Come, let us go this way

An analysis of Realdania's entrepreneurial role in Danish urban planning.

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ABSTARCT

Recent research highlights the role of philanthropic foundations in urban governance, emphasising their capacity-building, field development, and associated issues of accountability and legitimacy. However, the overall impact of these foundations on shaping urban policies remains underexplored. This study aims to examine how philanthropic foundations affect the Danish planning landscape. Using qualitative interviews and document analysis, it presents a case study of the coastal climate adaptation programme *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels,* launched by the Danish foundation Realdania. The case examines Realdania's influence on municipal coastal adaptation plans, focusing on its policy entrepreneurship and lobbying. The empirical findings show that Realdania advances its priorities by mobilising people, knowledge, and financial resources through entrepreneurial strategies. Not only does Realdania create spaces of lobbying, but it also draws people into its self-created spaces of lobbying.

DANSK RESUMÉ

Den stigende opmærksomhed på filantropiske fondes involvering i byudvikling understreger at fonde har evnen og ressourcerne til at mobilisere støtte fra centrale aktører. Dette positionerer de filantropiske fonde som dagsordensættende aktører med betragtelige finansielle midler i byudvikling. Den nye rolle foranlediger dog også udfordringer vedrørende gennemsigtighed, ansvarlighed samt legitimitet. Selvom eksisterende studier har beskrevet fondenes nye øget rolle, er forskningsfeltet forholdsvis nyt med begrænset mængde af undersøgelser.

Dette kandidatspeciale undersøger hvordan filantropiske fonde udøver indflydelse i byudvikling i en dansk kontekst. Undersøgelsen tager udgangspunkt i den filantropiske fond Realdanias engagement i dansk byplanlægning gennem et casestudie af det kommunale spor i deres klimatilpasningskampagne *Byerne og det stigende havvand*. Sporet består af finansiering af pilotprojekter for innovativ klimatilpasning i kystnære byer. Det kommunale spor er understøttet af et forskernetværk, som assisterer med viden samtidig med at pilotprojekterne bliver brugt som datamateriale for forskerne. Specialet har en realist-pragmatisk videnskabsteoretisk tilgang og tilgår analysen med en abuduktiv analysestrategi. Dataindsamlingen omfatter kvalitative interviews med udvalgte kommunale medarbejdere i de finansierede kommuner, programchef for klimatilpasningskampagnen fra Realdania samt en byudviklingskonsulent. Til at analysere den indsamlede data er der dannet en analyseramme bestående af to analysebegreber; entreprenante strategier herunder netværksopbygning, strategisk brug af beslutningsarenaer, indramning af problemer og brug af eksempler for at fremhæve dagsordener, samt indflydelsesrum. Indflydelsesrum forstås i dette projekt som steder hvor aktører kan påvirke dagsordner. Mens det at udøve indflydelse forstås som en rumlig praksis, hvor evnen til at få indflydelse ligger i aktørens evne til at mobilisere mennesker, ideer og ressourcer.

Resultaterne fra specialets analyse viser at Realdania benytter sig af entreprenante strategier til at få indflydelse på klimatilpasningsdagsordenen i de danske kommuner. Gennem skabelsen af et netværk mellem de finansierede kommuner, forskere og den statslig kystenhed Kystdirektoratet har Realdania mobiliseret mennesker til planlægningsemnet klimatilpasning i kystnære byer. Menneskerne i netværket kommer fra forskellige organisationer og bringer dermed forskellige perspektiver og viden ind i netværk, hvilket skaber en strøm af ideer og vidensdeling. Mobiliseringen af mennesker og ideer er understøttet af Realdanias finansielle ressourcer som finansierer de enkelte kommunale pilotprojekter, netværksmøder mellem kommunerne samt forskernetværkets arbejde. Ydermere viser Realdania gennem fondspuljerne til pilotprojekterne, at de benytter sig af strategien om at bruge eksempler til at fremhæve dagsordner. Kommunerne tjener som praksismodeller for de innovative løsninger Realdania ønsker at støtte. Mobiliseringen af mennesker, ideer og ressourcer giver ikke kun Realdania adgang til indflydelsesrum, men trækker også andre urbane aktører ind i

indflydelsesrum Realdania selv har skabt. Det placerer Realdania med betydelig indflydelse som den bruger til at påvirke hvilke udfordringer, der er relevante og hvordan de bedst tilgås.

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Introduction

Philanthropic foundations have increased their presence in urban governance over the last two decades. Notably, their presence goes beyond providing grants to increasing involvement in shaping the local urban agenda (Montero, 2020; Ravazzi, 2016). This new role of foundations is discussed by academics where philanthropic foundations have been described as actors that carry agenda-setting power (Rogers, 2011), acting as policy supporters and/or policymakers (Ravazzi, 2016) by utilising their network and resources to steer the implementation of policy goals (Madénian & Van Neste, 2025) and fill the gap of governmental retrenchment (Puttick, 2025; Thomson, 2023).

Philanthropic foundations can thus be seen as a prominent urban actor with substantial potential influence, but they also raise implications for governmental steering capacity, especially in cities facing limited resources (Fuentenebro & Acuto, 2022). In some cases, the local government is taking a secondary role in governmental services where foundations are present (Thomson, 2023) leaving foundations with the leading role, in other the foundations' involvement leads to lack of transparency and democratic deficits as the foundations decide how things are done and who is allowed to contribute (Madénian & Van Neste, 2025). The increasingly prominent role thus come with concerts about legitimacy and accountability.

While philanthropic foundations' changed role in urban governance has been identified, along with the potential shift in power dynamics, the research agenda is still emerging. Fuentenebro & Acuto (2022) call for research on philanthropy and urban governance, suggesting urban entrepreneurialism as a lens to base the research. Madénian & Van Neste (2025) suggest more case studies on philanthropic foundations' role in local urban climate governance. This research project aims to contribute to these calls by investigating the role of philanthropic foundations in Denmark.

In Denmark, the most notable philanthropic foundation in urban governance can be seen in Realdania. Since its establishment in 2000, Realdania has become a vital actor in the Danish planning context. The average annual distribution of 843.84 million DKK has made it one of the largest non-governmental funders of the built environment in Denmark, ranking fourth in annual funding across sectors in 2022 (Fondenes videnscenter, n.d.). While financing projects

across Denmark based on philanthropic intentions, Realdania has also faced criticism from municipal officials and other professionals in the urban sector. The criticism primarily centres on Realdania's influence on the projects it funds and the requirements it imposes for investing in projects (Lenler & Benner, 2010b). Some professionals have expressed concerns about the excessive influence of Realdania in the urban planning field, and that it can challenge the regional and national planning agenda, potentially acting as a parallel authority to the statutory system (Lenler & Benner, 2010a). In addition, Realdania has also received attention from scholars like Grange (2014),and Richner & Olesen (2019), who describe Realdania's role as powerful due to its large funding schemes and the potential democratic implications.

This raises questions about the influence of Realdania and its agenda-setting abilities on urban governance. Which actors are leading the governance of urban spaces? Who decides which issues need to be addressed? To contribute to answering these questions. The research project poses the following main research question.

How does Realdania influence the urban planning agenda in Denmark?

To help answer the main research question, the following supporting questions are posed.

- *What characterises the planning context in which Realdania operates?*

- *Which entrepreneurial strategies and supporting flows does Realdania employ to gain access to spaces of lobbying in the programme Cities and the Rising Sea Levels?*

- *What are the enabling and constraining factors for Realdania's ability to influence the Danish planning?*

To understand the role of Realdania in Danish urban planning, it is essential to understand the foundation's operating environment, as its structure and institutions set the parameters for its scope of possibilities. Furthermore, how Realdania operates in the planning environment is determined by its own operating strategies. Thus, this project will investigate the external and internal factors that affect philanthropic foundations' ability to influence. The investigation is carried out using a case study approach, focusing on Realdania's involvement in Danish climate adaptation planning. Firstly, the planning context surrounding Realdania will be analysed, which will supplement an analysis of Realdania as an entrepreneurial actor within this context.

02

Literature review

2.1 - The neoliberal turn in urban planning

Governance structures delineate the framework within which planning actors operate. To understand how philanthropic foundations exert influence, it is essential to describe these structures. Over the past decades, the governmental structures have changed, mainly referred to as the shift from government to governance. While governance has been praised for tackling the rigidity of bureaucratic activities, it has also been criticised for its neoliberal rationales (Mäntysalo & Bäcklund, 2017).

Similarly, scholars describe the current planning condition as being influenced by neoliberalism (Baeten, 2017; Haughton & Allmendinger, 2015; Olesen, 2014; Peck et al., 2009). In this research project, neoliberalism is understood as a political ideology that "rests on the belief that open, competitive and unregulated markets, liberated from state interference and the actions of social collectivities, represent the optimal mechanism for socioeconomic development." (Peck et al., 2009, p. 50) While the influence of neoliberal ideology has been prominent, scholars have observed a disjunction between the ideology and its practice, necessitating a distinction between the two. As Peck et al. (2009) describe, "actually existing neoliberalism" refers to neoliberal practices seen as a process rather than a final state. Consequently, "actually existing neoliberalism" can be understood as a process of neoliberalisation.

Placing neoliberalisation in a planning context, it can be seen as the process of reorienting planning to a market-led approach with the aim of economic growth (Allmendinger, 2017; Sager, 2011). Emerging as a response to the welfare-oriented, distributive planning in the mid-20th century, neoliberalisation turned to market mechanisms for organising society and solving societal issues. Scholars have identified three waves in the evolution of neoliberalisation in which the neoliberal rationality has been promoted: roll-back neoliberalisation, which aims to reduce the state's regulatory role in planning; roll-out neoliberalisation, where the state actively supports market activities through e.g. public infrastructure projects, market-friendly policies or partnerships; and the roll-with-it neoliberalisation which is seen as the gradual normalisation and the embeddedness of neoliberal practices and its goals (Allmendinger, 2017; Olesen, 2014)

Together, the "rolls" have steered planning away from welfare priorities and towards privatisation, project-led development and competitive agendas.

The process of neoliberalisation has key features related to urban governance. To outline this, I draw on Peck et al.'s (2009) description of mechanisms of neoliberal urbanisation, which illustrates how neoliberalisation has been promoted in cities since the 1990's and Sager's (2011) outline of neoliberal planning policies in his literature survey. A recalibration of intergovernmental relations through the removal of central government support for local governmental activities, together with the devolution of tasks and responsibilities to the local governments, can be seen as a mechanism of neoliberal urbanisation. This is supported by the establishment of new incentives to promote local entrepreneurialism and attract endogenous growth. The fiscal austerity measures for the municipal government and increased reliance on local revenues as part of the retrenchment of public finance are seen as a neoliberal tendency (Peck et al. 2009). Breaking away from bureaucratised and hierarchical forms of municipal administration and promoting network forms instead, such as public-private partnerships and New Public Management, can be seen as organisational mechanisms supported by neoliberal rationalities. The increase in private involvement, through privatisation and outsourcing, is argued to ensure efficiency and financial resources to public projects by sharing or outsourcing parts of public services (Baeten, 2017; Peck et al., 2009; Sager, 2011).

The influence of private actors in urban governance is also evident in the shift in land-use management. Comprehensive plans developed by public officials are being replaced by property-led planning, in which private actors initiate projects and public plans are then adjusted accordingly (Sager, 2011). The neoliberal notion is that property-led projects can generate demand and economic activity in cities. Peck et al. (2009) describe this as re-representing the city where entrepreneurial discourses and city revitalisation are promoted. This is followed by restructuring strategies for territorial development, which create economic development incentives to mobilise investment in the city.

While the process of neoliberalisation is widely used to describe changes in urban governance, it is also argued to be highly contextualised as it takes form based on historical, geographical and ideological attributes of the given context (Brenner et al., 2010). Baeten, p. (2017, p. 105) supports this notion and states, "neoliberal planning (…) does not constitute a clear break from previous regime of planning but will always be a hybrid between existing planning regimes and subsequent gradual neoliberal transformation." This leads to a variety of neoliberal practices and outcomes, thus calling for study at the local level.

In the context of neoliberalisation, the role of the state has thus changed, and new actors are invited to influence urban governance. This is not limited to private actors, but also non-governmental actors such as philanthropic foundations.

2.2 - Philanthropic foundations and their role in urban governance - more than just providing funds

Philanthropic foundations' activities have traditionally been associated with financial contributions through grant-making. However, scholars argue that given their financial capacity, they can engage more actively in social mechanisms and governmental activities to promote their vision (Quinn et al., 2014; Rogers, 2011). The increasingly prominent role of philanthropic foundations is, among others, also evident in urban development, where they use investments in cities as places to exercise their philanthropy, but also to gain influence on the agenda (Montero, 2020). This includes not only granting large amounts of money but also initiating programmes to tackle urban issues.

In their commentary, Fuentenebro & Acuto (2022) acknowledge the growing presence of philanthropic foundations on the urban scene but also point to a knowledge gap in urban studies regarding their impact on urban governance. Arguing that the influence needs investigation in terms of how "it might shape the form, politics and direction of urban development" (p.1), Fuentenebro & Acuto (2022) call for research on how philanthropic institutions influence urban governance. Moreover, they suggest entrepreneurialism as an entry point for researching the topic.

Although Fuentenebro & Acuto (2022) highlight a lack of research on philanthropic foundations in urban governance, a few studies have begun to address this gap. Among European studies, Ravazzi 's (2016) comparative study of philanthropic foundations' impact on local policy-making in Italy finds that, while austerity measures prompt local governments to turn to external actors for collaboration, the impact of these actors depends on the local mode of governance. Local governments ready to engage in partnerships left philanthropic foundations with more decision-making power than local governments not engaging in such partnerships. While differentiated impact, Ravazzi (2016) argues that philanthropic foundations end up acting as co-producers of public goods through their activities of transferring financial resources to other organisations and by creating their own projects.

Also noteworthy is Madénian & Van Neste (2025) study on philanthropic foundations' role in implementing climate policy, which delivers a valuable framework to understand philanthropic foundations' ability to influence policy processes. In their study, the authors view philanthropic foundations as policy entrepreneurs that effectively initiate and push forward climate-related activities and plans in Montreal through their economic and symbolic capital. They argue that local governments turn to other actors to overcome their struggles of reduced capacity, which may affect how priorities are framed and how the process is designed. While their findings showcased philanthropic foundations' ability to fill an implementation gap in urban climate governance, they also revealed implications, as philanthropic foundations chose which stakeholders to involve and how. According to Madénian & Van Neste (2025), these

implications suggest that their case study city Montreal catches on to the post-political policymaking trend, leaving the philanthropic foundation's role to be ambiguous.

