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| Nordic City Network

# Health and Social Inclusion in Nordic Cities

Towards a new culture in planning practices



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**Nordregio**

Nordregio is an international research institute established by the Nordic Council of Ministers covering regional development and planning, especially focusing on applied research that analyses and evaluates the latest trends in policy areas central to Nordic economic growth, competitiveness and sustainable development. Nordregio’s central research themes include urban planning, rural development, demography and governance. It is an official research entity of Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the EU. Mats Stjernberg and Diana Huynh from Nordregio have been involved in the writing and editing of this report.

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**Gehl**

Gehl is an urban design consultancy based in Copenhagen, Denmark as well as in NYC and SF in the US offering expertise in the fields of architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, and city planning. The work is centered around addressing global trends with a people-focused approach, utilizing empirical analysis to understand how the built environment can promote well-being.

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# Introduction

In the spirit of sharing, exploring and learning, Nordic City Network has hosted a series of digital Morning Meetings as well as an urban lab in Västerås throughout 2022. The purpose is to continue to exchange views and experiences of how best to plan for sustainable cities across the Nordic region, and during this past year the focus has been on social sustainability.

The Nordic region has for a long time held high ambitions to ensure good quality of life and well-being on equal terms for all citizens, in line with the vision to become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.

Similar to other parts of the world, cities across the Nordic region are faced with challenges of segregation caused by many different and complex factors and dynamics, calling for a varied set of integrated responses. In the Morning Meetings, we have focused on two paths of responses:

- Social mix and inclusion
- Urban health

The aim has been to explore and gain different views and perspectives on how to work with these types of responses through a Nordic lens, providing examples from different parts of the Nordic region.

This report is a collection of smaller articles, thought pieces, introduction to tools and case examples from this past year aimed at providing inspiration and further reflection on how to advance action. The report is edited by Gehl and Nordregio – Gehl in their capacity as advisor to the Nordic City Network and Nordregio as a member of the network with a special role to strengthen the connection between practice and research.



Kungsgatan, Malmö, Sweden.  
Photo by Charley Litchfield on Unsplash

# Social Sustainability

By Mats Stjernberg & Diana Huynh, Nordregio

Social sustainability and social inclusion are issues that have become prominent on the policy agenda, not only in the Nordics, but also more widely in Europe and globally. In the Nordic Council of Ministers' *Our Vision 2030*, social sustainability is one of the three pillars of this shared vision, and the notion of social inclusion is strongly emphasised.

## Increasing segregation in Nordic cities

Nordic cities have historically been characterized by comparatively low levels of segregation and inequality. However, in recent years there have been growing political concerns in the Nordic countries about increasing disparities between different population groups, which is manifested in greater segregation in many cities.

Increasing urban segregation is related to various broader structural causes, including changes in welfare and housing regimes, and global economic and labour market restructuring. In the policy debate, segregation is often also discussed in connection to immigration, integration, and the interlinkages between socio-economic and ethnic segregation are often emphasised. The socio-spatial structure of cities and neighbourhoods is also shaped by the decisions of individuals and households and where they choose to reside. For instance, the notion of school segregation has emerged in recent years, meaning that families may consciously choose to move to certain areas while rejecting others, depending on the reputation and socio-spatial characteristics of different neighbourhoods and their schools.

Against this backdrop, counteracting segregation, strengthening social

inclusion, and creating more socially mixed cities have emerged as increasingly important topics on the urban policy and planning agenda in Nordic cities.

## New policies to strengthen socially mixed and inclusive cities

All five Nordic countries have national policies that focus on strengthening social inclusion. For instance, the current Finnish government programme from 2019 is titled Inclusive and Competent Finland. Many Nordic cities are also working to strengthen social inclusion and mitigate segregation, which can be seen in a variety of regional or city-level policies and strategies relating to these issues.

One of the common features of Nordic policies for creating more socially inclusive and mixed cities is that they generally cover a wide range of policy sectors and themes. It is increasingly acknowledged that social exclusion and spatial segregation are complex issues that require a broad and holistic approach and a variety of measures relating to policy areas such as housing, education, labour market, integration, social welfare, service provision, democratic participation, children and youth, crime, and spatial planning, among others.

Another common characteristic is that partnerships and participation are key principles in many of these Nordic policies. This means that they often strongly rely on collaboration and coordination between actors at different levels of governance, ranging from ministries and state agencies, to regions and municipalities, civil society organisations, and citizens and local communities.



# Nordic Housing Market & Policy

By Mats Stjernberg & Diana Huynh, Nordregio

Housing plays a central role for people’s welfare, impacting social and ethnic integration as well as segregation.

As welfare states with similar approaches to social welfare and fundamentals values, the Nordic countries face many similar problems and challenges. In areas such as education, health care, and social services the Nordic countries have broadly similar policies. In housing, however, these countries have distinctive national differences.

Housing plays a central role for people’s welfare, impacting social and ethnic integration as well as segregation. The Nordic housing markets face many similar problems and challenges, but the ways that policies and regulations deal with them differ in many respects. Common to all the Nordic countries is that issues related to housing figure prominently in public discussion and it is central to the principles of the Nordic welfare societies.\*

A report on affordable homes in the Nordic region from 2020 observed that new housing development, application of diverse forms of tenure, and housing subsidies are examples of tools that can either worsen or reduce segregation, depending on how they are used. The Nordic markets seem unable, on their own, to supply enough suitable housing for students, young

people, low-income groups, and newly arrived immigrants, among others. These developments have gained increased political attention across the Nordic region as they challenge the whole idea of the countries’ welfare model, including the notion of social cohesion and equality for the Nordic populations.

As a response to this, national level policies across the Nordic countries strive for providing the conditions for safe and lively housing areas and the ability to influence living conditions and social circumstances on part of the residents. The consequences of meeting these housing and social sustainability objectives is more expectations placed on Nordic cities to deliver and tackling complex issues within the regular planning system, among other frameworks and strategies that are available at the local level.

