From equal opportunities to gender awareness in strategic spatial planning

Reflections based on Swedish experiences

The Swedish government aims to mainstream the policy of equal opportunities into all policy areas, including spatial planning. This paper draws on the key findings of a research project on good planning practice, based on a survey and in-depth interviews, to investigate achievements and good examples in this area. The good examples turned out to be few and instead a number of shortcomings were found. This can be partly explained by the inherent limitations of the concept of equal opportunities. The aim of the paper is, therefore, to demonstrate why and how an alternative approach, based on a combination of feminist theory and planning theory, must and can be developed to mainstream equal opportunities into spatial planning.

The Swedish government is well known for promoting equal opportunities between women and men¹ in its policy development. As a result, many policy areas today include relatively successful measures for implementing such objectives. However, this is not the case with regard to the field of spatial planning. Aside from a few interesting attempts by some municipalities, the promotion of the 'equal opportunities' concept in and through planning has not been successful. The concern of gender issues is, at best, limited to the general objectives listed in the introduction of planning reports. When interviewed, planners demonstrate ambiguity regarding the incorporation and promotion of gender issues, particularly at the level of strategic planning. Therefore, the integration of gender issues into planning has been a very slow process despite a general willingness among planners to achieve equal opportunities in society. A similar situation seems to be the case in Britain (Reeves, 2002; Greed, 2005).

The aforementioned findings are derived from a research project² which attempted to find out what the gender perspective of Swedish strategic planning praxis was,

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- 1 The translation of Swedish terms into English causes some problems. The Swedish policy term, *jämställdhet*, could be translated as 'gender equality'. However, more often the term 'equal opportunities' is used. This paper makes use of the term 'equal opportunities' as it is, just as in Swedish, not based on the term gender. In this way it is more easily distinguishable from terms based on the concept of gender, such as gender perspective and gender awareness. The terms gender perspective, gender sensitivity and gender awareness are used interchangeably.
- 2 The project was carried out together with Tora Friberg, Professor at Linköping University with a PhD in Social and Economic Geography. The project is reported in four working reports (Friberg and Larsson, 1997; 1998; 2000; 2002).

or could be. The project's objective was to question the gender-neutral approach to planning and the subsequent failure to incorporate women's experiences, especially those related to their home life, into strategic planning. By combining principles of practice and theory, the research project aimed to be a project both for and about planning. My many years of practice experience combined with academic research provided a good opportunity to identify and to close the gap between practice and research in mainstreaming equal opportunities into spatial planning.

Sweden serves as an appropriate case study due to its 'woman-friendly' politics (Engelske and Astrom, 1992) and the development of what is characterised as state feminism in Scandinavian countries (Hernes, 1987; 2004). Policies based on the concept of the 'two roles of women', originating from Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, and the norm of the two-breadwinner family, have been developed to promote women's participation in the public sphere – especially as wage workers (Engelske and Astrom, 1992). For this reason, the research project focused on the public sphere and its relation to the private/domestic sphere.

The data collected for the research project suggest that there are several major reasons for the slow advance of 'gender-awareness' in Swedish planning praxis:

- Most spatial planning praxis is based on the assumption of being 'gender neutral' by focusing on the general public interest. However, the working definition of 'public interest' is seldom discussed.
- Comparatively few planners demonstrate an awareness of gender theory.
- The concept of equal opportunities, as defined by the Swedish government, is not useful in the field of planning.
- Planning is a field mainly developed by practitioners in their practical work.

In addition, the findings provided only a limited articulation of what a gender perspective in strategic planning could be. Therefore, two important questions have to be asked:

- (i) whether the approaches developed by practitioners regarding the implementation of equal opportunities in the field of planning are inappropriate; and
- (ii) is planning a policy area which is not prompt to the application of equal-opportunity objectives?

As this paper will demonstrate, the answer to the first question is, for the most part, 'yes'. In order to respond to the latter question, this paper will present an alternative approach, developed out of academic gender studies mainly from fields outside planning. However, it is also necessary to include an analysis of contemporary planning praxis. Only by scrutinising the everyday praxis of what is referred to as 'gender-neutral' planning is it possible to reveal how the experiences of women are treated in the planning process.

Since the public sphere was the focus, the research project centred predominantly on the level of strategic planning, rather than that of detailed development planning. It is at the strategic level of the planning hierarchy that important decisions are made regarding the principal location of dwellings, work places, transport networks and the like. These decisions are extremely important because of the ways in which they affect the organisation of women's and men's daily life and consequently crucial to examine in planning from a gender perspective. In this analysis the relationship between the two planning levels, strategic and detailed, turned out to be a key issue.

Feminism has consistently grappled with the paradoxical problem of articulating the voices of women, while simultaneously aiming to dismantle and deconstruct the concept of gender (Eduards, 2002; Scott, 1996). The field of planning cannot escape from this dilemma. The challenge, especially for strategic planning, is embedded in the fact that it aims to create spatial conditions for a future society characterised by gender equality. If contemporary inequality is the basis taken for granted when plans for the future are prepared, such inequalities are likely to be perpetuated rather than changed for the better. Conversely, if the starting point is a hypothetical future society based on gender equality, women's traditional domestic experiences regarding care and household duties may be disregarded. Such experiences must be incorporated, but the question is how? This paper proposes that this dilemma may be averted by discussing production/paid work and reproduction/unpaid work, rather than the female and male experiences and interests. The examination of everyday life plays an important role in this discussion. This approach will be further elaborated on below.