In a similar vein, Thomson's (2023) research on philanthropic foundations' influence on city government in relation to community and economic development highlights the potential impact philanthropic foundations have in fiscally constrained cities in the USA. The study finds that influence varies depending on the initiating party and the duration of philanthropic foundation commitment, with philanthropic foundations gaining the most influence when they initiate long-term commitments. Further, Thomson (2023) finds that foundations' influence builds over time and intensifies. Governmental actors are more inclined to involve the philanthropic foundations in planning activities, the more active they are over time. While the growing involvement of foundations can be fruitful, providing resources to urban development Thomson (2023) also questions if the presence of foundations leads to the withdrawal of governmental resources in targeted areas and how the government ensures accountability when they have a secondary financial role.

In her study on why philanthropic foundations collaborate with local governments, Puttick (2025) illustrates that philanthropic foundations contribute financial and non-financial resources that foster policy capability in city governments. The empirical findings from a case study of three English city governments show that economic interests in cities are secondary to the foundations that seek to partner with local governments to support government capacity. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that a lack of internal capacity can limit local governments' time and resources for seeking support from foundations.

In summary, these studies indicate that philanthropic foundations play an increasingly larger role in urban governance, not only as financial contributors but also as active actors influencing policy agendas, implementation processes and stakeholder engagement. However, this influence also raises questions about legitimacy, accountability and the shifting boundaries between public and private authority.

3

Conceptual framework

The following chapter presents the conceptual framework used for analysing Realdania's role in Danish planning. Although philanthropic foundations are found to be a predominant actor exercising influence in urban governance in countries like the USA, Canada, England, and Italy. Research on philanthropic foundations in Danish urban governance is limited. Drawing on Madénian & Van Neste's (2025) study, this research project treats philanthropic foundations as policy entrepreneurs and employs this lens to investigate Realdania's influence on the Danish planning agenda. The chapter first outlines the characteristics of a policy entrepreneur. This is followed by an introduction of the two analytical concepts of *entrepreneurial strategies* and *spaces of lobbying,* used to analyse how and where Realdania exerts its influence. The entrepreneurial strategies define the tactical actions used by the policy entrepreneur, and Hofman and Aalbers' (2017) understanding of lobbying as a spatial practice provides insight into the structural setting in which Realdania operates. Lastly, the analytic framework developed based on the concepts is presented.

3.1 - What is a policy entrepreneur?

Policy entrepreneurs are, in this report, seen as political actors who use entrepreneurial strategies in collaboration with others to either advocate for changing the current policy arrangements or, on the other hand, to resist significant policy changes (Becker et al., 2024; Mintrom, 2019; Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). Entrepreneurial strategies are enacted in and around policy-making venues (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017). Boasson & Huitema (2017, p. 1345) supplement this characteristic by viewing entrepreneurs as actors who do more than just their job, actively "seeking to punch above their weight" by performing actions that lie outside their formal role. Changing current policy arrangements and turning policy ideas into policy innovation requires considerable capability. Entrepreneurs need to "be motivated by a bigger vision for a better future" (Mintrom, 2019, p. 309) and, as Kingdon describes it, have "the willingness to invest their resources - time, energy, reputation and sometimes money in the hope of a future return" (Kingdon, 1984, p. 129). Thus, entrepreneurs need to have ambition, but also be tenacious, as policy changes occur in complex contexts (Mintrom, 2019).

Furthermore, Mintrom (2019) argues that entrepreneurs need to possess social acuity in order to advance their agenda. Social acuity entails understanding how other actors think about the idea, how to utilise their network, and how to position the idea within the political context. Entrepreneurs need support to promote their ideas and build coalitions. They require credibility, which can be established through demonstrating expertise or holding "particular positions within or around government." An entrepreneur also needs to exhibit sociability, which helps gain coalition partners and expand the network (Mintrom, 2019, p. 311).

While Mintrom and Kingdon imply intentionality as an inherent character of the policy entrepreneur, Becker et al. (2024), among others, propose that conditions of necessity can also be the basis for an entrepreneur's actions, labelling the two motives as proactive and reactive. The proactive policy entrepreneur is a policy entrepreneur who takes advantage of opportunities and intentionally advocates for a specific policy idea or solution that is seen as the preferred option. The reactive policy entrepreneur is a policy entrepreneur by necessity. This implies that the entrepreneur pushes forward ideas or solutions in response to external pressure. The motivation can thus arrive from different places.

3.2 - Entrepreneurial strategies

Policy entrepreneurs employ strategies to advance their preferred ideas or solutions. The research project takes cues from Boasson & Huitema (2017) by categorising strategies into two main categories: the structural strategies and the cultural-institutional strategies. Within these categories, specific strategies are outlined and described, drawing inspiration from Mintrom's (2019) framework of strategies deployed by successful policy entrepreneurs and Boasson & Huitema (2017) notions of entrepreneurial strategies. Policy entrepreneurs are using these strategies differently, leaning towards some more than others.

3.2.1 - Structural strategies

Structural entrepreneurial strategies, as seen by Boasson & Huitema (2017), are those aiming to enhance governance influence through changes in the distribution of authority and information. When the entrepreneur employs such strategies, the aim is to overcome structural barriers and exercise influence. The structural barriers are seen as challenges produced by the current "distribution of formal authority and/or the distribution of factual and scientific information" (Boasson & Huitema, 2017, p. 1348). These strategies focus on gaining access to either decision-making arenas or information related to the entrepreneur's agenda.

Creating and expanding networks and coalitions:

Building and expanding one's network is a structural strategy. According to Mintrom (2019), policy entrepreneurs need to understand the value of their networks, as they contain a variety of skills and knowledge that they utilise to strengthen their initiatives. This is useful both for

generating and diffusing ideas. Networking can help the entrepreneur establish collaborations and gain support for their proposed idea or solution, as a large number of actors working together can push an agenda forward more effectively than a single actor. However, expanding the network also requires the entrepreneur to be flexible and willing to adjust their proposal to attract a significant amount of support from actors (Boasson & Huitema, 2017). This can also lead to the creation or engagement in a coalition. A coalition consists of actors from various positions who share a particular belief system and exhibit a nontrivial degree of coordination over time. It is assumed that members of the coalition disagree on minor matters, but the shared belief over key issues holds them together. Policy entrepreneurs can establish advocacy coalitions and also engage in actions that build upon the strengths of existing coalitions (Mintrom, 2019). Mintrom (2019) notes that the size of a coalition can be essential for demonstrating the degree of support a proposal for policy change has. Furthermore, networking and coalition-making enable the entrepreneur to learn the different policy-making actors' perspective on the specific problem, which they can use actively to draw authorities and other actors with a high level of legitimacy into the network. By having actors with formal authority within the network, the entrepreneur also has a better opportunity to gain access to decision-making arenas and thus overcome the structural barriers (Boasson & Huitema, 2017).

The strategic use of decision-making procedures and venues

Another strategy to overcome the structural barriers is the strategic use of decision-making procedures and venues (Boasson & Huitema, 2017). With this strategy, the entrepreneur uses their social acuity to understand when there is a reasonably good opportunity for their proposal to be adopted. Kingdon (1984) uses the term' policy window' to explain when entrepreneurs can enhance their influence by promoting their ideas and solutions. Another way to strategically use decision-making procedures is to employ 'salami tactics', where the idea or proposal is divided into smaller parts that seem less risky than the whole. The following steps are presented as a natural continuation of the previous step, and the proposal is thereby eased into the agenda and implemented.

3.2.2 - Cultural-institutional strategies

Cultural-institutional strategies aim to ensure that ideas and suggestions from the entrepreneur appear more attractive to decision-makers. Entrepreneurs use these strategies with the intent of changing "people's perceptions, norms, cognitive framework, worldviews or logics" (Boasson & Huitema, 2017, p. 1349) in favour of their ideas and thus positioning them against current and alternative policies or governance arrangements. While structural strategies are used to gain access to influence, cultural-institutional strategies can be used when this access is obtained. In this report, two cultural-institutional strategies are presented: *problem framing* and *leading by example*.

Problem framing

Problem framing is categorised as a cultural-institutional entrepreneurial strategy. Here, framing is actions that either underpin or undermine "certain ways of understanding and interpreting information and events" (Boasson & Huitema, 2017, p. 1349). As political problems have multiple attributes, how they are presented and which attributes are highlighted in discussions can shape what actors pay attention to. Problem framing can therefore be used to influence how people relate problems to their own interests (Mintrom, 2019). Common tactics for framing problems include highlighting evidence suggesting a crisis is at hand, outlining the failure of current policy settings, and gaining support from actors not directly related to the problem (Mintrom, 2019). An important ability for policy entrepreneurs using problem framing as a strategy is to understand other actors' perspectives and incorporate them into the framing to convince them of their ideas or solutions to the addressed problem. According to Boasson & Huitema (2017), problem framing can be differentiated by the intention behind it. Positive framing is seen as actions that aim to display specific solutions, ideas or attributes as good, desirable, legitimate or appropriate. To support one's positive framing in relation to a specific problem, it is suitable to demonstrate how the preferred solution links to the existing framework. Conversely, negative problem framing is an action that deliberately aims to delegitimise undesirable policies and practices. This form of framing includes "ridicule and shaming of existing and competing policy proposals" (Boasson & Huitema, 2017, p. 1349) and their proponents. The framings can be used alone or in combination to advance the entrepreneur's idea(s) or distance the idea from others. Thus, problem framing can be seen as a tool for creating a narrative that directs attention and political action to a specific problem, thereby legitimising the entrepreneur's proposed solution (Boasson & Huitema, 2017).

Leading by example

Policy entrepreneurs can also employ leadership by example to promote their ideas or solutions. This strategy serves as a showcase of the idea or solution. Showcasing is useful, as risk-taking is seen as challenging for some actors. By leading by example, the entrepreneur shows that the agenda promoted is tangible and risks can be lowered. This involves engaging others to demonstrate the workability of a solution or idea (Mintrom, 2019). Moreover, leading by example can also be used as a defensive strategy to reduce application scepticism by opponents (Mintrom & Norman, 2009) and show the entrepreneur's commitment, which can lead to gaining credibility with others (Mintrom, 2019). Mintrom & Norman (2009) exemplify this strategy through pilot projects, which can serve as working models of the proposed idea, producing valuable knowledge about the results and implications of the idea or solution, and thereby its applicability. Furthermore, by taking action, entrepreneurs can position legislators as passive actors, which can result in a change in attitude of the legislators to focus on the consequences of inaction instead of the consequences of action (Mintrom & Norman, 2009)

In summary, policy entrepreneurs are political actors who either advocate for or actively work against a proposed policy change. They are willing to do more than what their formal role entails. Successful policy entrepreneurs are ambitious and tenacious and have social acuity and credibility. Through structural and cultural-institutional strategies, the entrepreneurs try to overcome structural barriers and steer the issues handled by the decision-makers in order to push their agenda forward. These strategies need to be executed in spaces that can reach into policy-making arenas and thus influence the agenda. How these spaces are created and what it takes to do so can be understood through the concept of *spaces of lobbying*.

3.3 - Spaces of lobbying

To investigate how philanthropic foundations gain influence and shape their context, we can look to Hofman and Aalbers' notion of lobbying to understand the context and spaces in which they operate. According to Hofman & Aalbers (2017), lobbying is vital for understanding the power dynamics between the market and the state and how these dynamics are reproduced. They see lobbying as "enabling things to get done, about making a difference or to the contrary maintaining the status quo." (Hofman & Aalbers, 2017, p. 4)

Focusing on the lobbying effects in a state-market relationship, Hofman & Aalbers (2017) see the market as an institution in which market and state actors are active. Market actors are understood broadlyto include public interest groups, civil organisations, and think tanks. In this context, a (re)shaping of the market acted out by the market actors through lobbying is defined as:

> …the directed actions of individuals and groups to alter, influence, or hamper the decision-making process of governments. These actions consist of the mobilisation of resources that activate power and enable access to spaces of lobbying (Hofman & Aalbers, 2017, p. 2).

Thus, performing lobbying can be seen as a practice that enables actors to promote or weaken specific policies or regulations or support or reject certain actions or policy projects to their advantage. Hofman & Aalbers (2017) argue that lobbying is a spatial practice by outlining three flows between spaces of lobbying. The flows of people between organisations, ideas between those people and flows of resources between organisations. It is the ability to move or direct these flows that enables the actors to influence decision-making and shape the institution. Lobbying is thereby also an act of shaping the spaces and the relations in which power is exercised.

The flow of people refers to how people move between organisations and thereby spaces within the institution. Hofman and Aalbers exemplify this with the idea of "revolving doors" between government and firms. With the flow of people between different organisations, the two other flows can accompany them. It is thus people who carry ideas and resources.

The flow of ideas refers to how ideas circulate in between people. According to Hofman & Aalbers (2017), knowledge is constructed between people and ideas are thereby developed and transformed through the circulation. Hofman & Aalbers (2017) argue that it is the setting, the people, their relation and space, that shape how ideas are interpreted and if they are passed on. This entails that ideas are selective as they are reshaped in the process which allows the actors to (re)construct how the ideas are presented.

The flow of resources refers to both material and immaterial resources. While material resources are characterised as financial resources, immaterial resources include symbolic, cultural and social resources. Social resources are described as access to professional expertise and know-how. Symbolic resources are seen as an asset of the name and reputation of an organisation, as this can lead to support from other actors. The cultural resources are described by Hofman & Aalbers (2017) as a community that shares a skill set, a knowledge foundation and an organisational culture. This community is recognised as competent in its domain and has authority within this domain, which can be used to direct policies.

The spaces of lobbying, the flow of people, ideas, and resources, establish the spaces where actors can exert influence. The spaces are either actual or latent spaces of lobbying. The actual spaces in this report are seen as the spaces where the lobbying is exerted visibly by engaging directly with actors with formal authorities. The latent spaces of lobbying, on the other hand, are spaces where actors produce expert knowledge that can later be mobilised when engaging with policy- and decision-makers. These spaces are, according to Hofman & Aalbers (2017, p. 5), "centers of knowledge creation and mobilisation of power" which can be used in the actual spaces of lobbying.

Hofman and Aalbers note that lobbying influence can take many forms based on the relationship between the lobbyist and the lobbied and also the external context, the interaction is rarely based on conflict. Further, Hofman and Aalbers note that in order for lobbying to be effective and powerful, the ideas pushed forward need to be considered legitimate and actioned, and when most effective lobbying "is not defined as such by those that change their decisions or practice" (Hofman & Aalbers, 2017, p. 4).

