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City-region planning for everyday life

Experiences from four Nordic city-regions

Whether cities can provide a high quality of life for their inhabitants is an increasingly pressing question, especially in the light of rapid urbanization and climate change. However, recent research from four Nordic city-regions—which include Malmö, Stavanger, Aalborg and Tampere, and the areas around them—shows that detailed knowledge about inhabitants—permanent, temporary, new, multi-generational, or otherwise—in every part and subset of the city-region is lacking in spatial planning. If knowledge about the lives of those living in the city-regions is insufficient, then, how can specific spatial structures for a city-region be proposed as responses to different sustainability challenges? As a response, this policy brief proposes that, city-region planners should adopt Everyday Life Theory, (1) to influence everyday life practices in support of city-region sustainability; and (2) to better connect spatial structure/urban form with existing sustainability challenges. By adopting Everyday Life Theory, we mean that planning should be based on empirical knowledge about the needs and experiences of different groups of people in relation to four different dimensions: employment, housing provision, mobility and social reproduction.

There is an ongoing debate about the role of the compact city, and more generally densification, in achieving sustainability. The dominant view amongst policymakers in the Nordic countries is that different notions of the compact city, densification, concentrated development and polycentricity have the potential of contributing to social, economic and environmental sustainability. However, a substantial

body of literature, including feminist literature, criticises the prominent role of the compact city concept in the sustainable development discourse. That critique is based on research that shows that compact cities do not always manage to respond to challenges related especially to social inequality and social dimensions of sustainability (see Box 1 for that debate).

To reflect upon that critique, we

propose, in a recently finished research project¹, that spatial planning should be centred around Everyday Life Theory, as a further refinement of current practice. By doing so planners would be helped in their ambition to proceed beyond simple and normative assumptions about the potential benefits of different spatial structures. The focus would shift, and deci- »

Conclusions for policy makers

■ If planners consider Everyday Life Theory in their own work, there is a good chance that the profession becomes more open to different understandings of what everyday life means for the residents and other dwellers and inhabitants who may be implicated in and affected by planning. This is important, considering that planners tend to adopt their own visions and personal reflections on everyday life considerations. To exemplify, what is the purpose of striving for densification to mitigate climate change, if proposed spatial structures do not respond to actual everyday life practices of people?

■ A recognition of and a concern for the desirability of including a perspective based on the Theory of Everyday Life in planning makes the question of methodology central. The content and results of using the theory cannot be fully realized if a focus on methods is ignored. The use of normative expressions in city-region plans, such as, "It is good to include a gender perspective and a concern for cultural differences in planning the city-region," does not mean that one has actually done so, in praxis.

■ Detailed knowledge about people's everyday lives, as well as, needs, experiences and preferences, should be as central in city-region planning as in municipal planning, given that the lives of different groups of people involve complex patterns across administrative boundaries.

■ We encourage city-region planners to test and assess the usefulness of adopting methods that are normally developed at municipal and local levels (see case studies) to learn more about the "nitty-gritty life of people." This can include methods similar to those underlying the work by Helen Jarvis, et al., and synthesized in their book, *The Secret Life of Cities*, i.e., different forms of interviews, of both personal and ethnographic character, with individuals and representatives of households. The emphasis in their work was on large numbers of qualitative interviews, or, in other words, quantitatively qualitative approaches. To put it in everyday terms, lots of knowledge about a lot of people in many locations was required.

■ Different notions of the compact city, densification, concentrated development and polycentricity in city-region spatial planning might well be relevant to consider for approaching different sustainability challenges, but such approaches have to build on sound analysis and knowledge of everyday lives, as well as needs, experiences and preferences of different groups of women and men, not the least so as to develop a knowledge base that planners can rely on to influence everyday life towards more sustainable practices.

■ When planners have acquired the knowledge about Everyday Life Theory, and its potential application in city-region planning, as presented in this policy brief, the next step is to design a process for its actual implementation by city-region planners, both for assessing previous planning and reflecting on ongoing planning. A dedicated aid to those activities is the question framework that was developed as part of the method of this project. An adapted and shortened version of the question framework is found in Box 4, and is best used at the beginning of a city-region planning process.

Box 1: Defining the compact city...

"The compact city is an urban planning and urban design concept, which promotes relatively high residential density with mixed land uses... achieving a compact city does not just mean increasing urban density per se or across all parts of the city. It means good planning to achieve an overall more compact urban form"(source: Wikipedia). Critique of the concept is based on research that shows that compact cities do not always manage to respond to challenges related especially to social inequality and social dimensions of sustainability.