This paper consists of five further sections. The next section discusses the conceptual and theoretical framework upon which this paper is based. The third section presents the Swedish context regarding policies for equal opportunities and for spatial planning. In the fourth part, key findings from the research project on gender perspectives in Swedish strategic planning are presented. The fifth section develops an alternative approach for 'gender-aware' planning based on merging academic gender studies and planning theory. The research project identified a number of more or less successful methods to develop equal opportunities in planning. In order to develop a practical alternative approach it is necessary to discuss the merits and shortcomings of these methods. It is also important to consider how and at what point in the planning process they may best be incorporated. This is discussed in the final section.

Conceptual and theoretical framework

'Equal opportunities' is the term most frequently used when gender is discussed in Swedish planning and other policy areas. This concept dates back to the beginning of the women's movement in the 1970s and aims to highlight women's contributions to society in various fields. Quite often, the term equal opportunities is understood

to refer to the concerns of women only and what are perceived to be their needs. Alternatively, the term equal opportunities may be understood to mean 'sameness' – implying that women should become (like) men. For instance, Swedish policies have put more efforts on getting women to the labour market than encouraging men to take care of children and their home life (Mark, 2002; Engelke and Astrom, 1992).

In the context of planning, it is essential to distinguish between gender perspective and equal opportunity. The latter represents the ultimate aim for future gender relations in society, while gender awareness is the tool to use, or the 'glasses' one puts on, in the planning process to support the development of this aim. Since 'equal opportunities' is the most universally recognisable reference to gender issues among Swedish planners, it was used throughout the research project during the interviews and when making reference to the comments made by planners in this paper.

For the theoretical analysis and discussion, the concept of gender is used here in line with other academic gender studies. Broadly speaking, the concept of gender, as opposed to that of sex, refers to those differences between men and women which are socially and culturally constructed. For the purpose of this paper the definition of gender by Connell (2002) is useful. He rejects the understanding of gender as a dichotomy based on differences between men and women. Instead he formulates a definition of gender as 'the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes', which 'escapes the paradoxes of *differences*' (Connell, 2002, 9–10). Connell stresses that gender patterns and gender arrangements may differ from one cultural context to another and that they are always changing.

The recognition of the changeability of gender here is in contrast to much planning literature on gender in which gender tends to become a static category (often equivalent to women) despite recognising gender as culturally constructed and thus subject to change. Greed (2005, 253), for instance, identifies the categories 'male/female and sometimes transgender' along with other categories based on age, ethnicity and class. Consequently, specific needs are ascribed to women (and men) in the process of incorporating 'gender' into planning. Reeves's (2002) examination of gender sensitivity in strategic planning also disregards the changes that will take place due to the introduction of equal opportunity policies. Her investigation focuses on the present position of women and men in society and their respective needs. For many planners, at least in Sweden, the identification of people's needs is a common consideration in planning. However, when it comes to discussions of gender such an approach easily allocates needs into some biological characteristics of men or women. Only a few biological differences, such as differences in physical strength, are relevant for planning and should be taken into account, for instance when discussing safety and security in public space.

Relevant constructions of what is considered to be male and female in the field

of planning are generally influenced by attitudes, policies and legislation. Planners need to ask questions like these – how are relations between men and women formed today, and how are they likely to be formed in the future? To make such inquiries an awareness of the different experiences, rather than the needs of today's women and men, is necessary. Today's women and men in Sweden have experiences of both paid work and unpaid work, but the contribution of men to domestic work, in comparison to the contribution of women, is still limited (SCB, 2004). Unpaid work, consisting of the care of family members and household work in a broad sense will herein be referred to as women's traditional (domestic) experiences.

This paper argues that it is crucial to recognise these traditional domestic experiences at the level of strategic planning in order to facilitate the development of a gender-aware planning practice. To be able to further analyse planning practice and its oversight in this respect, it is necessary to find ways to merge feminist theory and planning theory. Such approaches have been called for and partly outlined by Sandercock and Forsyth (1992) and by Snyder (1995), but their contributions seem to have had limited influence. Theoretical considerations must be developed in relation to praxis, as Snyder argues:

A reflexivity is needed such that experience of practice informs theory and vice versa. If inequalities and domination continue to result from planning practice, as they so often do, one must examine the theory and methodologies behind that practice, and what is discovered there must be applied. (Snyder, 1995, 99)

In an attempt to further develop these reflections, I have found that the following theoretical issues are of special relevance:

- power relations and the subordination of women's experiences in planning praxis;
- ways to handle what are considered to be female, or women's issues;
- the use of dichotomies such as private/public, reproduction/production and unpaid work/paid work in relation to various planning levels;
- a clearer understanding of the concept of 'public interest'; and
- knowledge for planning activities from a gender theory perspective.

The Swedish setting

This paper identifies strategic planning as the most crucial planning level for integrating gender perspective into spatial planning. The role of strategic planning within the Swedish planning system and the government's policies with regard to equal opportunities will be briefly discussed here. Individual governmental policy areas (such as planning and equal opportunities) can often be inconsistent or in conflict with one another. Therefore, the ways in which gender issues have been considered in planning

policies and legislation will also be presented.

Strategic planning

Strategic planning above the level of detailed development planning incorporates two forms of spatial planning: comprehensive municipality planning and regional planning. According to the Swedish Planning and Building Act,³ each municipality is required to formulate a comprehensive plan for the entire municipal area. The plan is intended to, through the development of strategies, serve as a tool for creating a holistic approach to future developments in relation to the use of land, including detailed development planning. Consequently, the plan should conform to the political aims of the municipality. The Swedish comprehensive plan, unlike that of detailed development planning, does not have statutory implications. One characteristic of Swedish planning legislation is that, with some exceptions, it invests the municipality with the power to make decisions regarding the use of land. This means that any strategic plan which covers several municipalities has a weak position. However, the support lent to regional planning by the EU, through such schemes as the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), has created a new interest in regional planning.