In summary, spaces of lobbying are spaces where influence is exerted in order to promote ideas. The spaces are constituted by the flow of people, ideas and resources. Moreover, the spaces can be latent or actual depending on the engagement of formal authorities. I argue that the spaces of lobbying are spaces within which policy entrepreneurs operate to push forward their agenda. In the following section, I will elaborate on how these concepts complement each other and how they are utilised as analytical tools.

3.4 - Analytical framework

Building on the aforementioned concepts, an analytical framework is developed to structure the analysis. The concepts are therefore placed within a planning context. This entails viewing Realdania as a policy entrepreneur with multiple entrepreneurial strategies at its disposal. Applying Hofman & Aalbers' (2017) understanding of the market to a planning context, the market is viewed as the planning environment in which multiple actors shape and reshape it. Actors include planners, governmental agencies, politicians, consultants, and philanthropic foundations. These actors can influence because they flow between organisations, carrying ideas and resources. Looking at Realdania through the lens of the three flows, we can investigate the spaces in which they circulate, the ideas they promote, and the resources they use to enable those ideas.

The analytical framework combines the policy entrepreneurial strategies, flows and spaces to investigate Realdania's influence. It illustrates the analytical steps and their connections. The analysis is based on a case study of Realdania's influence in one of its programmes. The entrepreneurial strategies deployed by Realdania in this programme are first examined. The flows of people, ideas and resources which the strategies draw on are then identified. This research project uses the term planning agenda to understand Realdania's influence on planning decisions in local Danish governments. The term is understood as twofold, covering both substantive and procedural dimensions. The substantive dimension refers to the influence on which issues and topics are addressed, which values are prioritised and which visions are presented as ideal among the planning actors. The procedural dimension refers to the influence on how the planning is conducted, meaning which steps are needed to achieve the preferred outcome. The framework is visualised below in Figure 1

Analytical framework

The policy entrepreneur Realdania	Entrepreneurial strategies	Flows	Spaces	Agenda
	Structural strategies	People		
	• Creating and expanding networks and coalitions		Actual	Substantive
	• Strategic use of decision-making procedures and venues	Ideas		
	Cultural-institutions strategies		Latent	Procedural
	• Problem framing			
	• Leading by example	Resources		

Figure 1: The analytical framework based on entrepreneurial strategies and spaces of lobbying

04

Methodology

4.1 - Philosophical assumptions of the research approach

This research examines the influence of the philanthropic foundation Realdania on municipal decision-making in Danish urban governance. To achieve this, Realdania is conceptualised as an urban actor within a broader social structure. This social structure functions as the framework that determines which urban issues are prioritised and how the actors address them. Like Hofman & Aalbers (2017), who interpret the market as an institution through which actors seek influence, I regard the planning framework as a set of structures developed over time through the actions of various actors with diverse interests. Once established, these structures regulate the actions of actors. However, since these structures are created by actors, they are subject to challenge and change if perceived as restrictive or do not align with the actors involved (Christensen & Jensen, 2001). Additionally, the research project builds on the premise that structures can be shaped the act of lobbying. Consequently, Realdania can potentially shape the framework within which it operates through lobbying activities.

Based on the above perspective, the research project adopts a realist-pragmatist stance. This stance can be seen as holding an ontological realism position, where the structures of the world are believed to be real and to exist independently of human understanding (Johnson & Duberley, 2011). Therefore, there is an external reality beyond human cognitive abilities. The relationship between structures and organisations is dynamic, where these structures create the conditions in which organisations operate in the world. At the same time, organisations also constantly reevaluate and reinterpret these structures. Humans are active agents both formed by and forming the structures (Egholm, 2014). The purpose is not to search for a universal truth about how structures and mechanisms shape humans and their actions, but rather to describe and explain social phenomena contextually through human action.

This ontological stance is followed by an anti-positivist epistemological view, which considers all knowledge as socially constructed (Johnson & Duberley, 2011). Additionally, the understanding of knowledge and truth is rooted in a pragmatic perspective. Knowledge is regarded as fallible, and knowledge claims are evaluated based on their ability to explain the

phenomenon and support people's ongoing experiences. Consequently, the outcomes of a research inquiry should be seen as provisional and relative.

This perspective enables the research project to investigate how and why Realdania gains influence on urban planning in Denmark. The investigation employs an abductive approach. Observations of the growing influence of philanthropic foundations in urban governance initiate a set of theoretical concepts used to understand how and why this is happening, which are then applied to a specific empirical case. When examined through the lens of the theoretical framework, the empirical case will subsequently facilitate a refinement of the understanding of the underlying social phenomena. The theoretical framework consists of entrepreneurial strategies, spaces, and neoliberalisation. These elements are examined as credible explanations for Realdania's influence on the urban planning agenda and the reasons underpinning its capacity to do so. The empirical case utilised to test this theoretical framework is the partnership within the Realdania programme *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels*.

4.2 - Research design

The research design is developed to structure the research project, which has three principal areas of inquiry: the characteristics of the Danish planning context, the influence of philanthropic foundations on the planning agenda, and the drivers and limitations of a philanthropic foundation's agenda-setting power in Danish urban planning. These areas of inquiry aim to support answering the following main research question:

How does Realdania influence the urban planning agenda in Denmark?

As mentioned in the section introducing the analytical framework, the term' planning agenda' is employed to understand what Realdania influences with its engagement. The term is understood as twofold, covering both a substantive and a procedural dimension. The substantive dimension refers to the influence on which issues and topics are addressed, which values are prioritised, and which visions are presented as ideal among the planning actors. The procedural dimension refers to the influence on how planning is conducted, including which steps are needed to achieve the preferred outcome.

Climate adaptation planning is used as an entry point for investigating Realdania's influence in this research project. This choice is motivated by several considerations. Climate adaptation presents a planning arena where foundations often play a key role, as the challenges posed by climate change require a multi-actor approach and substantial financial resources. While Realdania funds and engages in multiple urban topics, a limited scope enables the research project to operationalise the theoretical concepts within a clearly defined context. The limited scope provides a deeper understanding of how Realdania's influence unfolds in practice. Furthermore, the limited scope guides the data collection, making it easier to select relevant data sources. Climate adaptation planning can also be seen as an example of how philanthropic

foundations take part in urban governance, providing insights into the specific planning arena and opening opportunities for more generalisable mechanisms.

To help answer the main research question and guide the principal areas of inquiry, the following supporting questions are posed.

1. What characterises the planning context in which Realdania operates?

2. Which entrepreneurial strategies and supporting flows does Realdania employ to gain access to spaces of lobbying in the programme *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels?*

3. What are the enabling and constraining factors for Realdania's ability to influence the Danish planning?

The three areas of inquiry are elaborated below:

Understand the planning context.

To understand Realdania's influence on the planning agenda, it is essential to understand the context in which it operates. By outlining the formal and informal structures and arrangements that define the operating environment, external factors affecting Realdania are outlined. These external factors are shaping how Realdania operates, but they are also structures that Realdania and others can influence and shape. An interview with a planning expert and a literature search will be used as the primary data source for this inquiry.

Analyse Realdania's approach to promoting their agenda

After establishing the external factors that influence Realdania's work, an analysis of how Realdania operates is conducted. This analysis will identify the entrepreneurial strategies Realdania employs in its *Cities and the Rising Sea* Levels programme. This serves as the entry point for identifying flows of people, ideas and resources used to gain access to or create lobbying spaces. The spaces and the targeted part of the planning agenda are identified last. Interviews with representatives from the funded municipalities and with an employee from Realdania serve as data sources for this analysis. The analysis is supported by a comprehensive description of the partnership, drawn from data collected from interviewees and from documents published by Realdania.

Discuss the drivers and limitations for Realdania's agenda-setting power in Danish urban planning.

Based on empirical findings from analyses with a point of departure in climate adaptation planning in Denmark, Realdania's entrepreneurial strategies, the lobbying spaces employed by

them, and the institutional arrangements are discussed, reviewing the enabling and constraining factors. By evaluating the institutional arrangement and Realdania's own actions, as well as the dynamics of the setting and actors, the research project provides insight into how a private philanthropic actor influences and is influenced by its environment, thereby contributing to an understanding of power dynamics in the Danish planning context.
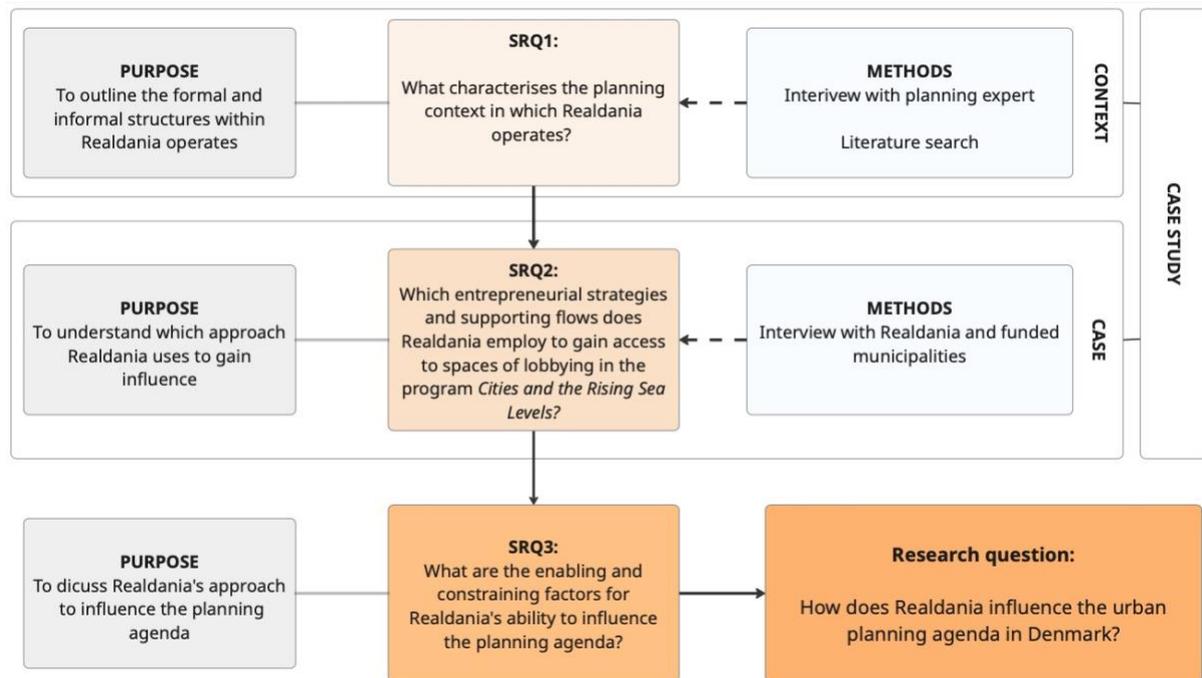
The research design is visualised in Figure 2

Figure 2 - Research Design

4.3 – Methods

This section presents the methods used to investigate how the philanthropic organisation Realdania influences the Danish urban planning agenda. The research inquiry employs qualitative methods to obtain an in-depth understanding of Realdania's involvement. The methods include literature research, case study and semi-structured interview

4.3.1 - Literature search

In this research project, a literature search is conducted to explore existing studies on philanthropic foundations in urban governance and to develop the conceptual framework. The studies are utilised to understand the current state of knowledge regarding the phenomenon in question and to identify knowledge gaps and the conceptual framework to guide the analysis. The literature search was conducted using different strategies, including a structured literature search, snowball and citation search.

Initially, a structured literature search was conducted to explore the relationship between philanthropic foundations and urban governance. The structured literature search used multiple search strings composed of different keywords. An example of used search strings is "urban "foundations" AND "urban planning" AND "philanthrop*". The search strings were used in the abstract and citation database Scopus, and the retrieved documents were exported to Mendeley for relevance review. The structured literature search resulted in two academic articles that were used for the following snowball and citation search. The two articles were:

Philanthropic foundations and local policy making in the austerity era: Does urban governance matter? by Stefania Ravazzi from 2016.

and

Philanthropic foundations as urban climate policy entrepreneurs by Hélène Madénian & Sophie L. Van Neste from 2025

Stefania Ravazzi's article served as the foundation for exploring empirical cases of philanthropic foundations in urban governance using a citation search. Hélène Madénian and Sophie L. Van Neste's article served as the foundation for applying the concept of the policy entrepreneur in the research project. Using their references on policy entrepreneurs, this research project employed the snowball method to develop its own understanding of policy entrepreneurs. Supplementary methods for literature search include drawing on literature from previous semesters and literature provided by the supervisor.

4.3.2 - Case study

This report employs a case study of the partnership in the programme *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels* by Realdania and the Danish Coastal Authority, for its empirical inquiry. The case study enables an investigation of philanthropic foundations as urban governance actors that can influence urban development and processes traditionally considered public-sector activities. This social phenomenon is analysed "in depth and with its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 14) as the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are vague. This supports the research inquiry into understanding why philanthropic foundations are becoming central actors in urban governance.

This research study is designed as an embedded single-case study. This entails one case with multiple subunits of analysis that contribute to the analysis of the case. The single-case design type is chosen due to the limited time and human resources available for this project. As Yin (2014) argues, single-case studies are vulnerable because they stand alone with the data generated from them, which can be criticised for the unique conditions of the selected case, thereby indicating an essential drawback of this approach. Employing a multiple-case study

with two or more Realdania programmes in this research would have provided stronger evidence for a generalisation and thus accounted for the possible unique conditions. However, Flyvbjerg, (2006, p. 228) argues on the other hand, "*the force of the example* is underestimated" and that context-dependent knowledge from a variety of cases is the foundation of detailed knowledge in a field. A single case with a possible unique set of attributes adds to the foundation, providing nuanced perspectives for the field of research.

The case is chosen based on primarily on two accounts. Firstly, the programme is developed and launched by Realdania. This initiative role positions them as a leading actor with an objective and a set of criteria for the actors who want to participate in the programme. This is important for the research inquiry because it reflects one of Realdania's most common forms of philanthropic work. Using a programme for the case study can thus illustrate a typical form of influence performed by Realdania.

Secondly, the partnership in *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels* programme is intended for municipalities. Realdania's funding encompasses multiple topics and actors, ranging from the engagement of local and national civic actors to private actors in the sustainable transition of the building industry, to collaboration with governmental actors and financing their projects. However, the research project focuses on the influence of philanthropic foundations on urban governance and the planning agenda, where governmental actors play a central role. As Danish planning practices can be characterised as decentralised, with most planning competencies being delegated to municipalities, these are the governmental actors that form and implement the planning agenda, making them key actors in Danish urban planning. Understanding how Realdania utilises its funding for municipal projects is thus essential.