\*See e.g. *State of Housing in the Nordic Countries 2022 (NBO)* [https://www.riksbyggen.se/globalassets/1-riksbyggen/press--opinion/nbo\\_rapport\\_2022\\_final.pdf](https://www.riksbyggen.se/globalassets/1-riksbyggen/press--opinion/nbo_rapport_2022_final.pdf)  
*Nordic Economic Policy Review (NEPR) 2021* <http://pub.nordregio.org/es-2021-1-housing-markets-and-housing-policy-in-the-nordics/>;  
<http://norden.diva-porta.org/smash/get/diva2:1420468/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

→ **FINLAND**  
The affordable housing system in Finland has been more targeted, and focused on **providing housing for low and medium income groups** of good quality across urban areas to tackle segregation in cities and to promote mixing of commercial activities.

→ **NORWAY**  
In Norway nearly 80 percent of all households are owner occupied and the **difficulties for young people to enter the market** are dominating the housing policy debate.

→ **SWEDEN**  
This has also become an issue in Sweden due to challenges of **housing shortage and high costs** for developers and consumers

→ **DENMARK**  
Denmark differs slightly with **an alternative of non-profit housing** in the country, the constructions of these rental homes are supported by the national and local governments keeping rental rates relatively low.



## Norway

Norway has a so-called dual housing market, consisting of a market-oriented sector with relatively little regulation alongside municipal housing that target the disadvantaged and those who are not able to enter the market. One of the key aims of the Norwegian housing policy is that everyone should live well and safely. The national social housing policy (2021–2024) targets, among other things, public efforts towards vulnerable groups in the housing market. The social housing policy aims to prevent people’s housing problems, while also seeking to provide help for those who are unable to acquire and maintain adequate housing conditions for themselves. Today, about 350,000 cooperative dwellings still represent an important housing supply - especially for small households with low and medium income.

## Finland

Currently Finland is the only European country where homelessness is on the decline, thanks to the Housing First policy. Through national programmes in this policy, organisations and municipalities have worked to provide new housing for the homeless and reformed the services aimed at them. The Housing First principle is guided by the notion: everyone is entitled to somewhere to live, both as a human right and a basic right. Living in rented dwellings has increased during the 2010s. According to Statistics Finland, living in rented dwellings has increased most among household-dwelling units of persons under the age of 40, but the share of those living in rented dwellings has also increased among household-dwelling units aged between 40 and 74.\*\*\*

## Iceland

The population of Iceland has significantly grown in the last decade, which has further strained the housing market. The country has the highest share of owner occupied dwellings among the Nordic countries. The aim of social rental housing in Iceland is to provide affordable housing for groups that are below a certain annual income. As of July, 381,000 people were living in Iceland which is 66,000 more than in 2007. Statistics Iceland predicts this growth will continue with Iceland expected to add 40,000 people in the next four years to reach a total of 420,000 people.\*\*\*\*

## Denmark

At the beginning of 2022, there were a total of 2,87 million dwelling units according to Danish national statistics. This reflects an increase in 30.819 units compared to the year before, and there has also been an increase in second homes. Denmark’s housing policy is strongly linked with the country’s public housing system. While new regulations were added to a revision of the planning legislation in 2015, these have not resulted in expected results in recent years. In 2021, the government reinforced new national housing plans that aim to strengthen efforts to create mixed residential areas in the large Danish cities. With the “Closer To II – Cities with Spaces for All” programme, the aim is to ensure thousands of new affordable homes with high quality for people with ordinary incomes, a development that will also target the country’s most expensive residential areas.\*

## Sweden

Sweden has long strived for a ‘universalist’ public rental housing model where the objective is that everyone should be able to live everywhere under the motto “good housing for all”. To meet the housing needs of those with low and moderate incomes, anyone in Sweden can apply to access one of the 830,000 units owned and managed by the ‘allmännyttiga bostadsföretag’ (public housing companies). Despite the general quality and affordability of public housing, demand for it continues to outstrip supply (State of Housing EU, 2021, 97). Discussions around homelessness, housing for vulnerable groups, and the municipalities’ capacity to implement adequate measures have been central in the public debate in recent years.\*\* These issues were also addressed in a government report from 2022 (SOU 2022:14) which came with a range of housing policy recommendations for national implementation.

\* <https://im.dk/publikationer/2021/okt/taettere-paa-ii-byer-med-plads-til-alle>

\*\* <https://www.regeringen.se/49662d/contentassets/d99a2b0531db40f0b2a070f881fd7e9a/sank-troskeln-till-en-god-bostad-sou-202214.pdf>

\*\*\* [https://www.stat.fi/til/asas/index\\_en.html](https://www.stat.fi/til/asas/index_en.html)

\*\*\*\* [https://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/news/news/2022/11/03/strong\\_residential\\_development\\_in\\_a\\_cooling\\_market/](https://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/news/news/2022/11/03/strong_residential_development_in_a_cooling_market/)





1

SOCIAL MIX  
& INCLUSION



# Social mix in Swedish municipalities, SE

By Martin Grander, Assistant Professor in Urban Studies, Malmö University

Why have ideas of a social mix gotten such a firm grip on city planning? And how is social mixing achieved?

Social mixing is undoubtedly the predominant ideal in city planning and housing provision in all Nordic countries. You probably won't find a single development plan where notions of "mixed neighbourhoods" are not present. According to this ideal, residential areas should be mixed in terms of housing types, functions, architecture, and – essentially – in terms of population.

In a recent research project, researchers from Malmö University have tried to understand and explain the driving forces, practices and outcomes of social mixing in Swedish municipalities.

