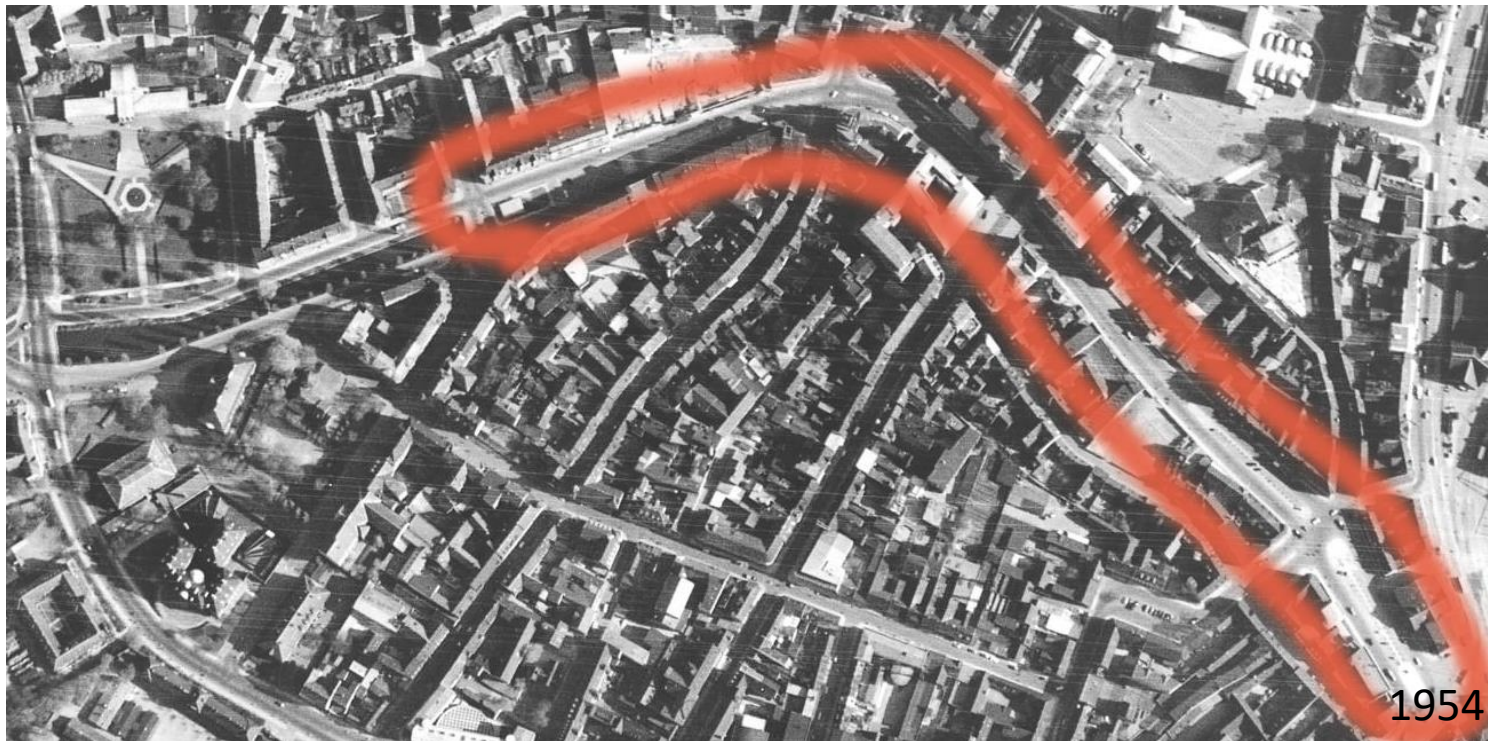




Uncovering The River Aarhus 1992-2015

Policy Learning Platform meeting 11-03-2021.
Phillip Fangel – Aarhus City Archives.