4.3.3 - Semi-structured interview

The empirical data are primarily generated through qualitative semi-structured interviews. This method is chosen to obtain knowledge on the collaboration between Realdania and the municipalities. Six semi-structured interview was conducted as part of the research project. The interviews aim to collect information about Realdania and its influence through the programme, thereby serving an information-seeking purpose for the research project. Since the research project examines how philanthropic foundations impact urban governance, the focus was on interviewing an employee from Realdania and municipal employees, as they are the primary actors. To support an understanding of the planning context, the research project also aimed to interview people with planning expertise.

Among interviewees with planning expertise, the current and former CEOs of the Danish Town Planning Institute were selected for an interview request based on the Institute's general knowledge of Danish urban planning. The selection of an interviewee from Realdania was based on which person(s) were involved in the programme. The programme manager of *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels* was thus contacted for an interview request.

Table A1. List of non-municipal actors contacted

Job title	Name	Interviewed	Replied
Urban development consultant and external professor at the Danish Royal Academic	Ellen Højgaard	Yes	Yes
CEO of Danish Town Planning Institute	Tina Saaby	No	Pending
Head of project at Realdania	Mikkel Suell Henriques	Yes	Yes

18 municipal pilot projects from 19 municipalities were funded through the programme. While knowledge from each municipality would have contributed to sophisticated knowledge of Realdania engagement through the programme, time and resources limits this possibility. Instead, four municipalities from the first funding round and two from the second round, in total six municipalities, were contacted by email with a request for an interview. The aim was to obtain information from both application rounds to get perspectives from

Table 2. List of contacted municipalities

Municipalities in the first application round of the programme			
Municipality	*Contact detail method*	*Interviewed*	*Replied*
Assens	Direct Department Search	No	Pending
Dragør	Direct Department Search	Yes	Yes
Hedensted	Direct Department Search	Yes	Yes
Hvidovre	Personal Connection Referral	No	Pending
Municipalities in the second application round of the programme			
Municipality	*Contact detail method*	*Interviewed*	*Replied*
Norddjurs	Prior Collaboration	Yes	Yes
Svendborg	Prior Collaboration	Yes	Yes

The interview lasted 45-60 minutes and was guided by an interview guide (see Appendices) based on the analytical framework. All conducted interviews were recorded through MS Teams or on a dictaphone and transcribed using Aalborg University's software Transcriber. The transcripts were later coded according to the analytical framework.

To access the knowledge, priority was given to face-to-face interviews, enabling more personal and fluid communication. However, due to geographical and time constraints, most interviews were conducted remotely via online meetings or telephone. Although face-to-face interviews are preferable, obtaining data from the interviewees was more critical, and the limitations of alternative methods are justified by the valuable access they provided.

Every interviewee was contacted by email with the interview outline provided. This included the data collection approach of recording the interview. Furthermore, each person was asked again at the beginning of the interview if recording was allowed. Each interviewee was likewise sent the interview guide beforehand, so they understood what the interview was about. Lastly, quotes and sections from the project referencing the interviews were sent to each interviewee, allowing them to correct potential misunderstandings.

4.4 - Use of generative AI

As outlined in the semester description, this subsection of the methodology chapter explains the use of generative AI. In this project, generative AI has been employed as an assistive tool for data processing, spelling correction, and sparring to improve time efficiency and readability. This has been particularly useful since the project was carried out by a single person, with limited time and feedback from group members. However, generative AI has its limitations, and its use has been carefully considered in this report, using tools provided by Aalborg University or external tools that comply with GDPR and EU data protection frameworks.

For the data processing, all interviews were recorded and uploaded to the UCloud platform, where the Transcriber application converted the audio files into text. The resulting transcripts were then reviewed and corrected if the text did not match the audio. Additionally, Copilot was used to assist in translating the interview quotes used in the analysis of this report. Furthermore, Grammarly Pro, a generative AI tool, was utilised for spelling corrections and language refinement. The tools have thus served only as support, and all text has been reviewed and accepted by the student. Generative AI has not influenced the analytical interpretation of the data.

05

Case introduction

In the following chapter, Realdania, as an organisation, is introduced, followed by a presentation of the programme *Cities and the Rising Sea Level,* which is the Realdania initiative examined in the case study analysis. The introduction aims to provide general background information about Realdania, which will serve as a foundation for later sections of the report. The introduction includes a brief overview of the history of Realdania to understand the organisation's legacy. A presentation of Realdania's organisational structure and an elaboration of the characteristic elements of an association and of a foundation follow. The philanthropic visions of Realdania are then presented to specify their area of work and the activities and means they use to realise these visions. Lastly, the *Cities and the Rising Sea Level* programme is introduced.

5.1 - Real Who? - An introduction to Realdania

5.1.1 - The start of Realdania

Realdania is a self-endowed philanthropic association established in 2000. Previously, Realdania was a financial association engaged in real estate financing. The association was founded in 1972 through the merger of four Danish mortgage associations and was named Mortgage Association Denmark (Kreditforening Danmark). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the association underwent significant changes. In 1989, the association was converted into a stock company, RealDanmark A/S, which was fully owned by the association through a holding company, which likewise was renamed Association RealDanmark (Foreningen RealDanmark). By merging the stock company RealDanmark A/S with the Danish bank BG Bank in 1998 Foreningen RealDanmark's owner share was reduced to 61% (Foreningen RealDanmark, 2002).

In 2000, Association RealDanmark sold all its financial activities (mortgage and bank) to the Danish bank Danske Bank. Due to Danish mortgage regulations, the proceeds from the sale were not allowed to be transferred back to the members of the Association RealDanmark, which led to an alteration of the association's statutes, transforming it into a philanthropic association using the proceeds from the sale as base capital (Foreningen RealDanmark, 2002). As Association RealDanmark's assets derive from real estate activities, it decided to continue to focus on this area, aiming to promote quality of life in the built environment. In the early

2000s, the association worked on establishing its new identity as a philanthropic association, distinguishing it from its former financial activities. This included, among other things, a change of name to Realdania in 2006 (Realdania, 2006).

5.1.2 - The structure of Realdania

As Realdania is formally an association, the organisation has its point of departure in its members. To be a member, a person or legal entity must own real estate in Denmark or be a municipality that has joined Realdania's professional election group (Valggruppe) for urban development (Realdania, 2024). The Board of Representatives is the highest body in Realdania and consists of 109 elected members, either based on their profession or as representatives from a geographic area. In addition, 11 candidates are appointed by the special interest organisations. It is the Supervisory Board that decides how many and which organisations can be a part of the special interest organisations. The candidates for the Board of Representatives from the special interest organisations need to be members of the Supervisory Board or the Executive Board of its organisation (Realdania, 2024).

The Board of Representatives appoints members to the Supervisory Board, which holds overall leadership of Realdania's activities. The Supervisory Board is composed of eight members from the Board of Representatives and three members elected by the Representatives based on their expertise in investments, the built environment, or other relevant fields that would benefit Realdania. These three members may be from the Board of Representatives, but are not required to be. If not already a member, they join the Board of Representatives and remain until they are no longer part of the Supervisory Board (Realdania, 2024).

The Supervisory Board then appoints members of the Executive Board. It is the Executive Board which manages the daily operations in Realdania. The Executive Board, led by the chief executive officer and supported by up to two officers, is responsible for implementing the strategies set by the Board of Representatives and the Supervisory Board, by overseeing three overall departments: Investment, Association, and Philanthropy, each working based on its own strategy to achieve Realdania's vision (Realdania, 2024, 2025b).

Realdania also manages three subseries that focus on specific parts of Realdania's objectives. Firstly, Realdania By og Byg, which acquires properties and engages in area development companies with other stakeholders, and thereby seeks to preserve architectural heritage while shaping urban development. Secondly, Videncentret Bolius aims to provide accessible knowledge about housing to Danish homeowners. Thirdly, Realdania Invest, which primarily works with unlisted equity for Realdania, enables Realdania to keep its capital growing (Realdania, 2025b). The organisational structure is visualised below in Figure 3
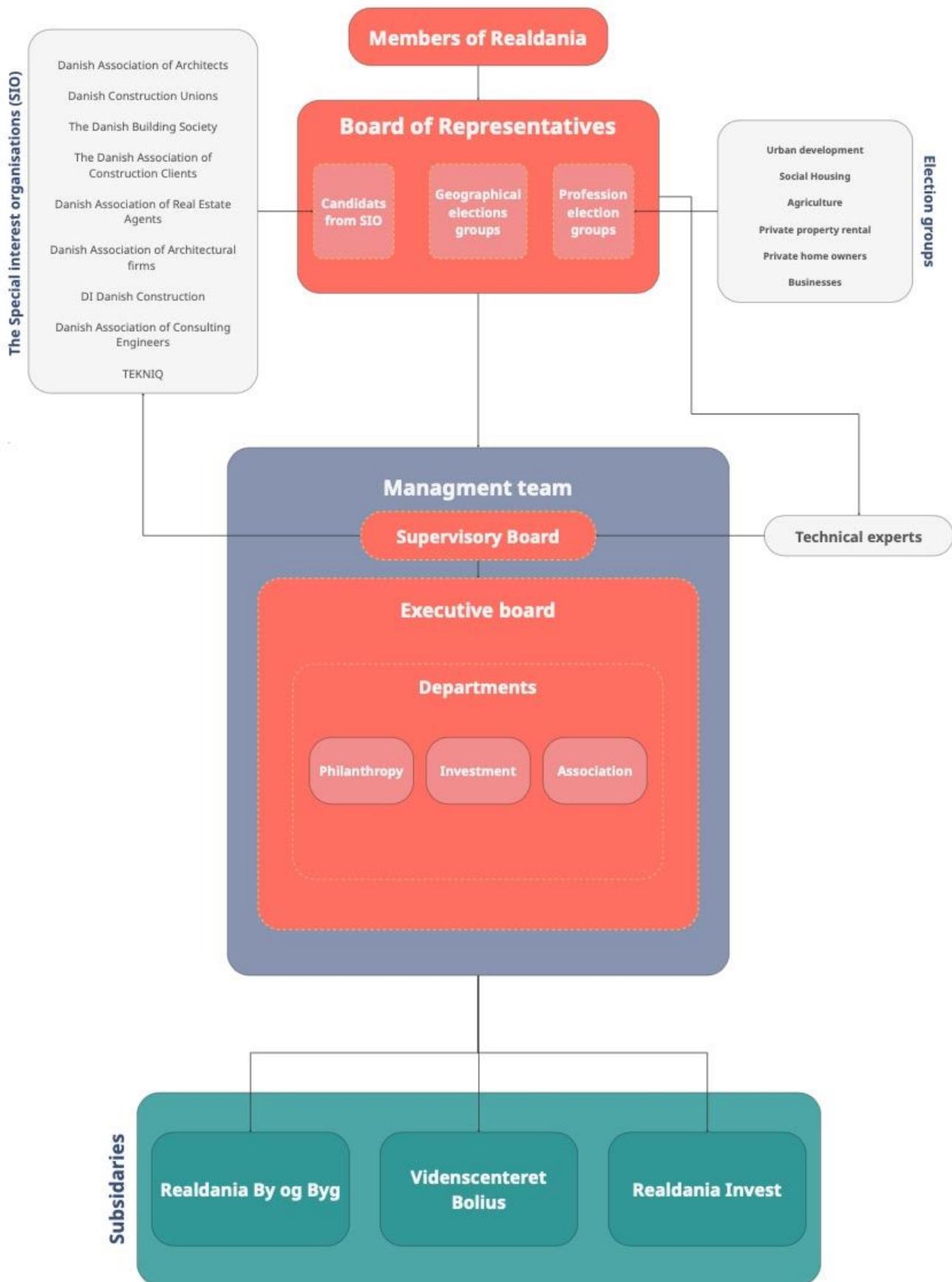
Figure 3 - Organisational structure of Realdania and its subsidiaries, showing the direction of power. Sources: Realdania, 2024 and Realdania, 2025a

While Realdania is an association with its representative member democracy, several characteristics make it more like a foundation. Realdania's permanent endowment and investment activities contribute, along with the professional Supervisory and Executive Board, to a business-oriented association (in Danish called "fondslignende forening"), although its objective is of a non-profit character. The status as a business-oriented entity can also be seen in that Realdania is regulated under the Danish Act on Certain Commercial Undertakings.

Although foundations have different structures and legal frameworks, they are heterogeneous as a group, yet they share the characteristic of serving a public purpose (Madénian & Van Neste, 2025). Ravazzi, (2016, pp. 919–920) agrees with this notion and supplements by arguing that all philanthropic foundations have two primary ways of working: "through the transfer of financial resources to public or private organizations for their activities, and through the realization of their own projects.". Realdania can be seen to follow these characteristics as it strives to support non-profit projects that serve a general purpose for current and future generations by providing financial support to other organisations and initiating projects itself (Realdania, 2025a). The research project will therefore refer to Realdania as a foundation.

5.1.3 - Realdania's philanthropic vision

The philanthropic visions of Realdania are outlined in its statutes, with the first objective in its objectives paragraph focusing on supporting non-profit and charitable initiatives primarily in the built environment across Denmark (Realdania, 2024). This objective is formulated into a philanthropic mission:

> To create quality of life for all through the built environment. (Realdania, 2020)

The mission is pursued through three main goals, on which all of Realdania's activities need to be based:

- collaboration with other actors
- societal responsibility
- innovation and new knowledge (Realdania, 2025b)

In 2013, Realdania added an extra layer to its philanthropic activities by working with catalytic philanthropy. This type of philanthropy, according to Realdania itself, differs from classic and strategic philanthropy by being more agenda-setting and problem-driven. In contrast, classic philanthropy relied on applications from grant-seekers, and strategic philanthropy focused on collaboration with other stakeholders (Realdania, 2013). The catalytic strategy should enable Realdania to be an active advocate for societal challenges. The then chairman of the

Supervisory Board of Realdania, Jesper Nygård, explained the catalytic philanthropy approach in an interview for Realdania's annual publication, Realdania Magazine:

> A catalytic approach also means that we place a greater emphasis on identifying and defining current challenges and problems facing society. We want to focus our philanthropic effort by taking what we call an 'issue-driven' approach. (Frøslev, 2013)

With the catalytic philanthropy strategy, Realdania aimed to be an agenda-setting actor and strengthen its activities on the topics of sustainability, climate change adaptation and social responsibility (Frøslev, 2013).

Realdania's philanthropic activities consist of funding and property investments. The philanthropic grants can be given to smaller projects, larger initiatives, or campaigns, and Realdania, alone or together with others, presents a topic of interest that they want to highlight. The property investments focus on securing the building heritage or promoting innovation in the construction sector (Realdania, 2025a, 2025b).