## Ideas

The results from interviews, document analysis, and surveys show that there is a strong belief among planners and housing developers that mixed areas will lead to more socially sustainable cities. Such a belief is however not grounded in research or empirical knowledge. Rather, the ideal is connected to not "making the same mistake twice", as consequences of the 1960's large-scale and homogenous planning that are still painfully evident in terms of inequalities, segregation,

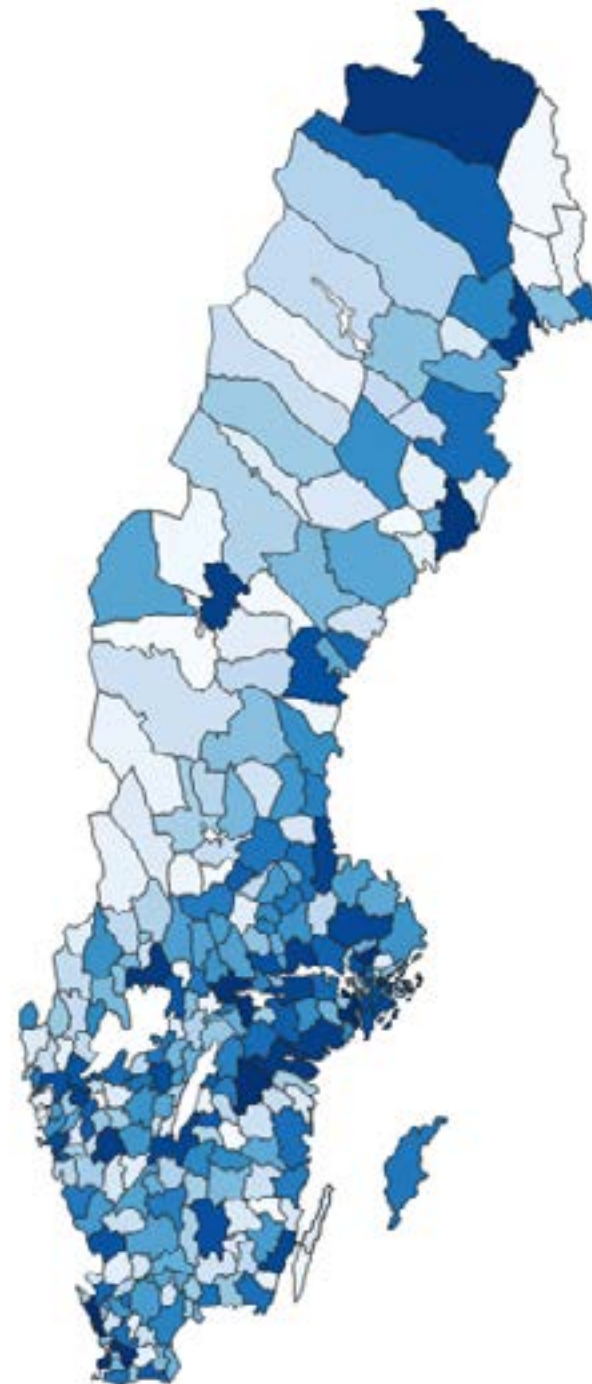
and social unrest.

## Practice

Several strategies for achieving a social mix can be identified. The single most popular is to encourage a mix of housing tenures in residential areas. The underlying argument is that rental housing and owned housing attract different socio-economic groups and thus will create a socially mixed neighbourhood.

While newly built areas on municipal land are planned with tenure mix as a point of departure, changing existing areas is not as easy. Here, infills of privately owned housing in areas dominated by rental – often – public housing is a common strategy. The opposite strategy – to integrate affordable rental housing in areas characterised by high income and home ownership – is a strategy sparsely observed.

Other tools that are invoked and used to promote social mixing include differentiated income criteria on rental housing in different areas, and geographic distribution of housing for vulnerable groups provided by the municipal social services, with the latter being by far the most common.



## Outcome

The analysis shows that mixing forms of tenure contributes to reduced segregation, but only if the mixing takes place on a very small geographical scale. Having an equal share of different forms of tenure in the municipality does not appear to reduce segregation, but rather the opposite. Therefore, municipalities need to take each district into consideration when trying to reduce segregation.

A problem identified is that social mixing and the mixing of forms of tenure often are equated. Mixing forms of tenure is not only seen as a means to achieve social mixing but often becomes an end in itself. This might lead to actors making large efforts

of mixing tenures, but not following up on the results. While mixing tenures might reduce segregation, the social mix which might occur is not a guarantee for integration. For people with different preconditions to actually integrate, meeting places are necessary as a complement to mixed forms of housing. For example, mixed tenures won't attract a mixed population if the schools in the area does not attract children with different backgrounds.

# Urban Belonging, DK

By Sofie Burgos-Thorsen, PhD Fellow at Gehl Architects and TechnoAnthropology Lab

## Rethinking the Toolbox of Citizen Engagement to Give Voice to Marginalized Communities and Craft an Intersectional Understanding of the Socially Sustainable City.

When, where, and why do different people feel like they belong? What urban conditions influence positive or negative experiences among marginalized groups? And how do we ensure inclusion of a diversity of perspectives in planning and policy matters?

In addressing such burning questions, we long for more diverse and nuanced insights about how the city works as a space of belonging - not seen from the professional eyes of those who plan it, but those who live in it. But to enable that, we need new tools and methods for participation that break excluding, tokenised, and extractive tendencies of conventional engagement.

To explore this, the Urban Belonging project (2020-2022) was initiated by a collective\* of planners and scholars in Copenhagen and Amsterdam in collaboration with local community organizations\*\*.

Leveraging participatory GIS software Maptionnaire, and developing a new open-source photovoice app, the UB App, the project invited members of seven marginalised groups (people who self-identify as lgbtq+, deaf, physically disabled, mentally vulnerable, homeless, ethnic minority, and/or internationals that do not speak Danish) to use photography and map-drawing to document how they experience Copenhagen.

Over three months, 33 participants



Photos from exhibition at Copenhagen Architecture Festival 2022.

*\*Research partners: Gehl Architects, Techno-Anthropology Lab and Service Design Lab from Aalborg University, Center for Digital Welfare at IT University Copenhagen as well as Visual Methodologies Collective in Amsterdam.*

*\*\*Community partners: LGBT+ Denmark, Danish Handicap Association, Mino Denmark, Danish Deaf Association, SIND Denmark, Hugs & Food.*

holding one or more of these identities went on 100+ walks in the city, took 1400+ photos, drew 200+ maps, and enriched them in workshops, where they collaborated to interpret data.

The result is a unique catalogue of photos, maps, and data visualizations that tells individual and collective stories about belonging in Copenhagen. The catalogue qualifies what 'belonging' means to different people, and discovers geospatial patterns of belonging and exclusion, unfolding how Copenhagen is experienced as a socially sustainable city.

The project operationalises an ethos of Data Feminism and Design Justice, interrogating who is made visible and invisible in how we datafy public life, and leverages visual and digital technology to:

- **Develop and test new tools for collecting lived experience data** with citizens as co-researchers; focusing on how citizens perceive, experience and attach to the city.