- Parts of The River Aarhus was covered between 1933-1957
- The river in the eastern end of the city centre.
- Due to infrastructural changes – access road between the harbour and the western railway station “Godsbanegaarden”.
- Sanitary reasons (smell, dirty water)



Ref: Krak.dk (1954 map)



The River Aarhus, ca. 1908-1912. Ref: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000186251>

How was The River Aarhus used before the covering?

- Transportation of goods (small boats)
- Drinking water
- Water for cattle etc.
- Watering gardens and fields
- Water for the mills (Aarhus Mill)
- Washing of clothes
- Garbage dump/sewage (inhabitants and industry)



The Aarhus River, ca. 1900-1905: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000186195>



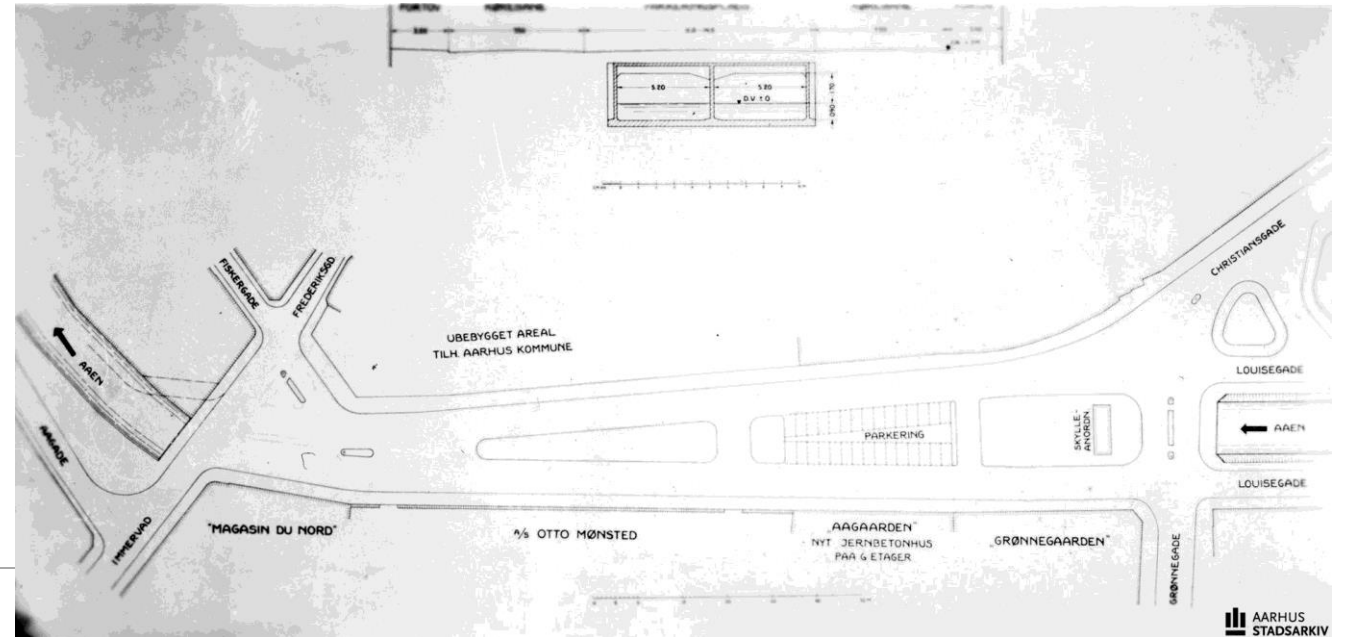
Painting of The Aarhus River, ca. 1850-1870: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000186199>

What does it all mean?

- The River Aarhus was covered up in a large “channeled pipe”.
- Paved the way for automobiles and other means of transportation to gain ground.
- Large-scale infrastructural changes with modern concrete bridges were constructed.
- More space for parking lots.



Bridge over The Aarhus River, ca. 1933: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000185858>



Drawing of parts of The Aarhus River with the uncovering incorporated, ca. 1932: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000318208>

What does it all mean?

