take many years, if we were to build everything today based on current sustainability standards, it would not be the best practice in even 5 years. In 10, 20, 30, things will change.

That's why we built these "experimental plots" to allow innovation over time. I hope so. However, there is no area in Copenhagen where you actually have the green experience and the water experience at the same time. We saw an opportunity to explore a hybrid typology, which is why we designed the beach promenade to be significantly greener than traditional ones. This approach is about **stacking learnings** from across Copenhagen, but Refshaleøen is unique because its **existing industrial character provides so much 'flavor' and heritage**. At the same time, because there are such massive, vacant areas today, we believe these flexible learning spaces and common areas can evolve..

*"...these flexible, unprogrammed spaces have the potential to become the next generation of social landmarks, much like La Banquina is today."*

# REFSHALEØEN

Lokalplan nr. 209 med tillæg nr. 1

Borgerrepræsentationen har den 18. juni 1992 vedtaget lokalplan nr. 209 Refshaleøen. Lokalplanen er bekendtgjort den 18. september 1992.

Borgerrepræsentationen har den 26. november 2015 vedtaget tillæg nr. 1 til lokalplan nr. 209 Refshaleøen.

Lokalplantillægget er bekendtgjort den 9. december 2015

DELVIST OPHÆVET  
- se lokalplan nr. 331-2



## 2. INTERVIEW PETER NIELSEN (Københavns Kommune)



Chiara Monelli:

1. What do you do in your field, and what is your role in relation to Refshaleøen?

Peter Nielsen:

Yes, I'm an urban planner in Copenhagen, and working with local plans, so it's a law in a small area, and it's a building, and uses, and this I have made for many years. I have nearly been in this business for 30 years, so it's a long time, and I work very much with Holmen (included Refshaleøen), or the area here, and Kløvermarken (Amager Est), and BLOX, the area house, and several places in Copenhagen. I think, for over 20 years, I have worked with Refshaleøen, and for a long time, there's an old local plan here from 1992, and it was, then Copenhagen was an industrial town, like Torino, I think, it was, you make a lot of automobiles, and so on. And here was the most important ship in Denmark, Burmeister & Wain (B&W). And this local plan was made to make it possible to extend and build more ships, but four years later, it collapsed, and there was no shipyard afterwards, and they thought, how can we use this building and this area? And it took 14 years before they could make a correct strategy for temporary use of the areas. And it was temporary, because in a municipal plan, we have, we call it a perspective area, that you don't can develop even for the period of 12 years. And this, our planning system is, we have a municipal plan that works for four years, then we make a new, or just decide it was the same, and so it's a rolling planning. And for 12 years, it's a three municipal plan, where you decide every four years, should we develop this area or not. And it has been not in so many years, and frustrating for the owners, but the special in this is not to make new areas, developing new areas, because it's a lot of money for the municipality, because you have to use new schools, and new infrastructure, and so on.

Peter Nielsen:

And it's now, it's a big area, like along the east coast, where we have started planning. And we thought it was the first step, was Refshaleøen. And for many years we thought it was this, but in March 2025, there was an agreement between municipality and estate to make more metro, and a big infrastructure. And in Denmark, and in Copenhagen, when we build metro, we pay it by developing new areas. So, what we make money for the new areas, we put in the metro. So, it defines how much it should be built, and so we go along planning. The first step in this is, just say if I go too far in your questions.

Peter Nielsen:

The area we are developing now, in steps, is Lynetteholm, and this area is the first part we are working with. It's called Kløvermarken (Amager in Danish. It must be Kløverpark in English. It's the first step, and it's 800,000 square metres. So, quite a bit, and the first step in the metro is to go here, and then we make a station here, and the next step is not decided when, but goes to Refshaleøen. So, maybe it's a long time before we go in, but the company out there, they try to push forward and go faster. (...)

## About Refshaleøen today

Chiara Monelli:

2. What role do temporary activities play here?

Peter Nielsen:

Yes, I think it was many places in the European city, between industrial city and the modern city, was lots of area that was done, and that in Denmark we have a famous case, the military area, Kristiania\*\*, that was occupied by citizens in the 70s, and still is occupied. So I think many owners of an area is a little bit scared about people who come and occupy it.

Then it's better to make temporary uses of the area, and for Reshaleoen it was important that open the area for everyone, and to make a new identity. And now I think it's very well-known places in Copenhagen, there's a lot of tourists that go to the street market, and other things in Copenhagen.

And back in the 90s, there was a lot of these things, but not in that size as Refshaleøen. We have a very nice place, now it's called Fisketorvet Copenhagen Mall. We are back in the mid-90s, and this area is developed since mid-90s.

Peter Nielsen:

And the same as Papiroen, the paper area, there was a very nice street food that's now moved to Refshaleøen, and also had this at the other places here. And it was a huge success in Copenhagen, this street food. You have something in Turin, I think.

And when we made this programme for the competition, and COBE won the competition, the ground use of these buildings... They used this as a step to make the development of this area. So, the temporary use in the existence building was to take the next step to developing this. But it's not the same. It will be more fine restaurants, and bars, and so on. But the goal was to have something from the past that would forward to the further. Yes. And I think I have talked most to **Claus Hovmøller\*** in this area, how to make the temporary use and creative companies be a part of the developing area, and also staying in this area.

Chiara Monelli:

7. Do you think these activities are temporary or will they influence the future?

Peter Nielsen:

I hope so. The good things about the existing buildings on Refshaleøen, it's a large company buildings, is that it's very difficult to transform them to housing. It's too deep buildings. So, a lot of this building must have another use, and I think some of the existing company will stay in the future. Okay. There is a very nice restaurant in this Michelin restaurant, Katimisten. I think in their strategy to rent the building, they take that this business, we want to be permanent in this area. And other business like, we have some iced bar in this area, it will be lost. And maybe also the contemporary exhibition.

Alexander. I hope it will stay in this. So, some of the temporary companies will stay, and others will disappear.

And it's very difficult for the municipality to have a deal in that. Yes, it's more difficult. It will be easy to delete everything. The best, I think, will be to this area to make a decision in the local plan and in the municipality plan to stay. It will be an area for working and so on. I don't know the exact word. Try to explain. In Danish it's Aveo. And you say that in this area there could be a company like an automobile maker, bakery, restaurant, painter, gallery, and so on. These activities can be temporary? Yes. And if we make some special notes about this, it will be more difficult to rent this area to something that can pay more for the area. Okay. Like a lawyer company, for example. Yes. And I don't think they would like to do that. But it's a nice, very nice and attractive working. I don't think the market here, the flea market, will stay for a longer time.

Chiara Monelli:

Because you told, talking about, for example, Christiania\*\*, that it is still occupied. What do you mean in practical to occupy?

Peter Nielsen:

That they were there... They broke down the fence and just run in. It was empty. All the buildings were empty and they just moved in. They built their house without authorisation, without paying nobody. And they are still there. Yes, but for 29 years now, the municipality and the government tried to normalise Christiania. It's a very long process. So now they have bought part of the area and they own the places.

Okay. And we have to make a local plan to build a new housing in this area, social housing, and it's a very long process. And one of the strategies in this is talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, and the municipality is not as bad as they thought they were. Okay. And now we can talk and it takes time. Okay, okay. That was interesting because he said at the beginning what you were thinking for that area.

Peter Nielsen:

I have a little conflict about the area. Can you occupy an area and it's yours and you don't have to make plans and so on. But it's a nice place and there's a lot of tourists in Copenhagen that visit Copenhagen that go to Crete. Some for buying something illegal, but it's this part that goes here and on, but this part also. It's a very nice path in this area. In the middle of the channels. This is the centre of Christiania. They also make a lot of new companies and small companies. The green building here is a local building market. They make their own communities. But without asking the municipalities to do it. They did, they also created a community, but nobody allowed them to do it. It's a phenomenon.

Peter Nielsen:

Slowly they move about more normal. Normal means there's a law that they have to recognise and so on. And healthy things like building regulations and so on.

But there's a lot of creative buildings and living that is very exciting.

## About the city

Chiara Monelli:

2. How is Copenhagen working today on former industrial and port areas?

Peter Nielsen:

Yes, we like to have new areas that is poly-functional, where there are schools and shops and working places and housing.

It's a real town, but it's not so easy. You have to have a lot of people to have a local shopping and school is the same. This area, I don't think we get a school in this area, because they have to move to these places and a school is very expensive for the municipality. And there will be a lot of housing, really, really many housing. And this existing area, we are now making a registration of the building that we would like to go further and could use this to something special. And we think this is a very important area for the whole Kløberparken.

It will be the places where you could go to a restaurant and a lot of these buildings could be transformed to shopping or something and the station will be here. So, I think this is very important to make and we call it Mangfalkby, but it's poly-functional. And also, we understand poly-functional, that the housing is both owner and rented and in Denmark

Peter Nielsen:

In Shared, you buy a house and then you can use a part of this house for your own housing. It's a little bit special.

### **Cooperative housing.**

And, you have a house, you share it and on special thing and it's not as expensive like the owner housing. And, you have more rights than when you rent that housing. So, it's a housing between rented and owner. The owner owns their own apartment.

## About Governance

Chiara Monelli:

8. How do you work with the municipality and private actors? How do you manage this relationship?

Peter Nielsen:

Yes. It's over a long time and we have a municipality plan that says what you can use in this area. And, it says that 25% should be social housing.

And, we have a degree about how to connect this area to the infrastructure. Should there be schools? Yes. All the plans. And, all these things. And, then we say to the company, yes, you can develop this area. We have to buy an area for schools and children and everything of this older people and so on. And, then we also say in this how much you can build. We say 150% or less. And, so there's a lot of demands in front. And, then we negotiate how to do it.

Could we build, they say, could we build more? And, so it's a long process. We have some starts. We have a starting point and then we negotiate.

Chiara Monelli:

How do you cooperate like this? Is then what is the owner only the municipality or in each area there is a private company?

Peter Nielsen:

It's mostly a private company. it's legal in the municipality plan and we can go further. And, many times they have an architect company that have a plan. And, we make a site analysis that we use in our dialogue with the company.

Peter Nielsen:

(...) They made many of the development sets together with the owners. And, we have a working group with people like me from the municipality and the ground owner and their advisors.

And, we make a plan how we come to the end that we make. The end of this process is a local plan and it takes two or three years where we make the ground owners make an architect competition and make a master plan. And, there is a process where we have to work with the master plan.

So, it's in condition with the municipalities, sizes of the road and so on.

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Chiara Monelli:

5. What makes Refshaleøen different from other areas like Nordhavn?

Peter Nielsen:

It's nearly the same. It was an abandoned industrial area, harbour area. The uses were different. Refshaleøen, it was a shipyard. That was the main part. But, there is also some municipal function in these places. And, Nordhavn was much more further than Refshaleøen. It was developed in the 00s. And, with the competition and so on, the infrastructure was easier to make in this place.

So, it was developed before Refshaleøen. Refshaleøen has always been out of the city. The infrastructure was very bad. And, in the first local plan from 1992, there is a little law that says that Refshaleøen could not be developed before there is a better infrastructure. And, this little text we have already said to the company, no, we don't want to develop this at this point.

It was first in 2018 where the government and the municipality made a decree about Lynetteholmen

Peter Nielsen:

Sometimes, when we thought we could start planning at Refshaleøen, it was in 2024, I think. We started developing Refshaleøen in the first phase, about maybe 500,000 square metres before the metro was established. But, we knew that we had a deal about the metro. It was established and finished in 2035. And then we thought, we start developing Refshaleøen and how many cars could the existing infrastructure handle. And therefore, we could make a small start and then, when the infrastructure was established, we could make the next step of Refshaleøen.

Chiara Monelli:

Is this water plant in Refshaleøen going to be decommissioned?