- **Design engagement methods that are accessible to more people** by replacing conventional written and oral participation with photo capture and map drawing
- **Give citizens control over their data** by involving them in interpreting their own data, replacing extractive processes that only involve people in data collection.
- **Craft a data visualisation language that can grasp intersectionality**; making legible how multiple aspects of marginalisation can intertwine to shape urban experiences.

The project culminated in 2022 with exhibitions at Urban 13 and at Copenhagen Architecture Festival. Coming up, the UB App developed, and the methodologies innovated will be disseminated in scientific articles. See more on [www.urbanbelonging.com](http://www.urbanbelonging.com), or follow the project on [www.instagram.com/urbanbelonging](https://www.instagram.com/urbanbelonging).



Participant using the UB App to capture a place of belonging



Map of where participants have captured photos with the UB App, including geo-tracked routes.



Mental map by participant, colored in gradients to show multi-marginalized identities.

# Inclusive Dialogue, SE

## A Good Place to Live Through Inclusive Dialog and Co-creation

By Malin Sturk, Eskilstuna Municipality

An inclusive tool where participants contribute to how issues are being framed and understood.

Safety and security issues (sv: trygghet) is high on the political agenda in the Swedish city of Eskilstuna. The issue is highly complex which means that no single actor or organisation have neither the understanding of the issue or the resources for it to be solved in a traditional sense.

Co-creation with the whole society is required for improvements and better management. Eskilstuna decided to improve its operations by piloting a dialogue model which embraces the complexity and focusses on the issue itself and where potential solutions are co-created together with stakeholders.

More traditional forms of dialogues initiated by municipalities is generally

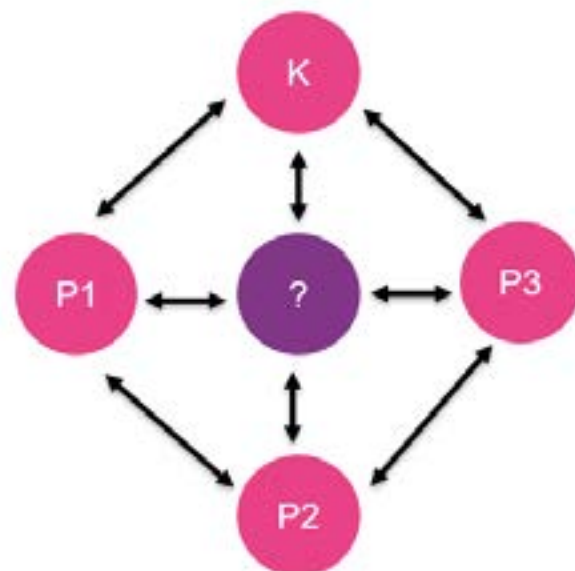
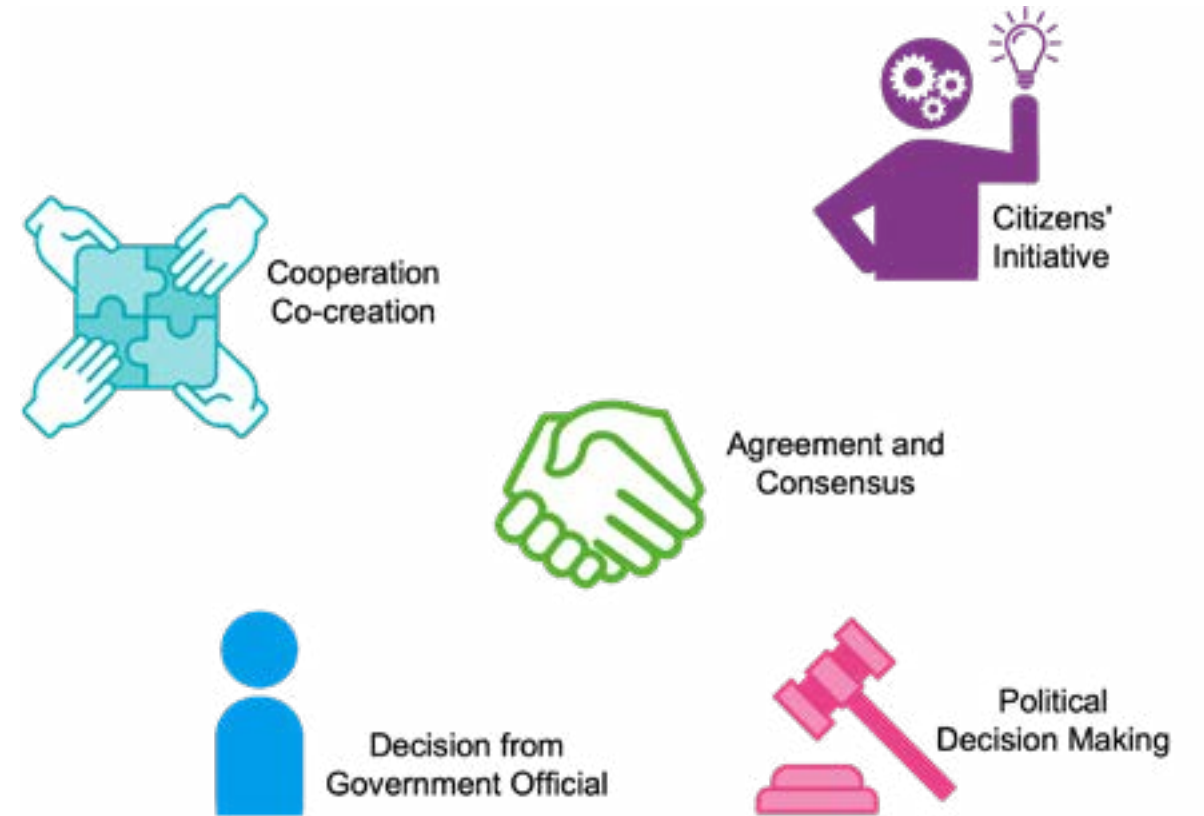
less concerned with inclusion when issues are being framed and potential solutions are chosen.