Policies of equal opportunity

The incorporation of gender issues into the process of planning has, so far, been based on the Swedish government's 'equal opportunities' policy. The overall objective is that 'Women and men shall have the same opportunities, rights, and responsibilities in all significant areas of life' which is specified by the following secondary objectives:

- equal division of power and influence between women and men;
- the same opportunities for women and men to achieve economic independence;
- equal terms and conditions for women and men with respect to owning their own business, work, employment conditions and career development opportunities;
- equal access for girls and boys, women and men to education and the development of personal ambitions, interests, and talents;
- shared responsibility for work in the home and with children; and
- freedom from sexual (gender-related) violence.⁴

It is clear that the policy embraces a clear vision of equality between women and men, both in the world of work life and the world of home life, or in the production and the reproduction spheres. Subsequently, policies have been developed with this vision in mind. Since 1971, income tax has been individually calculated to facilitate

³ SFS (1987, 10), referring to the Swedish Code of Statutes.

⁴ <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/4096>

the 'two-breadwinner family' concept. There is, therefore, no longer any financial compensation available to housewives. This is part of the reason why there are few housewives today – in 2003, 79 per cent of women (aged 20–64) were employed in paid work. Day care facilities are provided by the municipalities for all children above one year and close to 85 per cent of all children between one and six attend such facilities. Paternal leave, with partial compensation for loss of salary, is paid for a period of 13 months. Fathers can, and are encouraged to, take such leave – although men make use of only 19 per cent of the days for which parental leave is paid.⁵ The Swedish equal-opportunity objectives have, nonetheless, not made a lasting impression in the field of planning. The normative character of the policy (Reeves, 2005) is problematic in the sense that its objectives indicate ultimate goals but not the means for achieving them.

Gender in planning legislation and policies

The policy regarding equal opportunities is poorly reflected in the contemporary Swedish Planning and Building Act and the day to day planning practice. This is surprising as equality has been a prestigious word since the establishment of the Swedish welfare state. At the beginning of the 1950s the well-being of people, both at the work place and in the living environment, was the prime concern to Swedish planners and politicians. A concern for the everyday life of women was indirectly incorporated. However, this approach was firmly based on a traditional perception of what constituted a family – a wage-earning husband, a housewife and a few children. For instance, living conditions for housewives were explicitly discussed in the 1950s Master Plans (Folkesdotter, 1997). Architects and planners were keen to find an appropriate design for developing decent neighbourhoods and providing satisfactory housing for everybody. These visions were subsequently implemented through building over a million dwellings during the Social Democratic Programme in the 1960s and 1970s.

At that time the municipalities had enough resources, with regard to both financial resources and land access, to implement the visions of the welfare state. Contemporary spatial planning is, however, more susceptible to the impact of market forces and the role of the state has been shifted from being the provider to being the enabler (Healey, 1997). Planning activities of contemporary Swedish municipalities, therefore, focus more upon the requirements of market forces. As a result, the human and social issues regarding housing and its environments are no longer in the forefront of their planning efforts.

The present Swedish Planning and Building Act, established in 1987, was the

5 More information can be found in (SCB, 2004). Engelke and Astrom (1992) offer a comprehensive analysis of labour market and family policies which aim to promote equal opportunities in the welfare state of Sweden.

outcome of a lengthy discussion process which began in the 1970s. The introductory paragraph of this legislation states an overall aim to 'promote the development of a society with good social living conditions based on equality and a good and sustainable living environment ...' (Swedish Planning and Building Act, 1987, Chap. 1, para. 1.). Although the concept of equal opportunities is not specifically mentioned, it may be argued that the term 'equality' refers to gender/sex, as well as to race and sexual preference etc. This emphasises one common 'public interest' rather than recognising different interests of different groups in planning.

In 1995 the Swedish government requested the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning to promote the objective of equal opportunities in spatial planning. The published report (Boverket, 1996) was explorative in character. Rather than analysing the implications of merging gender theory with planning theory, it highlighted what was considered to be women's issues in the planning field. The Board proposed to develop such issues further through case studies at the municipality level. However, this proposal was not followed up since other tasks were given higher priority by the ministry in charge.

Key findings from the research project

A research project was carried out between 1995 and 2000 to explore the gender perspective in strategic planning practice in Sweden. Data was collected by sending a questionnaire to all 288 municipalities regarding activities related to ongoing comprehensive planning. This was augmented by the analysis of over 20 planning documents and in-depth interviews with 22 planners (11 women and 11 men). Only 28 municipalities were identified as having special equal-opportunity practice that merited further studies. Those planners who were interviewed had been directly or indirectly involved in processes designed to develop 'equal opportunities' in some form of strategic planning. Most of them had worked at the municipality level, though few at the county level. The answers to the questionnaire⁶ allowed for some quantitative analysis of the Swedish municipalities' ongoing or planned activities with regard to the promotion of equal opportunities in spatial planning. The interviews and documentary analysis allowed for qualitative analysis of how planners responded to such issues. The in-depth interviews also provided some interesting reflections and examples of alternative approaches regarding the development of a 'gender-aware' planning process. These cases have inspired further theoretical analysis.

A model (Fig. 1) based on two variables was devised early in the research process to guide the analysis of the findings. It illustrates four different approaches used

6 The response rate was about 45 per cent. As the intention behind the questionnaire was to find good planning practice for further investigations we concluded that most municipalities which did not respond did not focus on the issue of gender equality in planning.

	Top-down perspective	Bottom-up perspective
'Gender-neutral' approach	Position 1	Position 2
'Gender-aware' approach	Position 3	Position 4

Figure 1 Model for analysing research data

by practitioners to relate gender issues with planning practice. The model is a simplification of a whole range of situations, in practice there are no sharp and rigid divides between one approach and the other. Nonetheless, this conceptual model has proved to be a useful tool to understand the various perspectives we came across in the research project.