- Heritage was disassembled or covered up and not much care was given to the old river



Frederiks Bridge at The River Aarhus, ca. 1933: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000318217>



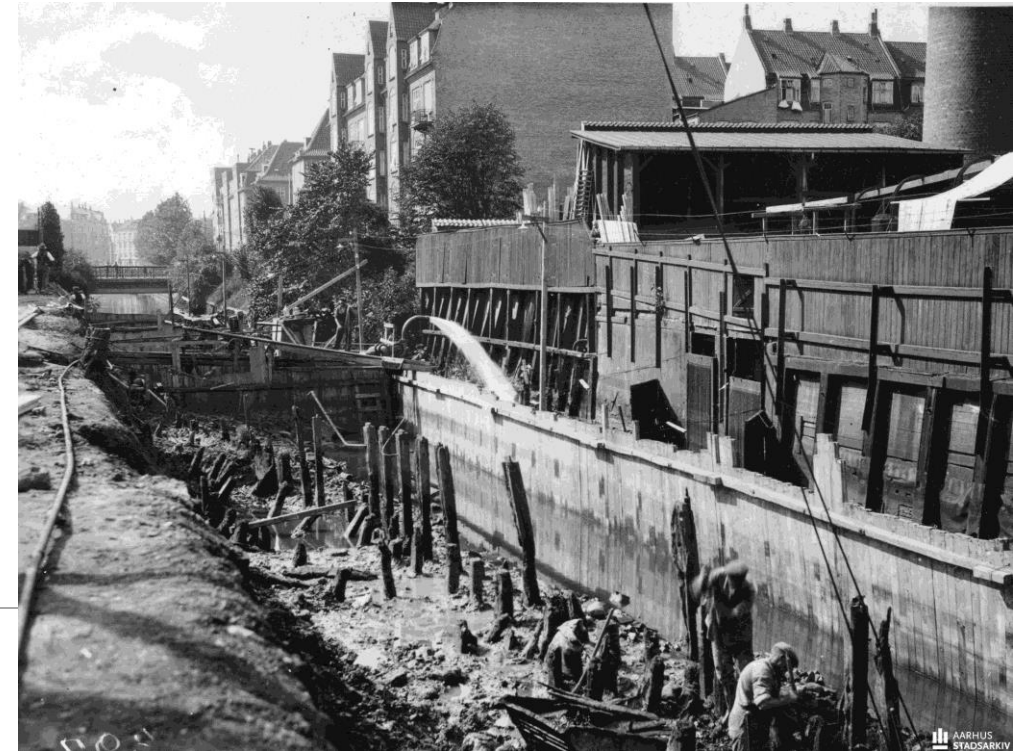
Covering up parts of The River Aarhus, ca. 1939: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000319662>

What does it all mean?

- The concrete, iron and asphalt separated the city in two parts in ways the river did not



Preparing the covering of The River Aarhus, ca. 1933: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000318202>



Preparing the covering of parts of The River Aarhus, ca. 1933: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000318220>

Before and after



Before the uncovering of The River Aarhus, ca. 1930s: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000319665>



After covering up parts of The River Aarhus, ca. 1939: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000319666>

Was it the right decision?

Big city dreams

Small historical buildings and old industry disappeared. Instead large functionalist residential buildings were constructed along many parts of the covered river



Aagarden at The River Aarhus, 1938: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/00038555>



Aarhusgaarden at The River Aarhus, 1938: <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000385567>

New thoughts

Thoughts of reopening the river

- Sporadic thoughts in the 1970s
- Replacing the centrally St. Clements Bridge changed things
 - Steel construction weakening.
 - Raise the bridge in order for trucks to have space for containers
 - Newly constructed columns in the river causing the workflow to include a temporary reopening of a small part of the river
 - City Architects Office suggest leaving the small opening around the columns as it is. The alderman went along with the idea.



Information on the new St. Clements Bridge above The River Aarhus, 1978. Aarhus Stiftstidende, 23-06-1978.