Usually, citizens are invited to share opinions on predefined issues and/or solutions which are then presented as potential solutions for public officials to pick and choose from.

The approach used in Eskilstuna is based on inclusion where participants contribute to how issues are framed and understood to give a deeper understanding on potential effects and underlying mechanisms. Potential solutions are then co-created with participants and a shared responsibility in realizing solutions and empowerment.

A fruitful dialogue requires that stakeholders are included and create a collective knowledge and

“  
Co-creation with the whole society is required for improvements or better management.”



←  
Participants contribute to how issues are framed, understood, to give a deeper understanding on potential effects and underlying mechanisms. To equaliz power the municipality is treated as one stakeholder among the others.

sense of understanding. This means that the dialogue is ongoing - if a stakeholder is identified as important, that stakeholder has to be included rather than talked about, to ensure that relevant actors are present when issues are being discussed.

Dialogue is not a quick fix for complex issues and results are more process oriented (networks, trust, and relationships). This form of dialogue is time consuming and difficult to plan ahead and requires authenticity and commitment. For cities, it requires a “all-in approach”, otherwise they are

at risk of damaging trust rather than building it.

To conclude, the main effects from the pilot in Eskilstuna is an increased activity in the involved neighborhoods with positive effects (lived rather than measured) on trust and relationships between citizens and the municipality. Dialogue is a useful tool for reducing the distance between the municipality, citizens, and other actors as well as dealing with segregation.



# Safety and Inclusion in Urban Development, DK

## Artistically Developed Methods

By Kenneth Balfelt Team

### Klostertorv in Aarhus, Denmark

In the area around Klostertorv in Aarhus, there were problems with the socially disadvantaged, who had been pushed away from other places in the city and eventually only had Klostertorvet left to stay. Consequently, the number of vulnerable people in the same place was high and so was the level of conflict - both internally in the group but also with neighbours, the business community, professionals, etc. Kenneth Balfelt Team made a context analysis of the situation on and around Klostertorvet and advised Aarhus Municipality on social, physical, and organisational solutions that create a better, more dignified, and safer city for the city's citizens, vulnerable or not, the business world, and professionals.

The context analysis was prepared via an extensive involvement process, where they interviewed the socially vulnerable, the professionals who work with them, local shops, cafes,

neighbours, property owners, police, and others.

The context analysis points to a number of different challenges in the Klostertorv area, including:

- Violent conflicts - internal and external
- High number of vulnerable people gathered in a small urban area
- Trash
- Unworthy toilet conditions
- Individuals without limits
- Few/no attractive alternatives to the Klostertorv area for the socially disadvantaged
- High stress levels and poor sleep
- Destructive role in the area - never constructive
- No one ensures peace and order

"Toilet" at Klostertorv as the public toilet often was out of order.  
Photo by Kenneth A. Balfelt

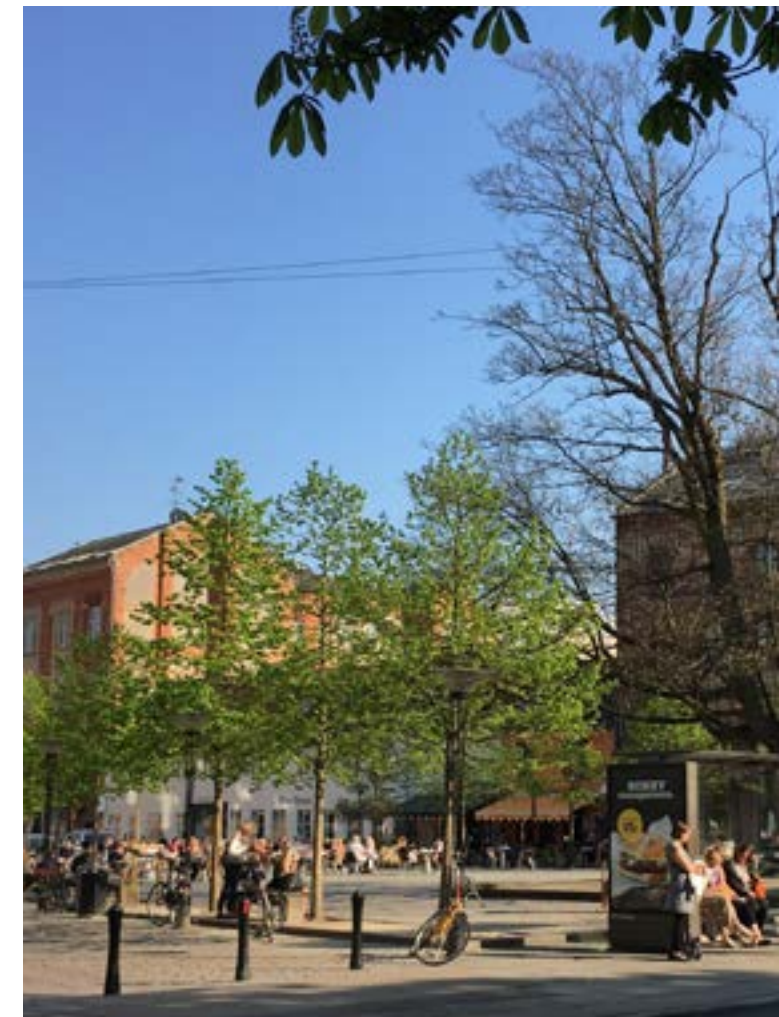


Kenneth Balfelt Team has worked for multiple Municipalities to improve urban spaces for socially vulnerable and the people around them and have co-written the rapport "The City As a Living Room - Urban Renewal with Inclusion of Socially Marginalised".

See [www.kennethbalfelt.org](http://www.kennethbalfelt.org) for more info.

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Bus shed used as hang-out place for socially vulnerable.  
Photo by Kenneth A. Balfelt



Klostertorv in Aarhus city center.  
Photo by Kenneth A. Balfelt

Aarhus Municipality with initial help from Kenneth Balfelt Team began a process to improve conditions for everyone in the Klostertorv area. This is, for example, secured through:

- Attractive, alternative places to stay. 3-5 outdoor and covered "hang-out places" in the city.
- Social caretakers who create a good relationship with the vulnerable, to improve dialogue, build norms for good behaviour and resolve conflicts.
- The City for All Network with representatives from Aarhus Municipality, the Police, Kirkens Korshær and SAND – the homeless NGO. The purpose is to jointly take responsibility for and solve any problems in and the city.