The two major perspectives (top-down/bottom-up) were identified from the analysis of the research data, which broadly correspond to the rational planning approach and the communicative planning approach respectively.⁷ Each perspective can then be further categorised as a 'gender-neutral' approach or a 'gender-aware' approach.

Position 1 illustrates 'gender-neutral', rational top-down planning approach, under which the planner is the subject who plans for users/citizens in the planning process. In this context, the term 'gender neutral' means that the different experiences of men and women are not taken into consideration during the planning process. This position is exemplified by several handbooks for planners, some of which were published by the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning. Position 3, on the other hand, indicates a new interest in taking into consideration the experiences of women. Through what is referred to as advocacy planning, the planners themselves attempt to distinguish the needs of beneficiaries, such as women. The intention here is not to change the entire planning process. During the interviews, some planners in position 3 asked for tools which would allow them to check the outcome of the planning exercise.

The bottom-up or communicative planning approach is practised by those who wish to actively incorporate the objects of planning into the planning process, thereby making them active subjects in the process. This method is characterised by actively engaging different groups of citizens and users who are expected to benefit from planning to contribute their knowledge and experiences to the planning process. In

7 My use of different planning approaches is in line with Khakee (1999). The four positions of the model can also be related to some of the models presented in Sandercock (1998, 85–104) – the rational comprehensive model (position 1), the advocacy planning model (position 2), the equity planning model (position 3) and the radical planning model (position 4).

position 2, women may be identified as a group; however, gender relations are not specifically discussed. Although this position represents a bottom-up approach, it still speaks a 'gender-neutral' language. Planners in position 4, on the other hand, see women as users/citizens right from the beginning of the planning process. This allows for the inclusion of new gender knowledge for decision making in the planning process. Position 4 incorporates an awareness of both new types of knowledge and the existence of power relations between men and women in the planning process. The most interesting cases for further development of a gender-aware planning belong to this position.

The differences between positions 3 and 4 are of special interest with regard to the prospect of developing a gender-aware approach to planning. Under these two different approaches, the relationship between planners and those who are benefited from planning is evidently different, so is the type of knowledge that is deemed as necessary in the planning process. Knowledge in position 4 is achieved through public participation, especially the participation of women. Through such participation, the differences between men's and women's traditional experiences are made more explicit. Position 4 planners tended to find key words such as 'non-hierarchy', 'bottom-up', and 'everyday life' experiences to be important and placed more emphasis on the importance of citizens' knowledge, experiences and 'language'. They also emphasised the importance of developing a different agenda for the planning process.

A feminist approach for the formulation of an alternative discourse

The analysis of Figure 1 shows that planners tend to use two main different approaches to incorporate gender awareness into planning – by 'adding' women and the gender perspective to the dominating planning discourse, or through more radical efforts of developing an alternative gender-aware planning discourse. Planners such as Sigrun Kaul (1996) and Leonie Sandercock (1998) highlight the necessity for a radically different approach to planning, in line with that of position 4, which would incorporate the voices and experiences of women. Rather than merely adding the gender perspective, as suggested in position 3, to traditional planning practices, Kaul (1996, 96) calls for a complete 'turnover', while Sandercock (1998, 44) uses the expressions of 'upheaval' and 'insurgent planning' to describe a similar process.

However, the identified approaches do not explain how and why planning praxis systematically subordinates women's traditional domestic experiences, a key question in feminist analysis; nor does the analysis provide a means to overcome this subordination or explain why the bottom-up approach seems necessary to be able to incorporate such experiences into the field of contemporary planning. These issues may be answered through an analysis of planning praxis based on feminist inquiry.

There are a number of steps involved in the formulation of such an alternative discourse. The first involves questioning the consequence of what is referred to by many Swedish planners as a gender-neutral approach. The next step involves an analysis of the relationship between comprehensive planning and detailed development planning, and the dichotomies that are deeply embedded in Swedish planning praxis. By suggesting a non-hierarchical relationship between various levels of planning and introducing the concept of everyday life into planning praxis, a gender-aware discourse can be formulated.

Subordination of women through gender neutrality

According to Connell (2002, 59), power relations constitute one dimension of gender relations – ‘There is both organised, institutional power and diffuse, discursive power’, the latter is manifested ‘through the ways we talk, write or conceptualise’. How and to what extent are women exposed to power relations in the planning process? One aspect of this question involves women’s actual participation in the planning process, as professionals, politicians or citizens. The number of Swedish women planners is quite large today – women have accounted for at least 50 per cent of students in spatial planning and architecture since the late 1970s. Despite the large number of experienced women architects and planners present in the field, women are not that well represented among chief planners in municipalities or private offices.⁸ In addition, while laywomen in Sweden often participate in public meetings, they are less likely than men to verbally express their views. In spite of the fact that the number of women involved in the planning process, whether as professionals or laywomen, should not be considered as the predominant issue in this discussion, however, it is crucial from a democratic and equity perspective. The application of a gender perspective in planning is the responsibility of politicians and practitioners, regardless of their sex. Furthermore, interviews conducted during the research project clearly showed that women planners are not always the advocates for gender awareness.⁹ In short, the mere presence of women within the planning process does not guarantee a gender-aware perspective in planning practice. A woman planner who develops a gender perspective often does so out of conscious choice. Indeed, to assume women planners to routinely raise gender issues is to deny ‘the myth of neutral, technological rationality on which many planners depend for their identity’ (Ritzdorf, 1996, 448).