Through the years, different agendas have been the focus of Realdania's philanthropic activities. However, three overarching focus areas have prevailed: built heritage, the construction industry, and urban spaces which should support the quality of life for humans. Since 2018, Realdania has published its philanthropic strategy, which it states should guide its philanthropic activities. In these strategies, Realdania outlines its current agenda, philanthropic goals, and core principles for supporting a project. A vital principle is that a project should have a clearly defined philanthropic task that the market or state cannot solve, making it problem-oriented and innovative (Realdania, 2025b).

5.2 - Cities and the rising sea levels – a Realdania programme

In line with its philanthropic goal of promoting sustainable cities, in 2018 Realdania launched its programme *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels,* which aimed to develop solutions to future rising sea levels and to address the increasing frequency of extreme weather events. The programme ran from 2018 to 2022, and 77 million DKK was allocated. The programme was divided into four tracks targeting different actors, designed to support one another with knowledge and perspectives that could develop new approaches for coastal cities to address the current and coming weather challenges. Track one aimed to create a research network to gather and share research regarding problems for the coastal cities based on climate and risk scenarios. Track two aimed to develop new, practice-related knowledge through support of municipal pilot projects. This track was a partnership between Realdania and the national agency Danish Coastal Authority. Track three aimed at distributing knowledge about the challenge and discussing possible solutions for mitigating these. Multiple actors, including experts, citizens and decision-makers, participated in this track. The last track aimed to synthesise the produced

knowledge from the other tracks and to anchor this among professionals, citizens and emergency service actors (Realdania, 2018).

This research project concentrates on the second track - the partnership between Realdania and the Danish Coastal Authority. The partnership issued a call for Danish coastal municipalities interested in becoming leaders in climate action. Municipalities at risk of flooding due to rising sea levels and storm surges were invited to apply through two application rounds. The partnership delineated city-specific projects for the funding scope. The pilot projects were required to enhance their climate adaptation measures and to develop development plans, strategies, or financial plans to secure funding. The funding could also be used to collect data, produce analyses, or develop collaborations to support innovative solutions (Realdania & Miljø- og Fødevareministeriet, 2019). The partnership was organised with steering groups, coordination groups, a secretary, advisory groups, and a research network (Henriques, 2019). The partnership aimed to facilitate the further development of existing initiatives within the municipalities. However, it also recognised that strengthening or reevaluating existing projects might be relevant. The partnership outlined six qualities for coastal climate management, which it aimed to support. As a part of the selection, the submitted projects were evaluated based on these qualities. The qualities were:

- *Proactive reduction of flood risks*

- *Holistic approach*

- *Long-term planning and flexibility in solutions*

- *Feasible and risk-adjusted planning*

- *Collaboration across organisational boundaries*

- *Combination of solutions* (Realdania & Miljø- og Fødevareministeriet, 2019)

The proactive reduction of flood risks was deemed essential, as prevention of damage prevention is less expensive than those associated with potential flooding incidents. The holistic approach was recognised as a valuable quality because integrating urban development can lead to solutions that make the city more attractive. Long-term planning and flexibility in solutions were considered important due to the uncertainty of rising sea levels; thus, the development of cities requires a modular approach and an acknowledgement that current solutions should not hinder future solutions. The initiatives proposed by the municipalities need to be weighed against the risks the municipalities are willing to accept, which calls for feasible and risk-adjusted planning. Collaboration across organisational boundaries is deemed vital, involving national government, regional authorities, municipalities, citizens, and both public

and private organisations. The partnership further contended that a combination of solutions would constitute the most appropriate response to the city's unique challenges (Realdania & Miljø- og Fødevareministeriet, 2019). Furthermore, the partnership prioritised the selected projects to be located in different geographical areas.

In each application round, 10 million DKK was allocated to support the process and planning of innovative pilot projects. Each project could receive up to 1,5 million DKK, with Realdania requiring 50% of the funding to come from the municipalities themselves. The target municipalities in this first round were those that already had professional and political attention to climate adaptation issues related to seawater in their submitted projects through innovative, exemplary solutions. The funded pilot projects in the first application round could subsequently apply for funding to implement the project. For the implementation, 40 million DKK were allocated. The second application round was intended for municipalities which need financial support to proceed with a holistic management of the challenge (Henriques, 2019; Realdania, 2021; Realdania & Miljø- og Fødevareministeriet, 2019). The partnerships resulted in 18 pilot projects across Denmark.

Pilot projects from the first application round

- Dragør Municipality
- Hvidovre and Copenhagen Municipality
- Assens Municipality
- Middelfart Municipality
- Hedensted Municipality
- Vejle Municipality
- Aabenraa Municipality
- Randers Municipality

Pilot project from the second application round

- Lyngby-Taarbæk Municipality
- Stevns Municipality
- Guldborgsund Municipality
- Frederiksund Municipality
- Svendborg Municipality
- Faarborg Municipality
- Syddjurs Municipality
- Norddjurs Municipality
- Skive Municipality
- Aalborg Municipality

06

Characteristics of the Danish Urban Planning Conditions

Before analysing Realdania's approach to influencing the planning agenda, the context in which the organisation operates through planning conditions is outlined. This context is important because it shapes how planning actors, including Realdania, approach tasks and responsibilities and interact with one another. The following chapter aims to situate the case study within the Danish urban governance context by outlining key changes in its structure over the past three decades.

The following supporting research question guides the chapter:

What characterises the planning context in which Realdania operates?

Since the early 1990s, the Danish urban governance structures have been the subject of a reorientation. Going from a social planning paradigm which saw planning as a welfare project and an integrated, comprehensive planning system in the 1970s to the late 1980s, where notions of neoliberalisation began (Carter et al., 2015; Enemark, 2016). Some of the early neoliberal effects are argued to be the revision of the Danish Planning Act in 1992, where equal development was replaced by appropriate development and together with the promotion of Copenhagen as an international city in the Øresund region, Denmark began to shift from a welfare to a competition state (Carter et al., 2015; Olesen & Hansen, 2020). The reorientation continued through the Structural Reform of 2007, which led to the reconfiguration of the planning tasks and responsibilities. The territorial outcome was the amalgamation of municipalities, reducing the 275 to 98 larger municipalities. Furthermore, the counties were abolished and replaced by five regions. Administratively, planning tasks and responsibilities were redistributed upwards to the national government and downwards to the municipalities, leaving the regions only the production of development plans as their planning tasks. This task was later removed as part of a revision of the Planning Act. After the Structural Reform, municipalities have the core responsibility for spatial planning, while the national government is responsible for safeguarding the national interest. The administrative structure can thus be seen as highly decentralised
(Enemark, 2016).

The urban development consultant and former CEO of the Danish Town Planning Institute, Ellen Højgaard Jensen, also recognises that the Danish national government's role in planning has evolved over the past 25 years. Previously, the national government, represented by the Ministry of Environment, played a more significant role in the planning agenda. This is exemplified by the fact that the national planning reports (landsplanredegørelse) prepared after each national election have transitioned from mandatory to optional, leading to the absence of a comprehensive, strategic plan for Danish planning. Additionally, the national planning responsibilities concerning national funding schemes across various planning topics and for state-led planning discussions have similarly diminished. Jensen articulated this as follows:

> Back then, the national government was much more active and engaged in discussions with the municipalities. The municipalities say that they could call the government [the Ministry of Environment] and ask: 'We're facing this professional issue—what's your take on it?' Today, there aren't many experts left; it has become the administration of legislation. And so now the professional expertise lies elsewhere. In that sense, it's a kind of parallel shift that has taken place. (Jensen, interview, 2025)

This exemplifies a previously stronger connection between local and national government regarding planning issues, followed by the retreat of the national government as an active planning authority with specialised knowledge and explicit guidance. According to Jensen (interview, 2025), the argument for less national engagement in planning decisions was that decisions should be closer to citizens, thereby weakening the national government and strengthening municipalities. This shift of responsibilities from national to local government, however, has left space for philanthropic foundations such as Realdania to intervene and assume some responsibilities previously under the Ministry's jurisdiction. This aligns with the principles of roll-back neoliberalism, in which the national government withdraws from involvement and leaves private actors with the responsibilities.

Enemark (2016) also notes that national-level planning has shifted from steering and strategic to a more flexible approach. The more flexible approach is evident in the series of relaxed regulations for urban development in the countryside, retail development, and coastal protection. Through amendments to the Danish Planning Act, planning regulations were simplified to allow for more development and economic growth, on the argument that planning was a barrier to needed growth, particularly in rural areas (Enemark, 2016; Olesen & Carter, 2018).

The reorientation was further substantiated in 2015 by the transition of the national planning tasks and responsibilities from the Ministry of the Environment to the Ministry of Business and Growth. Jensen (interview, 2025) noted that economic rationales became an increasingly important factor in planning decisions under the Ministry of Business's jurisdiction, following a revision to the objectives of the Danish Planning Act to include growth and business development.

While the retreat from the national government has given actors like Realdania more space to operate, Jensen (interview, 2025) also suggests that the transition to a project-oriented society is well-suited to foundations, as it allows them to support delineated planning projects. However, Jensen noted that Realdania is more of an active actor than just a provider of financial support for projects. The initiation of wider programmes and lessons-learned reviews provides a more strategic approach to Realdania. Jensen noted that foundations' increasing engagement in urban development can be problematic if the national government, on the other hand, withdraws:

> It's not a problem if you have a strong state, and it serves as a supplement. But if it suddenly turns out that the state no longer initiates any development or has any visions and strategies in the planning area, then it becomes a problem, because that gives the foundations too large a platform (Jensen, interview, 2025)

The project-oriented approach that philanthropic foundations latch onto comes with some implications, according to Jensen. With delineated project periods, a continuous concentration of professional expertise faces harsh conditions.

When asked about Realdania's role in urban planning, Jensen (interview, 2025) sees them as an innovative actor who is one step ahead of the municipalities. By offering funding schemes municipalities can apply for, Realdania can present its approach to the municipality and thereby influence the agenda. Regarding the municipalities' capacity to apply for funding in general, Jensen (interview, 2025) noted that it varies from municipality to municipality. Some municipalities have acknowledged that they need funding and, therefore, have actively allocated resources to fund seeking, whereas in other municipalities, fund seeking is a less organised task. Jensen (interview, 2025) highlights this division as a potential problem, as municipalities that develop funding-seeking abilities are more likely to secure funding than those without.

In addition, Jensen (interview, 2025) observes a general trend in external funding for research over the last 25 years and notes that this trend can yield essential knowledge. However, Jensen (interview, 2025) also stated that if research is left to external financing, democratic implications can arise, as external actors can exert significant influence over which research areas receive attention.

In summary, the Danish urban governance structures have been decentralised, resulting in municipalities being the leading governmental actors in urban planning. The simplified planning regulations and the growth amendment to the Planning Act indicate a neoliberalisation of Danish urban planning. The drawback of the national government allows other urban actors to promote their agenda, which has positive and negative effects.

07

Realdania's Strategies for Lobbying in Cities and the Rising Sea Levels

The purpose of this analysis is to investigate which approach Realdania employs to influence the municipal planning agenda in its *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels* programme. The municipal councils are viewed as the governments whose decision-making processes are intended to be influenced. Using the analytical framework, the analysis will identify the entrepreneurial strategies and the flows of people, ideas, and resources that support each strategy. The strategies and flows will showcase which spaces of lobbying Realdania seeks to access through the programme. The analysis is organised as follows. Each entrepreneurial strategy is being examined individually, along with its supporting flows of people, ideas and resources.

The following supporting research question guides the analysis:

Which entrepreneurial strategies and supporting flows does Realdania employ to access spaces of lobbying in the programme *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels?*

7.1 - Creating and expanding a network of knowledge

In the *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels* programme, Realdania employs structural strategies as a policy entrepreneur to enhance its influence on municipal governance decisions and thereby advocate its agenda within urban decision-making arenas. As described earlier, the partnership was introduced as a knowledge initiative to enhance professional understanding across disciplines and professions. Furthermore, it investigated new possible solutions for climate adaptation as the consequences of climate change continue to evolve. According to Mikkel Suell Henriques, programme manager at Realdania, a key obstacle in promoting climate adaptation as a current planning issue was not as much a lack of knowledge as the distribution of knowledge:

> There was actually knowledge out there to act on, but typically, it was not something anyone was fully working on. It was not sitting in the middle of anyone's desk. And there was a need to bring things together. (Henriques, interview, 2025)

The missing distribution of information about the potential consequences of rising sea levels and possible solutions can be seen as a structural barrier. Moreover, a lack of formal, structured responsibility could also make it challenging to recognise it as a priority and incorporate it into planning agendas across Danish municipalities. Furthermore, this demonstrates the complexities of the problems, as it requires collaboration across multiple disciplines that were not present at that time. Thus, a part of the challenge relied on connecting actors with different knowledge. Henriques further notes that Realdania intends to support the management of significant societal challenges, including storm surges, which cause extensive damage and negatively impact individuals' quality of life (Henriques, interview, 2025). The reason for Realdania's engagement in this challenge was also an opportunity to incorporate added value to the climate adaptation solutions and thereby enhance the quality of the cities. Henriques explained like this:

> When investments are made - and in the coming years, significant amounts will need to be invested in climate adaptation to prevent flooding of various kinds - the initiatives and the money spent should be used in a way that gives something back beyond just risk management. This focus on added value has been central in many of our projects: getting more out of it than simply reduced risk. That has guided us and was the reason we engaged in this work. (Henriques, interview, 2025)

Realdania thus aimed to focus beyond the technical aspects of climate adaptation. Sharing knowledge about climate adaptation solutions and the implications of climate change aligns with its strategic objective of promoting sustainable cities (see the philanthropic strategy section), making this barrier relevant to the organisation.

