



NORDREGIO
Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE NORDIC CITY-REGIONS

**A synthesis of the activities of the
Nordic Working Group for Green Growth:
Sustainable Urban Regions**

Nordregio Report 2016:2



Nordregio – Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

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Towards sustainable Nordic city-regions

Nordregio report 2016:2
ISBN: 978-91-87295-42-3
ISSN: 1403-2503
© Nordregio 2016

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**Nordic Council
of Ministers**

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INTRODUCTION

During the period 2013–2016, the Nordic Working Group for Green Growth: Sustainable Urban Regions (NWG4) and Nordregio have developed and shared knowledge about sustainable urban development, planning and green growth. Working in close collaboration with representatives from ministries and national authorities, policymakers and municipal and regional planners within larger Nordic city-regions, we have identified a number of common challenges and opportunities for sustainable urban development.

City-regions are important arenas for addressing the many challenges associated with urban sustainability, inclusiveness and attractiveness. This synthesis highlights some of these key challenges, indicates where there is potential to develop more sustainable and co-ordinated planning and policy-making. It also provides insight into implementation, monitoring and evaluation of various plans and policies through different tools, models and concepts.

In addition to outlining common challenges and opportunities for Nordic urban areas and governing city-regions, this report highlights some of the specific national concerns for city-regional planning in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. It also provides an overview of municipal reforms and regional reforms in the Nordic region as well as an introduction to all the Nordic spatial planning systems.

First comes a brief overview of the challenges addressed in this report. The different sections describe these in more depth and contextualising them with relation to the main findings from connected projects carried out by Nordregio. This is followed by national overviews of the spatial planning systems and regional reforms in all Nordic countries, as well as national concerns for city-regional planning. The report is concluded with a section about the NWG4 and a list of the related Nordregio publications.

Enjoy the reading!

Challenges for Nordic urban areas

Continuous urbanization:

During the last 20 years, 97% of the population growth in the Nordic region has occurred in 30 functional urban areas. Accommodating this growing population with housing, infrastructure, services and so forth, in a sustainable way, is the overarching challenge.

Densification and mixed functions:

Compact city development is a paramount urban policy in the Nordic region, but implementing this in practice is challenging. For example, the best way to locate and mix different urban functions and to maintain a good quality of life in urban areas, which are becoming denser, is not immediately evident.

Socio-economic differences:

Even though Nordic cities and regions are internationally known for social cohesion and relative social equality, a fundamental challenge is the socio-economic polarization and fragmentation within urban areas.

Diverse everyday lives:

Diversified lifestyles and mobility patterns across municipal and regional (and national) boundaries, in and around Nordic cities and regions, create new challenges for spatial planning in the 21st century.

Challenges for governing city-regions

Governing across administrative borders:

The importance of city-regions challenges traditional borders but also provides opportunities for new political and administrative collaborations based on functional networks across scales and sectors.

Co-ordination of plans and policies:

There are numerous spatial plans and policies at different scales in the Nordic region. Because these are interconnected and dependent on external actors and institutions outside the domain of statutory planning, there are key challenges in co-ordination, implementation and governance.

Practising communicative planning:

Communication is another key challenge both within city-regions, between public authorities directly or indirectly involved in spatial planning, and with various external stakeholders – from private individuals and NGOs to firms and businesses.

Planning regional development:

A common plan for the development of a city-region is a way to address many contemporary problems. However, collaboration within and between city-regions is challenging, not least in the political context where regional planning is contested.

Nordic challenges in a global context

Many of these challenges have clear connections to the 17 global *Sustainable Development Goals* that were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015. The primary responsibility to fulfil these goals, and the linked 169 targets, lies with nation-states. The role of the state in urban and regional planning and policy-making is an important but also difficult issue. For example, UN Habitat's report *Planning sustainable cities: global report on human settlements* highlights the importance of national urban policies in meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

However, within the Nordic region the relationships between the national, regional and local administrative levels differs; for example, in ways that the state can intervene in urban and regional planning issues. This became clear in the Nordic symposium on national urban policies (See photo 1).

Of the 17 goals that are to be fulfilled by 2030, there is one in particular that is pertinent to the Nordic challenges discussed above: *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*. This goal puts the Nordic challenges in a global context, reflecting a major issue for urban development in many parts of the world. Some of the specific targets related to this goal are particularly relevant within the context of Nordic cities and regions. These are listed below.

- **By 2030**, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
- **By 2030**, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.
- **By 2030**, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.
- **Support** positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.

Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/> (1 December 2016)

“Planning poetry is not the issue. The challenge is the implementation process.”

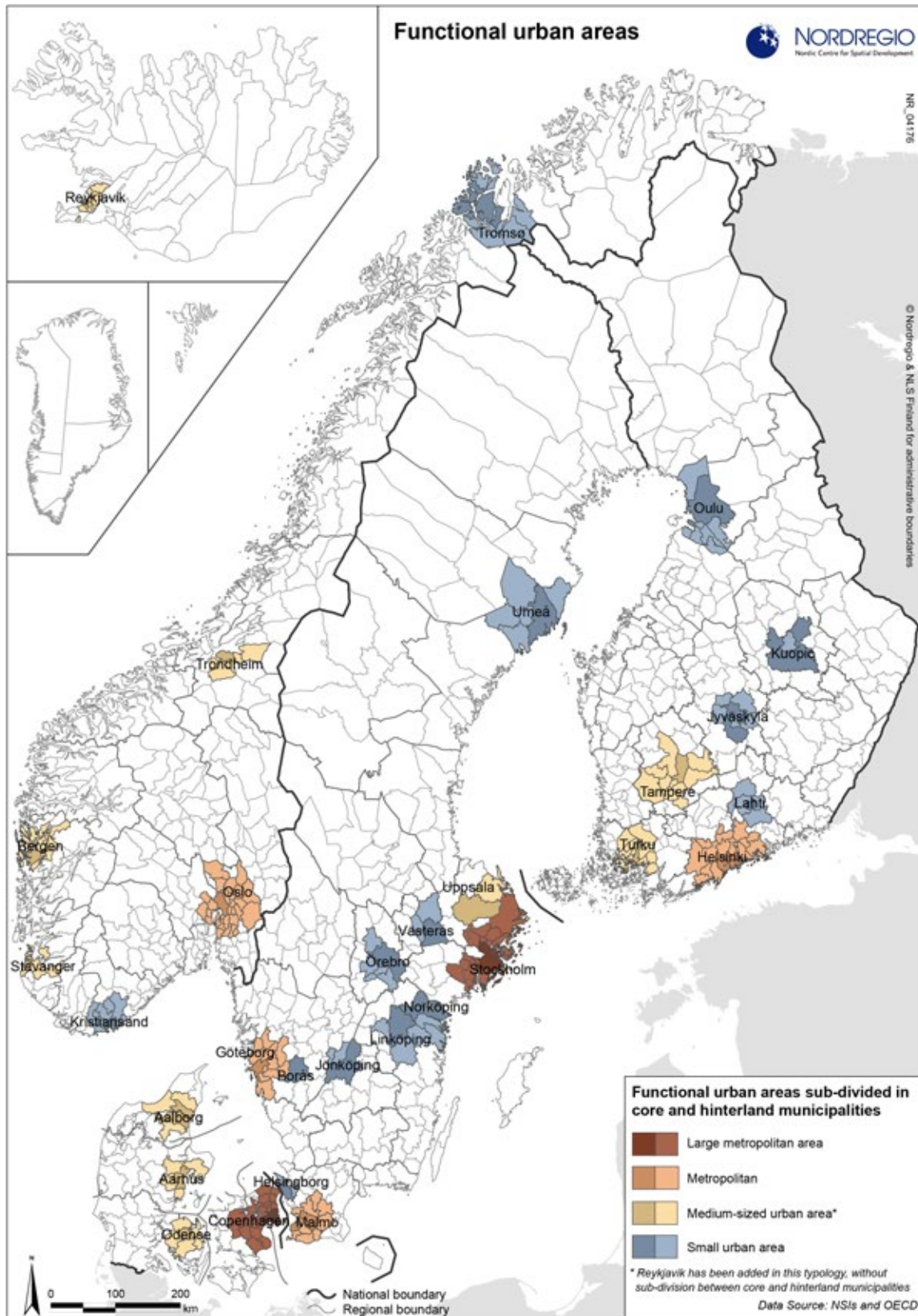
Klaus Kunzmann at the symposium on Planning Nordic city-regions: experiences and agendas at Literaturhuset, Oslo, Norway



Photo 1. In May 2015, the NWG4 and Nordregio organized a symposium on planning Nordic city-regions. The symposium provided an opportunity to share and exchange experiences of spatial planning at a city-regional scale and to discuss the challenges and possibilities for urban political agendas in the Nordic countries with a focus on the added value of a Nordic perspective. The symposium was a venue for discussions on the politics, planning and practices of Nordic city-regions. To stimulate discussion, Professor Klaus Kunzmann presented German experiences with city-regions, and Doctor Moa Tunström reflected on the urban norm in city planning. Furthermore, there were workshops on how to include social and everyday dimensions in city-regional planning, and new technical possibilities for city-regional spatial analysis.

