Critical Masculine and Feminine Norms in Sustainable Municipal Transport Policies and Planning

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Abstract

Transport planning has historically been dominated by masculinity norms with minimal attention to sustainability, but these norms are challenged. Our analytical framework explores municipal solutions to sustainable transport that go beyond traditional norms and advances knowledge on how gendered sustainability norms are articulated in municipal transport policies and planning documents. The article investigates whether masculine and feminine norms on sustainability affect transport planning and if they are concretely expressed in transport solutions in planning and policy documents in Swedish municipalities, considered high achievers in sustainable transport. The article also observes gender representation and political affiliation related to gender sustainability norms. Our results show that all municipal committees that handle transport planning adhere to masculine and feminine sustainability norms but that there are significant differences in the content of the policies. Our results do not verify a relation between norms and the representation of men and women in the transport committees, we find evidence of divergences between masculine and feminine norms in relation to political ideas.

Keywords: Gender norms, critical masculinities, eco-femininities, transport sector, municipalities, sustainability

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Introduction

This article aims to advance knowledge on how gendered sustainability norms are articulated in municipal transport policies by drawing attention to norms and what kind of transport planning solutions they result in. Norms are formal and informal rules, collective expectations, shared values, and standards that shape policy-making (cf. Horne & Mollborn, 2020). Masculinity norms have historically been dominant in political and administrative institutions, including municipal organizations in Sweden (Forsberg Kankkunen, 2009, 2014) and deeply embedded in policy-making institutions (cf. Kronsell, 2016; Prügl, 2011; Waylen, 2013). Masculinity norms have dominated Swedish transport planning and emphasized technical knowledge, quantitative cost-benefit analysis, technical infrastructure, and top-down perspectives (Jacobsson & Mujkic, 2016; Rømer Christensen & Hvidt Breengaard, 2021; Uteng et al., 2020; Winter, 2021) and automobile mobility (Hysing, 2009, p. 247; Sheller & Urry, 2000).

The dominance of masculinity norms relates to the historic dominance of male bodies in the transport sector. A common remedy that is often advanced is the call to increase the number of women across the sector thus, assuming that more women in planning and decision-making challenges and replaces masculine norms. A tradition of research has pursued the question of the effects of increased representation of women in policy and planning (cf. Childs & Dahlerup, 2018; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; Lovenduski, 2005; Sundström & Wängnerud, 2018). However, results are mixed and the evidence is inconclusive (Magnusdottir & Kronsell, 2015) also for the transport sector in Sweden (Hiselius Winslott et al., 2019; Hiselius Winslott & Smidfelt Rosqvist et al., 2019; Kronsell et al., 2016). Thus, for our inquiry, we find it more useful to study gendered norms rather than the presence of women and men. Masculinity and femininity do refer to values, meanings, and behaviors associated with male and female bodies, but norms and bodies cannot be assumed to coincide. For example, it is most likely that both women and men have assimilated similar norms on masculine transport planning ideals, taught and promoted within the technical universities where many of them have been educated (Faulkner, 2001; Holth & Mellström, 2011; Mellström, 2004).

Norms impact policy by providing the frames within which action is taken by policymakers (Gains & Lowndes, 2014) but even though masculinity norms are institutionalized through historic practice, norms can be expected to shift across time, levels, and within sectors, as policymakers resist or try to change them. Our puzzle centers on if and how these challenges to prevalent norms are reflected in sustainable transport policies. Specifically, we ask how far sustainability norms linked to ideas from critical masculinities and eco-feminism, might be present in policy development of more sustainable transport policies – and why.

We apply an ideal-type framework for the empirical study of sustainability norms expressed in transport planning and policy documents. This framework helps us decouple norms from the bodies – of women and men – without adhering to strict gender binaries. We formulate indicators based on the ideal types (cf. Gudmundsson et al., 2015, pp. 137–167) to show how sustainability is articulated in municipal transport policies. The indicators are used in a qualitative text analysis where we ask what kind of transport solutions, the transport planning documents of eight Swedish municipalities, promote and with what kind of underlying reasoning they do so. The municipalities selected are high performers and likely to show evidence of sustainability norms.

The sample shows variations in the degree of gender representation and the political constellation of decision-making bodies. Another aim is to observe if and how gender representation and political ideas relate to masculine and feminine norms in those municipal committees that handle transport planning. This allows us to return to the question of whether gendered norms are related to gendered bodies as well as allows insight into how sustainability norms relate to political ideas.

Below we outline the theoretical framework which is operationalized through indicators used to code the content of the texts studied. Then we present the case studies and the methodology. The third part provides the results and analysis.

Theoretical Framework

To study norms we follow Max Weber's methodology of ideal types. An ideal type provides a way to analytically explore specific elements relevant to a phenomenon (cf. Gerhardt, 1994;

Swedberg, 2018). It does not refer to perfect things, or ideals, nor empirical averages or generalization, but provides a systematic construction of ideas and distinctions helpful in an empirical analysis. Four ideal types were developed from a body of knowledge on masculinities and femininities in relation to climate change-, transport-, and sustainability planning (Cornet & Gudmundsson, 2015; Dymen, 2014; Dymén et al., 2014; Dymén & Langlais, 2017; Hultman, 2013, 2016, 2017b; Hultman & Anshelm, 2017; Kronsell et al., 2020; Kurian, 2000) and feminist theory in the equality (cf. Nussbaum 2000; Okin 1989) and ecofeminist traditions (Gaard, 2017; Merchant, 1980; Plumwood, 1993; Salleh, 2009). These are Critical masculinities (CM), Eco-feminities (EcoF), Technical masculinities (TM), and Equality Feminities (EF). From these ideal types, we developed mutually exclusive indicators to help us find the relevant ideas in the policy documents.

