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Abstract for International conference: The Intricacy of Walking in the City:
Methods and Experiments

Title: The rational pedestrian? Examining rationality and quantification in Swedish transport planning for pedestrians

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1. Background and research questions

European, as well as American, transport planning and research has in recent years seen a revival regarding transport planning for pedestrians. This has evolved alongside an increasing concern about sustainability and attractiveness in urban environments. However, despite an increased interest and attention, the knowledge of many aspects of pedestrian planning remains relatively scarce. When it comes to research fields such as traffic flow modelling, trip forecasting and cost-benefit analyses, the pedestrian remains somewhat an exception. Thus, transport planning face difficulties when addressing issues such as: Will society economically benefit from prioritising walking in the city? How big delays will pedestrians suffer if a junction is rebuilt? How many pedestrians will use a particular street when a new train station is established? If such questions remain unanswered, or even unasked, pedestrian advocates fall short when effects of future transport investments are discussed (Patton, 2007).

This paper suggests that this deficit can be understood as a result of the comprehension of pedestrians among planners and other stakeholders within the realm of transport planning. It is argued that pedestrian traffic is, in terms of behaviour, deemed irrational in contrast to motorised transportation. Furthermore, planning for walking is often appointed qualitative properties (e.g. streetscape design and architecture) as opposed to the quantified treatment of car traffic in terms of models and calculations on flow, travel time and other measures (Lundin, 2008).

Patton (2007) discusses how pedestrian planning and automobile planning have different competing rationales. The concern here then is if pedestrians can compete on the field of rationality, and if so, how would that go about? Although walking could be seen as even irrational behaviour; and, also, dependent on qualitative aspects of the urban realm, this study is interested in examining what rationality could mean for walking within transport planning (Stangl, 2008). The aim of this study is to explore how rationality and quantification has played out in recent years' pedestrian planning. How do planning documents and planning professionals explicitly or implicitly appeal to rationality and quantification? And, could this be a strategy for improving the status of walking in transport planning? Three cities in the southern part of Sweden is used as setting for examining these issues.

2. Rationality and quantification in transport planning

The issue of rationality has been a research interest in the planning field for long (Alexander, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 1993; 1998). Many studies have focused on the rationality of the planning *process* of urban and transport planning (Stangl, 2008), whereas this paper is mainly interested in exploring how the view on different transport modes as rational or measurable play out in planning practice. Rationality in transport planning should be seen in the light of changes within the research world overall. Herbert Marcuse (2002 [1964]) has argued that a shift towards positivistic and seemingly rational research has emerged in the social sciences. The fact that much focus within transport planning has been on measures and models linked to motorised modes of transport has to be seen in the light of the shift from

metaphysical and theoretical social research to empiricism and measureable research (Marcuse (2002 [1964]; Lundin, 2008).

One important aspect of this scientification has been to approach transport planning in a quantitative manner, which makes it into a question of models, mathematics and forecasts. This process of quantification justifies itself by appealing to values such as objectivity, formality and generalisability (Lundin, 2008; Porter, 1992). Transport planning has historically been keener on using quantitative techniques and methods, compared to other parts of the planning field (Brown et al., 2009; Te Broemmelstroet and Bertolini, 2009). This quantitative approach has been particularly present in car based transport planning and has, be it implicitly or explicitly, proven successful in its ability to give justification to policies beneficial for car use (Lundin, 2008).

3. Empirical analysis

This study draws on data from interviews about pedestrian planning with urban and transport planners in three cities in the southern part of Sweden (Malmö, Lund and Helsingborg), together with the cities' strategies concerning urban and transport planning. The interviews and the planning documents were seen as representers of the cities intentions and objectives for pedestrian planning. The material was studied through an approach of abduction in order to identify discourses of rationality and quantification.

4. Expected findings

This study aimed to reveal how rationality and quantification plays out in pedestrian planning. In the case of Sweden and least not in the setting present study, pedestrian planning has become a niche of its own, manifested by a rise in the number of planning and research projects devoted to walking, an interest to produce specific planning documents for pedestrians, initiatives to quantify pedestrians as well as attempts to treat walking as a transport mode on its own. All these aspects certainly can be seen as representing a view on walking as rational and measurable behaviour. However, is it a different, or even a competing, rationality that is employed, compared to that of motorised modes (Patton, 2007)? If so, is it an intentional strategy? How is the issue of the "irrational" pedestrian described and treated? This study hopes to answer these questions.