Establishing a network to facilitate knowledge and experience exchange can be seen as an entrepreneurial strategy to overcome this barrier. This strategy benefits Realdania in multiple respects. Realdania uses its existing network of experts and professionals to thoroughly understand the complexities of the challenges and identify key areas for investigation (Henriques, interview, 2025). This can be interpreted as the organisation's willingness to allocate financial resources to acquire a comprehensive overview of current knowledge on the subject, as demonstrated by the production of state-of-the-art reports on the specified topic. In this manner, Realdania acknowledges the importance of a network that can qualify and strengthen the programme and understands that other actors possess professional expertise on the subject. Actors with expertise in the subject also give the network a high level of legitimacy, which can attract new actors, expand the network, and mobilise a larger group in favour of its objectives. This was evident in the creation of the partnership with the Danish Coastal Agency, which not only had essential knowledge but is also a formal authority. Several employees from

the funded municipalities highlighted the presence of the Coastal Agency as vital for their engagement in the programme; for instance, the employee from Norddjurs Municipality stated:

> If we had contacted them [the Coastal Authority] ourselves, I'm not sure we would have managed to achieve the same level of involvement as they [Realdania] did. And I think that was a smart move by Realdania - it was a good decision to include them. Because without the Coastal Authority, it would have been something quite different, I have no doubt about that. (Jensen, interview, 2025b)

The Coastal Authority is considered as an essential actor by the employee from Norddjurs Municipality, both for its credibility and its expertise in coastal matters. Realdania thereby demonstrates its capacity to develop a programme that provides substantial engagement from the actors and draws in the competencies necessary to address the issue at hand. The employee from Svendborg also articulated the Coastal Authority's contribution by explaining the division of responsibilities between Realdania and the Coastal Authority. Realdania typically participated in the project's guiding processes, while the Coastal Authority contributed to the operational part of the project with technical knowledge and by having an employee attend workshops and public meetings as an expert (Nielsen, interview, 2025).

Thus, Realdania can be seen as playing a facilitating and strategic role in the network. This is continued as Realdania also invited the researcher network, a group of actors with high legitimacy in the programme. Henriques (2025) described how the research network supplied municipalities with knowledge from various disciplines to address the challenge more holistically. The research network was also highlighted as valuable by the employees interviewed in this research project. The employee from Dragør Municipality explained:

> The research network was really valuable, because many of these coastal protection solutions, and maybe especially some of them, well, they're also new for the consultants. So you can't necessarily expect the consultancy sector to be able to provide you with all the solutions in complex contexts. (Holm, interview, 2025)

The distribution of knowledge was thus highly relevant for the municipalities. The employees from Svendborg and Hedensted Municipalities also underscored the importance of access to various academic materials, including webinars and reports, for their projects, as this raised knowledge levels. The employee from Hedensted Municipality also noted they hired one of the researchers from the research network to support the dike association in handling the distribution of contributions (bidragsfordelingen) for the solution (Sørensen, interview, 2025), thus using the network independently of Realdania.

Through the network, Realdania provided a space for actors to connect and, in return, gain the latest insights into challenges and opportunities in coastal climate adaptation planning. Furthermore, the recognition of municipal limitations in creating networks and seeking

knowledge themselves in this context underscores the structural barrier regarding information distribution.

Expanding the network, as Mintrom (2019) observes, additionally necessitates that the policy entrepreneur demonstrates flexibility in their proposals for policy change. While Realdania outlines requirements for applications submitted by municipalities, the organisation acknowledges that not all potential solutions are thoroughly explored. It recognises the need for innovative approaches to effectively address and incorporate climate adaptation with urban development. Consequently, Realdania is willing to involve municipalities in generating new solutions, as they are the ones that encounter local challenges that require assistance to resolve. Henriques explains Realdania's open approach to the programme:

> And you could say, that was our way of saying: 'Okay, we have a challenge, and we are not entirely sure we have explored the whole scope of solutions. We need to find new ways of doing this…Municipalities, would you like to help develop that? (Henriques, interview, 2025)

This demonstrates that Realdania can be flexible and stay aligned with its network, recognising that challenges must be identified and tackled by those responsible for climate adaptation to mobilise support for Realdania's proposed ideas. This also shows that the network not only helps diffuse knowledge but also provides a basis for generating new knowledge from real-life situations, as municipalities apply for funding for innovative projects that address climate adaptation issues.

The network not only connected practitioners in the municipalities with experts from the Coastal Agency and the universities, but also the other municipalities funded by the partnership through network meetings. The network meetings were facilitated by consultancy firm BARK, which organised professional presentations that could support the projects (BARK, u.d.; Nielsen, interview, 2025). This enabled municipal employees to move beyond their respective organisations and enter a space where ideas can be shared and local challenges discussed. All municipal employees interviewed in this project expressed that they found the network with the other municipalities useful (Jensen, interview, 2025b; Nielsen, interview, 2025; Sørensen, interview, 2025). The employee from Dragør Municipality explains why:

> Some of the municipalities have more in common - where they might be at roughly the same stage or have issues that are somewhat similar. I think it's been really valuable because you can feel a bit alone when you're the one sitting with the coastal protection project. (Holm, interview, 2025)

In Svendborg Municipality, the employee also noted that administrative officers usually worked on climate adaptation through the administration of the Coastal Protection Act. However, the strategic aspects of climate adaptation and the development of the harbour were

handled solely by the employee, and the network contributed positively to the project by providing space for interdisciplinary discussions and new perspectives (Nielsen, interview, 2025). Similarly, the employee from Hedensted municipality notes that municipal employees often have a narrow scope of responsibilities and are not always able to discuss projects with colleagues. They emphasised the importance of having a network to share both positive and negative experiences (Sørensen, interview, 2025). The network meetings have provided a basis for relationships beyond the meetings facilitated by Realdania, the employee from Svendborg Municipality stated:

> I have definitely made use of some of them [the municipalities], the ones I felt were most comparable to mine. I have even just called them when we did not have network meetings... Even after the programme ended, you kind of had a network. (Nielsen, interview, 2025)

Hedensted Municipality has also used the network after the partnership ended.

> The dike association we established has been on study trips to see some of these projects after the network meetings ended. Having contact information and being familiar with the projects has definitely been valuable because then you understand where they are quite comparable, and where there are similar challenges. (Sørensen, interview, 2025)

This demonstrates that the network has indeed expanded and that the actors within act independently from Realdania. This indicates the network strategy has helped overcome the structural barrier of fragmented knowledge. The new connections among both practitioners and experts enable conversations about the subject where each actor has a better understanding of the issue and understands the different perspectives.

The three flows constituting spaces of influence can be observed, supporting the network creation and expansion. The network exemplifies Realdania's capacity to mobilise people around coastal climate adaptation by bringing together the Coastal Authority, the research network, and the pilot municipalities into the programme. This is supported by social resources, as the municipalities gain access to professional expertise through the two other actors. Likewise, the flow of symbolic resources is also presented as the researcher network, and the Coastal Authority can be seen as an asset to Realdania due to its high legitimacy. Furthermore, each actor brings knowledge to the network, which allows current knowledge to be diffused and new ideas to be developed, thus mobilising flows of ideas. Furthermore, the partnership demonstrates Realdania's ability to mobilise a flow of material resources towards this agenda, not only through the provision of foundational knowledge but also by facilitating network meetings among municipalities.

7.2 - Using the planning phase as an entry point

The network strategy is a key element of Realdania's entrepreneurial approach and an essential part of the programme. Recognising and using a gap between knowledgeable actors and the unexplored solutions can also be seen as a policy window, providing Realdania with a valuable opportunity to influence urban planning and serve as a leading actor. However, Henriques (2025) stressed that while Realdania's timing can indicate that it is a leading actor, its initiatives are rooted in professional recommendations:

> When we are setting up funding schemes, or entering into partnerships to promote certain ways of doing things, or a specific focus, it is based on professional recommendations. We are not inventing something out of the blue, but when we reach out [through initiatives, programmes or campaigns], there are still many actors who are not quite there yet. (Henriques, interview, 2025)

This demonstrates that Realdania's engagement is grounded in an understanding of the specific issue. Henriques added that before launching initiatives, a thorough investigation usually takes place, which can include funding production of reports on the subject to address challenges or to gather relevant actors for discussion. Henriques further noted the point of departure in professional knowledge, and using funding schemes to distribute that knowledge helps shift attention to specific topics and approaches (Henriques, interview, 2025). It indicates that Realdania acknowledges its role as an actor with access to expertise and, through its funding, the capacity to reach out and facilitate the distribution of that knowledge.

Realdania's facilitating role is also underscored in the interviews with the municipal employees. A recurring theme was the limited capacity for knowledge in smaller municipalities. As the employee from Dragør Municipality noted, the resources allocated to the climate adaptation projects come with certain constraints, such as a limited number of employees or limited technical knowledge (Holm, interview, 2025). When asked about the professional and financial support from national agencies in general, the employee from Norddjurs Municipality also highlighted the limitations:

> What really puts pressure on us [small municipalities] is that no one is hired for just one thing. It is actually really hard to free up resources for one task, because in the daily routine, you have to do all sorts of other things too. So I think it is a huge advantage when knowledge comes in that is so easily accessible and so highly qualified. (Jensen, interview, 2025b)

This underlines the constraints in smaller municipalities and the appreciation of external support for projects. The limited resources include material resources allocated to the project, as well as social resources, such as knowledge capacity within the municipality and access to

external sources. By highlighting the possible consequences, unexplored solutions, and understanding municipalities' limitations, Realdania can be seen to use its social acuity to advance its ideas on the planning agenda. The municipalities' limited resources can be seen as a barrier to developing innovative solutions, and to overcome this, Realdania provides the necessary resources. This can be seen as a strategic use of decision-making venues, as its proposal will support the municipalities but also its agenda.

The programme's launch timing and exploratory focus can also be seen as a strategic use of decision-making procedures, as the partnership joins projects early in the planning phases. This allows the partnership to be part of the process and thus contribute to shaping the project. When asked about Realdania's role in the pilot project, several employees noted that Realdania had an active role. The employee from Dragør Municipality described the engagement from Realdania compared to national funding like this:

> For example, when you receive funding from state coastal grants, unless you make major changes to the project, there are certain technical specifications you have to meet. But in my view, that's where Realdania is closer, because they also insist that you push yourself and make an effort by keeping challenging the projects, so they maintain that relevance for others to look at. (Holm, interview, 2025)

Similarly, the employee from Norddjurs Municipality, described Realdania's role like this:

> I think Realdania is quite unique, because I am used to working with all sorts of other funding schemes. And they don't really contribute knowledge and feedback. They basically provide money. So I think what's truly special here is that we actually got something more than just money. (Jensen, interview, 2025b)

This demonstrates that Realdania combines knowledge distribution with financial resources in this programme and sets requirements for the projects regarding exemplary value. This is valuable not only for municipalities but also for Realdania, as the pilot project can showcase the innovative solution and thus reinforce the focus and approach to climate adaptation.

However, the involvement of Realdania has been less prominent in Hedensted Municipality. The employee from Hedensted Municipality recalled that the partnership's representative in the steering group for Hedensted's project was an employee from the Coastal Authority. This provided strong professional input to the project, but inputs from Realdania were missing. The employee reflected on the rejection of the subsequent implementation funding application and expressed that some of the feedback could have been incorporated during the project if Realdania had given inputs. While the municipality has found other ways to finance the implementation, the employee noted that establishing a dike association with multiple actors challenges the financial aspect of the climate adaptation solution:

In a dike association, which consists of property owners, the municipality, and various companies, it becomes very much about: How much will it cost me? No one wants to pay more than absolutely necessary. And that is where what we might call the "icing on the cake" is the first to go, which can be a bit unfortunate when you have ideas, visions, and thoughts that could have been something different. And then you end up with something more basic. (Sørensen, interview, 2025)

This illustrates that financial resources are essential for implementing innovative solutions. However, supporting the planning phase does not automatically lead to the planned solutions. This is supported by the employee from Svendborg who noted that funding the planning phase distinguished itself from funding allocated for the construction phase of projects:

Cities and the Rising Sea Levels is not so much about construction funds as about preliminary analyses and about questioning some of the conventional ways of doing things. So in reality, it is small amounts [of money] compared to some of the large construction projects they support. (Nielsen, interview, 2025)

This demonstrates that the programme assists the funded municipalities in adopting alternative perspectives regarding their climate adaptation strategies. The employee from Svendborg further notes that the programme has given the municipalities a more nuanced perspective on climate adaptation, helping incorporate added value to the solution and having an adaptive approach to the project (Nielsen, interview, 2025). Additionally, it indicates that the financial burden is higher in the later stages of the planning process.

However, the financial resources have consistently emerged as a prominent theme in interviews with municipal employees. The planning and implementation of the climate adaptation project have required significant financial investment. The employee from Dragør Municipality noted that financial support from the partnership enabled the parallel commission to operate at a larger scale than the municipality could have managed on its own (Holm, interview, 2025). Similarly, the municipal construction budget limits municipalities' capacity to finance projects independently. The employee from Norddjurs Municipality highlighted the difficulties faced by small municipalities concerning the municipal construction budget, noting that they incur project costs prior to securing funding. She further elaborated that the municipality requested the Ministry of the Interior to exempt the climate adaptation solution from the construction budget, but this request was denied. The employee from Norddjurs also noted that larger projects such as climate adaptation are infrequent within a municipality of this size, and consequently, the necessary knowledge and competencies are not inherently available internally. Securing external professional expertise is regarded as essential for developing a project that can be effectively implemented and serve its purpose (Jensen, interview, 2025b). This demonstrates that knowledge capacity is not the only barrier to implementing innovative solutions, but financial capacity also contributes.

This is also evident in Svendborg. While Svendborg Municipality applied for funding during the first application round of *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels,* with the intention of implementing its preliminary climate solution consisting of multiple sluices, Realdania did not award the funding because the project did not seek new solutions as anticipated by the programme. However, Realdania allowed Svendborg Municipality to rewrite its application, so it raised questions about whether the preliminary solution was correct. The application revision, however, was not approved by the municipal council, as they had used many resources in planning the preliminary solution (Nielsen, interview, 2025). When the second application round came, Svendborg Municipality applied again, now questioning its solution in light of the realisation of the economic constraints. The employee from Svendborg municipality explained:

> It also became very clear to us that we actually cannot implement even a part of this climate adaptation with the funds the municipality can allocate. And it's not easy to secure external financing. (Nielsen, interview, 2025)

Svendborg's second application resulted in funding from Realdania, exemplifying the critical role of external financial support in climate adaptation initiatives. As the second round of applications provided funding solely for preliminary project planning rather than implementation, Svendborg Municipality needed to use the funding to explore alternative solutions.

The financial support from the partnership allowed the municipal projects to be supported by consulting firms, which the municipal employees interviewed emphasised as highly valuable. This includes thorough analyses of specific topics related to the project, the development of plans, and a parallel commission (Holm, interview, 2025; Jensen, interview, 2025b; Nielsen, interview, 2025; Sørensen, interview, 2025). The consultancy services have helped consolidate the knowledge, visualise and communicate the new solutions. The employee from Norddjurs explained the financial support like this:

> If it hadn't been for Realdania, we might somehow have gathered the same knowledge, but we would never have managed to bring it all together, involve so many people, and create this physical plan that you can sit down with and gain so much insight from. We would never, ever have gotten there. (Jensen, interview, 2025b)

This demonstrates the municipalities' lack of resources and competence in integrating diverse perspectives. The employee from Hedensted Municipality supported that notion, stating:

> There were already some plans that had never really taken off. Because we needed to secure the coastline, we had the opportunity to use those plans. The question of how we could integrate some of the other things we want to achieve in the area now that we were getting started. That was the task given to the consultants. (Sørensen, interview, 2025)

The employee further noted that participation in *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels* enabled the Hedensted Municipality to involve residents more actively in the climate adaptation project, thereby supporting local ownership of the project.