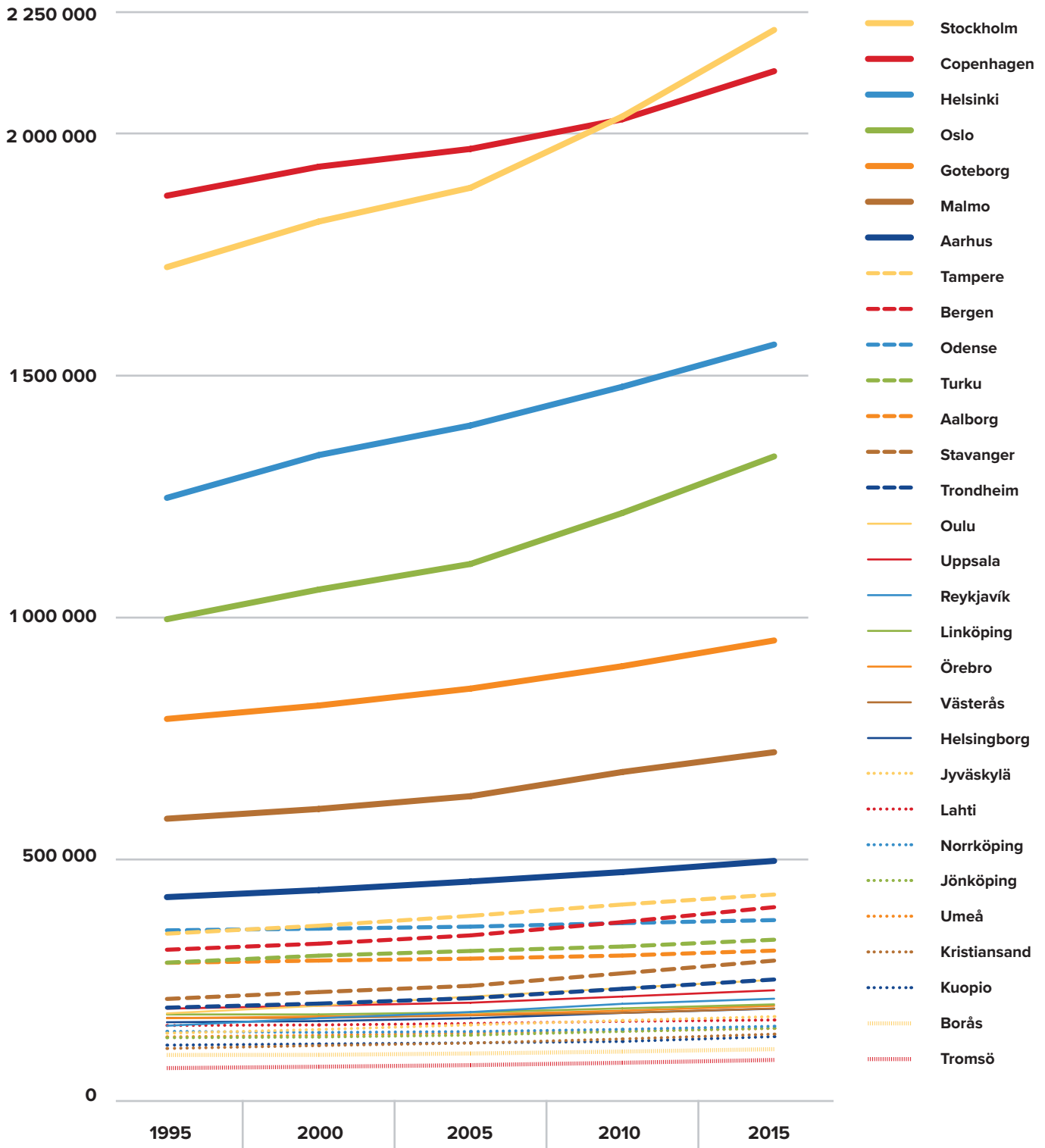
Read more about the seminar and download the presentations.

Map 1. Functional urban areas subdivided by core and hinterland municipalities



If the OECD's definition of functional urban areas is used in the Nordic region, almost 55% of the population live in the 30 largest urban functional areas. The population in these areas has increased dramatically between 1995 and 2015. Growth varies significantly between the different functional urban areas, from Stockholm (almost 500 000 new inhabitants) to Norrköping (10 000). The six metropolitan areas have grown by almost 1.7 million inhabitants. In relative terms, the Greater Reykjavik area and some of the Norwegian urban areas have grown the most, while Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg in Sweden, and Helsinki and Jyväskylä in Finland have also grown significantly.

Table 1. Population change in the 30 largest functional urban areas in the Nordic region 1995–2015



The boundaries of the functional urban areas are in accordance with the OECD's definition and based in the municipal boards from around 2001, except for Reykjavík where the area of Greater Reykjavík includes the following municipalities: Reykjavík, Kópavogur, Seltjarnarnes, Garðabær, Hafnarörður, Mosfellsbær, Kjósarhreppur. The population data comes from Nordregio. For more information about OECD's definition of functional urban areas see: <http://www.oecd.org/regional/redefiningurbananewwaytomeasuremetropolitanareas.htm>

CHALLENGES FOR NORDIC URBAN AREAS

Continuous urbanization

During the last 20 years, 97% of the population growth in the Nordic region has occurred in 30 functional urban areas. Accommodating this growing population with housing, infrastructure, services and so forth, in a sustainable way, is the overarching challenge.

Urbanization processes are concentrating people and capital in expanding functional urban areas (see Table 1 and Map 1). Therefore, many contemporary problems related to sustainable development, such as co-ordinating land use, transport and housing, are best approached at the city-regional scale. However, consideration of city-regions as functional urban areas challenges traditional spatial planning and policy strategies, especially within the Nordic systems, where regions have limited influence in between strong national governments and independent municipalities.

Densification and mixed functions

Compact city development is a paramount urban policy in the Nordic region, but implementing this in practice is challenging. For example, the best way to locate and mix different urban functions and to maintain a good quality of life in urban areas, which are becoming denser, is not immediately evident.

The notion of the compact city is the paramount policy approach directed towards sustainable urban development and attractive urban areas in Nordic cities. It is an approach focuses on urban form and on combating urban sprawl. It is based on the premise that a compact city structure reduces transport needs, energy consumption and public investments in infrastructure through efficient land use. However, compact city development is not a simple issue, or an undisputed idea, because it can also create land-use conflicts, increase pressure on public spaces and green areas, and contribute to increasing house prices and gentrification.

Socio-economic differences

Even though Nordic cities and regions are internationally known for social cohesion and relative social equality, a fundamental challenge is the socio-economic polarization and fragmentation within urban areas.

Social polarization and growing inequality are seen as some of the most severe challenges for the Nordic city-regions. The capital city-regions of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland all show patterns of socio-economic segregation. Spatial planners in the 21st century need to take diversified lifestyles and mobility patterns into account to help to achieve sustainable city-regions. The effect of urban structure and built environment on the social cohesion of Nordic societies is a subject of ongoing research, but we need still deeper knowledge.

Diverse everyday lives

Diversified lifestyles and mobility patterns across municipal, regional and national boundaries, in and around Nordic cities and regions, create new challenges for spatial planning in the 21st century.

Quality of life is important to current Nordic spatial planning – especially since the compact city has been adopted as the dominant approach to both accommodation of population growth and facilitation of economic growth in the Nordic countries. The effect of densification on social life is debated; a compact city structure will not automatically lead to more liveable cities or better everyday life for the residents. A thorough understanding of the effects of compact urban form on different groups of residents, and how this should reflect the needs of different groups in society, is crucial to effective policy application. People have different possibilities, needs and preferences about how to live their lives, and urban form therefore needs to support diverse lifestyles.