...and debating the compact city

To illustrate, a major Swedish newspaper carried a debate on the role of the compact city and, more generally, densification, in efforts to achieve sustainability. On one side of the debate, Göran Bengtsson, a well-known professor, pointed out that gentrification, increased housing costs, social inequality, over-crowded green areas, and the effects of weather extremes are the negative side of densification. He asked why the European discourse on polycentricity (see Box 3 for definition) is no longer discussed. In response, Alvar Palm, an environmental economist, and Patrik Andersson, coordinator for YIMBY ("Yes In My Back Yard") Göteborg, argued for densification's positive effects, namely attractiveness, energy efficiency, and improved public health. The debate continued with an article written by Karin Bradley and Pernilla Hagbert, who argue that by using consumption-based impact assessments it becomes obvious that even though urban dwellers, compared to others, contribute to higher levels of GDP, use more public transport and are prominent users of district heating, their ecological footprint is much higher than what could be considered sustainable. These dwellers consume a lot, travel by air, live in big apartments and have access to many dwellings. The compact city debate should now be nuanced towards discussing consumption patterns and supply systems that could be considered sustainable in existing cities, suburbs, small towns and rural areas.

To illustrate from the Nordic countries, a study by Jesper Ole Jensen, et al., from Copenhagen, shows that density in itself plays a very minor role for sustainability, but is embedded in historic, economic and demographic differences in the city. Planning for the compact city therefore has to be supplemented by an approach that includes behaviours of individuals and households. All in all, we wish to emphasise that urban sprawl is certainly not the solution to sustainability challenges, but that spatial planning efforts to compact the city should go hand in hand with good knowledge of the everyday life needs and experiences of different groups of people, to better respond to social dimensions of sustainability.

sions would be based on knowledge of everyday lives of different categorizations of people (i.e., people with different socio-economic capacity, ethnicity, culture, age and gender, amongst others). This in turn could contribute to the development of a knowledge base that planners can rely on to influence everyday life towards more sustainable patterns, in a virtuous circle. Based on results from the four investigated Nordic city-regions—which include Malmö, Stavanger, Aalborg and Tampere, and the areas around them—we propose that adopting Everyday Life Theory can assist city-region planners connect spatial structure/urban form not just with sustainability's environmental and economic goals, but its societal ones. This is further elaborated in the following section.

Everyday Life Theory, Sustainability and Nordic City-Regions

The project's starting point was our genuine interest in knowing how, in actual practice, Nordic city-region spatial planning addresses the relationship between urban form/spatial

structure, spatial planning and social dimensions of sustainability. In order to fill a gap in research, at the same time as providing useful guidance for planners in their work, we considered that it was, and is, necessary to not only better understand the relationship between urban form/spatial structure, spatial planning and the social dimensions of sustainability, but to do so through the complementary dimension of Everyday Life Theory. The adoption of Everyday Life Theory in spatial planning can contribute to a discovery of different possibilities for connecting the diversity of practices of individuals, households and groups with the vision of sustainability. This can be achieved by considering different narratives of the city, so as to avoid singling out the concept of the compact city as the only way to create a sustainable city.

With this foundation, the objective of the project was, (1) to consider whether, and if so, how, knowledge about everyday life practices of different groups of women and men is present and integrated into Nordic

city-region planning, and what planners can learn from that; (2) to test the usefulness, for researchers and planners, of assessing city-region planning through the eyes of Everyday Life Theory.

To proceed in our research, our understanding of Everyday Life Theory, as presented in Box 2, was transformed into a question framework that we applied to the investigated city-regions. Two levels of spatial planning were investigated in each city-region and we found that what we saw as two levels were usually formulated as either “city-region planning and regional planning levels,” or as “city-region planning and municipal comprehensive planning levels.” In Denmark, spatial planning is not performed at city-region level, which implied that we only investigated municipal comprehensive planning. Planning documents as well as interviews with responsible spatial planners were analysed with the help of the question framework. Results are described on the next pages, and then discussed at the end of this policy brief.

Box 2: Defining Everyday Life Theory in planning...

The adoption of Everyday Life Theory in city-region planning is concerned with exploring the “secret life of cities.” That view is informed by a feminist critique of planning as having an overly narrow understanding of people's everyday lives. It calls for moving beyond the duality of “home-work” and paying much more attention to social reproduction as the missing component. Helen Jarvis, et al., propose that an everyday life perspective should encompass knowledge of the relationships between four main dimensions: employment, housing provision, mobility and social reproduction. The latter includes all activities that make up our lives, but that are not covered by the home-work relationship. Social reproduction, in other words, can be about the issue of unpaid work, shopping, education and recreation, along with various associated forms of transport.