A more crucial consideration is the power relations which exist within planning

8 This statement is based on sex-segregated data from the Swedish Association of Architects regarding salaries, position at workplaces etc. Many spatial planners as well as architects working as planners in Sweden belong to this association.

9 The respective role of women and men planners and how they view their professional duties constitutes another set of important issues which are not dealt with in this paper.

praxis itself. The analysis presented below indicates that the prevailing Swedish planning system of comprehensive and detailed development planning often subordinates women's traditional, everyday life experiences in a manner that, in Connell's terms, may be labelled as 'diffuse and discursive' (Connell, 2002, 59). When the hierarchical nature of the planning system is examined in conjunction with the comments made by the planners, the mechanism of subordination becomes evident. Comprehensive planning at the strategic level, by definition, precedes and guides detailed development planning. The intention is that the overall structures of the physical environment should be determined through such planning. The interviews revealed that many planners regarded the strategic level as 'gender neutral'. The argument is that the focus is on public interest and this interest is assumed to include all in the society; no special group is, or should be, given special attention.¹⁰ It can be argued that this unitary understanding of 'public interest' is derived from Swedish welfare policies which were developed at a time when a concern for a decent life for everyone was the main priority (Healey, 1997). At that time there was a general consensus regarding the understanding of the term 'public interest'. Today it is questioned by many planners (Roy, 2001; Sandercock, 1998; Snyder, 1995). Instead they emphasise the importance of recognising the interests of a diverse cross section of individuals, including women.¹¹

Many planners interviewed during the research project argued that the issue of equal opportunities relates only to the level of detailed development planning. The concept of equal opportunities became synonymous with women's issues, while men's issues in planning were not mentioned. The main concerns of women were perceived to include issues related to housing, security and safety, transport, facilities for care and services, the local environment, new patterns of everyday life and public participation. Most of these concerns are related mainly to the immediate residential environment and the local neighbourhood and to issues regarding everyday life – concerns that traditionally have been, and to a large extent still are, considered to be those of women. Many planners claimed that these issues belong mainly to the private sphere and hence, to the level of detailed development planning. However, some issues such as security, safety, and transport are also linked to the public sphere. They have only recently attracted the attention of planners.

Some planners are thus prepared to raise the issue of equal opportunities at the level of detailed development planning. Although most women agree that the identified 'female' issues are important to their lives, however, their concerns go beyond

¹⁰ Reeves (2002, 207) received similar answers in her interviews with British planners.

¹¹ The Swedish Planning and Building Act is now subject to important revisions. To achieve a sustainable society, the presented proposal suggests that the concept of public interest should include considerations of the following – equal opportunities for women and men, 'diversity', concerns about handicapped etc. However, it is not suggested that the wording of the law itself should be altered to include these key words; the introductory paragraph will thus be unchanged.

those that are currently associated with the detailed development planning level. As contemporary Swedish women generally have paid work and often participate in political work, they see themselves, and want to be seen, as members of both the private and the public sphere. Their identity relates to both paid work and to home and care. On the other hand, men identify themselves predominantly with the public sphere of paid work, although changes are taking place.

My conclusion is that, by relegating women's issues to the detailed planning level, women's traditional domestic experiences are subordinated twice during the planning process. In the first instance, by limiting women's concerns to the detailed planning level, a 'gender-neutral' status is allocated only to the level of strategic planning. This means that, at this level the specific experiences and concerns of today's women (such as the complex travelling patterns which result from working, shopping, taking children to day-care centres and so forth) are ignored. As a result of this, such experiences do not have an impact on the outcome of the strategic planning process. In the second instance, detailed development planning is governed and subordinated by the gender-blind strategic planning level. Women's experiences are hereby reduced merely to those that relate to the house, the neighbourhood and issues that are largely associated with the private sphere.

One may be critical towards those planners who put the concept of equal opportunities on a par with women's traditional domestic duties. However, from a feminist perspective a focus on these traditional duties is of importance. Planners, therefore, need to be aware of the impact these duties actually have, or could have, on issues related to strategic planning. Are there ways and means for planners to take these issues into consideration, other than simply subordinating and referring them to the detailed planning level? In my efforts to establish such a means I will turn to the discussion of dichotomies.

The use and abuse of dichotomies

Dichotomies are embedded in planning practice, as they are in many other discourses. Such dichotomies are discussed and questioned by feminist theorists (Rose, 1993; Rendell, 2000). According to a feminist perspective, the basic construction of dichotomies is highly problematic, as it implies two opposites. A more fruitful approach would be to understand the two terms as extremes at the ends of a continuum, with several meaningful values in between; semi private, semi public and so forth. Another problem is that unequal value is placed upon the two terms identified in the dichotomy (Snyder, 1995; Roy 2001). For example, in western tradition, less value is generally placed upon the private sphere (associated with women) than is placed on the public sphere (associated with men).

The separation between the private and public spheres and how they are

Comprehensive planning → municipality space/public space → physical structures: buildings, traffic systems, open space → gender-neutrality.

Detailed development planning → housing areas/private space → the experiences of individuals (everyday life experiences) → men and women can be identified.

Box 1 Key words embedded in the two planning levels

respectively interpreted in planning has been of particular concern in the formulation of feminist reflections. The cliché ‘the personal realm is political’ has been one way of questioning and redefining the public sphere (Sandercock and Forsyth, 1992). Snyder (1995, 102) argues that ‘the public face is that of those groups with power – the business community, men, whites, the middle class’, while many of the concerns of women, such as ‘to-and-fro’ trips for shopping and activities related to children, are without a public face.

The terms public and private were also embedded in the presented arguments by planners for ‘gender-neutral’ comprehensive planning and ‘gender-aware’ detailed development planning, in the research project and elsewhere. Their perspectives can be summarised into two groups, which form a hierarchy as shown in Box 1.

