PlanNord2019: Scientific tracks

Track 1: Urban sustainability – time for a new paradigm
Session organizer: Jin Xue, NMBU and Rasmus Stefansson, University of Aalborg

Keywords: urban sustainability paradigm, environmental limits, social justice, welfare rights, ecological modernization

Our cities are experiencing multiple crises including an economic crisis, a moral crisis and an ecological crisis. A sustainable urban development that integrates environmental limits, social justice and welfare rights is therefore urgent. This track has its critical point of departure in the standing that eco-modernist planning, with its narrow focus on environmental eco-efficiency strategies, can only to a limited degree safeguard sustainability. It emphasizes the need, challenges and strategies of promoting a future sustainable urban development overcoming these shortcomings and integrating the presently weakened dimensions of social justice and welfare.

The track aims to discuss the flaws of the prevailing eco-modernist oriented notions of sustainability and explores alternative approaches to future urban development. We welcome contributions discussing the implications of a post-ecomodernist urban sustainability paradigm in various fields of inquiry, including housing, mobility, urban spatial development, planning and policy and the challenges of promoting such development within the existing socio-economic conditions.

Track 2: Enhancing Livability in Urban Areas
Session organizer: Harpa Stefannsdottir, NMBU, and Sanna Lehtinen, University of Helsinki

Keywords: Livability, urban experience, everyday life, urban aesthetics

Urban quality in terms of characteristics that influence happiness and subjective wellbeing deserves greater attention in research. The concept "livability" is suitable in this context, because it combines measures of human needs and subjective wellbeing with opportunities provided by the built environment. Sustainable development could be better managed with more focus on the experiential quality of urban areas and how the surroundings support perceived living quality. This involves such aspects as how aesthetics and good urban atmosphere can enhance acceptance of living in denser areas, how they can stimulate outdoor activities, sustainable travel mode choices and good social interaction. Overall, we call for research related to how the built environment can fulfil psychological needs and that goes beyond focus on instrumental and functional values. Perception, experience and various uses of everyday living environment are important aspects of this theme.

Track 3: Integrated Coastal Development and Planning – future challenges for Nordic countries
Session organizer: Knut Bjørn Stokke, NMBU, and Carsten Jahn Hansen, University in Aalborg

Keywords: Coastal planning, integration, development, protection

The Nordic coastal areas, including both marine and land areas, are characterized by an increasing pressure on and competition for spaces and resources. Most of the population in the Nordic countries is living permanently on or nearby the coast, and these areas are important for recreational homes, leisure activities and various industries and infrastructures. The coast is also

important for production of natural resources and the biodiversity is often high. Given the complexity and multiplicity of actors and interests, including the attention of several layers of public authorities, there is a strong need for coordination and integrated planning.

In this session, we invite presentations highlighting both academic and professional experiences with local, regional and national development and planning efforts in coastal areas. Comparative studies between countries will also be of great interest. Examples of relevant topics are waterfront development, climate change adaptation, conservation policies, nature-based tourism, cultural heritage and industries like aquaculture, coastal fisheries and energy production. In addition, we welcome varied contributions concerning both development and planning processes, planning cultures, participation and cooperation, property rights and legislation, knowledge production and application (like GIS), planning contents and impacts. The track is a part of PlanCoast, a research project led by NMBU on structural, political and legal challenges for integrated coastal zone management.

Track 4: Planning methods in practice

Session organizer: Daniel Galland, NMBU, and Johanna Lilius, Aalto University

Keywords: Planning methods, territorialisation, transdisciplinarity

As a field of knowledge and action, planning assembles, combines and relies on different methods from an array of spatial as well as aspatial disciplines. The role of planning in catering to spatial change is thus defined by an amalgamation of assorted methods that professional planners engage with and are able to use in practice. Planning methods thus have a strong say in legitimizing planning as a force influencing spatial development processes wherein multiple actors, politics and management processes intersect. At the same time, planning can be regarded as a methodology addressing principles of theoretical constructions, operationalization of concepts, methods of data collection, processing and interpretation, as well as their interconnection.

This track invites contributions focusing on the rationale and use of contemporary planning methods in practice as deployed in different forms and at different spatial scales within the Nordic countries. The track is open for presentations from planning academics and planning practitioners, which address planning methods at the interface between spatial dynamics and societal change with a focus on: i. ongoing theoretical and empirical knowledge of socio-spatial development, real estate development and territorialisation processes; ii. theories and methods related to the interaction between territory and society, including culture, values and mentalities, management technology and planning systems, as well as instruments and methods of practice (regulatory, strategic, deliberative and agonistic); iii. development of planning methods as regards critical reflections on the relationship between theory and practice in urban and regional planning; and iv. exploration of transdisciplinarity in planning education addressing learning methods emerging from the intersection between planning research and practice, particularly with a focus on recent experiences about planning practices in the Nordic countries.

Track 5: Sustainable mobility

Session organizer: Sebastian Peters, NMBU, and Karin Winter, KTH

Key words: Socio-technological change, urban spatial transformation, sustainable mobility, urban design, socio-spatiality, transport justice

The track emphasises current and future challenges of planning and design to meet sustainable mobility principles related to ongoing and expected transitions of urban space. A special emphasis is on the impact of technological and design innovation on social interaction and travel in urban space. We critically engage with the sustainability concept, which is facing a different socio-economic, cultural and technological reality than when it was coined and started to influence the planning field in the 20th century. In particular, the track attempts to discuss how to strengthen the social dimensions of sustainability when it comes to planning mobility. Rather than merely being a technical challenge, we see mobility as an arena for social interaction and socio-spatial processes linked to the (re)production of identity and sociality.

We welcome contributions critically addressing the existing discourses about and the use of the sustainability concept in the field of mobility. Urban design, mobility studies, studies on planning and design practice as studies on users in socially, physically and technologically transforming environments. We encourage a critical focus on those aspects of sustainability that are left behind, marginalized or disregarded in dominant mobility discourses. The session will address these issues both with a perspective on planning and design practice as well as with an interest in user behaviour and experiences.