Utilising its professional network to articulate critical issues and provide the latest insights, Realdania strategically positions itself as an intermediary between technical experts and implementing actors. Realdania can be seen to leverage this gap to enhance its influence on governance, as it can break down a structural barrier and position itself as an attractive actor, thereby getting closer to the municipal decision-making arena. Entering early in the project phase allows Realdania to contribute to forming the projects. This is supported by the flow of financial resources from Realdania to municipalities, which enables them to develop innovative solutions which illustrate that resources support the flow of ideas and people. However, implementing the innovative solutions is not financially secure. This leaves the municipalities with a new challenge later in the process.

7.3 - Addressing urgency and the need for new perspectives

Besides structural strategies, Realdania also employs cultural-institutional strategies to enhance the attractiveness of its initiatives. Realdania uses problem framing to create a narrative that steers attention to coastal climate adaptation. In the programme's introductory document, Realdania contextualises the impacts of climate change on coastal cities within a broader societal framework. The potential damage to buildings and infrastructure from storm surges could result in substantial economic costs if no preventative measures are implemented. Additionally, Realdania observes that Danish harbours are becoming increasingly appealing for recreational and residential purposes due to deindustrialisation, thereby heightening the interest in urban redevelopment in these areas (Realdania, 2018a). This is supported by Henriques (interview, 2025), who also notes that the current system is not prepared for the changing challenge of rising sea levels:

> The existing systems work with challenges that are already known. When a new challenge arises - one that is even changing and increasing - it can be difficult to integrate. That's why we want to support becoming better at handling that challenge. (Henriques, interview, 2025)

This demonstrates that Realdania sees the challenges posed by rising sea levels and extreme weather events as ever-changing and difficult to anticipate, which underpins the perception of the problem's uncertainties and urgency. Realdania emphasises the gap between the current approach and upcoming challenges, which creates opportunities to unfold and explore innovative solutions. This approach aligns with common tactics that utilise evidence to suggest

a crisis is at hand (Boasson & Huitema, 2018), thereby framing current strategies for addressing rising sea levels as inadequate for the future.

Additionally, Realdania can also be seen to frame coastal climate adaptation through highlighting specific attributes. One attribute highlighted is the integration of urban development in climate adaptation planning. Going beyond merely technical solutions that mitigate flood risk and focusing on added value (mereværdi) to areas in need of protection is highlighted as an appropriate approach to coastal climate adaptation (Henriques, interview, 2025; Realdania, 2018a). Henriques explained:

> We can see that current solutions largely point toward approaches we have relied on for many years, which are simple solutions we turn to because we know them. But we also know that as the climate changes continue to change over time, with a lot of uncertainty around it, and as well cities evolve, there should be better, more integrated solutions that incorporate urban development into the picture. (Henriques, interview, 2025)

By highlighting the potential integration of urban development, Realdania presents its approach to climate adaptation. In this way, climate adaptation is framed as an area with significant potential that can contribute to urban development, which can be characterised as positive framing. This is combined with the negative framing of the current approach through the notion of simple solutions that need to be replaced. Realdania can then be seen as positioning its proposal against current policies and as advancing a new logic within the topic of coastal climate adaptation.

A second attribute highlighted by Realdania is an interdisciplinary approach to climate adaptation solutions. Henriques (interview, 2025) described Realdania's reasons for bringing different actors into the programme in this way:

> We considered that if we were to start working on climate adaptation, it would need to include both a research component and involve practitioners. We approached it very much with the mindset that no one could solve this alone. (Henriques, interview, 2025)

This organisational perspective also demonstrates Realdania's understanding of the complex challenges that require collaboration across professions to develop solutions. In this way, Realdania situates climate adaptation as relevant to multiple actors, which justifies bringing them into the programme.

The problem framing is further substantiated by the partnership's application guidelines, which present its quality criteria. These criteria describe the attributes for addressing the challenges posed by sea floods that the partnership intended to support (Realdania, 2019x) and thereby favoured. The partnership stressed that municipalities needed to address how their projects related to the quality criteria, as the projects were evaluated based on the extent to which they

aligned with them. In this way, pilot projects that aligned most with the partnership's understanding of climate adaptation were funded.

By using problem framing as a strategy, Realdania presents an idea of how to approach climate adaptation. The idea flows through the funding scheme from the partnership of Realdania and the Coastal Authority towards municipalities. This enables a flow of people through the municipalities to the idea. The municipalities can then be seen to interpret the idea in their local context and present it through their pilot project applications. The potential flow of resources, both in terms of financial resources and social resources, can also be seen as supporting the problem framing.

7.4 - Demonstrating innovative solutions

Leading by example is also an entrepreneurial strategy that Realdania employed to advance its agenda in the programme. The funded municipal pilot projects can be seen as working models of Realdania's proposed idea to integrate urban development and coastal climate adaptation through an interdisciplinary approach. While municipalities receive financial support and access to experts to generate local knowledge of innovative climate adaptation solutions that help them address their local challenges, they also serve as exemplary cases. The employee from Dragør Municipality explained it like this:

> They [Realdania] set certain requirements that, in a way, help ensure there is quality in what we do and, as a result, that it can also be interesting for other municipalities to look at. (Holm, interview, 2025)

The pilot projects exemplify innovative strategies for climate adaptation planning that municipalities lacking funding can draw on. This aligns with Mintrom's (2019) notion of engaging others to demonstrate the workability of a solution or an idea. This is further substantiated by Realdania's knowledge catalogue on its website, where the strategies and action plans developed by the municipalities within the partnership are available. The knowledge-sharing focus is also evident in the collection of experiences that Realdania has published. The employee from Svendborg highlighted at the evaluation publication *Compass for Coastal Cities in Transition* from the first application round functioned as a support tool for the project in Svendborg that guided the project through different relevant considerations (Nielsen, interview, 2025). This can help reduce the risks associated with adopting novel solutions and make integration of urban development into climate adaptation planning more tangible to other municipalities. The employee from Dragør Municipality described Realdania's engagement like this:

> A part of their [Realdania's] aim is to encourage municipalities to take slightly different paths. And that is why they provide funding, so there are time and resources to take a

different route than the classic one of just building a technical project. (Holm, interview, 2025)

This illustrates that Realdania provides financial resources to guide municipalities in a new direction. Furthermore, it also demonstrates that Realdania recognised the need to explore new possibilities necessitating resource allocation. The employee also highlighted time as a central aspect of the project. When questioned about which consideration other municipalities should have when applying for funding at Realdania, the employee noted:

> If you are in a big hurry, it might not be a good idea [applying for funding], because Realdania wants to leave a mark on what they support - to make sure it has a level of quality. So to receive Realdania funding, there needs to be quality. And it can take time to work your way toward those solutions. (Holm, interview, 2025)

This indicates that Realdania not only provides funding but also requires projects to adhere to specific quality standards. The employee from Dragør further explained that Realdania provided resources to secure the quality through feedback from an advisory board. The advisory board challenged the current solution and offered different perspectives to incorporate in the project (Holm, interview, 2025). The employee from Svendborg also noted that being a part of the programme required the municipality to allocate resources and time for the project. When asked for recommendations for other municipalities joining a Realdania programme, the employee emphasised that the thorough exploration of the climate adaptation challenge required interdisciplinary collaboration and extended the process. Nonetheless, the approach has helped refine solutions, ultimately resulting in better outcomes for the municipality (Nielsen, interview, 2025). The requirements for the funded municipalities reflect Realdania's strategy of leading by example to promote its vision. If pilot projects are to serve as showcases, they must demonstrate their applicability and generate knowledge that is valuable to others.

The strategy of leadership by example is supported by the Coastal Agency's role as a partner. This illustrates that Realdania can engage formal authority to support the agenda. To explain the reason for choosing the Coastal Authority as the partner, Henriques states:

> Initially, we entered the partnership with the Ministry of Environment, and the Minister was involved. But we quickly agreed that this was not about a political clarification of the scope of possibilities - it was a highly technical task. Therefore, it made sense for the Coastal Authority to represent the Ministry of Environment in this partnership. (Henriques, interview, 2025)

The differentiation between a political issue and a technical challenge shows that Realdania has been seeking expert knowledge from the Ministry through the Coastal Authority, rather than political influence in this partnership. The collaboration with the Coastal Authority can, through its formal authority, help lower the risk perceived by some municipalities. The

employee from Norddjurs Municipality explained that the Coastal Authority not only brought expert knowledge into the partnership but also credibility:

> Especially with Realdania and the Coastal Authority, they [the municipal council] felt completely assured. So I think one of the smart moves Realdania made was to align itself with the Coastal Authority. I believe that's one of the things that really made a big difference for us. (Jensen, interview, 2025b)

The employee from Norddjurs Municipality also stressed the value of the partnership in guiding the municipality in establishing a project group with relevant actors to address its local challenges. This working group consisted of both local actors, like the port company and the utility company, and a national actor, the foundation Danish Coastal and Nature Tourism, which all provided the project with financial resources. Further, the employee highlighted that entering partnerships, organising project groups, and involving different actors to gain diverse perspectives on the project at hand have become common approaches in other municipal projects. The employee also noted that the partnership supported a transition within the municipality from a managerial to a strategic approach (Jensen, interview, 2025). The employee from Svendborg also notes that participation in *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels* led to the formation of an internal project group with people from different disciplines (Nielsen, interview, 2025). This demonstrates Realdania's ability to mobilise flows of people and financial resources to the case, but also the organisation's intent to influence the processual dimension of the planning agenda.

The programme's influence on the planning agenda was further described by the employee from Svendborg when asked about Realdania's contribution to urban planning in Denmark. The employee emphasised that the majority of projects awarded the Danish Town Planning Institute Urban Planning Award over the past decade were funded by Realdania. Moreover, the financial aspect of construction funding gives Realdania a significant capacity to direct projects in a particular direction. But with programmes such as *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels*, the influence is different because it addresses questions about current ways of doing things and advocates for innovative approaches:

> On one hand they [Realdania] succeed [in pushing for innovation], and on the other hand they manage to hold back a bit by saying, 'You shouldn't just build a lot of walls and a lot of sluices, but you need to remember to do it wisely, so you don't end up building something you regret spending so much money on because it only works for a limited time. (Nielsen, interview, 2025)

This demonstrates that the programme's focus lies in developing innovative solutions rather than implementing them. By promoting innovation and encouraging examination of local conditions, Realdania demonstrates its capacity to shape the planning agenda both

substantively and procedurally by directing the focus to coastal climate adaptation and how to approach it.

7.5 - Partial conclusion

In summary, Realdania acts as a policy entrepreneur in the *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels* programme. The organisation employs the four entrepreneurial strategies, creating a network, strategic use of decision-making venues, problem framing and leading by example. Establishing a network between the funded municipalities and bringing expertise through the Coastal Authority and the researcher network creates a flow of people towards the topic of coastal climate adaptation. People come from various organisations, each with different knowledge, which circulates within the network, thus mobilising a flow of ideas. The flow of people and ideas is supported by financial resources from Realdania, which funds individual projects, network meetings, and the research network, as well as from municipalities, which likewise allocate resources for their projects. The strategic use of decision-making is also evident in the programme. Realdania sees limited knowledge capacity in municipalities and understands the value of knowledge early in the process, which can support municipalities in planning climate solutions grounded in expertise and a broad range of perspectives. Funding planning processes can also help circulate ideas before climate solutions are implemented, thereby influencing the direction of the final solution. The flow of ideas is supported by the financial and social resources provided by Realdania and professional experts from the Coastal Authority and the research network. Realdania also employs problem framing to promote coastal climate adaptation as an important planning topic. By highlighting added value and the interdisciplinary approach, it can be argued that Realdania intends to influence both the substantive and procedural dimensions of the planning agenda. Lastly, by creating a funding scheme for pilot projects, Realdania also uses the strategy of leading by example. The municipalities serve as working models that demonstrate the applicability of the proposed approach. This shows Realdania's ability to mobilise people and resources around its approach to coastal climate adaptation.

08

Discussion

The purpose of the following chapter is to discuss Realdania's influence on the Danish planning agenda with the empirical findings as a point of departure. The case study findings show that Realdania employs entrepreneurial strategies to influence the Danish coastal climate adaptation planning agenda. Through the establishment of a network, Realdania acts as a facilitator, connecting people with expertise and implementation responsibility, thereby mobilising the flow of ideas and resources towards climate adaptation. Support from its expanding network of researchers, the Coastal Authority, and the municipalities directs attention to the topic. The programme's timing underscores Realdania's leading position in urban planning and enables the foundation to shape how urban projects unfold. The outlined conditions for the pilot project furthermore illustrate how Realdania uses problem framing as a strategy to promote its agenda. The pilot projects are presented as exemplary cases of Realdania's approach to coastal climate adaptation, which demonstrates the use of leading by example as a strategy.

The following supporting research question guides the discussion:

What are the enabling and constraining factors for Realdania's ability to influence the Danish planning?

In *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels,* Realdania acts as a policy entrepreneur by using entrepreneurial strategies to promote a holistic approach to climate adaptation supported by various planning actors. The case study illustrates that the strategies are enacted around the formal policy-making venues of municipal councils. As a philanthropic foundation with funding capacity, Realdania demonstrates that it not only provides financial resources but also actively pushes selected issues forward on the planning agenda. This is evident in its initiated programmes and in its active role in its funded projects. This is noted by the planning expert, Ellen Højgaard Jensen, and by one of the employees interviewed, who both stated that Realdania differentiates itself from other funding organisations by being strategic in its funding activities and close to its funded projects (Jensen, interview, 2025a; Jensen, interview, 2025b). The active role can be seen as punching above its weight, as Boasson & Huitema (2017) note as a policy entrepreneurial characteristic. Furthermore, it aligns with the existing literature on

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philanthropic foundations' ability to engage in governmental activities due to their financial capacity. This indicates that Realdania follows an international approach to leveraging its economic capacity and illustrates a governance structure in which non-public actors participate in shaping policies and plans.