Main findings from the projects

The main conclusions from projects conducted by Nordregio on behalf of the NWG4 in between 2013 and 2016 follow. These projects specifically focused on how spatial planning can contribute to green growth and on issues related to urban form, social cohesion and diversity.

Weak links between spatial planning and green growth policies

Nordic cities are in many ways world-leading role models when it comes to sustainable development, especially in terms of ecology and technology (eco-tech). The green growth concept is thus, unsurprisingly, an important example of Nordic collaboration, and there have been many achievements with regard to economy, technology and ecology (see, for example, the Nordic Working Group for Green Growth: Innovation and entrepreneurship). As green growth policies are currently structured in the Nordic countries, urban form is a key dimension within which green growth policies interact with spatial planning.

On behalf of the NWG4, Nordregio reviewed the relations between green growth and spatial planning in urban policy in the Nordic region. It was concluded that explicit links between green growth policies and spatial planning are quite weak because green growth policies are mainly framed at the national level and focused on regional development, while spatial planning is primarily done at the local and regional levels. Planning policies normally relate to 'sustainable development' rather than to 'green growth', but there are many implicit links to green growth policies, especially through a joint focus on urban form as a vehicle towards economic, ecological and social sustainability. The compact city is conceptualized as an attractive urban form that can contribute to green growth.

The project showed that green growth policies in the Nordic countries are generally in line with the definition used by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is focused on economic efficiency and environmental protection,

and explicitly neglects social sustainability. However, in practice, in Iceland and Finland, for example, social aspects are to some degree integrated in green growth policies. The adoption of an everyday life perspective in regional planning is expressed in the project as a possible way forward for integrating social sustainability issues in the planning of sustainable city-regions.

City-regional planning for everyday life – lessons from the local level

In one project, the notion of everyday life as an approach in spatial planning at city-regional level was explored. The project focused on four city-regions: Aalborg in Denmark, Tampere in Finland, Stavanger in Norway, and Malmö in Sweden. In addition to interviews with planners from the different city-regions and reviews of key planning and policy documents, a workshop discussed everyday life perspectives in city-regional planning. Although everyday life perspectives are not always a visible or literal component in plans and policies, the four city-regions expressed this philosophical inclination in varying degrees. In planning practice, a number of innovative practical approaches have been developed and used to satisfy the fundamental objectives arising from everyday life demands.

Recognition of, and concern for, the inclusion of everyday life perspectives in planning makes the question of methodology central and highlights the importance of knowledge production. In the four city-regions, there are different emphases on what kind of information is considered to be important as a basis for planning. There is a general bias, on a city-regional level, towards quantitative data with less focus on qualitative narratives about different groups of people in different spatial settings and how they choose, or would prefer, to deal with the complexities of everyday life. This approach raises questions regarding the basis for planning and the extent to which normative visions, about how people should live their everyday lives, relate to empirical knowledge about the actual lives of different groups of people.

Urban social sustainability requires holistic policies

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy (EK-R) commissioned Nordregio to review research on residential segregation in the Nordic capitals and to provide examples of urban social sustainability policy responses (see Photo 2). The project found three main factors explaining Nordic urban segregation: housing policy, spatial planning and discrimination.

Policy responses to socio-economic polarization and fragmentation in the Nordic countries such as area-based approaches, social mix policies, expert commissions and urban development 'think tanks' do have an effect on urban development – and on our knowledge of social sustainability in cities – but it is important to emphasize that no approach is effective on its own since urban segregation is a complex and multidimensional problem.

To succeed with planning for social sustainability in larger Nordic city-regions, a spatial justice-oriented approach is recommended. This means, based on the

conclusions from the study, that planning should avoid gentrification in regeneration or development projects, respond to shortages of affordable housing, and have a holistic perspective of the city when planning new areas.

'Through better transfer of knowledge and collaboration, Nordic cities will stand stronger in the global competition.'

Kjell Nilsson, director at Nordregio presents the NWG activities at the Nordic Regional Ministers' Meeting, May 2015, in Copenhagen, Denmark.



Photo 2. Nordregio presents the NWG4 and its activities, including the list of challenges and opportunities, at the Nordic Regional Ministers' Meeting in Copenhagen, 27 April 2015. One result of the meeting was that the Nordic Council of Ministers' Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy (EK-R) commissioned Nordregio to review research on segregation in the capital regions in the Nordic region.

Read more about the project on Planning for urban social sustainability in the Nordic countries.

CHALLENGES FOR GOVERNING CITY-REGIONS

Governing across administrative borders

The importance of city-regions challenges traditional borders but also provides opportunities for new political and administrative collaboration based on functional networks across scales and sectors.

The concept of city-regions refers to the increasingly sprawling and interconnected forms of cities, towns and villages through urban infrastructures. The city-region is also an important economic and political entity in the globalized world, connecting the local to the global. Even if functional city-regions are important economic spaces in a globalizing world, it is still important to recognize that territorial boundaries are fundamental to our political system. The competitiveness and sustainability of Nordic city-regions were discussed at an international forum in 2015 (see Photo 3).

Co-ordination of plans and policies

There are numerous spatial plans and policies at different scales in the Nordic region. Because these are interconnected and dependent on external actors and institutions outside the domain of statutory planning, there are key challenges in co-ordination, implementation and governance.

In the Nordic city-regions, there is a good availability of plans, analytical tools and policy instruments, and an awareness of the extensive knowledge base related to the previously discussed contemporary urban challenges. A difficulty therefore lies in getting an overview of the existing tools, models and concepts, and finding practical applications for them, rather than inventing new ones. There are, for example, a multitude of so-called integrated urban planning models developed by researchers and consultants, but their use in practice remains, in general, rather low. However, there are exceptions; for example, the Integrated Urban Model used in Region Skåne and Stockholm, the ATP model in Norway, and the Finnish Monitoring System of Spatial Structure.

Practising communicative planning

Communication is another key challenge within city-regions, between public authorities directly or indirectly involved in spatial planning, and with various external stakeholders – from private individuals and NGOs to firms and businesses.

During the national meetings in 2014, planners expressed frustration at their perceived inability to reach politicians and residents alike, calling for strategies to change the way that planning is conducted. Not only is there a need to get input from citizens and residents, especially the less vocal groups, and to incorporate this into plans but also there is a need for targeted information to these groups. To ensure evidence based policy-making communication between planners and politicians is also vital.

Planning regional development

A common plan for the development of a city-region is a way to address many contemporary problems. However, collaboration within and between city-regions is challenging, not least in the political context where regional planning is contested.

There is ambivalence about the role of spatial planning in Nordic policy-making. It is increasingly emphasized that planning should facilitate growth and not stand in the way of development, but planning should also contribute to sustainable development. This is partly reflected in continuous reviews and revisions of the planning systems. Spatial planning in the Nordic countries is still primarily performed at the local municipal level and thus complies with the relatively strong and independent role of municipalities. However, hierarchical integration and interaction between different levels of government is a more strained field. In particular, the role and function of the regional level within the spatial planning system is a field of experimentation. Furthermore, there is an inherent tension in Nordic countries between regional (economic) development and urban (spatial) planning.

“Nordic cities are clearly doing the right thing: placing humans in the foreground, megaprojects in the background.”

Bent Flyvbjerg at Nordregio Forum 2015: Nordic City-Regions in a Global Environment, in Kulturvaerftet, Helsingør, Denmark.



Photo 3. In November 2015, the NWG4 contributed to the Nordregio Forum on Nordic City-Regions in a Global Environment, which focused on the strengths and weaknesses of Nordic city-regions in a time characterized by fierce global competition, climate change and migration. In presentations by international scholars, examples from inspiring cities, panel discussions and peer-to-peer dialogue, three different, cross-cutting themes or challenges were on the agenda: 1. Competitive and sustainable city-regions, 2. Effective governance of city-regions: collaboration within and between city-regions, and 3. Liveable and socially inclusive city-regions.

Read more about the forum and interviews with the keynote speakers.

Main findings from the projects

Nordic cities and regions are often considered as leaders in sustainable urban development, but although social, environmental and economic goals are included in strategic urban policies, it is difficult to implement and co-ordinate these in current planning practices. There are also numerous technical tools such as integrated planning models and indicator systems that might be helpful for policymakers and planners if they are carefully used. Below are some of the main conclusions from four projects that are strongly connected to the planning challenges associated with implementation and governance. The projects were conducted by Nordregio on behalf of NWG4 2013–2016.