...and responding to different groups of people...

Being concerned with Everyday Life Theory is also about responding to everyday lives of different groups of people (i.e. adopting an intersectional perspective), in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, age and different cultural backgrounds, which are often reduced to simple variables, or indicators, in plans and analyses. More concretely and aptly described by Larsson and Jalakas, individual- and group-dependent choices of everyday life practices are subject to restrictions that depend on factors related to, for example, gender and ethnicity/race. Women and girls may feel restricted in their everyday life choices because of fear of crime in certain public spaces; persons from ethnic minorities may feel restricted in their choice of housing because of discrimination; whereas parents are struggling, on the one hand, to perform at work and, on the other, trying to avoid their children's needing to stay “too long” at childcare. (How long is “too long”? For whom?) As responses, individuals, families and groups adopt strategies to cope with restrictions related to the housing market, transport structures, the labour market and requirements related to social reproduction.

...and problematizing the compact city

Everyday Life Theory is also preoccupied with problematizing the compact city concept, as missing the societal dimensions of sustainability. Jarvis, et al., argue that planning the compact city as an antidote to urban sustainability is problematic, and even simplistic. The critique is not directed towards compact urban structures and densification per se, but to the origins of the compact city concept, developed after the Rio summit on climate change, as not based on credible assumptions about everyday life practices. Its assumptions are, firstly, about a particular lifestyle, which is based on a particular home-work relationship, and taken as granted. Secondly, that daily radial commuting is prevalent, and that people use local shops and services, but within an asocial notion of the household. Such an asocial notion derives, in other words, from the understanding that members of households live their everyday lives in their immediate neighbourhoods. Thirdly, that its model of human interaction is not credible.

NORDIC CASE STUDIES

The four investigated city-regions exhibited four kinds of awareness of everyday life as a topic for planning, but none of them could be considered detailed enough to correspond to Everyday Life Theory. Aalborg, although not at city-region level, but, at municipal comprehensive level, was the only one where the actual term was widely used, as “the good everyday life” (in Danish, “det gode hvaerdagsliv”). In Tampere city-region, the term “well-functioning life” (in Finnish, “sujuva elämä”) was used, but not clearly defined. For the other two city-regions, the research project needed to apply an interpretive approach in order to identify any indications of the everyday life perspective. Only in Malmö’s municipal comprehensive planning were social groupings, in terms of for example gender, ethnicity, class and cultural backgrounds explicitly considered in (what we classify as demonstrating an intersectional perspective).

Sweden

Malmö municipality Malmö - Skåne city-region

Investigated spatial planning level

- Non-binding municipal comprehensive planning for 300 000 inhabitants
- Non-binding strategic planning for 1,3 million inhabitants

Methods for planning everyday life

- Commission for a Socially-Sustainable Malmö (2000 people participated)
- Methods for including groups that are usually not heard; mostly done for local-level planning (focus on young girls, for example)
- “Area programmes” to promote social sustainability in local-level planning. Inhabitants, businesses, NGOs, university and national authorities work together
- Analysis is mainly done through statistical information and spatial analyses
- Dialogue with municipalities
- Planners specify that public participation and dialogue with inhabitants are handled in municipal planning

Spatial structures proposed in planning to address everyday life

- Densely-built structures, with the argument that “it is simple to live everyday life in a concentrated structure”
- Concentration around existing urban areas
- Increased connections between areas with different characteristics
- Densification and improving the public transport network
- Mixed housing and multipurpose spaces
- Spaces for cultural and recreational activities

Awareness of everyday life in planning

- Everyday Life Theory, or similar perspectives, is addressed
- Intersectionality, gender and diversity are considered important
- Social sustainability is addressed
- Everyday Life Theory, or similarly-detailed everyday life perspectives, neither addressed nor defined
- No explicit gender nor intersectional perspective - groups of people are not differentiated
- A general focus on “people”
- Social sustainability - especially geographic segregation is addressed