Peter Nielsen:

There is no decision about that yet. But maybe and I think it will be moving to this area Prøvestenen

## About Festivals

Chiara Monelli:

8. What is the role of large events, such as festivals (e.g. Copenhell), in the identity and development of Refshaleøen?

Peter Nielsen:

No, it's very, very difficult to make an area for festival in Copenhagen. And, I think, many places. And, yeah, the opportunity in Refshaleøen, it was far away from the house. Yes. And, it was a few days and it was, what is it called? Hard rock festival? But, it was far away. And, there had been a festival in other places in Copenhagen, like Gydals Park and so on. But, every place has a lot of problem, infrastructure, noise, and noise, again. So, Refshaleøen, they would like to rent the area out to the festival. And, it was far away from the city.

So, for seven years, it has been good for the city and for the company to have a place where you can make more noise than usual. And, in this local plan, we have indicated some area where you can have and make more noise than usual. Noise is a very big part of the city's discussion. You know, some people in inner city is drinking at the festival. In the city, it is not possible. Yes. And, if the opportunity in Refshaleøen will disappear, we have a problem. We have thought about many areas where we would like to make this happen. Politically, there are a lot of politicians who would like to find a solution. These are other places where we can make festivals. Some are speaking at the golf park in Copenhagen. But, it's difficult. Also, many of our politicians think that Refsele is very good as it is.

We have some function at this island that we couldn't have in other parts of the city. I think it's good for the city to have places like Refsele. Maybe, the best was for the city that there was no development.



#### 4. INTERVIEW SERAINA GRUPP (Transfer - Garden of Decay)



conceptual artist training  
focusing on food art

# About Seraina Grupp

Chiara Monelli:

1. What do you do in your field, and what is your role in relation to Refshaleøen?

Seraina Grupp:

Yeah, I'm an artist. I work from like a social scope towards a regenerative food system, and I work with biodiversity.

So I think regenerating the food system in a like multi-species way. And by creating community and care and stewardship for this process of judge. And I do it locally in communities, so I go in place and, yeah.

And that happened for a **Transfer** where I was the first one to arrive at this site and to create this multi-species community project, yes, in 2024. I started officially, but I had a preliminary observation phase of one year.

## About the city

Chiara Monelli:

How is Copenhagen working today on former industrial and port areas?

Seraina Grupp:

Yeah, I mean, I moved here almost five years ago, and I think what I can say is that I see a lot of fast changes. I can see the industrial areas disappearing in all parts of the city. And I would say they are often replaced by modern architecture that maybe compared to the kind of charming Nordic architecture we know. I would say it's a more sort of like multi-solution that could be applied to many places. So if you go to this area, yeah, but also if you go to this area, there's nothing like, so I mean, they don't build at the moment, like the plants are literally put in the last two weeks.

Okay. And they just, I've been especially observing the green spaces in those areas because personally I'm really interested in, and I feel, and I also see and know that by the construction site, around two weeks before the opening, they put the green living things.

Seraina Grupp:

(...)So that's something I really see. And of course they remove everything that is wild. Denmark doesn't have any wild places left. It's the second most cultivated country on earth. So yeah, it's quite bad. And there's one place maybe I would like to highlight, which is not necessarily, well, it's on the intersection, but there's one place I can also show you on a map where they made a system with plants. They had a lot of floodings in the basements and in the buildings, and they made this sort of ecosystem biodiversity project in the streets. So they recreated the public space and it works really well. So they don't have any problems anymore with the outbreaks. And in that case, it's why I was really impressed by the imitated wilderness they achieved. Like you could tell that those projects compared to these two week ones, it was carefully done and it was creating habitats and like ecosystems.

Seraina Grupp:

It's in Østebro. Okay. It's one part of Østebro where you can find it.

(...) This is the greens and you can see it even like the pathways and everything is quite special. And it's not necessarily a newly developed area, but this is a modern architecture of sustainability that I've seen uniquely in Copenhagen that I really want to highlight. Maybe in that way, architects and landscape engineers work directly in the meantime with landscape architects. Yeah, I think this is a specific architectural project that was also commissioned because of the problem of the flooding in the street, which I'm sure is also going to be a problem in the newly built areas or already is a problem. So this is an interesting modern architecture project in Copenhagen right now that is quite successful and it wasn't, I mean, it was aimed for kind of crisis, yeah, for a severe problem of flooding. So it's also interesting the aim behind the motivation.

Chiara Monelli:

Do you notice that these areas, as we're discussing about industrial area that are replaced by poly-functional, they are important also for the future of the city. If they are relevant?

3. What is the role of these areas in the future of the city?

Seraina Grupp:

Yes, if they are relevant, they are taken into consideration in the development of the city. Well, I would say there's a very big **speculation** going on. The prices of real estate has gone up into like unknown heights.

So at the moment, it's extremely expensive to buy any property in Copenhagen, specifically Copenhagen, which then leads that there's a lot of new buildings being built. I'm not sure if it's more speculative than actually the population growing. I mean, one has to understand Denmark is a very rich country, so people can actually afford to have multiple apartments, which also happens.

And then there's a few really big real estate companies that have been buying up a lot of property across the whole city. So I would say it's not maybe necessary to build so much more space. Or at least I think what would be more important is to think about public infrastructure. What are we building? Is it offices? Is it apartments? Or should we actually focus more on educational, community spaces?

Refshaleøen, for example,

is a good example of this because it's a private area. So it doesn't have any of the social infrastructure you would find in a neighbourhood that is not owned privately, like purely private. There's no library. There's no community centre. I mean, everything is a commercial space in the end.

The community is as spontaneous as yours. Yeah, like, for example, if you're out in Refshaleøen and it starts to rain, you can only find shelter in a place where you have to consume something. As an example.

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Seraina Grupp:

I think Refshaleøen is a whole big project. It's one of the biggest projects that we have to do. It's extremely commercial. We worked with them and they are really, extremely corporate people. We did a project for them and they didn't want to pay us and we had to, like, reach out to different people to pressure them to actually pay us. It's really a double-sided sword, I would say. So it's private. It's private. They act like they are... Also, all the food stalls, almost all of them are privately owned by this company. They pretend like it's a lot of small businesses, but it's not. So it's also, it's a bit of like a... I mean, I'm extremely critical about them. Also because of the personal experience of not being paid, working two and a half months for them. Okay. Yeah, so it's... I think they have approaches where they try to look like they are alternative and cool and like many small places. That's their strategy, the DIY kind of vibe. But one has to know they're extremely profit-driven.

Seraina Grupp:

It's a tourism magnet. It works really well for them. They make a lot of **money**.

Chiara Monelli:

I want to ask you, okay, so about this redevelopment. Refshaleøen is part of this and in how they are taking about what do you know? How Refshaleøen is considered in the process of redevelopment from the municipality?

Seraina Grupp:

Yes. A lot of people that live in Copenhagen, they would say first, oh, Refshaleøen that's so far away. So it's also really this kind of thing of it's quite an unaccessible place. You have to have a bike. There's only one bus. And that is very unviable sometimes. And there's a bus boat, which is really overcrowded, especially in summer. So it's a special area because there's only one street going there. And people really need to have a reason. So for Copenhagen people, they either go because they want to party. In summer there's a lot of festivals. So it's a festival place for them. It's a party place. They would, yeah, there's some clubs there that people like to go. And then there is this, there's a few food places that depending on what person you are, you would want to go to the street food or there's like Lille Bakery, which is sort of a darling of the city, especially of people who really like well-produced food. It's a very special project. (..) So people go because they want to eat at Lille, breakfast or lunch. Or people go because they want to swim maybe, get a bit out of the city, take a break. Yeah, so it's sort of this, it's an island for the city. Yeah, it really is. It's a leisure area where you can feel also a bit like cool being in an industrial zone. And it's really one of the last neighbourhoods. It's probably the last neighbourhood in Copenhagen that hasn't been reconstructed in the 21st century. So in this century we're living in, it's the only area that hasn't had a lot of building happening yet. And then there's the polarised conversation on Lynetteholmen.

Seraina Grupp:

I think you should go and see it. You will also see the relation. I mean people feel very protective also of the island. From the inside of the island, from the neighbourhood, we are a lot of creative small scale people. A lot of like small initiatives, projects. And the place is very much needed because it's one of these only places where you can get the studio spaces and where you can be a bit like messy because the buildings are old and then you can paint and you can like make ceramics

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Chiara Monelli:

I was comparing some area about Copenhagen like Nordhavn. There were already some redevelopment in the area. What do you think about it? Is it different from all of

Seraina Grupp:

I think maybe the special thing about Refshaleøen is it's mainly one landowner. I mean it's like Refshaleøen, Eidoskeleske, the ones you're talking with. And there's one other landowner which is called By&havn. That they are partially like also collaborating because they own parts of the coastal area which is for Lynette and very relevant. And maybe it's a good example to be well, By&havn is one of the really, really big developers in the city. They've already built a lot of different neighbourhoods.

## About Governance

Chiara Monelli:

So, what do you know about this administration, anyway, between different private and public?

I mean, I'm not Danish, so it's kind of a bit a hard question. I am from Switzerland. There is... Yeah, it's... I feel... Yeah, it's a hard question to answer. I mean, maybe I can say like this from what I know. In Denmark, there's basically... The government has, in the last 25 years, been a right-wing government. And I say that because there, basically, on a national level, there's no left-wing parties anymore. They all migrated towards middle to right-wing. And therefore, all the policies that you know from like left-wing policies, they're not represented on a national level, basically. But then again, **Denmark used to be a social state.** So, there's a few aspects. One is the politics of the last 25 years have made Denmark extremely, in my opinion, extremely, from what I can also see, into a full capitalist state to the verge. Like, **they're all about innovation.** I mean, they also definitely have a colonial heritage, which has given them a lot of... And still gives them a lot of wealth. I mean, Denmark being one of the richest places has a lot to do with its colonial past and also like present, colonial present. So, that's one part. **That's just like politics really destroyed a lot in the last 25 years in terms of land ownership, for example. I mean, that it is so speculative. There's probably, as I assume, a very strong lobby from real estate that it was even possible to gain so much private property.** Which now, in the last elections, in last fall, on the regional municipality level, like local and regional elections, it was the first time where they voted. And that only exists on the regional... So far, it's only left-wing politics exist, but only local and regional. And there has been a government from Copenhagen, been elected, **that promised in their elections that they will create again affordable living spaces, for example.** So, you can maybe very slowly see there might be a shift again. But, I mean, this is just the beginning. We need a few years to see if it will go back. But there have been some very worrying reports that a lot of the city has been bought up by these real estate mega companies that also act on a global scale. I think it was like one third of the property in the city was owned by these really big companies. I think one is called Blackstone, for example. It has renamed itself. They always rename so you can't track... It used to be called Blackstone. I think if you look up for Blackstone, you'll find it. And then another thing maybe is, yes, Denmark was a social state. So, also one third of the city is commonly owned housing. So, then you buy yourself into a collective ownership of housing. It's really hard to access. It's almost impossible if you're not Danish. But, yeah, a lot of the buildings you see around, they are called *andelsbording*. And they are collectively owned. So, there's this weird contrast of extreme private ownership and the same amount approximately that is owned collectively.

Seraina Grupp:

Like a society, a group of people buy a group of houses? Or one and many... Yeah, they have a deal with the bank. And then they kind of own this collectively. And also those prices have been going up and up and up. I mean, it's the collective prices once were maybe like, I don't know, you could get an apartment, collective owned apartment for like, you would maybe pay like 10,000 euros or something. You would get maybe three rooms somewhere in the central location. And then you would pay around, let's say you pay around like 3,000 to 4,000 crowns a month on top of this. So, you suddenly have an extremely cheap rent where you basically, you can rent an apartment for 500 euros a month on top of this collective ownership. So, you buy yourself in and then you only pay 500 euros for a whole apartment, which is very cheap here. Because normally, if you don't have this collective ownership, you pay around, you easily pay more than 1,000, maybe 1,500 euros for an apartment. Okay. I have friends and they pay 1,000 or 1,200 euros for 30 square metres. Okay. And not in the most central location. And that's, for example, one of the newly built complexes of living. So, the newly built things are extremely expensive. Very, very much. So, that's also something where I say, for me, this is speculation. Because it's insane that something costs so much. Yes. And also, it's, of course, yeah, it's all about connections. So, you only get affordable living if you're either Danish or you have really good contacts. Okay. If you somehow sneak in or you sub-rent for two years, it's also instable. They're asking also to participate in this collective owner, you have to be Danish. You don't have to be, but it's a gatekeeping system. Okay. So, you need to understand a lot to get in. You need to be really lucky and have really good friends. Basically, it works with lists. So, you're going on a wait list and then when it's your turn, you have the right to buy a part of it. But you wait sometimes 20 years. Okay. So, that's what I mean. I mean, for some of those lists, it's insane. Yeah. And then there's a whole, it's a whole thesis project in itself, the system. Yeah. But just to give you a little, that's what I feel also living here.