Identifying ‘service gaps’ in city-regions – a tool for analysing accessibility

Planning for mixed functions in the built environment is related to the accessibility of social and private service functions. Nordregio explored and developed a method of spatial analysis, using high-resolution, and mainly open source, spatial data of city-regions, to assess access to public and private services. The method includes four components: (1) the location of residences, (2) routing information, including streets, walkways, pathways and other established routes for people to move around in the city, (3) the location of services in the categories of culinary, culture and leisure, health, education and commerce, and (4) the location of public transportation stops and associated timetables.

The method was developed in collaboration with local and regional stakeholders, who helped both to define the functional urban regions and to identify their components. It has been tested in four different types of city-region: Funen in Denmark, Stockholm in Sweden, Tampere in Finland, and Trondheim in Norway. The output describes the service distribution and settlement structure of the urban functional areas. When analysing the results, locations were revealed where population density and service accessibility is mismatched, and in this way ‘service gaps’ were identified.

An advantage with such methods of analysis is that they provide visualizations that can frame broader discussion about urban socio-spatial inequalities. A weakness with the method is that differences in the availability, openness and quality of data between countries make comparative analyses challenging. ‘Mismatches’ in urban development structures can be discovered in areas with good service/public transport accessibility but low population density, thus showing places where infills may be appropriate. Equally, ‘service gaps’ are evident in areas with high population density but poor service/public transport access, indicating areas where policy should support better service distribution.

Using contractual arrangements to integrate and implement urban policies

Nordregio reviewed the opportunities for co-ordinating transport, land use and housing through contractual arrangements between state, regional and local authorities. Governing these spatial planning issues through contracts between authorities at different levels has emerged as a key approach to policy implementation in Nordic and other European countries. Both economic and political rationales support these often rather complex organizational and financial arrangements. The review provides a short introduction to these initiatives in Finland, Norway and Sweden with outlooks for France and the UK, and a brief overview of so-called ‘agreement-based urban policies’ or ‘urban contractual polices’.

Formal and informal agreements and contracts between state authorities and municipalities regarding various sectoral policies, such as transport and infrastructure, are not unusual. However, the contractual policies reviewed in this case are aimed at cross-sectoral integrations. They have been established particularly in order to promote sustainability. Furthermore, these urban contractual polices in the Nordic countries are being institutionalized through national regulation and funding. A critical question concerns how these contractual agreements relate to other formal (municipal and regional) spatial planning processes. It should also be noted that so-called ‘contractualism’ often refers, in other countries (such as the UK), to relations between public and private parties, not public-to-public relations as in Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Indicator frameworks hold potential for measuring planning but can also be misleading

Nordregio reviewed a number of indicator frameworks that are used in the Nordic region to assess their utility for measuring progress in planning for sustainable development. Indicator frameworks typically consist of collections of indicators (sometimes more than a hundred) that are aggregated together in different ways. Sustainable development indicators normally measure social, economic, environmental and political performance. They can be powerful monitoring, communication and decision-support tools for a range of urban planners and decision-makers, but need to be implemented and managed carefully.

There are many different types of indicator frameworks. Thematically oriented frameworks (i.e. goal-, issue- or theme-based frameworks) are most common. These frameworks are relatively straightforward to develop and they can easily link indicators to policy goals and targets, thus providing clear and direct messages to decision-makers while also facilitating communication with the public. Other types of indicator frameworks (such as model-type frameworks) are more complex and there is also a limited evidence base regarding their success in practical implementation.

Two things are crucial when choosing or implementing an indicator framework: 1) that those who are responsible for deciding upon and implementing the framework are aware of the benefits and limitations provided by different types of frameworks, and 2) that they are systematically integrated or related to the existing planning practices of local and regional administrations.

Integrated urban models for collaborative city-regional planning

Integrated urban models (IUM) are tools with great potential, especially in terms of their ability to support comprehensive and participatory decision-making processes with evidence- and scenario-based forecasting. In collaboration with the consultancy firm WSP Analysis and Strategy, Nordregio reviewed the benefits and challenges of IUMs and surveyed the extent of their use in Nordic municipalities and regions. WSP Analysis and Strategy specifically contributed to the project by reviewing the basic technical details of these models.

IUMs combine multiple urban attributes to simulate future land-use development scenarios. Attributes that are commonly included in the models are, for example, location and density of residential buildings, public transport networks, cycling networks, green space protection, population growth and cultural heritage sites.

The level of use of IUMs in the Nordic countries is still relatively low, but there appears to be great interest from both municipalities and the research community. IUMs have been applied in a number of larger cities and continue to improve through innovation, development and implementation. As benefits, the models (1) provide practitioners with a better understanding of the urban system, (2) enable virtual experimentation of urban development and associated impacts and (3) provide knowledge and content to stimulate thinking and to facilitate participatory planning processes as well as collaborative decision-making.

You can read more about tools for planning urban sustainability in Nordregio News 2014:1

THE SPATIAL PLANNING SYSTEMS IN THE NORDIC REGION

The Nordic planning systems are, from an international perspective, often grouped together in one category, but there are differences between the national planning systems that should be recognized.

To facilitate understanding of the context in which urban development issues are handled, Nordregio has compiled a comparative review of Nordic planning systems. This describes the various statutory planning systems and can be used as a benchmarking tool by anyone wanting a quick overview of the differences and similarities among the basic laws and regulations that steer planning in the Nordic countries. The focus is on key instruments and institutions.



Spatial planning in Denmark

Since the election in 2015, there has been a political debate on reform of the planning system. One immediate consequence has been that responsibility for the Danish Planning Act has moved from the Ministry of Environment to the Ministry of Business and Growth. Furthermore, in November 2015, the new Danish Government presented a more extensive strategy for how they intend to reform the Planning Act, including the key message that it has to be modernized. In the strategy, the Government states that the current legislation is too bureaucratic and too restrictive on municipal planning, which hinders local planning initiatives and growth. Another message from the Government was that they aim to reduce the national influence on local planning, with the aim of giving more freedom to municipal planning decisions. If the reform is implemented, it will be the largest revision in the planning system since the significant legal and administrative changes implemented through the Planning Act of 2007, which, for example, removed spatial planning from the regional level.

At the national level, the Ministry of Business and Growth is responsible for the Danish Planning Act, together with its executive state authority, the Danish Business Authority. National planning reports, overviews of national interests regarding municipal plans, and national planning directives, including specific

directives for the capital region of Copenhagen, are important instruments for guiding planning at the national level. The national planning reports outline national visions regarding functional physical development. Additionally, an overview of state interests is published every fourth year by the Danish Ministry for Business and Growth. The most recent was presented in November 2015, titled 'Overview of state interest in municipal planning 2017'. The national planning directive presents long-term goals for Denmark's geographical structure with recommendations on how to realize these.

At the local level, there are two main planning instruments: the local development plan (lokalplan) and the municipal plan (kommuneplan). There are three different types of detailed plans (framework detailed plan, conservation detailed plan and project detailed plan) that can be used for different types of projects. Since 2000, the municipal plan has been complemented by an obligatory municipal strategy (kommuneplanstrategi), which should be revised during the first part of every mandate period and should include a political strategy, which is prioritized in the municipal plan.

The Danish Business Authority provides more introductory information on the spatial planning system in Denmark.



Spatial planning in Finland

In Finland, there are no major initiatives for reforming the spatial planning system, but there are discussions about amendments within the planning system. For example, the Ministry of Environment has started to prepare an update of the national land-use guidelines (valtakunnalliset alueidenkäyttötavoitteet (VAT)/riksomfattande mål för områdesanvändning). The Finnish Government's intention is to be able to make a decision on the updated guidelines in the spring of 2017, with the aim of renewing the guidelines so that they correspond to current national challenges regarding land use and are more specific and concrete (Ministry of Environment 2016).

At the national level, the Ministry of Environment is responsible for the Finnish Land Use and Building Act. National planning guidance is mainly found in the national land-use guidelines, which are designed to ensure that national issues of importance are considered in regional and municipal land-use planning. In accordance with the Land Use and Building Act, the guidelines must be taken into account, and their implementation must be promoted in regional planning, municipal land-use planning and the activities of the state authorities. Local planning is supervised by the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, which are central government authorities present in each of the regions.

At the regional and local levels, there are three

key planning instruments: regional land-use plans (maakuntakaava/landskapsplan), local master plans (yleiskaava/generalplan) and local detailed plans (asemakaava/stadsplan) (Ministry of Environment, 2016). The regional land-use plan is legally binding and guides national and regional land-use goals at the local level. At the regional level, the regional councils (made up of all the municipalities in each region) are responsible for developing regional land-use plans; these guide local-level plans and policies. According to an amendment in the Land Use and Building Act, since January 2016, regional land-use plans do not need to be approved by the Ministry of the Environment.