Reader's letter "Uncover the river". Aarhus Stiftstidende, 27-10-1974.

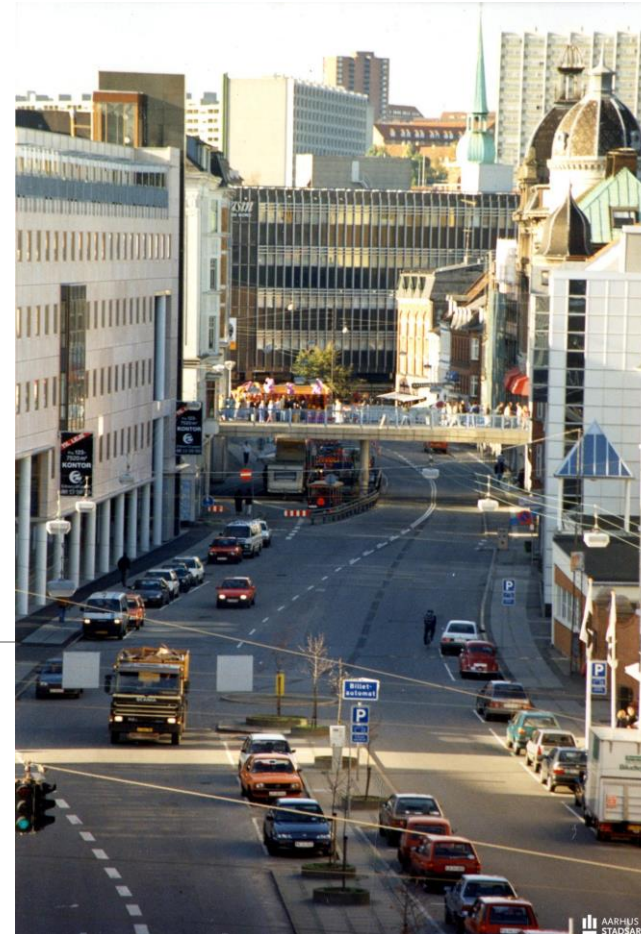
St. Clements Bridge



Breaking down the beautiful old columns of the St. Clements Bridge, 1984.
<https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000347538>



Constructing the new St. Clements Bridge with a look to The River Aarhus, 1984.
<https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000347545>



A look at the St. Clements Bridge, 1993.
<https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000337353>

New thoughts

- In 1984 the first drawings and visualizations of a permanently opened-up river were released from the City Architect's office.
- The main street of Åboulevarden was to be uncovered, and an extensive recreational canal area solely for pedestrians was to be established.
- Once again water was to be made visible along the historical river.

LIVET I BYEN

Nu bliver åen lukket op igen

Konkret forslag på vej til byrådet

I MANGE år har der været talt om at slukke ops for Århus Å i den indre by. Hidtil er det blevet ved snakken. Men nu er planerne gået ind i en realistisk fase.

Magistratens 2. afdeling har lavet et skitseforslag, som er på vej til byrådets medlemmer. I første omgang går planen ud på at genåbne åen på en 115 meter lang strækning under Clemens Bro. Et anlægsarbejde, der anslås at ville koste 12 millioner kroner.

Rådmand Olaf P. Christensen (K) er en varm fortaler for projektet. Han havde håbet, at arbejdet kunne sættes i gang allerede i 1986, men regeringens julepakke med bl.a. 20 procent afgift på kommunale anlægsarbejder har sat en kø i hjulet på det århusianske projekt.

— Jeg må nok se i øjnene, at det kan blive svært at få byrådet til at bevillige beløbet i 1986, når der skal lægges 20 procent oven i de 12 mill. kr., siger Olaf P. Christensen til Aarhus Stiftstidende.

Men det betyder så sandelig ikke, at projektet opgives. Det må så laves i 1987, tilføjer rådmanden. Han oplyser i øvrigt, at arbejdet planmæssigt frem, sådan at den færdige bro kan indvies til festugen 1986. Og så kan genåbningen af det første stykke Århus Å meget passende indvies til festugen 1987.