## About Participation

Chiara Monelli:

8. Do you think there is a participatory process in decisions about refshaleoen's development? (e.g., meeting with the Refshaleoen community)

**Yes, there was a meeting.** I wasn't there. I was travelling, but my collaborator went. And yes, **they basically organised a gathering for maybe two hours or so, where they presented the master plan, and then people could ask questions. Okay. And I think it was a lot about the concerns people had.**

And there is one neighbour specifically, who is one of the really important community members of Merhavir, who has been living there for ages, for sure 20, 30 years. And she is quite, she is one of the representatives, I think she is the strongest figure to represent rights of habitants, of people living on Refshaleøen. And she asked a lot of questions.

**But I wouldn't say it's a participative process. Okay. I think sometimes they try to listen to us, but I think it's a very intransparent system for me, how they listen or not listen.** Like when are they listening and when are they ignoring. I think that is for me a bit of a question mark. Yeah, which also, I mean, for the garden, for example, maybe as an example, one could say we're maintaining the garden for free. It's their lands. They should take care of it. So that's also their position on the whole project we have.

A **Transfer** is like, hey, we're giving you this space for free. So they take the other position where they say, we're giving you this space for free. We're extremely generous to you because we let you do your project for free here. But they also tell us that we can't make profit of it. So their premise is, yes, you can make a project here for free, but you can't make profit. In a way, we're maintaining a space where we don't get money. **We do it voluntarily.** We try to get funding for materials. But it's also kind of hard because the relationship with the municipality, I feel, is a difficult one. Because the municipality sees the landowners as a corporate entity that they don't want to give money to. Then we are sitting in between and we get a disadvantage of both. And I think us as a community, we just want to protect the garden. Because we think it's extremely valuable and there's a lot of species that you don't see anywhere in the city. And Refshaleøen is becoming... There's quite rare species seen lately. And I think there's animals living there that don't live anywhere in the city. But it's not valued. There are, but they are not considered. No, of course there's no project that actually examines this. Which is also maybe in a bigger context. The problem of the city is that, for example, maybe in other places like Italy or Switzerland, we would reach out to the university and be like, hey guys, I think we should research this place.

If we would do it in Copenhagen, I have the feeling we would encounter a lot of resistance. Because the municipality... I mean, they all hold together. Because you don't ask the municipality.

You have to ask the other owner or the private... In the end, they are all in this cooperation. So there is an interest... I mean, I do think environmentally Denmark might seem sustainable. It might look very sustainable from the outside. But they have been manipulating environmental empowerment in the European Union for the last... for sure 15 to 20 years. They've been manipulating efforts to create stronger laws. The concept of sustainability.

Seraina Grupp:

So on the innovation level, they make a lot of research on sustainability. They never implement them. Almost never. You can see that also, I don't know if you followed up on this, but there's this place called Amafell, which is a nature reserve. You see it also when you land with the plane. It's the highland between Malmö and Copenhagen. It's this place here. So this is the airport, and then you have this whole green area here. And it actually starts up here. And this is sort of like a nature... like a wild area. It's wild, okay. And the thing is that here... I don't understand English. I say this because this is a very valuable habitat for a lot of species in Copenhagen. But they are illegally building here. There's different construction sites, and I think...

## About Pollution

Chiara Monelli:

So, what do you know about this administration, anyway, between different private and public?

Seraina Grupp:

they illegally start to build. And there's been also cases where this happened before in Copenhagen, where actually if you build on a too polluted site, there's a risk of explosion. And people have been dying in Copenhagen. And they are doing that. And they do it anyways. And the citizens of Copenhagen, they voted against this project. But this is pure harm. And they just started building anyways. And they have a court case, which is also very risky for pure harm. Because if they lose it, they can go bankrupt basically.

Seraina

Grupp:

They do this festival in that period. I mean, the thing with pollution is one square metre can be extremely polluted. And you don't want to be out of pollution.

Seraina Grupp:  
They will cover and it's easier. I don't know. For polluted areas, the best thing is to let nature grow on it. Because ecosystems, they can actually seal off polluted areas. And they can grow in very few years. Sort of a safe zone on top that seals off the pollution. So it's a really good habitat. Nature is extremely smart. And human pollution is not necessarily a problem for nature. It's only a problem for humans. Yes, okay. And if you build then in such an area, which this part of the city. Yeah, that's what's happening there. That we have this genius solution by nature. And then there was this thing of we have to build. Ignoring the habitat. And it was an official vote that has been declined. They started building anyways. And then they start building on this ground. And actually there's a little river next to it. And also the groundwater. And there's also, I heard how the process is going. And it's extremely unprofessional and bordering. Anyway, are there systems to clean the area? You first have to acknowledge that an area is extremely polluted. And affecting the whole environment before you can actually clean it. It hasn't been acknowledged by none of the companies. I mean, it's a bit of like, yes, there's pollution. But we don't know how.

Seraina Grupp:  
Yeah, I think there's been a movement of 20,000 citizens. It's an initiative to fight. Or like a lot of, I think, I don't know. It was several thousand people who fight in a court case against that company.

## About Refshaleøen today

Chiara Monelli:  
2. What role do temporary activities play here?

Seraina Grupp:  
Yes, there are different examples, I would say. I don't know all of them. So, I would say, **there are a lot of temporary initiatives. But they are basically like this project based on voluntary work.** Extreme instability. Like a lot of the projects that I think are really important for the city. Very visionary, very sustainable. On different ecological and social level. They are purely based on values or like the aim of a person to do change. Without support of anything. Like it normally takes a really long time for an initiative to get support. It grows very slowly. And **most projects, they burn out before they are stabilised.** So, in Copenhagen it's very much possible to start an initiative. In Switzerland I encountered so much more resistance towards trying just something else. And in Copenhagen it's like, yeah, just try. We'll give you some land. And then they kind of know that you'll have anyways a really hard time. And if you actually make it, people respect what you did.

Seraina Grupp:  
But it needs this kind of survival time, I think. Maybe that's an answer. Yes, yes, okay. In fact, you gave me another perspective. I would say like a very few percentage of projects survive.  
Also funding. **You get easily funding for new projects. You don't get funding for maintaining.**  
Temporary houseboats. That one, how it works, about that. They are residents or not. There's both. There's some residential areas that are used temporarily. And there's some that are only used for studio spaces, businesses and so on.  
I mean, **I used to live in something called Copenhagen Village. And I think for what it is, it's way too expensive.**  
So you have a company that is like, we're doing student housing. It's going to be great. It's going to be very social and like people living together. We have this process of selecting diversity. I was attracted really about that. And then you go there and then it's just like another place where you pay a lot of rent.  
And also when you move out, they try to get you to pay, like not giving back your deposits. If there's problems, it's really hard to get help. Some of the quality of the accommodation is really bad.  
In fact, you pay, but at least you pay for... And you pay like 750, 800 euros almost for 10 square metres. Okay, okay. So they sell this project instead to be cheaper.  
Yes, yes. And often, and this happens also with the urban rigour. The same with the capsule tower as well. Some projects, they're like, oh, we're making student accommodation. It's a social building project. And then they make it so expensive that no one can afford it. And then it's like, oh no, we can't rent it out. So now we have to rent it to everyone. And then it becomes this weird situation where you have either students that have very rich families that can pay for it. Or you have this, I think in the capsule tower, a friend of mine is living there. He described it as the divorce place where people, when they divorce, they just very quickly need something to live. And they're like, whatever, I just take the easiest option. Okay, but you have to be, you can't afford anyway. But then, yeah, I mean, then you have the job, you have the income, you have the stability in life in a way. So it's, they often get the permission by the municipality being like, hey, this is going to be a social housing project. And then knowing that it won't work because people can't afford it. They know they can then rent it out to everyone anyways.  
So there's this other speculative. Of course.

Chiara Monelli:

But what is your thought about?

7. Do you think these activities are temporary or will they influence the future?

I can feel we have an impact on perception of value of, for example, the landowners. I can feel they sometimes understand maybe more than I think. I really hope that it would be possible for them to acknowledge that what happened in the past in all these other neighbourhoods, that this is not a place people really enjoy living. And that if they do a better job and actually consider social, mainly social, and like including the multi-species biodiversity, that they understand that there is a huge impact. I mean, also knowing, for example, that student items, they are part of the municipalities biodiversity strategy. Okay. So they kind of committed to, and that's a funny one because actually no one knows anything about biodiversity. Okay. I mean, between you and me, I think there is, I mean, they commit to something, they have no idea what it is. And I believe they start to very slowly learn a few bits also from projects like us. Okay. But I wouldn't be sure, I mean, we always have to be careful. Are we used or are we supported? Like that there's some kind of balance between achieving to preserve biodiversity, to enhance biodiversity, but also not being used by a corporate company where, I mean, I always say every mail I answer, every meeting I show up to, every administration that I do, all of this. As I said, it takes me around two days a week to work on this. I don't make any money of it. And for them, they are all, all of them have a paid salary. Like everyone is earning money. So if we go into a meeting, my time is not paid, their time is paid. So there's just a profound difference also. And I mean, I think I, there's no reasonable reason for me to be doing what I do other than just believing in that this is extremely valuable. And it's always a balance for me between personal resources, energy, health, whether I'm able to do this or not, which is the reason why we're also trying to be a very big community. If you're 15 people, it's much easier to do my work. But there's also types of work no one wants to do, which is the work I'm doing. So I'm doing like all the admin and all the communication, which is a lot of work. And it's not super pleasant for me. So, yeah, I think that's, yeah. And normally you're paid. Like, I think it's fair to be paid for the work that no one wants to do. Of course, of course.

## About Festivals

Chiara Monelli:

8. What is the role of large events, such as festivals (e.g.Copenhell), in the identity and development of Refshaleøen?

Seraina Grupp:

I mean, there's many festivals also. And festivals are important to the landowners, because it's the only way how they can use the land. And maybe they make more money from that. But once they are built, I don't think there's going to be any festivals anymore. Or just very small ones. But there won't be space anymore for festivals. And I think the festivals, some of them are really important to the citizens of Copenhagen. But yeah, it's also a bit like this party culture that is very present here in the summer time. Where everyone just wants to celebrate and dance. And drink. Yes. Yeah, I mean, I think the festivals are also a bit of a stress test every year for the community. I mean, you can't sleep. And it's basically from June till end of August. There's almost every weekend a big event. So you need to be quite sturdy to go through that. That's my reason why I can't really live there. Because I don't have a sturdy enough sleep to go through that. Yeah, but I think it's a mix. Some people really enjoy it. In summer it's really different from winter. The festivals, they really change the whole island a lot. And in winter it's very calm and peaceful. It's extremely like nowhere else in Copenhagen. There's nothing happening. No one wants to go there. It takes too long to bike. The wind is too strong. You're really in complete peace. It becomes a village. In winter, all the people that still go there, we all know each other. I can't walk five metres without saying hello to someone. So it's very different. Instead, during summer... Of course, if you're there in winter and you're there in summer, you still have those relations, but everyone is more stressed. Everyone is very busy. We have one collaboration with a festival called All Days. And they have been asking us every year to participate. Okay. And then, yeah, we get a bit of a pay to do projects. I think this year we might do a little bit of a bigger project. Okay.