The local master plan is primarily a land-use plan allocating areas for different land-use purposes such as housing, traffic, services and recreation. The local master plan should comply with the principal land-use guidelines outlined in the regional land-use plan. Local detailed plans, which conform to the local master plan, regulate what can be built and the functions of buildings. It is also possible for two or more municipalities to draft a joint master plan, but it must be approved by a joint municipal organ.

The Finnish Ministry of the Environment provides more introductory information on the spatial planning system in Finland.



Spatial planning in Iceland

In Iceland, there has been no major reform of the planning system since the current Planning and Building Act came into force in 1998. It introduced two main changes. Firstly, all land in the country became subject to planning legislation, including all municipalities. Previously, only a small part of the rural environment was covered by approved land-use plans. Secondly, responsibility for planning issues was formally moved from central authorities to local authorities.

At national level, the National Planning Agency under the Ministry of the Environment is responsible for the administration, monitoring and implementation of the Planning and Building Act. The Agency is also responsible for assisting and advising local authorities in preparing and reviewing spatial plans, including the approval of municipal plans drafted by local authorities. In addition, the Agency is responsible for the main national planning instrument, the national planning strategy, which presents national guidelines for land use at the local level.

At the regional and local levels, there are three main planning instruments: regional plans, municipal plans and local plans. The regional plan is voluntary and has no

corresponding administrative level. Two or more local authorities have the option to join forces voluntarily to create a common regional plan across municipal boundaries to co-ordinate policies regarding land use, transportation and service systems, environmental matters and the development of settlements in the region over a period of at least 12 years. The key planning instrument in Icelandic spatial planning is the municipal plan, which requires the approval of the municipal council and the Ministry for the Environment. The municipal plan should define policies regarding land use, transportation and service systems, environmental matters and the development of settlements in the municipality. The municipal plan is supported by local plans, which are development plans for specific areas within a municipality that should be based on the municipal plan and should contain further details about its implementation. The regional plan, the municipal plan and the local plan are all legally binding documents.

The Icelandic National Planning Agency provides more information on the spatial planning system in Iceland.



Spatial planning in Norway

Norway revised its Planning and Building Act in 2008. One of the main goals was to improve the co-ordination of national, regional and municipal functions. The revision also emphasized the strategic aspects of municipal planning and the synchronization and co-ordination of planning activities between the national, regional and municipal levels. Since the law came into force in 2009, various amendments have been discussed, such as how to make the planning process more time and resource efficient by co-ordinating objections from state authorities. However, the largest change in recent years was in 2013, when the responsibility for planning issues was transferred from the Ministry of Environment (now the Ministry of Climate and Environment) to the newly established Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation.

At the national level, there are four different national planning instruments: national expectations with regard to regional and municipal planning (nasjonale forventninger til regional og kommunal planlegging), central government planning guidelines (statlige planretningslinjer), central government planning provisions (statlige planbestemmelser) and a Government detailed plan (statlig arealplan). The national expectations are presented every fourth year and include the Government's guidelines on the appropriate focus for counties and municipalities in their local planning, in respect to national policies of importance. Central government planning guidelines also aim to guide regional and local plans and to put forward issues of particular national importance. For example, in 2015, the Government prepared specific guidelines to promote a co-ordination of housing, land use and transport. The central government planning provisions can be used to clarify national expectations for planning and to highlight national policies in key areas of planning. The Government may also draft a national detailed plan, if this be-

comes necessary, in order to implement a project that is of national interest. The central government land-use plan can be established either as a detailed zone plan or as part of a municipal plan.

At the regional and local levels, there are five main planning instruments: the regional planning strategy (regional planstrategi), the regional plan (regional plan), the municipal planning strategy (kommunal planstrategi), the municipal plan (kommuneplan) and the detailed plan (reguleringsplan). The regional authorities (fylkeskommuner) are responsible for developing regional plans, which are guided by regional planning strategies but should also be in line with national expectations and guidelines from the ministries. The regional plan is not legally binding for municipalities but provides guidance for municipal planning. The regional planning strategy and the municipal planning strategy have to be revised every fourth year, synchronized with the election period of the regional and local government. The planning strategy sets priorities for planning activities over the next four years.

The municipal plan includes both a social element (samfunnsdel) and a land-use element (arealdel). The social element includes strategic priorities for development of the society as a whole, public services and a spatial development policy. The land-use element has maps and provisions that are legally binding for detailed plans and building permits. There are two forms of detailed plans: area zoning plans and detailed zoning plans. The area zoning plans are mainly used for larger areas and more extensive urban construction projects, while detailed zoning plans are applicable to smaller areas and limited construction projects.

The Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation provides more introductory information on the spatial planning system in Norway.



Spatial planning in Sweden

The most recent reform of the Swedish Planning and Building Act came into force in 2011, with the aim of creating a more efficient planning system and highlighting the importance of strategic planning. Since then, there has been continuous political discussion on the function and role of the spatial planning system, including a number of amendments to the Act. There have also been several investigations seeking ways to simplify the municipal planning process and to make it more efficient. In August 2013, the Government directed a committee to investigate further the need for regional spatial planning as well as for increased co-ordination between various types of planning at the regional level. The committee's final report, which was presented in June 2015, is now being prepared in the government offices. There is growing awareness of the need for cross-sectoral approaches and for linking planning for regional economic development to physical and spatial planning at the regional level. In Sweden's national strategy for sustainable regional growth and attractiveness 2015–2020, there is also an explicit focus on spatial planning, emphasizing the need to co-ordinate better local comprehensive planning and regional growth efforts. The strategy states that by 2020, actors responsible for regional development in each county should have integrated a spatial perspective in their regional growth efforts. The strategy also emphasizes that this should be done through conscious planning and dialogue regarding both intra- and interregional development.

At the national level, the Ministry for Business and Growth is responsible for the Swedish Building and Planning Act, together with the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverkets). There are no

national planning instruments guiding regional and local planning, and no regional land-use plans, except in the county of Stockholm. Local planning is steered by the Planning and Building Act and the Environmental Code, which regulate areas of national importance that are protected because of their high environmental value. This legislation is enforced by the county administrative boards (länsstyrelsen), which are tasked with monitoring the enforcement of national policies at the local and regional levels, thus ensuring that municipal comprehensive plans (översiktsplan) are in line with national regulations. Even though there are no real regional spatial plans in the counties (except Stockholm), the Government requires that there should be a regional development strategy for each county.

The responsibility for spatial planning lies with the municipalities, and there are two key planning instruments at the local level: the municipal comprehensive plan (översiktsplan) and the detailed development plan (detaljplan). The comprehensive plan is not a legally binding plan but should include guidance on future land-use development and should describe long-term strategic developments within the municipality. The comprehensive plan should be co-ordinated with national and regional goals and should take into account national interests, such as national environmental quality goals. In addition, the comprehensive plan guides the legally binding detailed plans that regulate the use of land and water areas.

The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning provides more information on the spatial planning system in Sweden.

ADMINISTRATIVE MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL REFORMS

In 2016, the Nordic countries are planning and/or implementing municipal and/or regional reforms. The reforms include changes in both the organization of authorities and the distribution of responsibilities, in some cases suggesting new geographic boundaries for administrative units. The reforms are intended to improve governance systems and will address several of the matters raised here. Nordregio has summarized the most important recent and ongoing changes.

This section reviews municipal and regional reforms in the Nordic countries, alongside a description of the administrative geography of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland and Sweden, as of June 2016. Specific emphasis is placed on the function of regions within the administrative system.