Magistratens 2. afdeling har lavet en helt billedbog, der i tegninger og ord skildrer intentionerne med at genåbne åen. Ideen blev allerede aktuelt, da man afdækkede et lille stykke af åen i forbindelse med arbejdet på den nye Clemens Bro. Det satte gang i visionerne, og resultatet blev et konkret forslag om at genåbne 100 meter af åen under broen.

Men visionerne går videre, og det samlede forslag rummer også skitser, der viser, hvordan åen kan åbnes helt ned til havnen — og hvordan miljøet omkring den åbne del af åen fra Grønnegade-krydset til Mølleparken kan forbedres. Totalt er der tale om et projekt, der skønnes vil koste 70-75 millioner kroner at realisere (i 1985-priser). Det understreges, at visionerne kan føres ud i livet stykkevis og delt — over en lang periode.

Der kan laves et meget frodigt og spændende miljø under den nye Clemens Bro, mener afdelingsarkitekt Ole Østergaard fra magistratens 2. afdeling. Han nævner det som noget enestående, at to af byens hovedstrøg, Søndergade og Åboulevarden, krydser hinanden i hver sit niveau. Under den nye bro skal der laves et glashus med forretninger, og så skal man forestille sig et lille torv med esplanade mod åen. Herved opstår man en kanal-stemning, der igen kan give folk en oplevelse af at færdes i en by ved vandet.

Kan oplevelsen ikke distraheres af, at åens vand måske er noget plumret og ildelugtende?

— Den kritik høres ofte, men som regel af folk, der husker den åbne å fra 30'erne. Da var åen rigtigt nok ikke særlig lækker, fordi meget spillevand og alskens ubenslideligheder blev lukket direkte ud i åen. Men siden er der sket meget, og i dag går der rent faktisk ørreder og laks op i åen, siger Ole Østergaard.

— Hvad med trafikken?

— Vi har naturligvis analyseret de trafikale konsekvenser og peger også på forskellige forslag. Vi skal se projektet i det lys, at kommuneplanen leder af tung trafik til havnen ad de to indfaldsveje: Marselis Boulevard og Nørre Brogade / Nørreport. Det letter presset i de indre gader, og jeg mener godt, at man på Åboulevarden kan klare sig med kun to kørebåner.

Siden krigen har byplanlægningen været dikteret af bilens behov. Nu er tiden inde til at forbedre miljøkvaliteterne i den indre by, slutter Ole Østergaard.

Sådan tænker arkitekterne sig, at Åboulevarden kan komme til at se ud — fra Fiskergade mod havnen. I baggrunden BP-huset og til højre en arkade under nye bygninger. Helt ud til venstre Stiftstidendes rotationsbygning. (Tegning: Bjarne Juul)

I første omgang er planen at genåbne en strækning på 100 meter af Århus Å — under den nye Clemens Bro.



Flere visioner

MAN kan selvfølgelig ikke have et lille stykke afgrænset å liggende under Clemens Bro.

Visionerne omkring en genåbning af Århus Å går videre — i håbet om, at byen får råd til at føre dem ud i livet ad åre.

Det stykke å, som i dag er åbent i midten af Åboulevarden, altså fra Grønnegade til Vestel Allé, er ikke til glæde for ret mange. Den høje å-brink skjuler åen for dem, der passerer forbi.

Det vil planlæggerne på stadsarkitektens kontor gøre noget ved. I deres forslag skal åen gøres tilgængelig fra Immervad og ud mod vest. Det skal ske med en forsænket gang- og cykelpromenade langs nordsiden. Å-brinken udnyttes til en beplantet skråning med bænkpladser og trapper. Langs nordsidens boligkarréer skal der være en forsyningsvej.

men den egentlige motortrafik skal alene foregå langs åens sydside.

Nyplantede popler i skråningen understreger åen og promenaden som et parklignende område, der passer godt med de store, monumentale bygninger langs boulevarden.