In this hierarchy higher value is placed upon the level of comprehensive planning and its issues. More importantly some planning issues are reserved for the level of comprehensive planning, while others are left for the level of detailed development planning. However, Swedish planning legislation does not support the assumption that comprehensive planning is of higher value than detailed development planning, nor does it recognise that there are different issues to be treated at the two levels. The legislation only requires that the stage of comprehensive planning precedes that of detailed development planning.

There is another dichotomy which needs to be examined in the context of contemporary planning discourse – production and reproduction. The terms are closely linked to the public sphere and the private/domestic sphere, respectively. Reproduction refers not only to human reproduction but also to family life, household chores and care in the broad sense, which may include care of the elderly, children and the sick. It has also been suggested to include ‘sex-affective production’, or the production of love and affection (Folbre, 2001). The tasks associated with reproduction in this broad sense are traditionally perceived to be the responsibility of women. Furthermore, these tasks are traditionally carried out through unpaid work, although nowadays much of this care in Sweden is accomplished through public institutions, creating what can be called a social infrastructure. On the other hand, production involving the making of goods (in a broad sense) is predominantly linked to paid work and to the public sector,

which is traditionally considered to be an area of responsibility for men.

As with private and public spheres, the concepts of reproduction and production should be understood as the opposites in a continuum. This was accomplished in a study of the various committees of the Swedish Parliament (Wängnerud, 1999). It was found that the variety of responsibilities belonging to each committee could be placed along a horizontal line linking reproduction to production. The field of social welfare was located at the reproduction end, and the field of economy/technique was located at the production end. When women's participation in the various committees was examined, it was found that women dominated the fields linked to reproduction rather than to production. The women members of parliament who were interviewed regarded the importance of their own experience and their knowledge as major reasons for this situation. The particular interest of women in issues of reproduction may also be an indication of the importance they place on the well-being of the family. As Wängnerud points out, there are good reasons for women to be concerned about the politics of welfare. The present system of government welfare explains why many Swedish women are able to participate in both paid work and politics. Although the everyday life of women has always been structured by political decisions, the organisation of everyday life is nowadays open for debate in a manner that is previously unknown. This change has been described as the democratisation of everyday life.

A non-hierarchical relationship

The aforementioned study of the different contributions of men and women to the political arena inspired me to develop Box 2. This figure shows different pairs of opposite situations. Each pair forms a continuum upon which the nature of planning concerns can be placed. Note that the right end of the spectrum is not gender neutral (as Box 1 would suggest), but due to its gender bias is in practice considered to be a men's area today.

As opposed to the hierarchical structure of Box 1, the various pairs of terms or concepts in Box 2 are now presented as two ends of the same horizontal continuum. This gives each position along the line an equal value. If this horizontal and non-

Reproduction	Production
Social welfare	Economy/Technique
Private	Public
Women's traditional areas	Men's traditional areas
Detailed development planning	Comprehensive planning

Box 2 A non-hierarchical relation of planning issues

hierarchical model were adopted in the planning process, the subordination of certain issues could be avoided and a gender-aware planning praxis could be developed more closely to Sandercock's (1998, 44–6) call for insurgent planning. In practice this would mean that planners would oscillate between the detailed and comprehensive levels during the planning process. However, in order to do so, it is necessary to find a tool that can link the two ends of each continuum. This paper argues that the concept of everyday life provides such a tool.

Everyday life as a connecting link

'To make everyday life work' was a common expression in the interviews, particularly by those women planners who have seriously tried to incorporate a gender perspective into planning. However, the organisation of everyday life is not only a matter for practitioners. Philosophers such as Agnes Heller and Henri Lefebvre have made use of the concept of everyday life in their writings. In addition, the field of social sciences has developed this concept for use in a number of specific areas.

The Swedish sociologist Kerstin Bohm (1985, 29) in her writings about the role of citizens in spatial planning, emphasises the role of the urban environment as a framework for everyday life. Her understanding of the concept of everyday life derives from Heller (1981, 24) – 'the totality of individual persons' acting for his/her own reproduction, which, in turn, creates possibilities for societal reproduction'.¹² According to Bohm's interpretation, the practice of 'everyday life' does not have a secondary or subordinated role in society. The demands of the structures created by 'everyday life' are just as necessary and important as those demands which are related to production. She emphasises that it is through the activities of 'everyday life' that activities related to market and production are developed. However, she does not specifically link reproduction to women. Her interpretation provides the framework for how to understand the ideal relationship between reproduction and production in the planning process. Both spheres are necessary and should be given the same status if a socially sustainable society is to be created. The important point here is that everyday life experiences (as seen from the perspective of the individual) should be incorporated into the planning process. Everyday life, in this sense, comprises unpaid work such as care and household chores as well as the individual's performance of paid work including travelling to and from work. In this way, the spheres of reproduction and production are linked together.

I would argue that the reality of contemporary strategic planning practice in Sweden coincides more closely with Henri Lefebvre's statement that 'in every urban project there is a concealed program for everyday life' (Lefebvre 1961, 88; Franzén and Sandstedt, 1982). This statement provided the starting point for reflections by

¹² My translation from Swedish.