- Physical measures on Klostertorvet itself: The toilet on Klostertorvet has been out of service for a long time creating toilet use in inappropriate places. A new better functioning toilet was installed. In addition, work is being done to upgrade street furniture, bicycle parking, and cleaning of the area.
- Small job efforts. Many socially disadvantaged had no constructive role in the local area. An employment consultant was assigned to help create small flexible jobs e.g. care taking of the square, washing street furniture, and tending the green spots. The aim is, besides the constructive role in the local area, to improve their relationship with neighbours and the community.



# Feminist Urbanism at Buens Torv, DK

## A Feminist and Intersectional Approach to Urbanism Can Create More Inclusive Spaces.

By Bettina Werner, COurban design collective

The consensus from definitions of feminist architecture and urban development is that an intersectional perspective and involvement of women and girls throughout the process creates better cities and spaces for everyone. According to UN Habitat's program Her City, girls and women tend to plan with more diversity in mind (UN Habitat 2020). Globally, women take more responsibility for care work, including care for children and the elderly, in combination with being more frequent travellers on foot and driving less than men (Criado Perez 2019), which could be important factors for recognising the need for planning for diversity.

Gender is of course not the only identity maker which shapes our embodied experiences, our perception of safety, and use of public space. These embodied characteristics can give a degree of privilege, and they can help us understand which user groups are suffering from oppression and are at risk of being marginalised in a design process (Goodwill 2020). Through a diverse project team and ambitious engagement of users, we can secure greater representation throughout the process.

Evidence in recent research report poorer mental health with young girls and women (age 16-24) compared to males the same age. Further research shows that young people suffering from mental health issues are less physically active, impacting their physical health (Sundhedsstyrelsen 2021). The place we live has a crucial role in promoting mental, physical, and social health. A feminist approach to urbanism can help secure diversity in and access to our city spaces in order to secure equal access to good health and wellbeing.



### Pilot project Buens Torv

When studying URBAN13, an urban space under Bispeengbu in Copenhagen, we found a space dominated by physical activity, with most users being male.

To address the limited gender diversity in the space, we initiated a feminist architecture pilot project, 'Buens Torv'. The interventions were decided based on an extensive literature review and case analysis of other projects under the umbrella of feminist architecture and inclusive design. We especially looked towards other projects in Scandinavia and to projects where the users' lived experiences and desires were well accounted for. Based on this, we decided on three interventions: wayfinding through signage, paint on the ground, urban furniture, an indoor community space inspired by a greenhouse, and an art installation to create a more pleasant visual and sensory experience in the area.

Throughout this project, we have encountered both a misconception about how a feminist approach benefits all users and a general lack of knowledge, acknowledgment, and data in academia, the political agenda, and among city makers regarding feminist urban design and architecture. However, we have also been met with great interest, curiosity, and a desire to learn from this experience. Feminist architecture and urbanism builds on broad contributions to feminist, anti-racist, health, and gender science, which should be in everyone's interest.

There is still a lot more to learn and explore, and pilots and implementations to be made with a feminist approach to urbanism. We look forward to seeing cities, developers, and other stakeholders embracing this approach to promote more equitable cities and spaces.

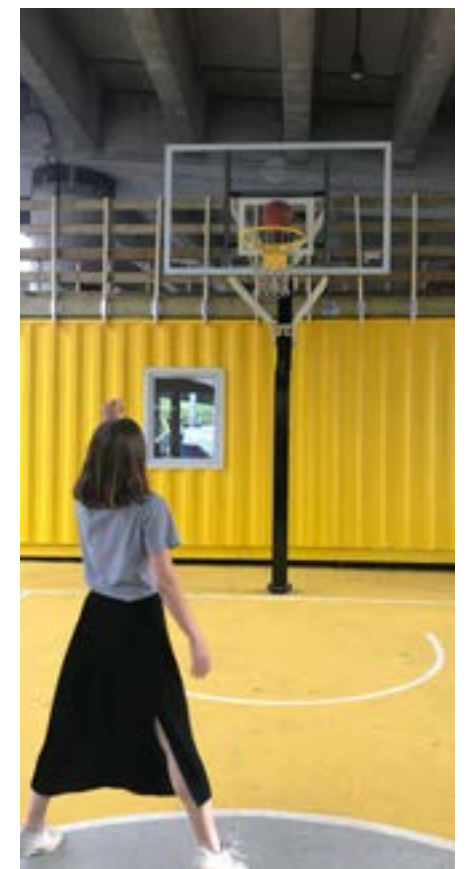
More information: <https://courban.co/project/buen/>

*The project Buens Torv is developed in collaboration with URBAN13 and AIMbyliv, and is generously funded by Frederiksborgsfonden, Tuborg Fonden, Frederiksborgs kommune, Flügger farver, 3xBYG, Geveko Markings, and Wonderful Copenhagen*



1. The stairs
2. Wayfinding
3. Process
4. The street

Photos and illustrations: AIM byliv/Asal Mohtashami, Erling Brodersen, COurban





# BoPilot, NO

## An Innovation Project on Alternative Affordable Housing Solutions

By Vidar Vollen, architect Trondheim Municipality

BoPilot is a government supported research-project that focuses on how research-institutions can assist municipalities in handling challenges defined by the municipalities.

The municipalities, especially in bigger cities like Trondheim and Bergen, aim to welcome diversity in their population and to include all their citizens in different communities, regardless of socio-economic status.

We had a hypothesis that many people are not being included when it comes to where and how to dwell. We wanted to find out how the situation was, and what a Norwegian municipality can do to cope with this.

In Bergen, we tried to understand how the Municipality can regulate a new typology of dwellings. In Trondheim, we investigated how foundations can offer affordable rental dwellings with more sharing with support from the municipality.

While Norway's nordic neighbours have models for ensuring dwellings for low income families, Norway does not. In Norway, where as much as 80% own their own dwelling, only the most vulnerable citizens are ensured an affordable rental dwelling by the municipality. People who can't afford to buy, are left with no option but to rent at unaffordable housing prices.

