A PLACE WITH A UNIQUE HISTORY

The first beach resort in Denmark was opened at Fanø Bad in the 1890s. Fanø Bad was a destination for the higher society of Denmark, Germany and Austria to experience the healing effect of the fresh salt water at the Danish West coast. Though the main attraction was not the fresh air or the broad beach, it was to see others and to be seen strolling up and down the promenade.

THE FORGOTTEN PROMENADE CULTURE

The holiday culture flourished several times during the 1910s, the 1920s and again in the 1960s. But 1970s and 1980s were tough in the area. Visitors became fewer. Some of the original buildings from the 1890s burnt down while others were demolished. The new buildings that replaced them were without quality and coherence with the surrounding landscape. Concrete was widely used, and the buildings from that time have not aged well. Fanø Bad now attracted the common Dane and German, and the vacation culture had changed. Instead of revolving around life in the public spaces it had turned toward family life in private summerhouses and apartments.

The outcome of the develop was a town with a broad road, narrow pavements for pedestrians, plenty of car parking in key sight lines and buildings with questionable architecture and quality. The commercial premises had turned inwards and the town was without a place to gather.

The glamours past was forgotten, the town declining and local businesses were fighting to survive.
The Wadden Sea was in 2014 classified as UNESCO World Heritage. The vision of this project was to re-establish Fanø Bad as a special spot in the Wadden Sea, by using the historic promenade culture as an inspiration for a modern vacation spot, while creating a better relationship between landscape and town. The project might have a small budget but it was a significant investment for Fanø Municipality, and the square is a part of a long-term development plan.

The few elements of the projects are all inspired by the history and nature at Fanø. The most important element is the new town floor consisting of a brick pavement, in a mix of yellow and grey bricks. The colour scheme is inspired by the nature on Fanø, when the tide is low, sand and water creates a special light, which the coal-burnt brick recreates when it reflects the sun. The lighting elements are reinterpretation of historic seamarks, and the large chandelier forms a new landmark and focal point, while the furniture creates room for stay and play.

A SITE-SPECIFIC POTENTIAL CREATED A NEW IDENTITY

FROM BACKSIDE TO URBAN LIFE

TOWN FLOOR CREATES COHERENCE

THE SQUARE IS A FRAME FOR URBAN LIFE

THE FURNITURE ESTABLISH A NEW URBAN SCENOGRAPHY

Photos: Kirstine Autzen
That main problem was that the town had lost the connection to the surrounding landscape. It had no urban centre, no place to gather, no visual focal point and no urban life. The cars were taking up too much space and the broad road put cars above pedestrians.

The strategy was to densify the central town and thereby set the stage for urban life. The reminiscence of an old brick pavement was the inspiration for the new 'town floor'. The new pavement ties the town together, it defines the town centre and creates visual coherence. Broad pavements and speed-bombs in brick pavement slows down traffic and establishes a new hierarchy with pedestrians on top. The new central square builds a venue for urban life. It provides shelter for the fierce wind, and establish a more intimate scale that Fanø’s cityscape was lacking before.

**SUSTAINABILITY EQUALS QUALITY MATERIALS AND FLEXIBLE SPACE**

Sustainable materials together with a flexible design set the stage for urban life. Brick pavement, oak furniture and ceramic lighting are long-lasting materials that reflect the nature of Fanø. These materials were chosen because they will age beautifully and can withstand the sand and the rough wind at the island. High quality materials sets a new standard for the town centre and brings a whole new atmosphere in the town. Already today can be seen how the locals have improved facades and so on.

**THE EFFECT IS LOCAL ENGAGEMENT AND INITIATIVE**

Today the locals have taken ownership of the square. The surrounding business premises have opened their facades towards the square, and the change have brought hope, energy and inspiration to the community. Local initiatives are flourishing everywhere in the small town of Fanø.