Seraina Grupp:

sometimes I go to the festival. But I think as the garden was just next to the festival, it has been a bit of a stress. How do you manage that? Because there's a lot of people who just go into the garden and pee and they hide their alcohol. Very disrespectful to the space, which is not so pleasant. So for me, actually, I was a bit like, I can't do this anymore. Which I'm really happy to move the garden away. Okay. Maybe it's better for everybody. Okay, collaborate, divide the space. But it's better to collaborate. In the new space, we have much more possibility of being a bit more particular. Okay. Which we really appreciate, not to be so explicit. Yeah, it made it really hard because the landlords, they really wanted the garden to always look pretty. To plant flowers and so on. But people always took the flowers. So there was also something about, there's no point in making the space look pretty because it takes so much effort. We don't have the budget. And then people anyways go and pee everywhere where they want to. Yes. So there's been a few challenges with that.

# About Redevelopment

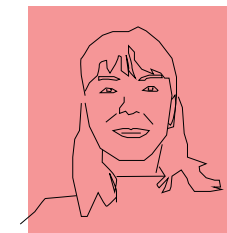
Chiara Monelli:

How do you perceive the ongoing transformation in general?

The redevelopment. Yes. A lot. I think it's really, for some people it's just work. For other people, it's their homes. Okay. And everyone always talks about what's going on, what meetings haven't been postponed. The redevelopment is really a big cloud on top of the whole community on Epstein. And we all know at some point it will start and there will be buildings. And we all just kind of hope it will push and push and push. But yes, it will happen sometime. So it's very present, I think, in some ways. And for us, I think on a personal level, I made the project based on the fact that we'll have to move, based on the fact that this is a temporary project. I tried to make a concept that makes it resilient towards change, even strengthen itself towards change. So also this moment of having to let go of the old garden, starting a new garden. I think there are sad aspects of this. I am worried about the biodiversity. I am worried if we can preserve its incredible ecosystem that it became. I also see changes in people with a lot of energy, a lot of ideas. They come in newly, they have so much drive and ideas. They are so motivated, which I don't have this energy anymore. So there is also something really beautiful, and the name Transfer has been chosen. Because I knew we'll have to transfer one day. And now everyone is going like, ah, you were Transfer is transfer. Which is, yeah, it's kind of making me smile. Because for me, in the end, it's an art project. My interest in this is how can we survive. I say I don't fight. I don't see, I think in fighting you lose so much energy. And I think we need more strategies of surviving and sustainability also. We need to figure out how things can continue to live. And if they have to change, everything has to change always. So we need to find strategies of change that work for surviving. So if we move a garden, how does that work? And I'm pretty sure that the only way of doing these crazy kind of moves and changes is through very creative thinking and community. So I really believe that in an urban place, we should come up with projects that really also... Because I see everyone so involved, and it's incredible, it gives me so much hope. I lost climate anxiety over this project. It's extremely empowering, and there's been hundreds of people involved in this project. And the people who are more involved, I think they have a similar optimism that arises. Digesting struggles together is so much easier than doing it alone. So I think there's really... You're not alone in this. I think there's something that makes me smile. We have this cheeky smiling, I would say. Because it does work. It is a project that I am really happy about. I started it, and it's been a shitload of work. But I still keep going, because I really believe we need these kind of initiatives in these times of struggles and climate change and social justice crisis. It's just... We need to hold together and go through changes and challenges together. I think that's a Transfer also.



## 5. INTERVIEW AMAYA STEENSMA (Transfer - Garden of Decay)



AMAYA  
STEENSMA

eco-social designer experience  
working in conventional and  
biohybrid architecture, ex  
resident in URBAN RIGGER

## About Amaya

Chiara Monelli:

1. What do you do in your field, and what is your role in relation to Refshaleøen?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

So, my field is originally in design. I was trained as an industrial designer and a product designer. And I, from the beginning, trained myself in eco-social design.

And over time, I started to specialise in design for ecosystem conservation and restoration with structures, particularly in marine coral reef ecosystems. And then that evolved into learning how to do consultancy in circular behavioural and bio-integrative architecture in Copenhagen.

I already had experience in automotive design, in robotics, And then just general, I designed a barbecue and a car charger also, I'm not sure what, electronics slash garden cooking. And I became very interested in not just marine rewilding, but also terrestrial rewilding.

So, I developed deeper toolboxes for an architecture studio in terms of bio-integrative design, particularly. And then I went on to study strategic design and entrepreneurship. And so, I dived into the worlds of not just sustainable architecture, but political architecture and bio-hybrid architecture, as well as behavioural design and academic and also professional process consultancy and a few other aspects of that.

Now, I'm an external lecturer at university. Well, I guess it can count. I've done a few lectures, I hope to continue to be.

And I kind of have one foot in academia as an independent researcher, and then also one foot in the professional sphere.

And my link to Refshaleøen is a deep love for community engagement. And I guess this conversation is the eco-social part of design.

I learned how to, I studied in my master's, I studied entrepreneurship for geared towards, strategic design geared towards how volunteer groups and communities survive.

So, ones that don't earn profit, they're not even non-profit organisations. And so, I came to know the garden

through this. And I became a community manager together with, as you know, Seraina, Astrid and Alex.

During that period of time, I became so immersed in the case study. And so, we taught people how to engage with urban ecosystems and workshops.

We cared very deeply for the garden itself and the human community around it. And yeah, I would say participatory design and research became a very important part of that and of my career moving forward as well. So, I guess that's kind of an expansive. And so, that was my role with that. We also were project managers and strategists and implementers basically of reference, greening strategy and community engagement around gardening, community gardening for a little bit there. And also, I lived in Refshaleøen for basically, essentially two years.

But officially, it was, I believe, a year and a half in the Urban Riggers, that's also a relationship I have there. And I would say that's about it. I think I was hired as well as a volunteer and that type of thing as well.

## About the city

Chiara Monelli:

How is Copenhagen working today on former industrial and port areas?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

Yeah, it's interesting because they've refurbished a lot of areas. It actually reminds me of Bilbao in many ways because like in Bilbao, there's a huge coal industry. In Copenhagen, it was different, but they've turned it into very aesthetic neighbourhoods.

I think Refshaleøen is very particular. I think, in my opinion, from what I've perceived, it's trying to take the most advantages possible of these previously industrial, even military areas along the coast and just general port areas. Some of them are very active still also.

These pre-port areas, it's interesting to see how, for example, if you're going to Northwest, I believe it is, Nordhavn.

Chiara Monelli:

How the city is working with ex-industrial area, you mentioned Bilbao, how was the relationship, because how the city is developing this area, do you think they are using the same routes or what?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

I know very little about the Bilbao case, what I do know is, the reason why I thought of it was because it used to be a very, very, very dirty coal industry, this one section along the canal, and

I'm thinking about, and they refurbished it into a clean space that was inhabitable and not dangerous and just, you know, attractive to tourists, basically, I think that reshaping the face of these areas has happened, especially as industry has gone outside of the city and industries have shut down, in Spain it must be similar to Italy, where a lot of the main revenue of the country has shifted towards tourism, and a lot of the industries that used to exist started to shut down, so

I know that because I know more about the coal side, because my grandfather was a mining engineer, and then I know from the reaction that my dad had from when they lived there, when we went to Bilbao, he was describing the difference in these spaces, so I have more of that knowledge of it, I never looked into it further, but it reminded me of that, from what I know about the industries that predated what currently exists, it wasn't coal, but yeah.

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Chiara Monelli:

What makes Refshaleøen different from other areas like Nordhavn or Sydhavn?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

Working today in formal industrial quarters, I think it's become very activated, some are more activated than others, some are more residential than others, as the examples that you give, but they seem to just really embody this new kind of, I don't know, modernism. It's this clean aesthetic that you get from recent buildings built in Copenhagen, which is a very Scandinavian aesthetic.

Big windows, sleek, clean, you know, facades, very pleasing to the eye, in my opinion. Nice brickwork, it's, some areas are quite expensive, most if not all of these, which look like this. I think it's a staple of that, but it's sadly, it's very expensive. But there are certain pockets in these areas, or near these areas, that are very much not like that, I would say. The difference between that line between Nordhavn and then Osterport is very fascinating,

because there's this huge difference in socio-economic level around where the train line is, and you cross over and then you see this incredible industrial slash residential site that's high-end,

and then you move to this other place, it's kind of sketchy to walk around at night, and then you move beyond that, and then you're back to the embassy and fancy residential place again. Yeah, I think it's just that, there's just entertainment, restaurants, residential some fancy industrial areas, like Sydhavn has a combination, Nordhavn has a combination of that, and Refshaleøen has its own version of that, yeah.

Chiara Monelli:

Could you confirm that the difference is in every area, in every developed area, and every area is different from the other, because of function and also the aesthetic way?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

I would say that they're similar, except for Refshaleøen, most are similar in the fact that they have some proportionality of, like, all of it is kind of like this fancier, more aesthetic, renovated brick, big window look. They all have a proportion of that aesthetic, some high-end, like, industrial site of different fields, depending on the area, they're different industries, and also some form of either entertainment or at least food, you know, or more kind of, it's not really culture, I think Refshaleøen is more culturally, but there's some form of entertainment, I would say, because the cinema in Nordhavn is entertainment, there's amenities for swimming, that's super common to all of them, I would say, from what I've been able to see in different proportions, but yeah, so residential, kind of like public amenities, and then also industrial areas, selective, that are not port, so these post-industrial sites are next to refurbished industrial sites, you know, does that make sense?

## About Refshaleøen today

Chiara Monelli:

What role do temporary activities play here?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

I mean, it activates the place so much, I think it's such a special place, because the buildings, you feel like it's, it is, the feeling I got the first time I went to Refshaleøen was, this is being inhabited, these bones are made for something else, and it's being re-inhabited, it's being reclaimed, that was the immediate feeling I had, and I think everything, I want a clarification in terms of what temporary means in this question.

Chiara Monelli:

6.1 Okay, I mean, temporary, like the market, the reference market, it's not stable, it's not a physical store, so it can be temporary, or also your transfer, it was borne as temporary, and also like activities of, like that.

AMAYA STEENSMA:

because everything in Refshaleøen currently is temporary, so yeah, it's, I think, you know, the garden emerged, it's kind of, to me, I think it gives, if we're being very poetic, to have a very simple metaphor, when it gives, I think it brings a value and a liveliness to a place that flowers do in the spring to a site. You know that they're going to go away sometime soon, you try to enjoy them as they last, and you hope that they'll come pop up somewhere else after they disappear, and I think these temporary pop-ups, they're very different to nature also.

I think the diversity itself is also an element that plays a role within these temporary activities.

The second-hand market for furniture that has been there for ages, and it is physically. Okay, so that one, if you walk in, I'm not sure if you went by it, it didn't seem like you had when you were visiting, it's also not important, but when you walk in, there's like thick layers of dust on the furniture, on these designer pieces that have been there for ages, and so it sits there for ages, but the space becomes available to people sometimes for that. (....)

AMAYA STEENSMA:

the garden is a really interesting example, because not only is it something that was known to be temporary from the very beginning, and something that we've actively, we didn't know if the contract would be renewed from the several-month period to a several-month period, it's very precarious. But on top of that, and we were very much in the present moment, we were like, let's just make the most of this now, because we don't know if we're going to have it from here to November, basically. So that was a very special feeling in itself, aside from the anxiety that accompanies that.

But also, the community members, it was a high turnover. They were international, some people would be there for a short period of time in Copenhagen and somehow find out that it was existing. That was very few cases.

But most, there were very few people who were interested in the whole of what the garden was doing. Some people were there just for the community dinner, some people would just help out with the chickens, other people really interested in the gardening and building days. And so it was interesting, there was temporary engagement within the community.

Aside from it being a completely living organism, the chickens were there seasonally, the projects would change depending on what community members there were at a given moment, and who was bringing what to the table and service to the garden. And let me think, what else?

Reffen is interesting, because they've been changing their strategy over time.

They used to be more of an alternative, edgy place. And then they started to have more mainstream. I think the food markets were always kind of the same thing.

But it was kind of a pity when the music, for example, was changing. I was really happy when they brought in a drag show. They do little pop-ups like this, and they're very passionate about what they're doing.

But there are certain things that are not catering. I'm not sure if I'd consider Reffen as a temporary thing within this guise, because they're a corporate entity that's very rooted in the Ghasheed.

And they've become more and more corporate.