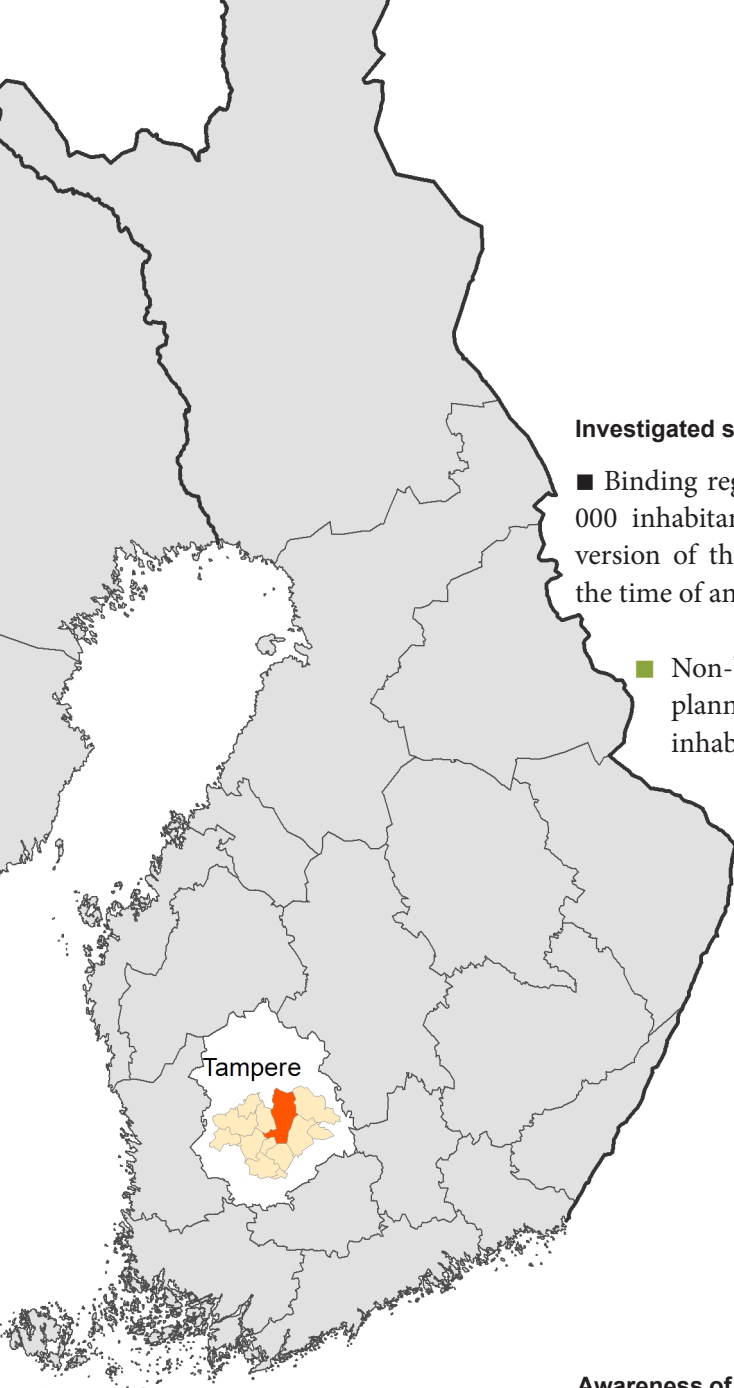


MAPS: LINUS RISPLING/NORDREGIO²

Finland

Tampere region

Tampere city-region



Larger urban areas

- Core Municipalities
- Hinterland Municipalities

Investigated spatial planning level

- Binding regional planning for 500 000 inhabitants (only a short draft version of the plan was available at the time of analysis)
- Non-binding strategic planning for 360 000 inhabitants

Spatial structures proposed in planning to address everyday life

- Polycentricity, with different levels of centres focusing on different service and housing opportunities
- General densification
- Polycentricity with different levels of centres focusing on different service and housing opportunities
- Diverse, mixed-use living

Methods for planning everyday life

- Quantitative analysis of the service network (includes existing service network, accessibility, expected changes in land use, population development)
- Attempts to include inhabitants, for example through collection of inhabitants' practices, e.g., travel diaries

■ Mainly quantitative analysis, although compared to earlier plans there is a stronger focus on qualitative approaches

- Dialogue and consultation with municipalities
- Limited public participation, but some public events, including inhabitants, NGOs and private companies, have been organised

Awareness of everyday life in planning

- Everyday Life Theory, or similarly-detailed everyday life perspectives, neither addressed, nor defined
- Intersectionality, including socio-economics, ethnicity and gender, is not explicitly emphasised
- Everyday Life Theory, or similarly-detailed everyday life perspectives, neither addressed, nor defined
- Intersectionality, including socio-economics, ethnicity and gender, are not explicitly emphasised
- The term "well-functioning life" is used, but not defined
- Issue of aging population is addressed