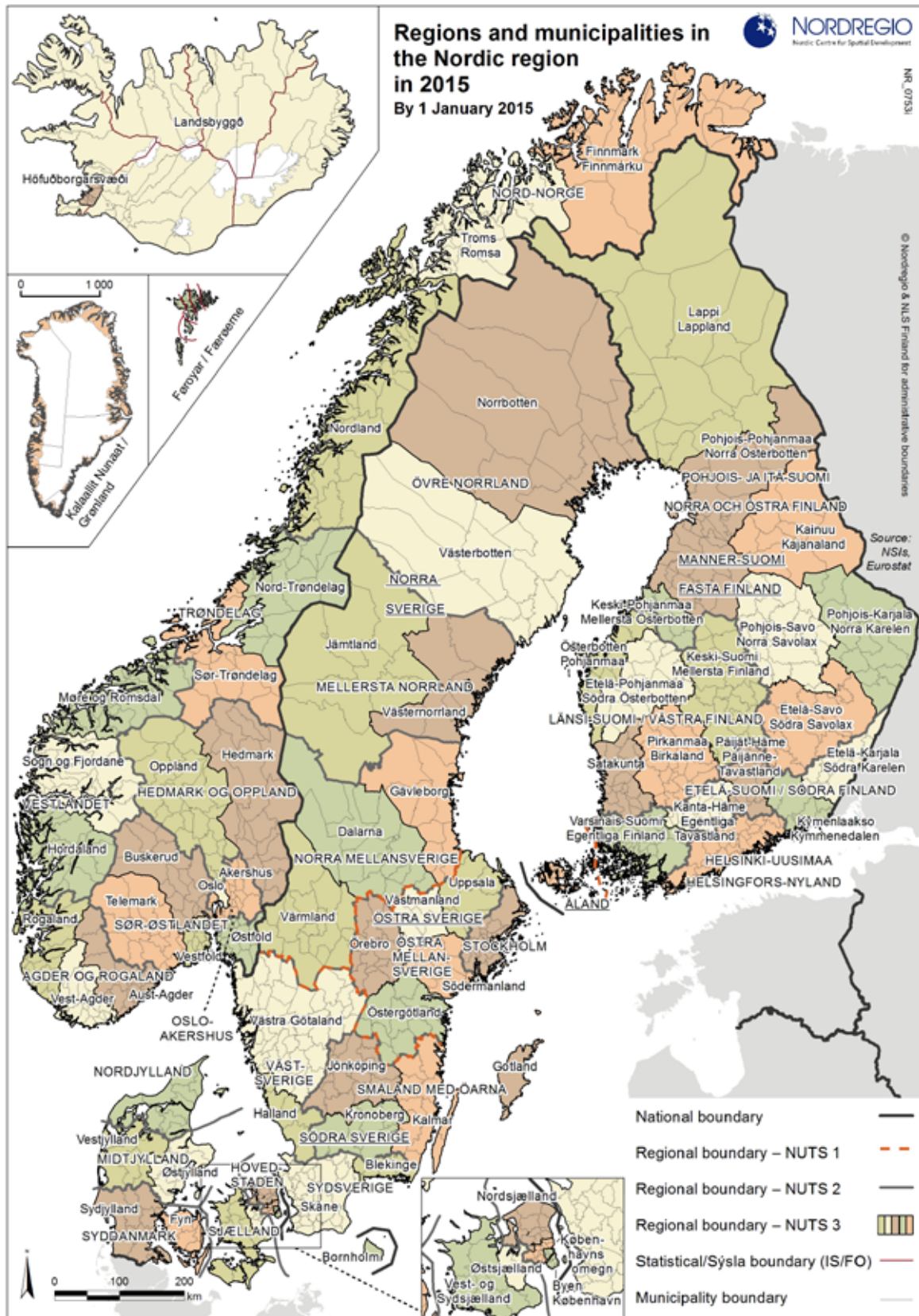
You can also read more about municipal and regional reforms in Nordregio News 2015:3.

Table 2. Administrative divisions and statistical territorial units in the Nordic Countries

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
NUTS 1					3 supra-regions
NUTS 2	5 regions (region)	5 major regions		7 regions	8 regions
NUTS 3	11 sub-regions	19 regions (maakunnat)	2 main territorial units	19 counties (fylker)	21 counties (län/landsting/ region)
LAU 1	98 municipalities (kommuner)	70 sub-regions	8 statistical units	89 sub-counties	
LAU 2	2143 parishes	336 municipalities (kunnat)	74 municipalities (sveitarfélög)	428 municipalities (kommuner)	290 municipalities (kommuner)

The administrative structures in the Nordic Region in 2015, including number of units, according to the European classifications systems. The European classification system with “Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics” (NUTS) and “Local Administrative Units” (LAU) facilitate comparisons between European countries’ regions and municipalities. However, these comparable administrative units do not always match with relevant policy levels within each individual country. For example within the Nordic countries, the standard regional level is NUTS 3 in Finland (maakunta/landskap), Norway (fylke) and Sweden (län). In Denmark, on the other hand, the NUTS 2 level (region) is the main regional unit. Likewise, in the Nordic countries, the municipalities are in most cases equal to LAU 2, but in not in Denmark where municipalities are equal to the LAU 1 unit.

Map 2. Regions and municipalities in the Nordic region in 2015



The map shows the regional and municipal divisions of the Nordic countries, including the latest municipal boundary changes as at 1 January 2015.

The administrative structures in the Nordic countries, including the number of units, according to the European classification, are similar, but there are differences, which need to be considered when making comparisons. For example, Denmark differs from other Nordic countries regarding the definition of what is usually referred to as regional, with respect to municipal/local, in the terms of the European classification system: Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS). There is no regional government level in Iceland.



Review of the planning act in Denmark

In June 2016, there was no major ongoing discussion about municipal or regional reform in Denmark, mainly because a major reform was implemented in 2007. As a consequence of that reform, the number of municipalities was reduced from 271 to 98, and 14 counties (amt) were replaced by five new administrative regions (region). The reform was preceded by over 10 years of broad investigation into the principles of public sector organization and the responsibilities of the different layers of government, with the aim of creating larger and more efficient administrative units. However, in 2007, the Danish Government decided to implement the reform without any broad political consensus and not following the recommendations arising from the investigations.

Since 2007, the regional level does not have any formal regional planning mandate but serves as an important arena for co-operation. Regional councils (regionsråd) may veto municipal plan proposals that contradict the regional development plan. In 2014, the Danish Parliament passed an amendment to the Business Promotion Act (Erhvervsfremmeloven), combining the regional development plan and the regional business development strategies in a new regional strategy for growth and development (vækst- og udviklingsstrategi). The intention of this change was to create a new and consistent focus on growth and development at the regional level, under the responsibility of the five elected regional councils. The regional councils appoint growth forums, whose main purpose is to develop the region's growth and development strategy, taking into account the national planning report. The intention of the amendment is thus to facilitate interaction between the regional development strategies and planning at local, regional and national levels.



New Finnish regions in the making

In recent years, there has been continuous discussion about regional and municipal reforms in Finland. Until recently, the focus was on implementing municipal reform to create more economically and functionally vital municipalities. In August 2015, municipal boundary reform was abandoned after four years of attempts. On a voluntary basis, however, four mergers will be realized during 2016.

The focus in 2016 has shifted towards creation of new larger regions and introduction of elected county governments. Finland so far has not had any directly elected regional bodies and instead has had a form of regional statutory joint municipal authority, which has meant that every local authority must be a member of a regional council. The councils have had two main functions laid down by law: (1) regional development and (2) regional land-use planning.

The current regional package intends to reform regional administration and is one of the largest administrative changes ever in Finland. It includes a number of changes in administrative structure, and the responsibility for providing public health care and social services will be moved from municipalities to the new counties. The proposal also stipulates that the new counties will take over the majority of the regional development and planning tasks of the 'Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment', the statutory duties of regional councils, the responsibility for organizing the duties of 'Employment and Economic Development Offices' and certain tasks from municipalities and Regional State Administrative Agencies. The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, Employment and Economic Development Offices, and regional councils will cease to exist from 1 January 2019.

Preparatory work on the regional reform is under way in 2016. The Government has charged a specific working group with the task of designing these reforms. The Government's aim is to transfer the organization of health care and social services and other regional services to counties on 1 January 2019.



Inter-municipal co-operation in Iceland

In recent decades, Iceland has implemented two systematic reforms in municipal structure, one in 1993 and one in 2005. It is important to note that there is no regional government level in Iceland, although there are eight statistical subnational units. Under these two reforms, traditional national responsibilities have been functionally delegated to the municipalities, and the number of municipalities has been reduced, from 124 in 1998 to 74 in 2013.

More recently, the goal has not been to enforce further mergers of municipalities but instead to promote inter-municipal co-operation as a way of delivering public services. In 2015, the Minister of the Interior proposed to initiate a working group focused on improving municipal governance. The proposal suggested that the working group could draft a specific action plan for the next 10–12 years and that the objectives should include identification of ways to improve municipal co-operation, resident involvement, and quality and diversity in public services. The action plan also includes a new legal framework for public finances and the development of information technologies to provide new opportunities for public administration.