Ann-Cathrine Åquist (2001, 269–70; 2003, 123) upon the role of everyday life in the planning field. She interprets Lefebvre's statement to mean that agendas for everyday life are often built into planning documents without being expressed. Such agendas are taken for granted and are not allowed to be discussed. With regard to this reflection, I have observed that human beings are hardly 'present' at all in comprehensive plans developed by Swedish municipalities.¹³

Such 'taken-for-granted' agendas within strategic planning are not without consequences. Local knowledge, based on people's everyday life experience, is not considered to constitute an important part of planning conditions. As a result, this local knowledge is excluded from the list of relevant issues that are considered as important in shaping the spatial structures. This situation has, most likely, arisen due to the fact that the comprehensive planning process in principle precedes that of detailed development planning. However, there is no opposition between this timing requirement and how knowledge is achieved and used in planning. Information and knowledge derived from local conditions can be used to direct the comprehensive planning process if planners allow themselves to oscillate between the detailed level and the strategic level. For instance, it is likely that an inventory of monuments will have an impact on the formation of a comprehensive plan when it comes to securing a historical heritage. It seems that, in the Swedish context, it is indeed difficult for knowledge related to the level of individuals and everyday life activities to find its way into the decision-making process of strategic planning. The implementation of communicative process as well as the use of geographical information systems (GIS) in the planning field has the potential to develop the production of knowledge from 'below'; however, there are so far few indications of such a change.

The concept of 'everyday life' provides an opportunity for planners to include the individual's perspectives (with regard to daily activities) in comprehensive planning. The concept can serve as a means of bridging the gap between the opposing ends (reproduction and production, public and private etc.) of the planning continuum. It also helps to liberate planners from preconceived notions of what constitutes the respective duties, spaces and habits of men and women, as the concept focuses on human beings' activities instead of the sex of the person behind them. Dolores Hayden (2002) argues for this liberation through subtitles such as 'Domestication of Urban Space' and 'Beyond the Architecture of Gender' in her latest edition of *Redesigning the American Dream*.

To summarise, the application of the 'everyday life' perspective in planning means the inclusion of a perspective which is normally neglected in conventional planning. This perspective serves to highlight hidden assumptions regarding everyday praxis of individuals. By shifting the focus to the daily routines of individuals, their activities

13 Here I rely on my own long experiences of urban planning and teaching in the field of municipal comprehensive planning.

may be observed in context; namely, in relation to the specific social and material environments in which they take place. While a so-called 'gender-neutral' perspective is dictated by the market and by production, an everyday life perspective is conscious of the daily routines which relate to the requirements of reproduction. However, it must be emphasised that it is only through a consideration of both perspectives, deriving from the demands of both production and reproduction, that a holistic planning practice can be achieved. The important conclusion is that these perspectives should be equally valued – a balance between the two needs to be achieved in the planning process.

A feminist epistemology for planning

Having highlighted the importance of incorporating the 'everyday life' perspective into various kinds of strategic planning, the next issue is to consider how best to gather the relevant knowledge. Feminist critique also investigates approaches to the production and treatment of knowledge in order to achieve change. Epistemology focuses on the production of knowledge and questions science's traditional way of perceiving knowledge. It also considers the qualifications of those who control or 'hold' knowledge by questioning concepts such as objectivity. A feminist epistemology has argued for a long time that the voice of science is masculine, that women have been excluded from 'knowing' and that their life experiences have been given less value (Sandercock and Forsyth, 1996; Snyder, 1995; Saarikoski, 2002). Despite these claims, there is at present no distinctively feminist epistemology according to Sandercock and Forsyth (1996). They 'insist that knowledge is inherently dialectical and that feminist inquiry has had, and should continue to have, emancipatory as well as critical power' (Sandercock and Forsyth, 1996, 473). Discussions such as these are always ongoing. For planners this means living and working with unstable paradigms.

Feminist critique thus stresses the need to develop knowledge which relates to those individuals, or groups of individuals, who are intended to benefit from planning. A conventional approach to the production of knowledge may limit our understanding of the variety of everyday life experiences which are relevant to the planning process. Sandercock and Forsyth (1996, 472) suggest different approaches to knowledge production for the planning process. They mention 'talking' and the oral tradition, 'listening' (with reference to Forester, 1989), 'tacit or intuitive knowledge', and the construction of 'symbolic forms' as a few possible alternatives.

Experiences of various approaches

Only a few of the various planning processes explored in the research project can be described as following the knowledge production approach as suggested by

Sandercock and Forsyth. Instead, most of them were rather conventional. In order to highlight the merits and shortcomings of different epistemological approaches, examples from the research project, recent literature and other ongoing planning practice are discussed. Some approaches generally involved those who would benefit from that specific planning exercise, while others were intended to improve knowledge generally in relation to women's experiences.

Approaches to the production of knowledge vary according to the time at which that knowledge is expected to be used in the planning process. For example, some approaches have been developed to be used in early phases to influence the planning process. Others have been developed to allow assessment of the outcome of the planning process, for instance with the aid of a checklist. These two principal approaches correspond to the bottom-up/gender-aware (position 4) and the top-down/gender-aware (position 3) positions in Figure 1.

A traditional consultation of a (more or less) complete planning proposal represents a top-down/gender-aware approach. The ambition to facilitate women's participation in meetings is one example of developing gender-aware approaches in top-down planning. This is done by careful consideration of the time and place of such meetings in order to avoid potential conflicts with other domestic matters such as childcare responsibility. Another example is for the planner to stay on after the formal ending of a meeting to allow women to speak directly to the planner about their concerns. The planners who developed this approach were aware of the fact that women may not always speak up in public and would rather take part in discussions in an informal setting.

Top-down/gender-aware approaches may also involve the use of checklists. The first checklist to be compiled by a municipality was published in 1990 and a few more have followed. The overall objective of these checklists is to promote the creation of a society which caters equally for women and men. However, issues or concerns which are listed on the checklist focus mainly on those everyday life experiences of women which relate to home and care. It is difficult to estimate how effective or how commonly used these checklists are as no relevant study has been carried out. However, checklists are more likely to be effective in the early stages of planning a project, for example, when setting the agenda, than when used at the end of the process. During the early stages of planning, checklists can facilitate the generation of new ideas and approaches, but if used in later stages the 'checking off' may rather serve to reinforce established viewpoints. Indeed, they may only perpetuate traditional preconceptions regarding the responsibilities and interests of women.