Promenaden skal starte ved Immervad, forsænkes med rampe ved Grønnegade-krydset og udmunde i en pladsdannelse ved Mølleparken.

I rapporten til Århus Byråds medlemmer ligger der også tegnede anvistninger på, hvordan åen kan åbnes mellem Fiskergade og havnen. Her vil man gerne give Åboulevarden nye kvaliteter. Langs åens sydside skal hulerne i facaderækkerne udfyldes med ny bymæssig bebyggelse, og de tænkes sammenbundet med en arkade.

"The river will be reopened". Article in the local newspaper "Aarhus Stiftstidende", 12-11-1985.

Politics...

- From the first ideas and drawings it took quite a few years before physical changes was to be seen
- There was plenty of political disagreements on the value of uncovering the river versus the possibility of congestion, loss of income for business owners etc..
- In the municipality there was a hefty debate between the City Architect and the City Engineer and both departments produced materials to support their opinions on future development of the river.



The new St. Clements Bridge. 1984.
<https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000347555>.



"The offices deeply disagree about the uncovering".
 Article in the local newspaper " Aarhus Stiftstidende", 13-12-1985.

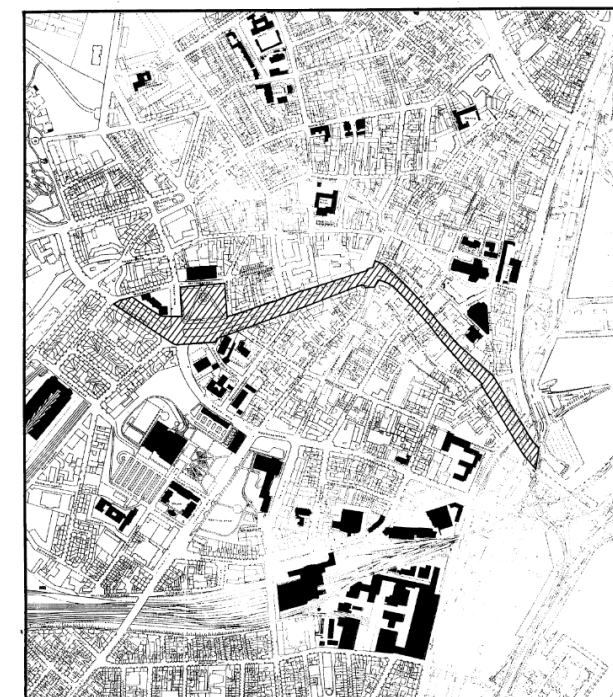
Political agreement

- In 1989 the City Council of Aarhus principally decided to reopen the area that had been covered up half a century earlier.
- The local plan that dealt with the reopening was finally approved in 1992.
- The first stage which covered the stretch between the streets of Harald Skovbys Gade and Immervad was opened to the public in the summer of 1996.



First stage. Uncovering The River Aarhus. 1995.
<https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000381402>

Århus kommune Lokalplan nr:
 Tillæg nr.3 til Kommuneplan 1988 - 96
 Åboulevarden - Genåbning af Århus å **419**



Statistikområde/distrikt nr.00.50,70-90,01.60-70 Registreringskortblad nr: 56

Magistratens 2. afdeling Stadsarkitektens kontor Februar 1992

Lokalplan nr. 419
 Åboulevarden - Genåbning af Århus Å



Århus Byråd har vedtaget en lokalplan for det viste lokalplanområde, der gælder for Åboulevardenområdet i Århus Indre By samt en del af Støbet og dens omgivelser vest herfor. Samtidig har byrådet vedtaget Tillæg nr. 3 til kommuneplanen.

PLANEN BETYDER:
 Åboulevarden kan ændres fra en trafikformål til mere rekreative og strøgkvalitative formål i forbindelse med en støvevis genåbning af Århus Å.

Planen er ændret i forhold til forslaget vedrørende bl.a. bestemmelser om tilslutning fra fredelegemindigheden samt beskrivelser.