What is temporary is what they offer per season. So they're offering a skating rink, for example, in winter. That's new, because very few people would come to Reffen in winter. And they have been there for not that long. That is something that must be said. I think they moved to that location from Papiron.

Yeah, so that's an interesting thing. Let me see what else. It's very fascinating, because there's a whole group of.. They're also temporary visitors. This diversity brings... I think it's the more temporary things that happen that are more underground, more quiet than the corporate, more ingrained places.

Even if we're thinking about hearts, thank goodness La banchina Bakery and The Monkey Naira are recognised for the places that they are, because they're fabulous. But these ones that are not festivals, not events that pop up, so things like the garden, things like Ewen Owens' home, which is a rooted one, but they themselves have said, we've designed the beds themselves, knowing that this is temporary. They would have done different things if one of the women there explained that to me once.

They bring people who are not... And they cater to people who live there, and they bring people in who are not just the partiers, not just people who are going to the museum and going to...

It's curious, because I think the rock club people, a lot of them don't stay around very much, but they're really more of the type of people that we would see around the garden. They're really cool. I think what I'm trying to describe is a lot of complexity around that. And then amongst those more temporary things, the complete opposite, going back to kind of what Reffen brings, is the festivals, of course.

And I know that there's another question about that, so it brings different crowds.

Chiara Monelli:

7. Do you think these activities are temporary or will they influence the future? /

AMAYA STEENSMA:

Something I've been thinking about for a very long time, actually. I think the simplest way of putting it is, I don't know about if they're going to stay there beyond the redevelopment. That depends on the negotiation between the groups and the landowners, expression of value, changing in strategies, and also the interface with the municipality. I think the way that these temporary... Assuming that they won't continue in initiatives like the garden affect the future, is what people take with them beyond its existence. The communities that it's created, the learnings, the memories, the personal development, all of these very visceral effects.

I can speak for myself in terms of what I've carried beyond me living in Copenhagen now, even though the garden still exists, thankfully. We actually, in our research, we were trying to... In my master's, what I was trying to bring also was, how do we keep this community going beyond this specific location?

I think that even if that doesn't happen, I think that's the answer. I think it affects people in certain ways, and somehow that spreads, even if it's not directly, but it's changed us. I think it changes us to different degrees. Yeah, it's very moving.

# About Participation

Chiara Monelli:  
9. Do you think citizens are involved in the process of the future development of Refshaleøen?

AMAYA STEENSMA:  
Okay, the participation in local organisations such as the community garden, it's extremely participatory. Any project is welcome as long as it serves the garden and the community, it gives back. Then there's places like UNHCR??? where it's kind of an in-between where they have a lot of educational programmes. But it's usually them teaching them. But there are discussions that are had in a very Danish way. And then you have more of the extreme of Copenhagen Contemporary or Copenhagen Street Food, where it's their institutions. They're like really... they're mammoths on the island. And their attempts for... like when we were doing the Reffen Wild project, their intention was to have some community boxes. But the participant... like it would be defined by them. The gardening itself inside of the boxes would be open. But it wasn't to the same degree at all. It's specific to an activity within those private groups. In terms of the process of redevelopment on the island, that participation has been interesting. Because, of course, and before the development, the Refsaluen and the municipality have been in conversation very much. They have very fluid communication, consistent because... I mean, for very practical reasons. Because Refsaluen can't carry out many things without their approval. So there's a constant negotiation going on there and open communication. With us, they would communicate what was possible, what... you know, all those things. And we had one person inside of the company of Reffen, the landowners, that particularly had more similar values to us. Which helped as an interface in the negotiation of what we were capable of doing on our plots in the garden. Which maybe would not have led to that many permission. Like, for example, with the very decay, the aesthetic of decay, we wouldn't have been able to get away with a lot of things that we were able to, if it weren't for them. But at the same time, we weren't able to get away with a lot of things that we wanted to. In terms of pushing those boundaries, because they had very hard limits with whether or not the polytunnel could be adjusted or that type of thing. So we would be able to ask questions, they would answer honestly, but they had very hard boundaries as well, in different ways. In terms of the process of the redevelopment, we, as inhabitants, given how I lived in the rigours, I'm just going to speak from that standpoint for a second. I remember hearing from a neighbour at some point that, oh, did you hear that the year for moving out has been moved to 2027 instead of 2025? And we're just like, okay, we don't know if 2027 is also going to be delayed. Also, I don't think the landowners even know. **There are certain things that are unknown because the landowners don't know, and other things that they choose not to communicate, such as a willingness to truly involve people because of the control that they have in their agendas.** It's an interesting balance, because **in terms of what was going on with the competition and everything, they brought us into a room for a Danish meeting. I didn't attend because I can't speak Danish, but Seraina and Alex did, as an update of, okay, these are the selected studios that are going towards the next phase. They've already done their investigation.**

None of them contacted any of us, of the studios. They all did it from their desktops, basically, from what we know and what we heard. **The complete investigation phase, which is when participation to negotiate the design, which is very uncomfortable for those who are developing it sometimes, because you have to reach compromises. That didn't happen.** We, as a garden, the landowners – O-Days, I'm very grateful that they were open to giving us another plot, and that they've allowed us to inhabit that plot. It's very expensive land, without requiring us to give rent. That's something that needs to be very clear. Also, on the other hand, O-Days, which is the festival that actually happens on the plot that's next to where the garden used to be, next to the riggers, it's growing bigger and bigger over the years. They kept on wanting more space. It's more expensive to have part of the festival in another place, in terms of logistics. Trucks can't really get through for whatever they have to do on the island. It's just the logistics they told us was going to be more expensive. They said, we need the garden plot to be able to expand the festival arena. They did not ask no methods, because they have a plot right next to ours, which is about the same size, a little bit smaller. I think they definitely didn't ask Jane, because I don't think anyone wants to screw with Jane on the island. She's a badass. Also, it brings architectural... The aesthetic of Jane's buildings are very much in line with what they're looking for, as with Noma. Ours were not. **We agreed that if they helped us move with at least basic equipment, like to carry some of the plants, we would be willing to move sooner. They gave us this other plot that was available. That's the participation. We have been able to negotiate these things with them. We have reached a lot of compromises with them in terms of aesthetics,** but in terms of the process of redevelopment, it's all been a spoof. I wasn't present with the citizen engagement, but from what I know of it, it was also a spoof. It was an actual participation, **uncomfortable participation.**

Performative participation is how I would call it.

**As a professional who knows participatory processes and is continually trying to learn myself, after having many discussions with people who work in advancing participatory architecture as well specifically, I can tell you for sure it wasn't.** However, from my experience in GXN, it is better. It is more than what we would do in the projects that I was part of for the year that I was an intern there, because there was no zero. There was zero participation. So, perhaps, sadly, in that way, it's innovative. It's absolutely not how participation should work. It's a comfortable, performative participation that gives them... It's basically SOCIAL WASHING, because it gives them kudos on the side of the municipality to say, yay, you involved kids to draw us some drawings, and then disregard everything, and not actually contact the cultural institutions that are very important and the inhabitants of the island, because those would be difficult conversations that I don't think that they're willing to compromise on. But they do better than nothing, just like with them giving us the plot and the change. They do try, but they don't know. That's my long answer to that short question.

## About Lynette

Chiara Monelli:

9 Do you think this opens a documentary like that, that is strongly side against... not against, but it was telling the truth about a big owner like BY&HAVN. Do you think this could be called participative process? So, what is happening to the citizens?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

the documentary itself and the truth as a participatory element? Yes. I would say it's not... That's an interesting question. To me, that's trying to inform the general public about what's actually going on in a corrupt system that claims to be providing a nature-based solution for flooding, and that claims to be adding value to the city in many ways that they're not. I think that it gives information that could hopefully... It's too late for it, but activism... I see this as a form of activism. Activism like this, just like whistleblowers, just like anyone who seeks to communicate and uncover the truth despite the greater powers not wanting that to happen, is grounds for... Because once you have information, you can act on that information. If you don't have that information, you can't. So, I would say it could be a catalyst for grassroots, so top grassroots at the very least participatory processes. Hopefully, very, very hopefully, the government would be willing to be open to hosting this type of participatory process, especially given the controversial role that they held in that. But in itself, it's a one-way reception of information when you attend a documentary. So, I wouldn't count that as participatory process. I would count that as, yes, involving the citizens in an attempt to communicate the truth and say, now you know, what are you going to do about it? And that what are you going to do about it could be a participatory process that comes from that. No, I definitely don't expect it to happen from the private companies. My hope is perhaps that the government... Does that make sense?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

And it's... I know someone who... It was extremely devastating, the whole process. There were so many students who were doing thesis on this, there were so many activists that... I know someone from the Centre for Applied Ecological Thinking, called Salvatore Della Rosa, also Italian. he is an academic and also an activist in practise. It's really interesting. He's a political... well, he's a sociologist, but he works within political ecology. He helped organise the states, right? I think I told you about this, right? Where they would camp there. They literally set up camp and they would relay each other to make sure there's always someone there. And they were able to delay the process, but even that, you know, it's just... it's very, very frustrating, because we look towards Scandinavia as people who are not from there.

I remember looking towards Scandinavia and thinking, oh, I'm going to go there and work, and I'm going to be in this **little wonderful bubble of sustainability** and recharge myself to then go back to Spain, to then go back out into the world and face the issues that there are.

Oh, if everyone was like, you know, Scandinavian countries, it would be a better world. You know, to be honest, after having lived there just for four years, it's a pattern where they have budged numbers in certain reports. Actually, I think it's like 2% circular as a country, or something crazy like that. Yeah, two or three. Yeah, it was just a really small number. But in terms of these things, you know, there's another example. I think that they have really good intentions with certain things. They are cutting edge with certain participatory processes and endeavours into sustainability. But when it comes to these things, the money becomes very apparent as the main thing. The Lynetteholm is going to be middle to upper class residential area. That's all. What they're doing in all of Denmark right now is also the demolition of, quote-unquote, ghettos. I mean, there are ghettos for dangerous entries. That's what they call them. It's also problematic to call them this because that's a whole other thing. But they're demolishing perfectly good buildings. Also, not selectively. I know about this because GXN was trying to say, okay, it's going to happen anyway, despite the political lashback?? of civilians. If it happens anyways, how can we try to influence at least the demolition process so that we can reuse parts of the buildings? It's happening anyways. It's really devastating. I think that it's really important to hold people accountable as to what's not enough and what's not okay. That starts with willingness to compromise for the people who live in a place, for the ecosystem that we inhabit in the city of Copenhagen, because money is clearly still the driver. They don't need that much. That's my honest opinion.

## About Festivals

Chiara Monelli:

9 What is the role of large events, such as festivals (e.g. Copenhell), in the identity and development of Refshaleøen?

AMAYA STEENSMA:

Money. Money.

Yes, I mean, also I must say, I would have loved to have attended Copenhagen. That crowd is wild and very kind. I think it's, let's see, because it's O-Days, it's Distortion.

Carousel and Copenhagen, exactly, yeah. I think Carousel and Copenhagen are very immersive, especially Carousel, because it's in the forested area. It's almost mystical.

When I went, it was a lot of fun. I think, of course, it's to activate the area. It's to use a space that is very expensive land.

That's why I say it brings in money. It's also a big thing. It attracts people from around the world.

It was amazing to see the different nationalities, because the whole campground that's outside of the urban rigour, that whole field was the campground for Copenhagen. We got to see all of these teeny little flags that people would put outside of their tents. People from New Zealand, from South America, from all over the place just coming over here because it's a massive, massive festival.

It is an enlivening of the spot. Hopefully, it's just like what we saw with the garden, not always, hardly ever people who come from the outside for these purposes, for these pop-ups, for all these things, actually stay and come back for these more... That's another discussion though, the more underground little initiatives.

It also serves the purpose of being very... Oh my God, it's so loud. It's such a nightmare, not carousel.

Carousel is very nice because it's further away. We don't really hear it at night. I remember I had a concussion maybe a week before O'Day's started.

Thankfully, O'Day's... I think the function of entertaining inhabitants is only when they open up tickets to people who live there. O'Day's does that well.

