

By Flemming Stender, Ambassador of Denmark to Latvia

*A world of Architecture*

Architecture is such a natural part of our world that we often do not give much thought to it in our daily life. But this year, architecture will be the focus of attention in Copenhagen as Denmark's capital has been appointed World Capital of Architecture in 2023 by UNESCO and International Union of Architects.

Copenhagen will serve as meeting point for people from around the world to show-case and discuss why and how architecture can play a key role in addressing the present climate crisis – via the homes we live in, the cities we develop, and the neighbourhoods we belong to. 2023 will be marked by events with a focus on architecture and the city organised by the City of Copenhagen, businesses, museums, and not the least the Copenhageners themselves

Copenhagen was chosen as World Capital of Architecture due to its strong architectural traditions and forward-looking urban development focusing on sustainability, climate and liveability. Copenhagen, in particular, is known for its unique and innovative city design and buildings. Such as Copenhill, a waste-power plant with a ski slope on the roof, and the world's highest climbing wall. Bike-first urban design with bicycle bridges and super cycle highways. Not to mention floating harbour baths, student accommodations in recycled shipping containers, rooftop-restaurants with vegetable gardens, and play- and sports-grounds on the top of buildings. As well as innovative and sustainable (CO2-neutral) residential buildings built after the principle of providing housing that is healthy, affordable, simple, and scalable over time.

Danish architecture is widely known for its focus on people and its democratic approach. The human aspect of Danish architecture is closely associated with Danish architect and urban planner Jan Gehl. His theories have had significant influence on the development of sustainable urban environments across the globe. Gehl is famous for his innovative approach to urban development, which focuses on people and the spaces between buildings, such as public squares and cycle lanes. This has inspired cities like Sydney, New York, London and Mexico City, as well as Riga which he has visited several times and shared his views and advice to the Riga municipality. His book "Pilsēta cilvēkiem" is available to Latvian readers.

The world capital of Architecture will also focus on how architecture can contribute to achieve the UN's global sustainable development goals by 2030. This will be the focus of the world congress of Architects held in Copenhagen in July expecting to gather some 10,000 key urban planners and

architects in discussions around future-focused architecture, sustainable urban solutions, and urban design.

An impressive program with exhibitions, workshops, tours and much more covering the entire year will put the capital's architecture and urban space in the spotlight of its residents, but also for visitors.

The first activities are already underway. Such as the exhibition "Our Architecture" at the Danish Architecture Center focusing on architecture in public buildings such as schools, hospitals, airports and other important buildings in our everyday life where people, function and design come together to create architecture for everybody. In March, the event "Open House" is held, where more than 50 normally closed buildings – from palaces, power plants, technical installations, to private homes and much more - will be open their doors to the public to give new perspectives on shared architecture.

To inspire and involve children - of all ages – within the field of architecture and sustainable urban development, Danish Architecture Center in collaboration with the Donald Duck & Co. magazine has developed a special edition of the magazine focusing on the many extraordinary works of architecture in Denmark and Copenhagen. The famous duck takes the reader on an adventurous city scooter-ride through the streets of Copenhagen passing some of the capital's most well-known architectural icons. The magazine also allows the reader to get wiser on how and why architecture and sustainable urban development have helped shape Danish society - and how architecture can contribute to saving both people and our planet.

Danish architectural people-centred traditions and forward-looking urban development have inspired cities across the world. Also in Latvia. Riga is widely recognized for its art nouveau architecture and wooden houses. Now several new innovative buildings designed by Danish architects are currently underway in Riga including the new Rail Baltica Riga Central station, and the planned development of "Krasta city", just to mention a few.

Copenhagen stands ready to host you, to celebrate its architecture, and to engage in thinking out of the box on how architecture can serve people and our ambitions for a sustainable future.

You may read more about the program for the year of World Capital of Architecture 2023 on [www.copenhagenincommon.dk](http://www.copenhagenincommon.dk), and on Danish Architecture Center [www.dac.dk](http://www.dac.dk).