A method called 3R, developed by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities for various types of municipality planning activities, has been exported abroad under the name REFLEX (Reeves, 2002, 2002; Engender, 1998). It can be characterised as a checklist. The three Rs stand for Representation (of women and men), Resources (in terms of money, time etc. set aside for women's and men's activities) and Realia

(norms and attitudes that guide different activities related to women and men). The research project examined some examples of the application of the 3R method. The conclusion from the experience is that it is not effective for planning purposes. As is the case with most checklists it is used too late in the process. It is also based on an approach that treats men and women as two categories to which specific resources and the like are to be allocated in order to meet their different needs. Thus the changeability of gender over time is neglected.

Bottom-up/gender-aware approaches are the most relevant for the development of gender-aware planning processes. Some planners using approaches in line with this position created special groups which were designed to allow public participation in the planning process. In some cases these groups only consisted of either women or men. However, other groups were also established, for example youth, pensioners or mixed groups. The groups met over a period of time to reflect upon ideas which had emerged during discussion. In some cases the groups were given a great deal of freedom to explore various issues. The starting point in such cases was an empty map which participants were instructed to fill with ideas. Planners were available to answer questions and to give specific information when required. All of the issues ('big' and 'small' alike) raised during group meetings were given serious consideration thanks to an open attitude on the part of the (women) planners. With reference to the writings of Sandercock and Forsyth (1996, 472), these approaches are intended to recognise 'tacit or intuitive knowledge'.

During the construction of a strategic plan for Gothenburg, an approach was developed which could have been a first step in the efforts to place an equal value upon the spheres of 'reproduction' and 'production'. Two planning levels were identified: 'Small' Gothenburg and 'Large' Gothenburg. 'Small' Gothenburg treated issues at the local level in different parts of the city. To develop a 'bottom-up' approach, the inhabitants were encouraged to participate in the development of planning issues, as opposed to merely commenting upon planners' existing proposals. Planning at the level of 'Large' Gothenburg, in which overall city structures were treated, was, however, carried out in a conventional top-down way. While this whole process began in an encouraging manner, sources at the Gothenburg planning department have reported that issues related to 'Large' Gothenburg were always given priority over issues of conflict between the two planning levels.

Daily programmes developed out of the method of 'time geography'¹⁴ (founded by Torsten Hägerstrand) have been suggested by Åquist (2003) as a way of depicting

14 Daily programmes illustrate the sequence of individuals' activities in space and time during one or more days. Data may be collected through time-diaries. They can be more or less detailed – either just describing movements between home, workplace, shops and the like, or by identifying and estimating time consumption for all activities such as getting up, waking the children up, making breakfast for the family, reading the paper, cycling to the office etc. and finally going to bed.

everyday life activities. Such programmes illustrate the concrete organisation of daily life and incorporate the wishes and priorities, as well as compromises which individuals need to make in response to demands related to working life and responsibilities for the family and the home. As far as I know this method has never been used in any Swedish strategic planning processes.

Both time-geography analysis and the use of statistical data comprise methodologies which do not automatically fit into the model in Figure 1. The use of statistical data is considered to be a very positivist and rational method. During interviews, some planners advocated the use of quantitative data to highlight important facts in relation to gender issues. One reason for this argument may be the fact that, when properly compiled and analysed, figures are very difficult to object to. However, when poorly analysed or incorrectly utilised, such data tends to have the same shortcomings as other methods belonging to the top-down approach. Namely, the different behaviour of women and men tends to be treated as though these were the outcome of biological differences, rather than different gendered patterns in society. Nevertheless, this paper would argue that statistical data can be used for feminist analysis (in line with bottom-up/gender-aware methodologies) if the causes behind differences between men and women are carefully analysed from a gender perspective. Such analysis must then be followed by considerations of how spatial planning can contribute to overcome such differences. To pave the way for such analyses, an 'equal opportunities' index has been developed by the government agency, Statistics Sweden. This index highlights several characteristics specific to the life of women in relation to that of men at the municipality level.¹⁵

Summing up

The incorporation of 'gender' into spatial planning praxis is, as has been demonstrated, a problematic task. First, it has to overcome the problem of planning for a future society which will be different from that of today and hopefully more egalitarian. If certain issues linked to the private sphere are identified as female, the subordination of women is likely to be perpetuated. Secondly, the perception of strategic planning as a gender-neutral planning level must be questioned. The paper has analysed the consequences of this perspective and argued for an alternative position which would recognise all experiences of women and men alike as the starting point for the formulation of a gender-aware planning praxis. By linking these experiences to the spheres of reproduction/unpaid work and production/paid work, respectively, through the concept of everyday life, all aspects of life may be included in the planning process, without necessarily regarding them as either female or male. This, in turn, makes it

15 EqualX – Gender-equality index; SCB homepage http://www.h.scb.se/scb/bor/scbboju/jam_htm_en/index.asp (accessed, 6 May 2005).

possible to use planning as a tool for the development of an egalitarian future society. In addition, such an approach transcends the objective to somehow mainstream the concept of equal opportunities into the planning process.

However, in order to plan for an egalitarian future society, planning must incorporate both issues of the market and of production, and a consideration of those concerns which relate to reproduction and daily life experiences in a broader sense. Both perspectives are equally necessary. The important point is that they should be handled in a non-hierarchical manner; there must be a balance and a dialogue between the two. Paradoxically, if planning is carried out along these lines it will become truly gender neutral. However, this approach would be better labelled as gender-aware planning as it underlines that the planners have incorporated the issue of gender into the process.

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