In Trondheim, there is another option though. Non-profit foundations in Trondheim provide dwellings for those in need. The most unique is called Svartlamon Boligstiftelse and consists of smaller and bigger houses in a

central area of the city.

Bopilot facilitated an investigation among all inhabitants in Trondheim which included interviews with people living in dwellings owned by the foundations (in Trondheim 1.700 of around 100.000 dwellings). The result was clearly that the dwellings provide a different social life for people with lower income or people who want to live alternatively. The project also included interviews with foundations which showed that the municipality can do many things in order to support foundations. This could be part of a strategy in which the municipality aims for a social mix of people - in all parts of the city.

In Trondheim, BoPilot also collaborated with two very interesting pilot-projects, both owned by foundations. The pilot-projects consisted of apartment buildings that were initially empty. During the project period, the buildings became occupied by a mix of people from different socio-economic backgrounds. To strengthen the community the pilot-projects offered the residents to create indoor and outdoor shared facilities.

The impact of BoPilot in Trondheim is still ongoing. Most politicians in Trondheim are eager to prompt the Municipality to cooperate with the foundations. With time - and through small projects, this can become reality.



**People who can't afford to buy, are left with no option but to rent at unaffordable housing prices.**



Eksperimentboligene  
Photo by Nøysom arkitekter



Mellamoen  
Photo by Brit Furu



Mellamoen  
Photo by Jenny Stenberg





# 2

## URBAN HEALTH



# Health & Well-Being in a Nordic Perspective

By Diana Huynh & Mats Stjernberg, Nordregio

The need for sustainable solutions to health challenges caused by increased urbanisation.

For a long time, The Nordic region has held high ambitions to ensure good quality of life and well-being on equal terms for all citizens, and been working towards becoming the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. Sustainable solutions to the health challenges brought by increased urbanisation are thus needed to meet these objectives.

Nowadays, attention is increasingly being paid to the interlinkages between the governance of health, planning, and social sustainability. While the negative consequences of an unhealthy diet and physical inactivity have been addressed in joint Nordic cooperation strategies and guidelines, research reflects that health inequalities persist in the Nordic countries.

Although health, well-being, and planning in research has been well acknowledged it has been made more explicit across research areas, policy, and practice which will help the Nordic region leverage quality of life while also seeking to balance the demands of a changing climate.

Copenhagen, Denmark.  
Photo by Kai Pilger on Unsplash



## Health and well-being in planning

Many Nordic cities are currently testing innovative methods and prioritising efforts to integrate health and well-being in local planning and development. Indeed, partnerships in private and public sectors are important drivers to mitigate and prevent health challenges while sustaining the quality of urban environments. Cities like Vantaa, Copenhagen, and Kristiansand are exploring possibilities for healthy neighborhoods through the lens of green infrastructure and foodscapes. In Tórshavn, Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Reykjavik, the cities are looking at how data can be used to reduce exposure to pollution and ensure healthier and safer cities. In seeking to promote health and well-being through green space planning Stavanger, Espoo, and Vilhelmina have used digital tools for citizen engagement.

## How are the Nordic countries promoting health and physical activity?

All the Nordic countries have action plans on physical activity where multi-sector collaboration are evident in the policy approaches. There are also dedicated strategies and frameworks on outdoor recreation. In Denmark, for instance, the strategy has focussed on vulnerable and socially disadvantaged groups. Known as the Nordic region's cycling country, Denmark has also allocated specific funding for promoting cycling. In Iceland, the national planning strategy that supports municipalities is currently being revised to put more emphasis on public health, air quality, and land use. Whereas in Norway, public health is a mandatory aspect of urban and social planning as well as having established a national centre for age-friendliness. In Finland, a national communications campaign was launched during the pandemic called Finland Forward, which aims to strengthen societal resilience and help people cope with crisis in their everyday lives. In Sweden, promoting physical activity in the workplace is essential, especially because most people receive an annual wellness allowance for a range of activities through tax exemptions.

## Towards inclusive and green cities for all ages

One of the key aspects of planning health promoting places and encourage physical activity is to ensure access and inclusion. The planning of age-friendly cities has therefore become central to development processes in many Nordic cities. When we talk about age-friendly cities, this often refers to understanding the role and needs of older adults in social planning, but can also be extended to child-friendly cities where designing multifunctional playgrounds for young children and safe spaces for youth to spend time outdoors. In the Nordics, there is a network for age-friendly cities and municipalities that is part of the World Health Organization's global network with 10 member cities.



# Towards a Healthy and Sustainable Future

By Helle Juul, CEO Juul Frost Architects

Juul Frost Architects have developed 'The Urban Health Culture of the Future': a strategic, holistic and interdisciplinary approach to planning and urban development across various scales, categories of needs and sectors.

'The Urban Health Culture of the Future' is aimed at everyone concerned with urban planning and relevant to private and public developers, planning authorities as well as consultants: architects, landscape architects, and urban planners – only together can we create the urban health culture of the future.

## The challenges of urbanization

More and more people are gathering in cities around the world. 68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, says UN. As the populations of urban areas grow, the design of cities and urban areas plays an increasingly important role in securing people's quality of life and health: Sedimentary lifestyle, noncommunicable diseases, loneliness, and social segregation are some of the urban health issues that together with the demographic changes and climate changes poses new challenges to our urban well-being.

The design of our cities, built environment, and urban spaces has an impact on our health and well-being as well as our health culture: how we live our everyday lives, our behaviour, and the choices we make. There's a need

for a new urban health culture, a re-integration of health and planning, and prioritization of health on the urban agenda.

## From policies to pragmatic tools - putting knowledge into practice

Internationally the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and WHO's "Healthy Cities" focus on urban health at policy level. But there is a need for pragmatic tools to complement policies. Based on international collaborations with a focus on health, Juul Frost Architects has launched the project 'The Future's Urban Health Culture' with support from the philanthropic association Realdania.

Through a collaborative process with urban planners and an interdisciplinary think-tank with representatives from, among others, Danish universities and major health organizations, Juul Frost Architects have developed a new holistic planning method and tools to integrate health and planning. With a focus on urban behaviour and how we measure the effect and impact on social, mental, and physical well-being the aim is to impact the way we plan and develop our cities.