Realdania enables municipalities to base their planning on the latest knowledge, thereby increasing awareness of solutions they would otherwise be unable to access due to lack of resources and expertise. The active involvement and financial support for the planning of coastal climate adaptation projects carry governance implications. When seeking funding, municipal autonomy can be weakened, as the funding often comes with conditions that influence municipal actions to some extent. This is evident in the *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels,* as the partnership outlined conditions for funding. The conditions for integrating urban development and climate adaptation, and for long-term strategic planning in the pilot projects, shape municipalities' approaches to climate adaptation projects.

Placing conditions is not, by itself, unreasonable, as the partnership has developed objectives which should be followed. But viewed in light of municipalities' dependence on external financial resources for both the planning and implementation phases of projects, these conditions become important features that can steer municipalities' focus and approach. As illustrated in the case of Svendborg, the preliminary plan for the harbour's coastal adaptation did not receive funding from the partnership. But when applying for the second round, questioning the preliminary plan due to financial constraints, funds were received. While Svendborg has succeeded with a revised plan and has regarded participation in the programme as valuable for its project, it also demonstrates a potential imbalance in power between the local government and external actors, where the search for funding can direct municipal decisions. However, the potential power imbalance was not explicitly addressed by the municipal employees interviewed, but Realdania was regarded as having a large capacity, which enhanced the quality of their projects. The absence can be interpreted in multiple ways. The focus of the interviews with employees might emphasise the collaborative aspect of the relationship more than the power dynamic. Secondly, the employees' own ability to reflect on the collaboration can also have limited the exploration of the power balance. Thirdly, the absence of explicit addressing of the potential imbalance of the relationship can also be interpreted as an acceptance of the governance structure where external funding is necessary.

The reliance on external actors also challenges the democratic legitimacy of municipal decision-making, as democratically elected councils seek support from actors lacking democratic legitimacy. Realdania, as a philanthropic foundation aiming to improve the quality of life in the built environment, possesses social resources that provide legitimacy, but not democratic legitimacy. While active engagement and funding conditions might limit municipal independence and raise legitimacy concerns, Realdania also fosters new ideas that can promote innovative urban governance solutions. This leaves questions about whether innovative solutions can be implemented without external support.

The case study illustrates that Realdania influences the planning agenda through knowledge creation and financial resources. The influence is mobilised through the use of entrepreneurial strategies. The structural barrier posed by limited municipal knowledge capacity is overcome by diffusing and generating new knowledge through a research network. The network supported by the latest knowledge lays the groundwork for influence, as the knowledge is subsequently used in the municipalities. The research network and academic reports can be viewed as resource bases that produce expert knowledge, which can be mobilised when engaging with formal authorities. The latent space of lobbying can thus be seen as supportive tools for promoting ideas and proposals. While Hofman & Aalbers (2017) suggest that lobbying enables access to lobbying spaces, it can also be argued that the ability to mobilise the three constitutive flows creates such spaces. In the case study, Realdania mobilises a flow of material resources and people towards the topic by financially supporting the development of the network and its publications. The network meetings among the funded municipalities can also be seen as a latent space created by the partnership to mobilise the circulation of ideas and knowledge. Both spaces were established as part of the programme and made for that purpose. Similarly, the steering group in each municipality can be viewed as a new space of lobbying created for the programme's purposes. As Realdania engages the municipal administration in the steering groups, these can be seen as actual spaces of lobbying. By creating spaces for lobbying rather than accessing them, Realdania demonstrates its financial capacity and its willingness to promote its agenda.

Using the pilot projects as exemplary cases that should inspire other municipalities to approach climate adaptation more holistically, Realdania relies on the ideas to spread from the pilot municipalities to others. The employee from Dragør municipality acknowledge this and sees that being a funded municipality requires more work because Realdania pushes for innovative solutions that can have value for other municipalities. While this requires more resources in the municipality, the employee noted that it is a part of the arrangement and that the municipality also gains from the extra work required by them in terms of knowledge and financial support. Evaluation publications and access to generated knowledge from the pilot projects on the Realdania website also support the diffusion of knowledge and ideas among other municipalities. However, access to knowledge needs to be accompanied by the resources to activate it. The empirical findings demonstrate that these resources are limited in the municipalities, and thus, external financial resources are required. In the case of Hedensted municipality, the ability to hire consultants through the financial support from the partnership has enable them to build a solid foundation for the dike association to continue to work on. The findings are consistent with the literature, which shows that urban authorities have limited capacity to address the challenges of climate change (Krause & Hawkins, 2021). The leading by example strategy can thus be seen as valuable for showcasing innovation, but does not necessarily help overcome structural barriers of limited financial resources. This seen in the case of Hedensted where the lack of funding from Realdania for the implementation led to downscaling of the innovative solutions. The lack of financial resources at the municipalities and the need for external financial support can furthermore uneven urban development. The municipalities need to allocate resources in order to apply for funding, thus internal resources

are required to get external resources. In this view, municipalities with less internal capacity are disadvantaged in terms of in securing capital for innovative urban development. This raises questions about whether external funding from organisations like Realdania contributes to inter-city competition for resources. While the partnership between Realdania and the Coastal Authority clearly states that geographical diversity is part of the selection criteria for the pilot projects, this cannot make up for the limited resources for applying.

These challenges can be observed within the context of the increasing planning responsibilities allocated to municipalities in Denmark. The Structural Reform of 2007, the decrease in national engagement in planning activities, and the administrative competence at the municipal level concerning coastal protection applications exemplify the withdrawal of regional and national authorities as prominent actors. This aligns with Peck et al.'s (2009) conceptualisation of neoliberalisation as a multi-scaled phenomenon wherein responsibilities and risks are downloaded to localities. Decentralisation positions Danish municipalities as the principal government entity in urban development. However, the delegated responsibilities necessitate adequate resources and expertise. Absent these, turning to external entities may become a viable option.

The increasing planning responsibilities at the local level are not the only aspect that follows neoliberal notions. The Danish Coastal Authority entering a partnership as a national authority can be seen as delegating tasks and duties to non-governmental actors, downsizing the state's involvement, and securing private financial support. With the Coastal Authority's expertise and Realdania's economic resources, the partnership can promote coastal climate adaptation in municipal planning. This is supported using the research network for knowledge creation. Drawing on formal authorities illustrates Realdania's ability to mobilise the flow of people to a topic of their choice. While Realdania bases its initiatives on professional knowledge and challenges, the organisation still chooses which challenges to focus on and which projects to get funding. Along with its ability to mobilise financial resources, this gives Realdania agenda-setting abilities. As Jensen (interview, 2025a) mentioned, this needs to be seen in a broader context. Given that municipalities are the primary governmental planning actors in Denmark, the focus is on the local level. Together with the relaxed planning regulation, the individual municipality is given considerable room to steer local development. Nevertheless, the government's emphasis on localities may result in the neglect of regional and national priorities, which could subsequently be addressed by non-governmental actors. If organisations like Realdania are the primary providers of vision and financial resources for national urban planning, this can be seen as a democratic problem. However, if Realdania's funding and initiatives supplement national steering, the implications are less problematic.

Realdania also employs the entrepreneurial strategies, the strategic use of decision-making venues, and problem framing. Using problem framing to position the topic and approach enables Realdania to advance its agenda. This is supported by the strategic use of decision-making venues and processes, as addressing challenges while they are still new positions the proposal more favourably. As Boasson & Huitema (2017) state, in order to expand one's network, the policy entrepreneur needs to be flexible. The actors in the network can influence

and adjust the idea. This can be questioned in the case of Realdania and its philanthropic funding. While Realdania needs to adhere to the challenges faced by the municipalities in order to comply with its statutes promoting quality of life in the built environment, the municipalities' dependence on external resources makes the relationship uneven. This is illustrated in the call for pilot projects, which addressed local challenges but needed to align with the requirements of the partnership's funding scheme. The problem framing and the strategic use of decision-making venues and processes can thereby be seen as reinforcing Realdania's position as a facilitating actor.

The enabling factors for Realdania's ability to influence the planning agenda consist of Realdania's own active engagement through programmes, followed by its financial capacity to mobilise people to self-established spaces of lobbying. The limited municipal economic resources also enable external actors to influence municipal decisions. The commitment from researchers, the Coastal Authority, and the municipalities is also an enabling factor, providing support for the direction. On the contrary, the constraining factors for Realdania are the dependence on external resources, which leaves the utilisation of diffused and generated knowledge dependent on non-governmental actors. The implication of democratic legitimacy can be seen as a constraining factor for their influence.

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Conclusion

The purpose of this research project is to understand how Realdania, as a philanthropic foundation, influences Danish urban planning, thus contributing to the research agenda on philanthropy and urban governance. Through a case study of the partnership between Realdania and the Danish Coastal Authority in the Realdania programme *Cities and the Rising Sea Levels*. The theoretical concepts of neoliberalisation, policy entrepreneurial strategies and spaces of lobbying are used to analyse the empirical data. Whereas neoliberalisation is used to understand the urban planning context, policy entrepreneurial strategies are employed to analyse Realdania's approach to influence and spaces of lobbying to investigate which spaces the strategies gain access to. The empirical data were generated through six qualitative semi-structured interviews, four with employees from municipalities that received funding from the programme, one with a representative from Realdania, and one with a planning expert.

The empirical findings show that Realdania influences the urban planning agenda with four entrepreneurial strategies: network creation, strategic use of decision-making venues, problem framing, and leading by example. The case study demonstrates that Realdania follows Hofman & Aalbers' (2017, p. 4) notion of lobbying as the foundation's success "in enabling things to get done". By mobilising flows of people, ideas and resources, Realdania not only accesses actual and latent spaces of lobbying but also draws people into its self-created spaces of lobbying. This positions Realdania with substantial influence, which it exerts across both the substantive and procedural dimensions of the planning agenda. The empirical findings further illustrate that the funded municipalities lack the capacity, both in terms of knowledge and financial resources, to carry out planning and implement innovative solutions without external support. While Realdania provides this support through the partnership, it also outlines conditions for its support, including the direction the project should take and the project's exemplary features.

As this research project's empirical data is limited to a single case study, with reflections from four municipalities, further investigation into municipalities' experience with Realdania and other non-governmental actors' role in urban development is encouraged.

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Appendices

A1: Qualitative Semi-structured interview guide for the urban planning expert

Introduktion	Introduktion til specialet Introduktion af Ellen Højgaard
Udvikling i dansk planlægning	• Hvordan har skiftet fra statslig regulering til netværksstyring og partnerskaber påvirket dansk planlægning? • Hvordan spiller økonomiske rationaler og konkurrence ind i planlægningsbeslutninger? • Hvordan balanceres nationale og lokale interesser i planlægningen?

Realdanias rolle i dansk planlægning	• Hvilken position i dansk planlægning har Realdania i dag?
	
	    o Hvilke begivenheder eller skift ser du som mest afgørende?
	
	• Hvorfor har Realdania fået den rolle i dansk planlægning?
	
	    o Hvilke strukturer har gjort det muligt?
	
	• Hvilke andre aktører er centrale i dansk planlægning?
	•

Realdanias tilgang til byudvikling	• Hvordan vil du beskrive den måde Realdania arbejder på? • Hvilken rolle har Realdania ift. andre planlægningsaktører? • Hvordan vurderer du Realdanias indflydelse på, hvilke projekter og værdier der prioriteres i dansk planlægning? • Hvilke muligheder og udfordringer skaber Realdanias finansielle og institutionelle magt for planlægning i Danmark?
Afrunding af interview	

A2: Qualitative Semi-structured interview guide for the representative from Realdania

Introduktion	Introduktion til specialet - Filantropiske fonde og deres indflydelsesmuligheder Introduktion af Mikkel Suell Henriques
Realdanias rolle i dansk planlægning med fokus på klimatilpasning	• Hvad mener du er Realdanias rolle ift. klimatilpasningsdagsorden? o Hvilke grunde er der til at I har valgt at fokusere på klimatilpasningsdagsorden?

Strategier og overvejelser ved indsatsen *Byerne og det stigende havvand*	• Hvilke strategiske overvejelser havde I i udformning af indsatsen?
	
	• Kan du beskrive de greb, metoder eller tilgange har I brugt ifm. indsatsen?
	   o Hvilke har virket bedst ifølge dig?
	
	• Hvilken indflydelse har pilotprojekterne haft på indsatsen?
	   o Hvilke(t) pilotprojekt har udmærket sig?

Samarbejdspartner og ressourcer til indsatsen *Byerne og det stigende havvand*	• Hvilke aktører har været vigtige at få med i indsatsen? • Er der bestemme ressourcer eller professionelle aktører I har trukket på i forbindelse med indsatsen? o Hvor stor har indsatsen været i forhold til jeres andre programmer?
Indflydelse på dagsorden gennem indsatsen *Byerne og det stigende havvand*	• Hvordan arbejder I med at få klimatilpasning på den politiske dagsorden – nationalt og kommunalt? o Hvilke ideer eller pointer har været vigtige for jer at fremhæve? • Hvilken betydning har, eller håber du på, at indsatsen får for hvordan der bliver arbejdet med klimatilpasning og hvilke værdier/emner der prioriteres?
Afrunding af interview	

A3: Qualitative Semi-structured interview guide for the municipal employees

Introduktion	Introduktion til specialet • Formålet med interviewet • Optagelse til dataindsamling Introduktion af den kommunale medarbejder
Intro til jeres pilotprojekt	• Kan du kort beskrive jeres projekt og hvorfor I søgte Realdanias pulje Byerne og det stigende havvand?
Samarbejdet med Realdania	• Hvordan har samarbejdet med Realdania fungeret? o Hvilken rolle har de haft og hvad har de bidraget med? o Hvad har de gjort særligt godt? • Hvordan adskiller Realdanias tilgang sig fra andre fonde? – du arbejdet med andre fonde?
Refleksioner over samarbejdet	• Hvilken betydning har indsatsen *Byerne og det stigende havvand* haft for jeres projekt? • Vil I arbejde anderledes fremadrettet - og hvad tager I med jer? – kom Realdania med nogle særlig gode inputs? • Hvordan har Realdanias involvering påvirket jeres muligheder for at sætte klimatilpasning på den kommunale dagsorden? o Har de haft indflydelse på politiske beslutninger i kommunen? • Hvilke pointer har været vigtigst at fremhæve over for beslutningstagere i jeres projekt?
Refleksioner over Realdanias rolle i byplanlægning	• Hvilke råd vil I give til andre kommuner, der skal samarbejde med en fond som Realdania? • Hvilken rolle spiller Realdania og andre fonde for byudvikling i Danmark?
Afrunding af interview	• Eventuelle afsluttende bemærkninger eller refleksioner