O'Day's gives urban rigour people, and I think the village people also, the village people, Copenhagen village inhabitants, tickets to attend. I know this because we've attended, but distortion, it is a public space. It's just the music is crappier in that area because the best grassroot music going on is in the city.

That's just a fact. They just try to sprinkle around little food trucks that are mediocre, and you can't compare it with Riffin. I just remember the music being very crappy to my liking.

Copenhagen, very loud people up until when they try to be respectful. The more drunk they are, the less respectful they are, but they are quite respectful with the neighbours. I think O'Day's is the more entertaining one, but you have no choice.

When I had my concussion, I remember it being I had to flee the island because I could not. I was getting a migraine degree. I couldn't move the first night because I was so bad. It was a nightmare. I guess in terms of roles or effects, I've brought in the term effects to that question.

## SPECIFIC QUESTIONS – AMAYA

Chiara Monelli:

What is your role within the Transfer community, and how do you use the space in Refshaleøen?

It changed over time. So initially, I started out helping with the chickens very pragmatically. And I started asking Senaina what they needed more help with. So I started helping to fix planter boxes. Just fix things around. I just started getting involved in helping like clean, organise those days clean up. We also built an emergency, like I would show up for the emergencies or like with the chickens were getting too cold one time. So a couple of us came over immediately and built this emergency chicken group. I think that was one of the first times that I talked to Senaina and asked a little more deeply, because it was after that we were all tired. We were having like a little something in front of me. And then we started talking about ambitions for the garden. So that's where I started to help with kind of the community coordination and just helping the more core activities. I was on boarded. I got to meet the rest of the people, the landowners. So I started interfacing with that and took that on quite a bit. And then we made the decision to do the four way work. So at the beginning, Seraina and Astrid were more on top of, Astrid was very on top of the plants. And well, Seraina was too, but Astrid is a gardener. They're gardeners professionally. And so they would be bringing plants from their school and the kitchens. And Seraina would know where everything was and the chaos of the greenhouse. So I would basically help with everything else. And then I helped trying to earn money for us as well with the different, like taking on, we would share the workshop responsibilities and we would try to organise the pop-ups. And I was very much involved in the cafe exhibition, all of these things and trying to activate the community too, through my own research. So I brought a lot of people together to make the zines that I designed as an activity of representing the collective understanding of what the garden meant to them through two seasons. And I would say that that's kind of, yeah, I added communication strategy, like Seraina also was really good at that. I just had a different angle. I think I added some more, it was kind of an interesting bridge between Alex, who's an architect and Seraina, who's an artist. I think I was somehow an in-between and sometimes a translator, so to say, because the aesthetics of both of them were very, very different in particular, just to put an example, if you look at aesthetics.

# Layers of preservation

Qualities worth of preservation on site

01 Small scale industrial activities



02 Temporary housing



03 Recreative public spaces



04 Vegetation



05 Unique spatial qualities



06 Special ground surfaces



## 6. INTERVIEW CECILIE ØDUM (Architect)



CECILIE  
ØDUM  
KNUDSEN

Architect at Hørsholm Kommune, ex resident in CPH VILLAGE, Master thesis on Refhslæøen at Royal Danish Academy

## About Cecilie Ødum Knudsen

Chiara Monelli:

1. What do you do in your field, and what is your role in relation to Refshaleøen?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

In my written thesis or the written part of my thesis, I looked very into the gentrification of Copenhagen in general, because I thought that we missed some kind of architecture policy for each area, because right now it just looks the same.

So for my final presentation, I made this quiz to my examiners, where I put 10 different pictures of new buildings in Copenhagen and then made them guess where they were from, because they all look exactly the same.

It was to prove my point that. You know, you could keep so much of the soul, but instead of doing that, you just like tear down everything and then you just build something up and then you expect, you know, the soul and life to come back.

So I wanted to work in another way around it, to keep the existing qualities and build around them, just to keep the atmosphere, instead of just closing everything.

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I was actually inspired by nature. When you have endangered species, you're not really allowed to build there. For example, there's this plot in Amager, the island in Copenhagen, where developers wanted to build, but there was endangered species out there. So they weren't allowed to build anything because we have regulations. In order to keep these endangered species in nature, but we don't do it with the cityscapes.

So right now, the people that moved to Copenhagen, in the 80s, for example, they are being pushed out of the city.

So you cannot afford to live here, if you don't have like any higher degree. So we're missing a whole group of people that are being pushed out of the cities, and we are losing certain , jobs in the city.

We're losing like, so many different things. And I wanted to keep that certain. Okay.

In my programme, I called it endangered species of the cityscape. For example, if you have these industrial areas, they will be endangered species, because they're about to be, torn down, and replaced with housing instead. And the same with some of the social groups.

And the jobs. So for example, if you were like an industrial worker, you cannot afford to have a shop or an apartment in Copenhagen anymore. So I wanted to secure that.

## About the city

Chiara Monelli:

How is Copenhagen working today on former industrial and port areas?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Yeah, I think one of the things that's really a quality for Copenhagen is that you can see clearly it used to be industrial port area. But yeah, as I told before, they have torn a lot of those buildings down. And I think it's really sad because it's such a big part of Copenhagen's identity. And especially on Refshaleøen, where they used to have this huge shipyard. I really hope that they keep some of these qualities, because otherwise, you're just, physically erasing the history of the port.

Chiara Monelli:

What is the role of these areas in the future of the city?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Right now, they're being used as, economic interests for future development of Copenhagen. So for example, they are selling the land of those areas to pay for the metro or pay for other things.

I think they then will turn it into housing.

## About governance

Chiara Monelli:

I understood in these days, because there is a communication between private and public. They try to work together. I don't know if you can tell me more.

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Copenhagen municipality built the metro back in like, 2002-2007 (first metro development phase), I think. Maybe before that. And they were in so much debt that they weren't allowed to like, develop anything else.

So they made a debt company. And that's By&Havn (2007 foundation year) .

So they are 95% owned by the municipality. And then they took over the municipality's debt. And then they also took over the development Copenhagen municipality's land.

Chiara Monelli:

So it wasn't before the construction in 2010-2020. It was everything owned by the municipality.

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Yeah, some of the plots are owned by it. But the thing that's unique with Refshaleøen, that it's also privately owned by a company. But places like Øresund, for example, or Nordhavn and Sydhavn, they used to be owned by the municipality of Copenhagen.

So what By&Havn does is that they develop these places, and then they sell them, so that they can earn money to pay for the debt of the municipality.

Right now they have a huge debt. And they're also building the metro. So I think a part of the plot of land they're selling and developing is paying for the future .

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Chiara Monelli:

4. Where does Refshaleøen fit within Copenhagen's development?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I think what I understood is that, that Refshaleøens Ejendomsselskab (Refshaleøen Real Estate Company), the ones that owns the island, they kind of wanted to care of that it's done properly. But they are also like, fusioning with By&Havn. So they will own it together. And By&Havn is known for their quick development of other harbour places. But hopefully, there will be a difference this time. And I hope that they will keep some of the existing qualities there.

Chiara Monelli:

4.1 Why is it different?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I think it's different because the other industrial areas in Copenhagen has been mainly owned by the municipality, where this island has been private because it was a shipyard. So, the owner of the company, they own that piece of land. So I feel they have a relation to it.

Chiara Monelli:

5. What makes Refshaleøen different from other areas like Nordhavn or Sydhavn?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Refshaleøen is only owned by one company . There are other differences with Nordhavn. Maybe the difference could be that we have learned so much from the last time we have been developing these parts of the city. Hopefully We have because it's more sustainable just to, not tearing everything down and build something new hopefully, they will keep some of the buildings and transform them into something else instead of just tearing them down. But now we'll see.

## About Refshaleøen today

Chiara Monelli:

6. What role do temporary activities play here?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I had a theory that I put in my written thesis that the temporary activities is being used as a development strategy for companies like By&Havn, for example. So a few years ago, I think it was in 2007, when they developed Ørestaden on Amager ( By&Havn), it was Copenhagen municipality's plot of land and they planned to build a whole city out there to connect Sweden with Copenhagen and then to make this huge infrastructure place between them.

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

But the thing is that it was so far away that a lot of people in Copenhagen didn't really care about it. So everything was quite cheap out there and they didn't really earn enough money on the plots of land. And then the financial crisis in 2007 hit and now everything is quite a shit show out there, to be honest. So I think what they learned is that they can use temporary activities to make people connect to a place and sell it more expensive that way. For example, on Papirøen. It used to have the same temporary activities as Refshaleøen has today. They just moved these temporary activities to Refshaleøen when they developed Papirøen. But before that, nobody really knew Papirøen and there wasn't really public access to Papirøen. Then they started Experimentariet\* (A museum of science) I and they started the street food market and I think they had Copenhagen Contemporary as well. And suddenly everyone started to go to Papirøen after work and it was a huge debate when they decided to close Papirøen just to tear it down and build apartment houses. And that was because everyone had a relation to it somehow. So I think they're using temporary and recreative activities as a development strategy. I don't think anyone would care for Refshaleøen without the temporary activities because it used to be closed but now it's where all the big festivals are and there are cafes and there are bakeries and the street food market. I think everyone in Denmark has a relation to that island now and if By og Havn didn't use the temporary activities as a part of the development strategy, I don't think anyone would care. Today, because of people's connection to Refshaleøen due to temporary activities it's attractive amongst developers.

Chiara Monelli:

So I missed a point. What I understood and I knew that for example the Reffen market was in Papirøen and then moved to Refshaleøen. Yeah. And also the contemporary activity was the Contemporary Art Centre was in Papirøen. Yeah, I think so. Okay, okay. What you were talking about that nobody before knew Papirøen and now go? Why?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I think it was because it was purely industrial areas. They were closed off. There were no access to the public. I think the buildings were empty. Maybe there were like small startup companies, small workshops, but it wasn't something that, you know, the average Danish person would know about. And it was the same with Refshaleøen. So I used Papirøen as an example for what possibly could happen to Refshaleøen.

Chiara Monelli:

7. Do you think these activities are temporary or will they influence the future?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I really hope that they will keep them in the future. And that was also what my project was mainly about. Because I think it's really sad that you build this whole public atmosphere and you let everyone in and you give access to everyone. And you create this really nice environment just as a development strategy. And then you just push everyone out and tear everything down. I think it's really sad.

So I'm hoping that they will keep it. But I can also guess that the next development project after Refshaleøen, Might be Jernbanebyen\* (An industrial area now used for temporary activities) . Jernbanebyen is, like Refshaleøen, also one of these plots of land that nobody had really known about, Before it was used as a place for temporary activities.

Their street food market is called Banegaarden (A new food court). And as you can see, By og Havn doing exactly the same again. They're building up a street food market. They're trying to build up venues, the paddle yard, Lokomotivværkstedet (An indoor venue) which is a venue used for parties, and exhibitions. This area was industrial, it used to be a place where you fix all the trains in Copenhagen. Nobody knew about it a few years ago, maybe just move it to the list of other activities.

But I think they will start to plant some seeds there and try to make it attractive. And then when they're starting to develop the area, once it's popular and has a high marked value. My theory is that they'll move Reffen Street food to here. And then when they move all the people there, and they will make that the main temporary activity venue in Copenhagen. Once it has become popular, I think they will move all the temporary activities to a new industrial area to make that area popular and then develop Jernbanebyen and make that into another housing area with expensive apartments.

I think it's a part of the development strategy. We have seen it before starting with Papirøen, and I don't know where it was before Papirøen, but now it's Refshaleøen, and I think when they develop Refshaleøen, they'll move it to Jernbanebyen. So they keep moving the qualities around, instead of just keeping them everywhere, while developing everything.

Chiara Monelli:

7.1 Do you think it is a positive strategy to apply in this way, moving the market, you move the people, do you think like that?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

From an economic perspective only, I think it is a great strategy because it makes nearly worthless plots of land quite attractive because of the many local activities and the peoples connection to the place. In that way, By og Havn can sell the land to a higher value to a developer and the developer can build cheap apartments and sell them with a higher value. In that way By og Havn will be able to afford developing projects like the Metro in Copenhagen.