Denmark

Aalborg municipality

Investigated spatial planning level

- Binding municipal comprehensive planning for 200 000 inhabitants

Awareness of everyday life in planning

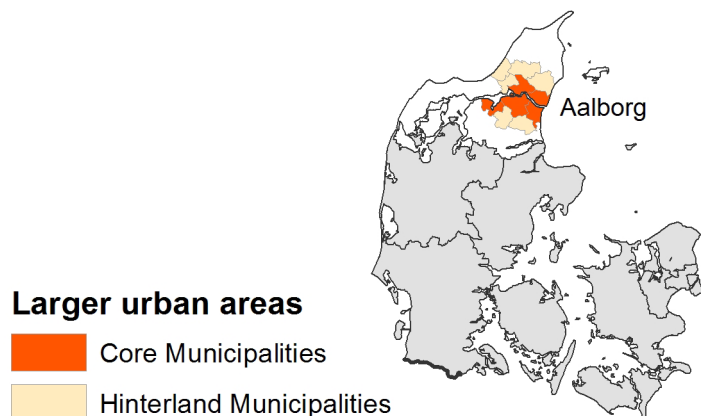
- Everyday Life Theory, or similarly-detailed everyday life perspectives, is neither addressed nor defined
- Very little focus on gender and intersectionality
- The term “good everyday life” used, but not defined

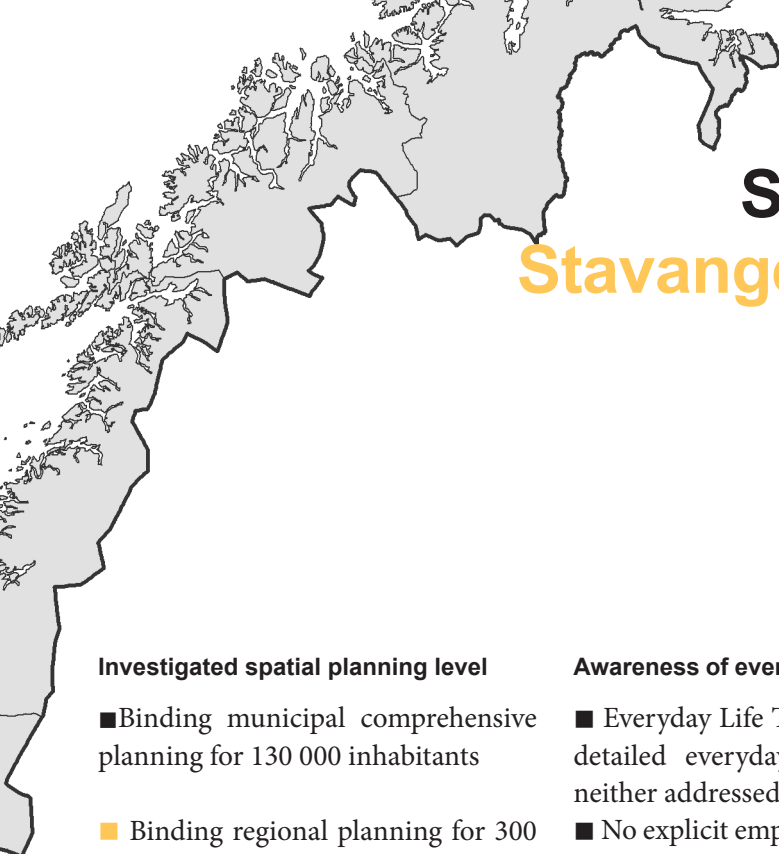
Methods for planning everyday life

- Integrated planning, using a “co-creation method,” to avoid “silos” between municipal administrations
- Workshops with citizens are held mainly for local-level planning
- Consultation with key persons, “dedicated enthusiasts,” undertaken in local-level planning, to increase knowledge of local communities

Spatial structures proposed in planning to address everyday life

- Focus on densification
- Integration of urban functions
- Transport nodes should function as places for multi-service and social interaction





Norway

Stavanger municipality

Stavanger- Jaeren city region

Investigated spatial planning level

- Binding municipal comprehensive planning for 130 000 inhabitants
- Binding regional planning for 300 000 inhabitants

Spatial structures proposed in planning to address everyday life

- General focus on densification
- Improved public transport
- Favouring biking and walking
- General focus on densification
- Focus on service provision in regional centres
- Focus on concentrated development