Fremtidig bebyggelse eller andet omvendelse skal være i overensstemmelse med planen.

PLANEN KAN SES PÅ:
 Kommune Information, Rådhuset Århus, og Hovedbiblioteket, Marktorvet, Århus fra onsdag den 18. marts 1992.

PLANEN KAN KØBES PÅ:
 Kommune Information og Hovedbiblioteket for 25,00 kr.

MAGISTRATENS 2. AFDELING

Advertisement on the district development plan (local plan in Danish) on The Uncovering of The River Aarhus. Aarhus Stiftstidende, 17-03-1992.

Uncovering the river

There were three phases of the uncovering, and it all began in 1992 and ended in 2015.

The district development plan stated “The street Åboulevarden can through several stages be transformed from traffic purposes into more recreational and pedestrian-street like purposes through an Uncovering of The River Aarhus”.

Phase 1:

1st stage: Harald Skovbys Gade – Immervad. 1992-1996

2nd and 3rd stage: St. Clements Bridge – Mindebrogade. 1996 – 1998.

Phase 2:

Christiansbro/Christiansgade – Immervad and Christiansbro – Slusebroen. 2005-2008

Phase 3:

Mindebro – Mindet (The Mouth of the River) – finished 2015



Work on Phase 2. <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000161335>

What does the uncovered river provide?

- Recreational spaces for pedestrians
- A “green and blue” line through the city centre.
- Modern aesthetics (bridges, railings, seats, pavement, lights etc.)
- Modern solutions for securing the environment.
- An area free of cars, busses and motorcycles.
- A lively stretch with bars, restaurants and cafes.
 - It has become the place to “hang out” in the city centre.



People hanging out at “The Spanish Steps”. 2005. <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000254653>

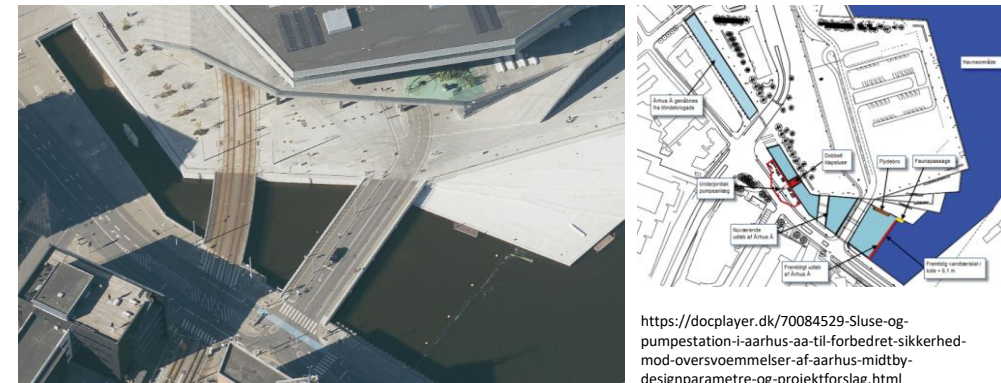
Key success factors

The Environment

- The establishment of an open canal would help protect the city against floods caused by torrential downpour alongside the reestablishment of two larger lakes at *Årslev Eng sø* and *Egå Eng sø*.
- Located next to the river, the central park area “Mølleparken” also became subject for a water-linked transformation. Beneath the park a massive underground reservoir for sewage water was constructed. This set up a new kind of water management solution right in the centre of the cultural heritage heart of Aarhus. A similar 16.000 m³ reservoir was constructed near the old Hammel train station just a few hundred meters further up the river.
- In the last phase of the Uncovering near the Mouth of the River, a sluice mechanism that regulates water levels was installed in order to prevent flooding in areas along the canal as a result of climate changes. The system has a capacity of 18 m³/s and is therefore able to pump away 18.000 liters of water per second.