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

But from a perspective with focus on qualitative values, development strategies like these are ruining the city. By using temporary activities as a development strategy with no intentions of keeping their qualities, when tearing down and building new, leaves the neighbourhoods soulless and gentrified. At the same time, the housing prices are rising in these areas which makes it impossible for many social groups to live there since only a few can afford it.

## About Participation

Chiara Monelli:

8. Do you think there is a participatory process in decisions about refshaleoen's development? (e.g., meeting with the Refshaleoen community)

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

**They started with this idea competition, just to open up to everyone. Where both architects, students, neighbours, and citizens could share their ideas for Refshaleøens future. And just to start to have some focus on the qualities.**

**And then they narrowed it down to the competition that they're currently running.** And now they're just, waiting for clarification about the metro.

Chiara Monelli:

The metro, yes, they are waiting for the metro, yes. The metro will be a job from the municipality. Yes, exactly.

In fact, they told me they are choosing the project, the owner, but they have to wait for the metro approval from the municipality. Okay, okay. No, I was interested about this.

In fact, I was already, I found something online about this. It is not really a participatory process, but it's something because, in fact, the owner showed me a book where they collected drawings from children or from architects, they collected, so you know about this, okay.

Instead, they opened instead the other competition that it was opened to the studio and the main architects.

So they did two different, they told me also that they will, when the decision will be made, and that could be from one studio or two proposals together, they will do another meeting with the citizens.

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I don't know. But they have also been waiting quite long for the competition. I think it was supposed to start in September 2024, and then they had to wait for the municipality plan, but I don't know if they came to an agreement.

Chiara Monelli:

Do you know other process like this, that they involved with the citizens in any district?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I know from the municipality side, because I work in a municipality now. So I work with local planning, and also the municipal plan.

Chiara Monelli:

How is called the municipality?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Hørsholm

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

So usually you use your municipal plan to base your local plans after, and then in that plan, you write very briefly where you want to develop places. And then you use local planning to regulate smaller areas. The local plans regulate what's allowed and what kind of activities you want there. In both processes, you are inviting the public. And especially if people live in the area, where you work with the local plan, they're invited to hear about what their new neighbourhood is going to look like.

## About Festivals

Chiara Monelli:

9. What is the role of large events, such as festivals (e.g. Copenhell), in the identity and development of Refshaleøen?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

I really like the festivals and I really like that it's so close to Copenhagen without being too noisy for anyone. But I don't know what the future of the festivals is. And there is especially this festival called Copenhell. Right now they're very unsure about if they're allowed to continue as a festival or if they have to close because there isn't enough space for them in Copenhagen if the outdoor venue, they currently use for the festival is being developed into housing or something else dense.

Chiara Monelli:

I wanted to show you that I did some research and I also found the map about, it is something about my thesis. Because I found out the maps of the festival and I put it on the map and I found how this festival changed the atmosphere of everything, yeah. I can find them. I will show you at the end. This is really interesting because in fact, and I was also interested about this. I used to attend the festival also in Italy and everything. And it was interesting that it is like all Rafshaleon was also seems like was dedicated to this.

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Yeah, exactly. And they're kind of missing that outdoor venue if they're developing it, because I don't think they'll find it anywhere else. Then they should go to Amager. But I don't know if there's enough space for that.

## SPECIFIC QUESTIONS – CECILIE

Chiara Monelli:

How would you describe Refshaleøen today from the perspective of someone who lived on the island?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Yeah, it was quiet, except for the festival seasons. And I think it was really nice to have this connection with the island. I moved in in 2018. And I think we were only 16 citizens on that island. So it was really quiet. And I lived there before. Reffen was a thing. So I was there before the street food market. It has also been really interesting to follow the process of having the whole space to ourselves. And then suddenly, everyone came. And even my international friends had heard about Reffen before they came to Denmark. So suddenly, it's one of Denmark's or like Copenhagen's biggest attractions. So it was interesting to see that process. And you can see that every year, it's getting more and more crowded out there.

Chiara Monelli:

In your thesis at the Royal Danish Academy, what aspects of Refshaleøen did you choose to study?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

That was the endangered species that really inspired me. I was like, I thought it would be sad if all temporary activities in Copenhagen disappeared. I thought it would be quite sad if Copenhagen was fully developed someday, that there wouldn't be enough space to have this flexibility in the city. We also saw a need for flexibility during, for example, COVID, that the new housing areas don't have. They're having a density percentage about 150, 200%, which means that they don't really have that many open spaces or open spaces that are flexible. Like, for example on Refshaleøen you can have a whole concert one day and then you can have a festival the other day and then the street food market. So everything is quite flexible. And I wanted to keep that flexibility in the city.

Chiara Monelli:

What risks do you see in the area's future transformation? For example, loss of identity, gentrification, or excessive standardization?

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

For me, it's the identity, but it's also the home of startup companies and industrial workers. I'm really fearing that Copenhagen is only going to be a city that's where only a few can afford to live here. So the prices are high for just living standard. It's almost impossible to find an apartment and everything is really expensive. And right now we see a tendency where rich parents are buying apartments in Copenhagen for their children and then the prices are just rising.

Chiara Monelli:

It's a process of exclusion now.

**Cecilie Ødum Knudsen:**

Yeah, exactly

And I'm really fearing that that's becoming a thing. So I really looked into By&Havn because they keep saying that they want a city for everyone and they really want diversity and they want mixed cities. But what they're really doing is that they're building for the upper middle class. And then the prices are rising because of that.



## 6. INTERVIEW JANE OSTERMANN-PETERSEN (KOLONIEN)



Artist and resident - Kolonien

## About Jane Ostermann-Petersen

Chiara Monelli:

I wanted to ask also about your background. How did you arrive here? And what is your relation to this island?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

**I'm brought up partly, my grandfather built that building.**

This was like the harbour where they had all the goods coming in, going to different places of the country. And my family was busy with the transport and the shipping things.

So I have always been on the other side, looking over on this area, which was totally forbidden. It was a huge a shipyard. And you could not come in. You had to have a purpose to be here.

Chiara Monelli:

And why do you choose actually on this area for kolonial and your project?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

Because, you know, for me, it has a huge aesthetic value, you know, that old industry, pre-war, war, post-war industry. You know, like, I'm brought up with that we would also in Amsterdam, you know, like that we would... This is where we make the parties.

So it has this kind of leftovers industries, you know, from that area. Also in Germany, it just got some aesthetic qualities, which I really like. There's some **“good ghosts”**, you know. So that was pretty easy. But the special about this place is, there's probably some left in Germany as well, but is that it's so close to the city and you still have this area which is sort of waiting for something to happen, you know. And then there is happening a lot of things in the meanwhile.

Chiara Monelli:

is interesting the relation to this area and the city.

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

Exactly. But normally in a city that, you know, like expansion of the city, you know, like unification and that would be in a slightly... Yeah, it's like the plans.

That's sort of like having this little battle thing going with. But so in that sense, it's, I don't know, the older I get, the more I'm like into birds and plants.

Chiara Monelli:

Do you cultivate also something?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

I try not to, but yes, I do. But then I do it like in, like out there, you know, and then I only do plants which I can use for colouring. And then I made that house over there. Yeah. So that is also have a little bit of direction, gardenery, you know, like you can have plants pre-growing. So I think I am slowly going into some sort of adapting to this place as being this nature-like situation or urban nature.

## About the city

Chiara Monelli:

2. I was interested also, in fact, about this industrial area. I wanted to know also about your knowledge, how the city, the municipality is working with industrial area, but also other districts. How is Copenhagen working today on former industrial and port areas?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

And I don't know exactly what that is. But I can, of course, say something about like how I am experiencing it.

Chiara Monelli:

3. For sure, we can see that there was a movement about the industrial area in here. Also, I visited also Nordhavn, Sidavn and also the other area. Do you think all of these here in general, they will be developed and considered in the future of the city? What is the role of these areas in the future of the city?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

I think the city always did. I think it's always been part of the, you know, like when, back in 1605\*, you know, when **the King wanted people to move to Amager**. You know, they said to them, like, **“Hey, you don't have to pay tax. I give you land. You should just build.”** So that was in 1600. So there's a lot of examples back in the time where you sort of like, you have these pioneers, you have these people, who know more about something. Inviting them from **Holland**

(in spoken English people often say Holland to mean the Netherlands - inviting Dutch settlers from the Netherlands),

making them do greenery on Amager. They don't have to pay taxes. So it's a way of inviting certain qualities you want for the city. Okay.

So the last what, 40 years, 50 years, 60 years, I don't know. You know, like it's changed because it's democracy. It's not a king who is sort of like, it's a whole organisation which has to work. And you're like “we need better houses for a lot of people”.

We, you know, like we have to move in quite big houses, you know, and then the story at a certain point in the 80s here, Copenhagen was almost bankrupt. There was no money for renovation.

And, you know, like a quite good example, that house over there has been in my family for, I don't know, like three generations. And at a certain point, it's built like in 1904, and you know, like in Copenhagen, there was a lot of build from 1890 to 1910. A lot, a lot, a lot. But so a lot of those buildings at a certain point, they needed new roof. They need a certain fire. Quite big investments. And there was a lot like my father and my family who hadn't put enough money on the side. So they hadn't, they didn't have the money for renovating. Yes. So they were sort of like, and that was a very special agreement made in Copenhagen, that by law, the people selling the houses, they had to sell it to the people living in them. And that's how you got a lot of **andelsbolig**, a cooperative housing ownership, a very specific Danish housing model in Copenhagen.

Chiara Monelli:

The city is always moving and is always moving to renovate the area.

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

Exactly. Something has to go down. Other thing has to be built, you know, and you can also see it from here. You can see the big renovation over there. It's, of course, the people who is building there, it's good. This mask got his headquarter there and now they are making a new headquarter. They have to expand. So that's what's going on over there. So it's always been. But you can see that it's sort of like a political agenda as well. This old, this was old military. I think 10 years ago, they were really talking about transforming it into older, elder homes. But because of the war and Europe was going on, they are not selling military. This was one of the most important part of the military defence of Copenhagen. So it got a huge historical value. Okay. And for now, that story, it's much more important than some old people.

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

The military was nearly not something we have been thinking and spending money for, for a long time, you know.

The whole situation is quite the new windows, you know, like a heating system has to be, you know. But there's also a huge gym in there. And slowly, people who are living in the area, they sort of like got access to that, you know.

So there's all these, you know, like where, like, this be a way, you know, like in the 70s, there was a lot of like; "the guys in the office". Okay. And, and they wanted to play tennis. So there is, you know, because that's what they do. I don't know. So there's like a tennis course being built there. And, and then people are taking that over and are playing tennis. So you have a lot of trade for different areas, different ideas, different, you know, like then it's been taken over and used for something else or from somebody else. And that's just, that's how a city, it's a body. It's a life.

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Chiara Monelli:

4. Where does Refshaleøen fit within Copenhagen's development?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

I don't know. I mean, I know that I got a lease. I got a contract like everybody else for the next couple of years. So what I know is only what you can pick up in, in use. So that's the only thing I know. If you dig a little bit deeper, you know, because I'm not the one who's deciding. And I, it's not my money and it's my house, but I got a release and that's what I'm sort of like.

Chiara Monelli:

5. What makes Refshaleøen different from other areas like Nordhavn or Sydhavn?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

Yeah. Because, and that's quite special actually. The development you had like in Amsterdam in the nineties, in London and, you know, it sort of didn't happen here. So you have actually an open field. You are very close to the centre. And the old purpose is still very visible, you know?

And I think that this situation has been here now for 20 years, whatever. So you also start to see, you know, like with the containers, with the houses like me, you know, which is also sort of a reflection of the time and different thoughts about what we need or what we would like to, or so that, that period of temporality is also starting to get its own story and its own life and its own, you know, like little marks on Refshaleøen.