Awareness of everyday life in planning

- Everyday Life Theory, or similarly-detailed everyday life perspectives, neither addressed, nor defined
- No explicit emphasis on gender nor intersectionality, but recognition of the fact that the composition of the local population is diverse and that the number of immigrants is growing
- The term “high quality of life” is used
- Focus on public health
- Focus on demography
- Everyday Life Theory, or similarly-detailed everyday life perspectives, neither addressed nor defined
- No explicit emphasis on gender nor intersectionality. However, a growing awareness that social issues are important
- The plan mentions a children’s perspective
- Awareness that the preferences of new arrivals may be different from those of established residents. City-region planners attempt to make municipal planners aware that immigrant groups may have preferences that are different from those of established residents, for example in matters of housing

Methods for planning everyday life

- Statistical data collected every two years (living conditions, unemployment, education, criminality, residential turnover, families with children, immigration, etc.)
- General feedback gathered through public hearings and workshops (especially for local-level planning)
- Planners acknowledge that they lack tools for engaging less-vocal groups
- Planners acknowledge that knowledge about inhabitants’ preferences is lacking
- “Universal design,” to ensure equal access to public spaces
- The “10-minute city”; daily services should be within 10 minutes’ reach
- Workshops for leisure and outdoor activity associations
- Collection and analysis of basic statistical data, e.g., demography, density, education, employment, private sector development, housing prices, public transport
- Planners specify that input from inhabitants is sought in municipal planning

Everyday Life Theory as concern and method

In analysing how everyday life issues are emphasised in planning in the four investigated city-regions, an important observation was made. As a theoretical concept, everyday life is both a concern, and a method. A planner may have the concerns, but not use the method. For example, a planner may be concerned with defining “good” transportation structure, without knowing much about the economic and cultural values of its eventual users. Although the planner may attempt to find such information by consulting other planners, it is likely that, until the planner devises a method for collecting empirical data directly from and about the users, the plans will be deficient.

Dialogue and interaction with groups of people at mainly the local level

The deficiency mentioned above is especially visible when comparing city-region planning and municipal comprehensive planning in Malmö-Skåne and Stavanger-Jaeren. In analysing city-region planning documents and in interviews with responsible planners, we learn that methods used for enquiring into people’s everyday lives have not allowed a deep understanding of everyday life practices of different groups of people (i.e. people with different socio-economic capacity, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, class, race). Most methods use quantitative analysis with a limited number of indicators (see case studies). Planners responsible for the city-region planning informed us that public participation and dialogue directly with different groups of people are mainly done for municipal and local-level planning. This result should encourage planners to ask the question: are we planning our city-region based on our own assumptions about how people live; or are we planning our cities based on empirical knowledge about the lives of different groups of people? In Denmark, spatial planning is not done at city-region or regional level, which implies that relations between detailed knowledge of everyday life practices and spatial structure/urban form are lacking. In-

terestingly, however, regional planning in Tampere engages more directly with people (e.g. through the method of accessing citizens’ travel diaries), compared to city-region planning. An important comment here, nonetheless, is that, unlike Sweden and Denmark, regional planning is legally binding, which also means that there are legal requirements in terms of public participation.

At municipal comprehensive planning level in Malmö, Stavanger and Aalborg, interviews with planners reveal methods that have the potential to allow a deeper understanding of everyday life practices of different groups of people. Nonetheless, interviews with planners made clear that most interaction with groups of people is done for

of a new recreational spot for young people, in order to promote the creation of more inclusive public space in Rosengård. Instead of using the traditional methods of simply “mapping the wishes of the local inhabitants,” as such methods are usually termed, the city planning administration adopted a more long-term approach. This was to engage the local girls in its work, by, among other methods, employing two girls as interns, as a type of affirmative action. Their task was to plan the recreational spot in cooperation with other young girls who also resided in the area.

In conclusion then, one might argue that, on the one hand, it is not surprising that detailed knowledge of people’s everyday lives, as well as future needs



PHOTO: NORDEN.ORG/YADID LEVY

local-level planning.

The only evidence of a method that explicitly adopts gender and intersectionality for analysis was found at the planning department of the Municipality of Malmö. They have actively aimed at finding new ways of including groups that are usually not heard in planning. Planners there discovered that, in some of the less affluent areas, local girls were uncomfortable spending time in public space, especially in the area known as Rosengård. As a result, it was decided, as a form of affirmative action, that only young girls would be included in the planning

and preferences, are not emphasised in city-region planning, given that those plans are supposed to draw the big picture and the general trends. On the other hand, as argued above, the lives of citizens involve complex patterns across administrative boundaries. In order to plan for the lives of different groups of women, men and children, “nitty gritty” knowledge of everyday life practices should be addressed at the city-region level.