Regional development activities are organized by a national state agency: the Icelandic Institute of Regional Development. The institute monitors and advises on regional development. Its main function is to contribute to regional development through the implementation of government policy via the introduction of regional strategies. Its operations are aimed at strengthening settlements in rural areas through the support of viable, long-term projects with diverse economic bases. The capital area of Reykjavík is not eligible for support from the institute.



Municipal and regional reform on its way in Norway

After the current Norwegian Government took power in 2013, there were continuous parliamentary debates regarding municipal and regional reforms. A municipal and regional reform bill was subsequently passed by the Norwegian parliament in 2014. It initiated a process, currently voluntary, where municipalities and regions seek alliances with neighbours. At the same time, the Government is reviewing the organization of functions and responsibilities between the different administrative levels. The last municipal and regional reforms in Norway took place more than 50 years ago. Since then, greater responsibility has been given to the 428 municipalities and 18 counties. This has challenged their ability to deliver sound welfare services and to manage urban/rural challenges. In 2014, the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation appointed an expert commission to propose criteria for the reform and to provide recommendations. They made recommendations regarding the ideal population sizes for municipalities to ensure service quality, and a recommendation that municipal structures should be more aligned with functional development areas.

The Government presented their proposal of a new regional structure in April 2016. The proposal includes new tasks and responsibilities for the regions, along with geographical restructuring halving the number of regions from 19 to 10. The rationale behind the proposal is to strengthen the regions as functional units and to provide more coherent housing and labour market areas.

The reform road map indicates that regional decisions on county mergers are expected in 2016 and that municipal and regional mergers should be done mutually. The Government's ambition is to take parliamentary decisions on both the municipal and regional reforms during spring 2017, followed by election of new municipalities and new regions in autumn 2019. The reforms can then be implemented from 2020.



Discussion and proposal for new regions in Sweden

In Sweden, in recent decades, there have been several debates and multiple investigations regarding regional structure, but the municipal level remains dominant. The regional structure was already under investigation in the 2000s, and a Committee on Public Sector Responsibilities was appointed in 2003 to clarify the division of responsibilities between the different levels of government. Despite the positive response from many of the actors involved, the Government at the time decided explicitly to decentralize the reform process to the regions and left it up to them to propose regional amalgamations. However, in March 2015, the new Government started an investigation into larger regional mergers, taking changes in functional geographies into account.

A committee will propose, by 31 August 2017, a new division of the counties and county councils based on, for example, the needs of citizens and businesses regarding transportation, labour, health, education, culture and a good environment. One important principle is to create appropriate subdivisions, and hence effective organizations, by taking into account functional labour markets and their regions. The current Government argues

that the existing regional structure is a complex mess of geographically unevenly distributed responsibilities for regional development. In four counties, the County Administrative Board is responsible for regional development issues, but in 10 counties, since 2015, the responsibility has been assigned to the directly elected County Council or the rather newly formed regions. In the other counties, a specifically installed inter-municipal co-operation agency is charged with the task of responding to regional development questions. The Government's ambition is to launch a new regional reform from 2023, although there may be new mergers as early as 2019. In 2016, a proposal to reduce the number of regions from 21 to 5 larger regions was presented.

The current administrative system in Sweden consists of two main regional bodies in each county: the County Administrative Board, which represents the Government at the regional level and acts as a regional co-ordinating body for the State, and the County Council (or Region), which is a directly elected regional body responsible for health care and public transport. Ten County Councils (out of 21) have additional responsibilities, such as regional development. In the rest of the country, regional development falls under the responsibility of either the County Administrative Boards (in four counties) or Regional Co-ordination Bodies, which are indirectly elected assemblies owned by municipalities and county councils (in seven counties).

NATIONAL CONCERNS FOR CITY-REGIONAL PLANNING

The larger Nordic city-regions have many common challenges, but there are also differences in priorities between the countries. During 2014, the NWG4 and Nordregio arranged national meetings in Copenhagen, Malmö, Oslo and Tampere. Representatives from both municipal and regional authorities participated in these meetings and were asked to prepare for discussions concerning: (1) intraregional forms of co-operation (formal and informal) and (2) the added value of a Nordic perspective on city-regional planning.

The meetings occurred during 2014 and were organized in collaboration with the Danish Nature Agency, the Finish Ministry of the Environment, the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications and The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning. Below is a brief summary of the views expressed at the meetings in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.



Denmark: Collaborative planning for city-regional competitiveness

The Danish municipalities and regions emphasized that a key challenge is to identify how spatial planning can contribute to growth by serving the needs of the business community. Discussions indicated that collaboration and multisectoral co-operation are essential for ensuring a well-functioning city-region, including dialogue with the private sector. More specifically, promoting new forms of city-regional co-operation was stressed as a key policy instrument for creating growth and more competitive city-regions. This co-operation was also seen as important for implementing more network-oriented collaboration between municipalities.

Furthermore, three geographical links were highlighted as ways of understanding the importance of functional co-operation: (1) city to city (national and international relations), (2) urban to rural (hinterland and intraregional relations) and (3) city to suburb (city centre and the immediate metropolitan area). These three relations exemplify the key message that was stressed; there is a need to develop a more flexible collaborative approach to urban planning in cities and regions – beyond administrative borders, across geographical scales and between sectors.

When it comes to Nordic collaboration and research, the need for Nordic comparisons and good examples was emphasized, as well as common tools for measuring urban attractiveness and development.

Participating municipalities and regions: Region Midtjylland, Region Syddanmark, Region Hovedstaden, Region Nordjylland, Region Sjælland, City-Region Fyn, City of Copenhagen, Odense municipality, Aalborg municipality, Aarhus municipality and the (now dissolved) Ministry of City, Housing and Rural districts
Copenhagen, Denmark, May 2014



Finland: Tools for implementation of plans and policies

Finnish municipalities and regions highlighted the need for integrating land-use, housing and transport policies into city-regional planning. Transport-oriented planning and investments along growth corridors were stressed as the most interesting approaches to steering urban development across cities and regions. Considerations concerning that larger Finnish cities will experience significant population growth in the coming years and a need for national housing policies that aim to provide a mix of tenure forms, were expressed.

Co-operation at the city-regional scale was stressed by local and regional as well as national representatives. The so-called letters of intent for land use, housing and transport between states and municipalities were seen as promising tools for strengthening co-ordination within city-regions, between municipalities and between state authorities.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it was agreed that good practice examples from other Nordic countries regarding integrating land use, housing and transport would be a great benefit for the participants. Regarding the potential for Nordic co-operation, there was a general interest in gaining knowledge about tools for planning and policy implementation from other Nordic countries and also in learning more about options for monitoring planning outcomes.

Participating municipalities and regions: Regional Council of Southwest Finland, Regional County Council of Tampere, Regional Council of Oulu, Joint Authority of Tampere City-Region, Turku municipality, Tampere municipality.
Tampere, Finland, October 2014



Sweden: Urban development need to counteract social segregation

The Swedish municipalities and regions put forth social inclusion, cohesion and segregation as fundamental challenges. Arguments included the contention that the Nordic countries are well known for their safe, secure environment, making it especially important to acknowledge current segregation issues. More specifically, it was emphasized that Swedish cities need to build more affordable housing with inclusive design to counteract segregation. Here, the regional representatives also argued for a stronger focus on the social dimensions in regional planning. Meanwhile, the municipal representatives stressed the need to put 'everyday life' at the heart of the planning process. A view shared by all representatives was the necessity for new forms of collaboration between cities and regions. In this context, the representatives expressed a need for a clearer national urban agenda to support and facilitate city-region co-ordination. The high value of improving cross-border collaboration between Nordic neighbours was also noted.

In relation to the potential of Nordic co-operation, the representatives highlighted the importance of tools for monitoring the implementation of comprehensive and regional plans. Moreover, comparisons between Nordic city-regions were put forward as a potential added value arising from Nordic co-operation.

Participating municipalities and regions: Region Skåne, Stockholm County Council, Region Östergötland, Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities, City of Malmö, City of Gothenburg, Norrköping Municipality, Linköping Municipality.

Malmö, Sweden, August 2014



Norway: Co-ordinating land use, housing and transport

The core issue discussed with Norwegian municipalities and regions was the importance of planning tools to manage rapid population growth in the city-regions. The discussion focused on the need to find innovative approaches to integrate land use, housing and transport; e.g., promoting transit-oriented development, in which housing development connects to public transport nodes.