## About Refshaleøen today

Chiara Monelli:

6. What role do temporary activities play here?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

Yeah, of course. Yeah, of course, because it is. If you, you know, like, if you don't make two big steps, you know, this is how it works, the city will develop, you know, like something has, there is needed this, we are building that, this is too old, this has to go, you know, like, this is how a city will move, you know? Yes. And the thing is, of course, when you are having these huge, you know, like, okay, you know, city planning, and of course, you can say something about, hey, shouldn't we make smaller plots, you know? No, because it's much better to have bigger plots, because they are a little bit much more efficient.

Around 1900, in the beginning of 1900, there was also built, I mean, a lot of houses, because it was needed, you know?

But then again, you know, like, when I, but again, my grandparents, they had six children. I got one. And it's like, you can look at the statistic. It's not because we're getting more kids. We're definitely not getting so much kids as my grandparents. Yes, for sure. Absolutely not. And a lot of people, a lot of people choose not to have kids, you know? Not because they're not able to, but they want something else.

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

And so, of course, that, so that story about, you know, like, we have to build, build, build. It's like, yeah, **but maybe be a little bit clever about what it actually is we are building and for who, you know?**

..

*So what kind of cities is it we want, and who is definitely needed in those cities, you know? We just have to talk about it.*

..

Because if it's going to, you know, easily, you know all about it. In a city where the money is lying, so now it's like on tourism. So there is a lot of houses being brought up, people who doesn't, they don't have anything to do with Copenhagen. They're getting in, they are, you know, like, renovating, whatever, tourists in, tourist shops, tourist, tourist, tourist. And exactly, you're coming from Italy, you know of some, you know exactly what is going to happen when that is happening, you know? Yes. But we don't have that much experience with it in Copenhagen and Denmark yet.

..

So for us, it would be like, but look at Venetia, is that what we want? You know, look at Barcelona, is, you know, like, let's just talk about it, you know? And that discussion is sort of, you know, like, slowly starting up, you know? And people are starting to get really annoyed by another tourist shop.

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

But that's a huge discussion and that's in all Europe, you know? Yes. But, I mean, is it okay that we are taking doctors and nurses from somewhere else? Didn't they are needed? You know, like, people coming from another place in the world to take care of our kids and they got kids themselves. What is going on, you know? So, and I think that, get a little bit grip on, you know, like, but you also hear it, you know, trying to get the production back home.

But I don't know, you know, I'm not economy, if it's only in my little bubble that people are starting to like, hey, we have to be able to, you know, produce something ourselves. And we have to take care of the water we got, and got to have some windmills.

## Governance

Chiara Monelli:

Then I wanted to ask also **how is the role with the relationship between citizens and the government**, or also the owner? Because my thesis will be more about sociology.

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

It's also really nice. **They did it because they were actually lobbying for the development to go through within the municipality. So they really were working towards that that was going to happen.** The plans, the longer plans for the city is only being discussed, I think, like every fourth of eight years, 12 years, something like that. So it's quite important to get yourself in that little spot there, because otherwise it will first be discussed again 12 years later. **So we were really invited for talks and then when they didn't get the permission to go, the meeting stopped.**

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**

It's not because they really love us and they really want to tell us everything what is going on. **It's of course a political game.** It's also like when it's going to happen, because it is going to happen at a certain point. They want everybody to sort of like, like let's try to, you know, do this together in a way, but I don't think it's really, it's when the guys with the money, really the one who is going to build, when they're stepping on board, that's where the problem comes, because that would be like *"What you want, Jane's little transitional garden, what? I can build a skyscraper we can make, and you want to pay the metro, so what?"* You know? Yes. Yeah, well, but it's really important for our brand I don't know what city, that there is some green and Jane can have a little corner. Well, but it's very expensive for your brand, so you know how it works. Yes. But again, there is so many examples of developing areas where they are, you know, like being taught that it has to be built and it has to go up, and **then they are struggling with that people are not really so happy living there.** There's a lot of things missing, you know, like, and I hope that they are aware, also the architects, you know, they are also just like giving the up, you know, like, no, okay, how much, you know, like, that the idea that it is important with these low buildings, because **it sort of creates a feeling of belonging and traditions and, you know, that it is important.**

I think, but you must know, I mean, I think there is being made study of that one, you know. And I also know from Amsterdam, a lot of the big areas being built in the 70s, you know, like blocks, to the dirt, high, it was a matter of 10 years, and then it was a ghetto, and it was like, you know, like a lot of criminality, and no one was really going for it, you know, nobody was really happy about the situation, you know.

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**  
So, what they did is that they actually teared down some of them, built something in, you know, not that high, so a combination, you know. Yes. But just to, you know, that's not really, on the long run, I don't think, and I don't think it's good for business as well. I don't know, but I don't think so. Okay. I think that everything will tell you that, you know, like, different age groups, different, you know, it's just a better idea. Okay, okay. But you know more than that, you know, like, **I'm just sitting here in my corner**, so maybe.  
So, for me, it's much more important what, you know, like, how are we building, with what are we building. **So, all this is plant-based, all the material here, and, you know, like, it's leftovers from the festivals.**

## About Festivals

Chiara Monelli:  
10. What is the role of large events, such as festivals (e.g. Copenhell), in the identity and development of Refshaleøen?

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**  
You know, like, that is, you know, that is not coming as a surprise. The festival was here, and it's coming here. That was, that was given. But it's funny, because I'm sitting here with my little plant-based, blah, blah, blah, and then there is coming a massive, you know, like, festival in Copenhagen, blah, blah, ..

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**  
It's actually quite, in a certain way, it's actually quite nice. Because it's, in a certain way, it's also like, hey, wake up, you know. Yeah. And it is a city, and no, we are not sitting on a, on a farm in, I don't know, anywhere, somewhere far away. So that's, that's actually quite nice, you know. Okay.

Chiara Monelli:  
Yes. Yeah. That's really interesting. I also, I found also some maps about the festivals, so how also the place change according to the festival, they start to, like, they create a

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**  
But what's really nice from **Reda** is that they are sort of protecting this area. They're sort of putting a fence up. Okay. So they sort of let this, this little piece of land, that they, they try to keep it out of the festival, because, you know, like, if they don't put up a fence, then it will be totally smashed. So it's, so in that sense, they are really playing along, you know. And the people who's making the festivals, they're also sort of like, okay, we're putting up the fence, so there's a lot of understanding, you know.

Chiara Monelli:  
Okay. So do you feel protected, at least? Yeah. This is protected, this fence.

**Jane Ostermann-Petersen:**  
Yeah. Okay. I do. I do.



## 8. INTERVIEW CARLY (Øens Have)



Farmer at Øens Have  
Refshaleøen

## About Carly

Chiara Monelli:

1. What do you do in your field, and what is your role in relation to Refshaleøen?

**Carly:**

I work at the urban farm and event space, Øens Have, which is located on Refshaleøen.

## About the city

Chiara Monelli:

2. How is Copenhagen working today on former industrial and port areas?

**Carly:**

Copenhagen is developing former industrial and port areas - like Sydhavn, Nordhavn, Ørestad and Papirøen - with new apartment buildings, businesses and recreational areas.

Chiara Monelli:

3. What is the role of these areas in the future of the city?

**Carly:**

These areas are said to shape the future of Copenhagen as a city with neighborhoods that are livable, sustainable, and lively. They are also said to address the city's housing crisis. In theory, their role is attractive. In practice, they have shaped the latest wave of gentrification.

## About Refshaleøen in the city

Chiara Monelli:

4. Where does Refshaleøen fit within Copenhagen's development?

**Carly:**

Development on Refshaleøen will likely begin in early 2029. For the past few years, there has been a competition between many architecture firms to propose a design plan for the area. Some of the same firms (such as COBE) who developed the aforementioned neighborhoods are part of the competition - which is overseen by Refshaleøens Ejendomselskab and By & Havn. It follows that Refshaleøen may therefore be developed to resemble Nordhavn or Papirøen.

Chiara Monelli:

5. What makes Refshaleøen different from other areas like Nordhavn or Sydhavn?

**Carly:**

I have not spent much time in either Nordhavn or in Sydhavn, so I can't easily compare what they were like before and after their development. But I can say that nearly everybody I have spoken to about Refshaleøen's impending development laments the possibility that it will turn out like Nordhavn or Papirøen. At present, Refshaleøen is full of character - something that both Nordhavn and Papirøen are criticized for lacking. Refshaleøen has space. Physical, open space, as well as space for creativity and spontaneity from locals. Every square meter is not accounted for, and so there can be festivals and pop-up art exhibitions and impromptu gatherings of locals and tourists alike. There can also be a space like Øens Have, which was at the time of its establishment the largest urban farm in Scandinavia. There are areas to hang out which don't demand payment, which are increasingly rare in the age of capitalism.

Refshaleøen does not have nearly the housing density that Nordhavn or Sydhavn has. But then again, Nordhavn is the most expensive neighborhood in all of Denmark. In my opinion, that seems more like gentrification than a solution to a housing crisis.

## About Refshaleøen today

Chiara Monelli:

6. What role do temporary activities play here?

**Carly:**

Temporary activities contribute immensely to the character of Refshaleøen. Festivals bring thousands of people to the little island. In the old industrial buildings, there have been temporary art exhibitions. A couple of years ago, the Danish Royal Theater created a pop up where they sold their fantastical old costumes at low prices in the iconic old "Refshaleøen" warehouse. There used to be an outdoor bar at the edge of the harbor, with a slide to go swimming! At the Hangar, there are mutual aid events and alternative concerts. These kinds of activities draw people from all over the world to Refshaleøen, even though it is outside of the city center and not so easy to access. In a sense, all the activities on Refshaleøen feel temporary - and that lends a certain kind of playfulness and involvement from local creatives that would otherwise not be there. It depends on the way that Refshaleøen is developed - but if it has to be closed off for years for building, I don't think temporary activities on the island will be able to sustain and influence the future.

## About Governance

Chiara Monelli:

I know that there is a private landowner and the municipality to manage the development of Refshaleøen. 7. What do you think about this co-administration? Do you know how it works?

**Carly:**

There are three pension funds and the municipality managing the development of Refshaleøen. I know somewhat how it works. My thoughts are that pension funds, whose goals must always be to make more money, are not a good match to address a municipality's housing crisis.

## About Participation

Chiara Monelli:

8. Do you think citizens are involved in the process of the future development of Refshaleøen?

**Carly:**

The participative process with citizens could be done with meetings, or others. **I do not believe that citizens have been effectively involved in the development process.** When we tell visitors at Øens Have that the garden will be destroyed, as well as much of the island, the vast majority tell us that it is the first time they are hearing of the development plans. Beyond that, **Refshaleøen is a very international community, where the common language is English. The documentation that they publish on their website with specifics about their structural plans is all in Danish. I have never seen an open call for community members to give their input.** Once, I sent an email asking if I could attend a meeting with the architectural firms in the competition, and was denied.

## About Festivals

Chiara Monelli:

9. What is the role of large events, such as festivals (e.g. Copenhell), in the identity and development of Refshaleøen?

**Carly:**

Large events like festivals bring energy and character to Refshaleøen. They contribute to its identity as a place for many different kinds of people and interests. I don't know if there will still be space for them when the island is developed

## Specific questions

Chiara Monelli:

What is your role within Øens Have, and how do you use the space in Refshaleøen?

**Carly:**

I care for all of the plants and animals at Øens Have and welcome volunteers, interns, students, tour groups, partygoers and neighbors to the space. Øens Have is on the only plot of land where the soil is not contaminated on Refshaleøen, so we grow right in the soil.

Chiara Monelli:

Can you explain what it is and what role of Community Øens Have plays in Refshaleøen?

**Carly:**

Everyone is welcome to enjoy the garden at Øens Have, which is like a little oasis, living and breathing in the industrialized area. We grow vegetables for 40 community members, so that they can come every week and pick up a bag of the freshest harvest during the season. We partner with our neighbors Lille Bakery, so that members can also get bread, and Funga Farm, so they can get mushrooms. We grow flowers and herbs for the neighboring restaurants. We share tools and knowledge with Transfer Garden, which is also on the island. We host volunteer days, where people of all different ages and backgrounds can come to get their hands dirty and enjoy a free, communal lunch on Tuesdays. Almost every day, school children from the municipality come with their classes to harvest and cook their own food over bonfires. It's a lovely community!