That politicians, through planners, attempt to influence people’s everyday lives is certainly a political and democratic issue, but such attempts have to

be grounded in knowledge of people's everyday life patterns and experiences, and needs and preferences for the future. In other words, borrowing terminology from futures studies, we argue that to be able to create a trajectory (i.e., in this case influencing everyday life practices) towards a desirable future (i.e., a sustainable future) the present situation has to be mapped and understood (i.e., everyday life patterns).

Spatial structures and everyday life in Nordic city-regions

Our conclusions, based on the sections above, are that spatial planners in the four city-regions describe and approach everyday life issues in different ways, but the commonality is that definitions of everyday life are rather general, and that methods for enquiring into people's everyday lives, at city-region level, are not precise enough to capture the fine-resolution detail of the everyday lives of different groups of people. A relevant question to ask, then, is: How can specific spatial structures be proposed as responses to different sustainability challenges, if knowledge about the lives of people, now and in the future, is insufficient?

Let us exemplify from the four investigated city-regions. In Malmö and Malmö-Skåne city-region, there is an ambition to use spatial planning to address everyday life issues, especially in the form of social development. Both at municipal and city-region level, densified polycentric spatial structures are considered to contribute to, among other things, decreasing unemployment and facilitating the mingling in public spaces of people with different backgrounds. From a gender and intersectionality perspective, the Malmö comprehensive plan strategy includes considerations of the experiences and needs of different groups. It is for example stated that when creating new public spaces, or meeting places, diversity and a gender perspective need to be included. The question of proximity and access to services for the aging population and the disabled is also emphasised as being especially

important.

A reflection here is that stating that certain values are important is one thing, and then going the next step, to finding out how, for whom, and what measures can be taken, is another. Having taken the first step does not automatically ensure that the second one follows. Put another way, the plans make assumptions about the relationships between people's everyday lives and spatial structures. However, to make such relationships credible, the question of method is important. For example, at city-region level in Malmö-Skåne, the decision to work towards a densified polycentric spatial structure is based on a long process of varied analyses and dialogue with municipalities. But, according to planners who were interviewed, that process has a limited focus on gender, intersectionality, and being able to differentiate between and enable direct input, or co-creation, from, different groups of people. In municipal planning, though, methods are being developed to address people's everyday lives with an understanding that gender and intersectionality are important factors.

Planning in Stavanger and Stavan-ger-Jæren city-region has a strong focus on densification and concentrated development, seeing them as strategies for constraining urban sprawl and associated transportation issues. A connection between people's everyday lives and spatial structure can be found in the two concepts: the "10-minute city" and "universal design." Given that the understanding of everyday lives of different groups of people, through for example gender and intersectionality, is not emphasised, there is a risk that especially the "ten minute city" does not reflect people's everyday lives now nor in the future. If the "ten minute city" concept attempts to respond to everyday lives of different groups, it should consider, for example, fear of crime, especially among women. Certain groups of women and girls might feel restricted in using the shortest path to specific services, because of fear.

The same conclusion can be drawn for Tampere city-region, where plan-

ners refer to polycentricity and densification in order to contribute to a smooth, well-functioning, easy fluency in the lives of inhabitants. The understanding of people's everyday lives, through for example gender and intersectionality is not, however, emphasised. Nonetheless, the regional plan collects people's everyday practices through travel diaries.

All in all, different notions of the compact city, densification, concentrated development, and polycentricity in spatial planning might well be relevant to consider for approaching sustainability challenges, but such approaches have to build on sound analysis and knowledge of everyday life practices and preferences of different groups of women and men, not the least so as to develop a knowledge base that planners can rely on to influence everyday life practices.

The usefulness of Everyday Life Theory for city-region planners

The adoption of Everyday Life Theory is useful in connecting spatial struc-

Box 3: Defining polycentricity

"Polycentricity was one of the key concepts coined by the European Spatial Development Perspective in 1999, and subsequently followed-up by the Territorial Agenda in 2007, in order to provide a framework for strategic planning at the transnational level. In recent years, however, the concept of polycentricity – and its inherent expectations, diverse understandings and interests – can also be seen to have increasingly trickled down to the regional level, in particular with a view to guiding spatial development "within metropolitan areas." In a literal sense, the term polycentric indicates that a spatial entity consists of multiple centres. The term does not however clarify what kinds of centres (centres of a transport axis, for housing, certain economic activities such as retail, industries, etc.) are in focus here, so that various notions and starting points are conceivable when discussing polycentricity with spatial planners and policy makers" (source: Nordregio).

tures/urban form with the everyday life patterns of different groups of people. By doing that, city-region planning has the potential to couple spatial structure/urban form with sustainability goals.