The River Aarhus with Mølleparken in the background”. 2009. <https://www.aarhusarkivet.dk/records/000161342>



The Lock mechanism at the Mouth of the River. 2019. <https://skraafoto.kortforsyningen.dk/>

<https://docplayer.dk/70084529-Sluse-og-pumpestation-i-aarhus-aa-til-forbedret-sikkerhed-mod-oversvoemmelser-af-aarhus-midby-designparametre-og-projektforslag.html>

Key success factors

The Environment

- The absence of cars, busses and other vehicles that emits carbon dioxide. Only delivery of goods for the business along the canal provides temporary access for vehicles.
- Many trees were planted along the canal in the pedestrian zone.
- Better possibilities for animals to live and plants to grow in and around the opened river.



Key success factors

Awards

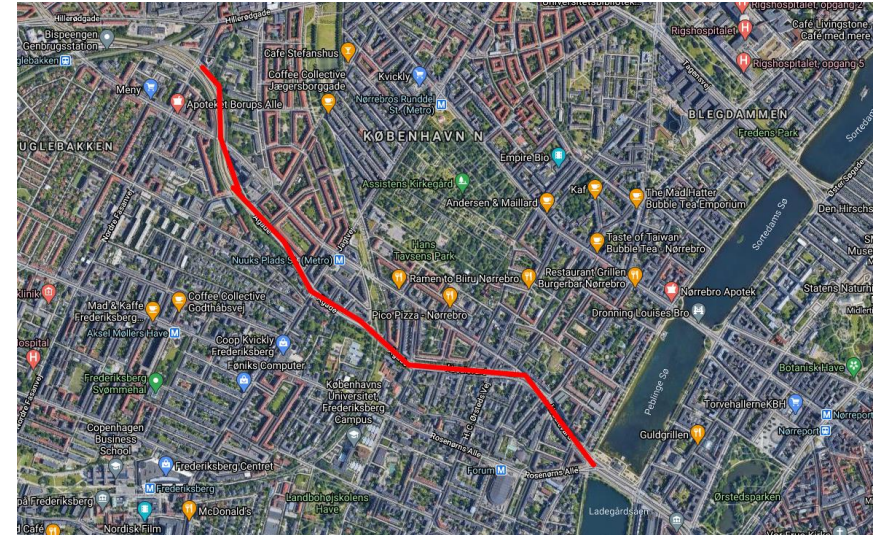
- In Brussels in November 1998 the project received official praise by an international jury of city planners. The jury had the opinion that the project had to be seen as a model for other places within the European Union. The project in Aarhus was considered for the award due to its high standard in planning, as well as quality in the shaping of the city. The management of the traffic situation in the city was also praised.
- The project had already received an national award in 1996. The “UrbanPlan”-award was given for well-run and sustainable city planning from the Union of Danish Architects and the Danish Urban Plan Lab. The project in Aarhus won the prize based on new thinking within city planning that brought forth aspects within traffic, environment, architecture and heritage.
- The City Architect of Aarhus also received an Urban Renewal award for his creativity and involvement in the uncovering.



Potential transfer of Good Practice

National level:

- Ladegaardsåen in Copenhagen.
 - Talks of uncovering Ladegaardsåen.
- <https://www.ladegaardsaaen.dk/> - activist website for the uncovering.
- *“Copenhagen faces many environmental problems; the most compelling are a lack of green space and recent extreme rainfall causing flooding. This project aimed to address these problems by (1) investigating the possibility of daylighting Ladegårdsåen, a piped canal that is located under the busiest road in Copenhagen, the Ågade-Åboulevard (AA), and (2) developing a feasible design concept that our sponsor, Miljøpunkt Nørrebro, and other stakeholders might pursue further.”*



WaVE film - The River Aarhus



The River Aarhus – WaVE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDBvl6W09bU>

Bonus video – Aarhus Vand

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnWzHkm2THc>



Further info on The River Aarhus



- AarhusVand: <https://www.aarhusvand.dk/en/international/solutions/the-aarhus-river-project--improved-water-quality-and-flood-prevention-in-one/>
-