Only together can we create the urban health culture of the future.

Download the publication  
'The Urban Health Culture of the Future' on  
[www.juulfrost.dk](http://www.juulfrost.dk)

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The tools are based on case-studies, best-practice, evidence, and an interdisciplinary knowledge acquisition. They comprise strategic and practical tools divided on six themes: health equity, quality of life, social neighbourhoods, green areas, active living, and the integration of research.

## Collaboration is the key

The adaptable and holistic method and tools can be applied across all scales and phases. They provide an approach for working integrated with mental, physical, and social well-being – from initial mapping of potentials for health promotion, appraisal and design to strategy implementation, construction, and evaluation as well as measurement of effects.

Innovative urban planning, architecture and landscape design requires collaboration between developers, authorities, and interdisciplinary competencies.

As architects and urban planners, we see it as our responsibility to facilitate collaborative processes, that bring together the key players with the necessary knowledge. We believe strategic and interdisciplinary health partnerships are the key to developing the urban health culture of the future

Download the publication 'The Urban Health Culture of the Future' on [www.juulfrost.dk](http://www.juulfrost.dk)



Better Affordable Housing  
By Juul Frost Architects





# Thrive Zones, DK

## Actionable urban design solutions to reduce exposure to poor air quality

By Louise Kielgast, Associate and Health & Community Expert at Gehl

Air quality affects all people, but it has a compounded effect on the development of children in urban areas. For instance, children between the ages of 0-5 breathe 4 times faster than adults, and in these formative years, 90% of brain development occurs. It is therefore essential that children breathe as little polluted air as possible. By focusing on children and providing targeted solutions to improve air quality for this age group we minimize the exposure of those children to poor air quality earlier in their lives and so maximise the potential for improved health outcomes.

### Air pollution as an invisible threat

Air quality in cities is one of the most impactful elements affecting the health and quality of life of all urban residents. For decades, it's been a well-known and persistent challenge, but one that has seen few successfully implemented solutions. One reason for this is the 'invisibility' of air quality in relation to most urban residents' daily lives. Much of this comes down to availability of air quality data at the human scale. Despite the overwhelming evidence of poor air quality recorded in most cities, air pollution data has done little to catalyze significant actions limiting its creation at source – with localized air pollution effectively remaining, invisible.

*The Thrive Zone Project is developed in collaboration with Bernard Van Leer Foundation, Copenhagen Solutions Lab, Google, Utrecht University*

### Reduce exposure and invite for cleaner air through urban design interventions

Focusing on the lived experience of children and their caregivers, Gehl mapped childcare institutions and playgrounds in two Copenhagen neighbourhoods: The Inner City and Vesterbro and then observed and documented lived experience in these locations. We put ourselves in the position of children and how they experience the city from a height of 95cm.

Taking this data, we cross referenced it against the detailed hyperlocal air quality data from the Google Air View car, giving us a unique snapshot of children and their caregivers' exposure to air pollution in their daily routines. It was found that across both neighbourhoods, small children often move through and are active on streets with very poor air quality. Simultaneously, there were 'pockets' within the neighbourhoods with relatively better air quality where small children did not spend much time.

With the aim to reverse these findings, Gehl proposed 'The Cleaner Air Network'. This took the simple premise of reducing exposure in the places with poor air quality most frequented by small children and inviting for access to the places with better air quality that are currently less frequented by small children. By mapping the neighbourhoods according to these potentials we identified key locations that would potentially impact the most children and their caregivers in their everyday routines and suggested 'reduce + invite' urban design interventions.

Visualising Istedgade before and after urban design interventions to reduce exposure



Gehl mapped childcare institutions and public play facilities as the basis for understanding children and their caregivers daily routines



Young children and their caregivers walk along Istedgade in Copenhagen



The Cleaner Air Network proposes joint reduce + invite urban design interventions to benefit the health of children and their caregivers in their normal daily routines



Air quality in cities is one of the most impactful elements affecting the health and quality of life of all urban residents.



# Nordgreen, NO

## Greening Public Spaces to Improve People's Health and Well-Being

By Diana Huynh & Mats Stjernberg, Nordregio

With NORDGREEN, Stavanger is trying to understand how the holistic design methods and frameworks established by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in Alnarp can be used to serve the health and well-being of its local community, and how this knowledge can be transferred to three ongoing development processes in the city. The aim is to apply evidence-based design in ways that will help the city to create spaces that serve the needs of both people and nature.

### Planning public projects with many demands

Creating green spaces is surprisingly complex. From a planning perspective, it is important to anchor the design proposals in research because the approval of these require good arguments to acquire green areas that are adequate and large enough. For example, according to one of the landscape architects in the city, “the space currently reserved for schoolyards may be much smaller than what is generally recommended for a healthy school environment, which is, for example, the case in our project at St. Svithun High School.”

The second project piloted in Stavanger is the rehabilitation of Byparken in the city centre. Here, the density and complexity of the green area surrounding a lake has also required a lot of careful planning and consideration of the historical environment, the care of old trees and wildlife, as well as maintaining multiple public space functions.

The third project is at an early stage, but the aim is to build a new park by the Hillevåg area seafront. In the past, this was an industrial port for the oil and fishing industries. The seafront has a great deal of potential, but citizen surveys and studies have indicated the need to ‘green the grey’ with new parks and meeting places and make these accessible and known to the public across all age groups.

### Evidence based-design for health promoting place-making

The City chose these three development projects since they allow for upscaling of the SLU implementation in Alnarp, while also supporting the development of safe and well-designed environments that use existing place qualities as a starting point and attract investments.

In order to proceed with the seafront project in Hillevåg, the Municipality needs a full assessment of the status quo and other feasibility aspects in order to get the resource approvals needed for the property. This is why, in this project as well as the other two, the city needs to measure and understand the positive effects the park may have on liveability and health of people at the start of planning phases.

NORDGREEN is coordinated by Nordregio and funded by the NordForsk programme on Sustainable Urban Development and Smart Cities under grant number 95322. The project runs between 2020-2023. For more information see: <https://nordregioprojects.org/nordgreen/>