The key idea that makes the link between the understanding, or theory, of everyday life, and the application, or methodology, of it so essential is that it represents the critical, multi-dimensional question, “Whose everyday life?” That question returns repeatedly when contemplating the inclusion of everyday life issues in the (everyday) work of city-region planning. When planners ask what considerations of everyday life should affect the plans, whose everyday lives are meant? Is it the everyday life of the planner herself? Is it a question of where he lives and of how many children she has? Is it the lives of the decision-makers, the city-region’s politicians, or some other particular subset of the population that is accustomed to making their voices heard, as if theirs are the only ones who “really” matter? If one means, instead, the everyday lives of the inhabitants—permanent, temporary, new, multi-generational, or oth-

erwise—in every part and subset of the city-region, then, if one is paying attention, a new question immediately follows: “How do we know what that is?” Answering that question is exactly what makes the techniques, or methods, and the search for better ones, or methodology, all the more important.

What we have learned from this research project is that, if planners consider Everyday Life Theory in their own work, there is a good chance that the profession becomes more open to different understandings of what everyday life means for the residents and other dwellers and inhabitants who may be implicated in and affected by planning. This is important, considering that planners tend to adopt their own visions and personal reflections on everyday life considerations. To exemplify, what is the purpose of striving for densification to mitigate climate change, if proposed spatial structures are not grounded in knowledge of the everyday life practices, needs and experiences of people who live, work, or visit, there?

We propose that, when planners have acquired the knowledge about Everyday Life Theory and its applica-

tion in city-region planning, as presented in this policy brief, the question framework developed for this research project can be used by them for assessing previous planning, and reflecting on ongoing planning. A dedicated aid to those activities is the question framework that was developed as part of the method of this project. An adapted and shortened version of the question framework is found in Box 4, below, and is best used at the beginning of a city-region planning process.

Box 4: Self-reflective question framework for policy makers and city-region planners

- Do we (city-region planners) make assumptions about the relations between groups of people, the built environment and the natural environment that can affect how everyday life is understood by us? (An example is useful here, to make ourselves aware of what assumptions can lead to. The eco-district Hammarby Sjöstad, in Stockholm, works fine as an illustration. Hammarby Sjöstad, developed and constructed over the last 20 years, was originally planned for middle-aged persons without children. However, it turned out that a lot of families with children chose to move there, and as a consequence, childcare infrastructure was lacking.)
- Are we planning our city-regions based on our own assumptions about how people live their everyday lives, or are we planning based on empirical knowledge about the needs and experiences of different groups of people?
- How do we address the relationship between production (paid work), housing, transportation, leisure time and social reproduction (education, child care, elderly care, grocery shopping etc.) for different groups of people?
- How are everyday life practices of different groups of people (i.e., people with different socio-economic capacity, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, class, race) addressed and described in our planning activities? Are we generally “blind” to some of these types of differences? Do we understand what restrictions individuals and groups of people face in their strategies to cope with everyday life?
- What are the norms that set the standards for “the good everyday life” in our planning activities? Are these norms reinforced or are they challenged? Whose norms are represented in planning?
- How do we arrange our work, and how do we inform ourselves (methods/techniques) to understand everyday life patterns and preferences of different groups of people?
- Are the spatial structures that we propose, as responses to different sustainability challenges, grounded in empirical evidence of different groups of people’s everyday life needs and experiences? If not, can we adopt any of the methods/techniques used by planners in the investigated city-regions (see case studies)?
- If everyday life patterns were better understood at city-region level, how would our planning become more relevant for responding to sustainability challenges? Can we learn anything from the methods/techniques and procedures used for municipal and local level planning (see case studies)?

Further reading

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Endnotes

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Nordregio acts as the Secretariat of the Nordic Working Group on Green Growth – Sustainable Urban Regions. The activities of the working group are continuously developed via collaboration between the members of the working group (i.e. national representatives from ministries or national authorities) and key stakeholders (i.e. policy-makers and planners in the municipalities and regions in the larger city regions in the Nordic countries) with an equal focus on theoretical and practical approaches.

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