A related challenge that was emphasized was the localization and mixing of urban functions, such as housing, offices, retail, industries and other essential amenities. Compact-city policies were put forward as a potential means of making cities more attractive and sustainable. Furthermore, the representatives sought a broader discussion and more research on what urban quality means for a city's attractiveness. This issue was connected to the general need for urban planning to have an everyday-life perspective, where planning starts from the needs of citizens in their daily activities.

Concerning the value of Nordic co-operation, the representatives recognized the large amount of research conducted on this theme but commented that municipalities and regions need support in the form of brief research overviews from the other Nordic countries. Finally, the importance of Nordic arenas for exchange of knowledge and experiences was pointed out as a development opportunity.

Participating municipalities and regions: Akershus County Council, Rogaland County Council, Region of Trondheim, County Governor of Rogaland, County Governor of Hordaland, County Governor of Akershus, Oslo Municipality, Bergen Municipality, Stavanger Municipality.

Oslo, Norway, September 2014

ABOUT THE NWG4

The Nordic Working Group for Green Growth: Sustainable Urban Regions (NWG4) was set up under the Nordic Council of Ministers' Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy (EK-R) for the programme period of 2013–2016. Nordregio has functioned as the secretariat but has also carried out commissioned projects on behalf of the NWG4, occasionally in collaboration with others. The main task for this working group was specifically to explore how spatial planning can contribute to green growth within the context of Nordic city-regions. The members of the working group specified three main objectives within a working programme, which included diverse activities, projects and events.

The **first** objective was to identify and analyse examples of urban forms and planning processes that can be models for different types of Nordic city-regions and that can also be inspiring examples for other city-regions in Europe. This objective was addressed through a number of different activities. Overall, the compact city appears as the model, and as Nordic policy, leading towards sustainable urban development. Planning practices and policies can then contribute to green growth primarily through regulating, and intervening in, the urban form. Another key issue is the integration of land-use, transport and housing policies. Considering the vertical relations between different administrative levels, important issues include the role that the region should have in sustainable development and the role that the state should have in local planning. These issues also overlap with opportunities for collaboration between municipalities within different functional urban areas.

The Nordic cities and regions are in many ways international forerunners in working towards more sustainable development, especially in terms of eco-technology and green growth. However, there are some worrying trends in terms of social sustainability and uncertainty about how to produce affordable housing and infrastructure efficiently, and how to create inclusive and ecologically sustainable urban areas. Nevertheless, there are also possibilities: the Nordic city-regions can – with necessary political decisions and with more perspectives and actors recognized in the planning processes – lead the way towards sustainable urban development.

The **second** objective was to contribute knowledge on city-regional planning tools, models and concepts, and how they might be used, implemented and translated in practice. This objective was addressed both directly and indirectly through various activities. Spatial planning is very much on the political agenda, and there are many initiatives aiming to make planning more efficient; for example, to integrate transport, housing and land-use planning through contractual urban policies.

The Nordic countries appear to be good at making plans and policies regarding sustainable development; however, a key issue is how to implement, evaluate and monitor various plans and policies. Planning has become increasingly strategic and goal oriented, which also provides opportunities for evaluation and monitoring through, for example, indicator frameworks. The projects done on behalf of the NWG4 have shown how open data and open source geographic information system (GIS) applications provide opportunities to map urban form and service accessibility. There are a many different applications – for example, different kinds of

integrated urban planning models – that can be used to facilitate city-regional planning and decision-making.

The **third** objective was to facilitate exchange of experiences between the Nordic city-regions. This objective has been addressed directly by the activities and engagement of the members of the NWG4. Seminars, meetings, workshops and publications have facilitated the exchange of ideas and experiences concerning how to develop functional, competitive and sustainable city-regions.

The field of knowledge in urban and regional sustainability is vast, but by providing comparisons and producing state-of-the-art reports that synthesize the latest research, highlight the specificities as well as the commonalities between different city-regions, and exchange concrete solutions, Nordic collaboration contributes to the planning and development of attractive and sustainable city-regions.

The specific activities of the working group have been developed continuously through collaboration between the members of the NWG4 (i.e., national representatives from ministries or national authorities) and the key stakeholders (i.e., policymakers and planners in the municipalities and regions in the larger city-regions).

Chairman, Svend Otto Ott,

Ministry of Business and Growth, Denmark,

Holger Bisgaard,

Ministry of Business and Growth, Denmark

Olli Majjala,

Ministry of the Environment, Finland

Olli Voutilainen,

Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finland

Ellen Husaas,

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PUBLICATIONS

Nordregio Policy Briefs

Can Planning Combat Segregation and Strengthen Social Sustainability?

Within Nordic cities, residential segregation is high on the agenda and a hotly debated topic, often discussed alongside concerns relating to socio-economic inequality, welfare provision, immigration and integration. Social sustainability is another recurrent 'buzzword', but what does it actually mean and imply in practice? This policy brief presents Nordic perspectives on segregated cities and planning for social sustainability.

Nordregio Policy Brief 2016:2

City-Region Planning for Everyday Life

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. This policy brief proposes that city-region planners could adopt everyday life theory to (1) influence everyday life practices in support of city-region sustainability and to (2) connect spatial structure/ urban form better with existing sustainability challenges.

Nordregio Policy Brief 2015:7

Planning Nordic City-Regions: Challenges and Opportunities

Contemporary challenges for the development of sustainable urban regions in the Nordic countries relate to how physical planning can contribute to green growth and city-regional competitiveness. This policy brief presents an overview of the different challenges and opportunities faced by the larger Nordic city-regions. These

relate to (1) urban form and growth, (2) social cohesion and diversity and (3) implementation and governance.

Nordregio Policy Brief 2015:3

Indicator frameworks: Helping planners monitor urban sustainability

This policy brief aims to provide planners with a clearer understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by the use of sustainability indicators to support urban planning and policy-making.

Nordregio Policy Brief 2015:1

Integrated Models: Planning Urban Sustainability

This policy brief offers local and regional planners an introduction to the world of integrated urban modelling. It provides information on its potential benefits, implementation process and current use in the Nordic city-regions.

Nordregio Policy Brief 2014:1

Nordregio Working Papers

Segregated cities and planning for social sustainability - a Nordic perspective

Within Nordic cities, residential segregation is a hotly debated topic, often discussed in conjunction with concerns relating to socio economic inequality, welfare provision, immigration, and integration. Nordic capital cities have experienced similar patterns of segregation and face shared problems.

Nordregio Working Paper 2016:3

A Spatial Analysis of City-Regions: Urban Form and Service Accessibility

This project was completed on behalf of the Nordic Working Group for Green Growth – Sustainable Urban Regions under the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy, Nordic Council of Ministers. This working group focuses on how spatial planning can support the development of attractive and sustainable city-regions, along with contributing to the development of beneficial tools for city-regional planning.

Nordregio Working Paper 2016:2

Green Growth and Spatial Planning in the Nordic City-Regions: An Overview of Concepts and Policies

Nordic co-operation on green growth is important if we are to improve common infrastructure for coping with shared economic and climate challenges, and if we are to move research and innovation forward in order to create a more environmentally friendly Nordic region.

Nordregio Working Paper 2014:5

The Use of Integrated Urban Models in the Nordic Countries: Summary and Documentation of an Online Survey

This working paper presents the results of a survey on the use of Integrated Urban Models in the Nordic countries, carried out by Nordregio's researchers (with preparatory support from WSP Analysis and Strategy). It reveals that the use of models is limited in the Nordic countries and provides an account of the underlying reasons that, despite the potential benefits they offer, models are not more widely used.

Nordregio Working Paper 2014:1

Other reports

Review of Land-Use Models

This report is the result of an inventory and assessment of different land-use models that are (or have been) in use in different parts of the world. The report has been written by Lars Berglund and Svante Berglund, senior analysts at WSP Analysis & Strategy.

WSP REPORT 2014

More Nordregio News

A new wave of reforms sweeping over the Nordic countries?

Municipal reforms are gaining political momentum in the Nordic countries, which all face great social changes. Some countries have already pushed their reforms through; others are still struggling with decisions on the matter. In this issue of Nordregio News, we review current initiatives on municipal reforms in the Nordic countries. What exactly is happening now, and why?

Nordregio News Issue 3, 2015

Planning Tools for Urban Sustainability

In this issue of Nordregio News, researchers explore new technologies and new tools for sustainable urban planning. From different perspectives the three articles provide new insights on innovative planning tools and models for managing complexity at different scales.

Nordregio News Issue 1, 2014

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