The text analysis used all four ideal types to code the material but this article homes in on the two ideal types, Critical masculinities (CM) and Eco-femininities (EcoF), that represent norms based on sustainable rationality and assumed to be most challenging to dominant norms. They were less prominent in Swedish municipalities compared to Technical Masculinities (TM) and Equality Femininities (EF) both based on economic rationality. Indeed, TM is the most dominant in Swedish transport planning practice (Eriksson et al., 2021) and advances transport solutions that are firmly grounded in economic rationality which is about achieving a given end most efficiently, by minimizing waste and maximizing value (cf. Diesing 1962 cited in Kurian, 2000, p. 27) with technical knowledge highly esteemed (cf. Faulkner, 2007). It most often advances solutions like transport infrastructure, development of vehicles, such as electric and autonomous vehicles, and operations that should be designed to minimize losses and maximize value and contribute to economic growth. EF is also common and has been articulated as women's right to equal representation in public life. EF emphasizes equal representation in transport decisions. The main goal is to assure equal access and benefits from a secure and safe transportation system that can support and integrate women into the economic development process (Kurian, 2000). Economic rationality is in sharp contrast to sustainable rationality, a common feature of EcoF and CM.

EcoF and CM have in common their association with sustainable development ideas (originating in Brundtland, 1987) or sustainable rationality which places humans as interdependent of ecosystems and in a context of limits to growth (first raised by D. H. Meadows et al. 1972; D. Meadows and Randers 2012) and the demands of living within

planetary boundaries (Rockström et al., 2009). It calls for simultaneous attention to social, economic, and ecological implications in planning and a reduced use of resources. Sustainable rationality refutes the idea that economic growth and environmental protection can be mutually supportive. Thus, increased efficiency and technical innovation are not sufficient for sustainable transport planning.

Sustainable rationality is attentive to the problems of top-down policy-making (Healey et al., 2002) and instead supportive of bottom-up policy-making where small-scale solutions are advocated. According to one proponent, John Forester (1989): to achieve progress in preparing and implementing plans, the planner must have the capacity to learn from others and communicate in an empathic way. This is in line with Cornet and Gudmundsson's (2015) suggestion that a key feature of sustainable transport planning is to develop sustainable solutions accepted by a majority. This includes careful consideration of the local context, by avoiding top-down (pre) definitions of topics and by bringing different stakeholders into dialogue to shape problem definitions and solutions. For municipal sustainable transport planning, which is expert based to some extent, the process should be transparent, explicit, and inclusive of affected stakeholders and policymakers. Participation and multiple actors' engagement in problem-solving and decision-making is assumed to lead to more effective outcomes (Forester, 1989).

This understanding of sustainability is common to both types used but there is a general distinction in what they emphasize about gender. For EcoF, gender equality is a core value where equal access to policy-making and resources in transport planning, is crucial. The emphasis is on an intersectional understanding of gender as interconnected with different oppressions such as class, ethnicity, or age. When CM are concerned with gender, they emphasize the responsibility and role of men in achieving equal rights and sustainability. This can be contrasted with TM which does not actively address gender or equity issues as it represents the historically dominant system of patriarchy. The two ideal types are outlined below.

The ideas on which CM is based is an antagonism to centralized industrial masculinity and evolved in the 1960s with the green social movements that were highly critical of the overreliance on technical and economic rationality. CM seeks to decentralize power structures, for example by advancing small-scale technologies with an aspiration to co-

habitate with nature in everyday life. Its critique of extant power structures calls for extensive social structural changes that go beyond voluntary, individual, consumer choices and market solutions. According to Hultman, CM requires extensive democratic participation, equality politics, and politicians who assume long-term responsibility for the biosphere, even if it means interference in consumption habits and citizens' behavior (2017a). Allister explores the potential of shaping masculinities around ecological and sustainable principles and argues that 'gender should not necessarily be placed above everything as an exclusive source of identity, other social categories like class, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, mental abilities, physical abilities...contribute to identity formation' (2004, p. 8). CM implies a challenging need to develop acceptance for far-reaching societal changes toward climate change mitigation and adaptation and tends to emphasize the responsibility of men to engage with those changes (Hedenqvist et al., 2021).

The indicators developed for CM are: Men's responsibility; critique of technical masculinities; reduced travelling; small-scale solutions; and local anchoring. They were used to code the texts and are elaborated in the analysis.

Ecofeminist theory offers guidelines as to the content of the ideal type EcoF. Ecofeminist scholarship has investigated the oppression of women and its connection to environmental destruction with a concern for the earth and a critique of modernity, science, and technology (Merchant, 1980) and brings to the fore the significance of feminine values including cultural and spiritual values. Violence against women is inherent in the capitalist economy. The destructive nature of development has its roots in modern science, which has excluded female experts and simultaneously excluded holistic and ecological ways of knowing (Salleh, 2009). Important values in EcoF are non-scientific sources and knowledge from the humanities and social sciences, including local, traditional, and cultural knowledge.

The call for a decentralization of power structures – an integral aspect of CM – are based on Kurian's ideas (2000, p. 30) on policy making. The inclusion of civil society, management toward adequate solutions for a larger group, co-creation, bottom-up sources of knowledge, and participation by citizens, are core factors. Although decentralization is also called for in EcoF, we deem it as most relevant to CM, the use of ideal types implies that indicators are mutually exclusive.

Care theory is central to EcoF and argues that humans are constituted through social relations of interdependence maintained through caring practices. The centrality of care values in human relations can be carried over and extended to include the care for 'earth others' and future beings (MacGregor, 2006; Plumwood, 1993). From a planning perspective, EcoF will promote sustainable rationality through deliberations with a broad range of affected actors in inclusive processes that are sensitive to the needs of subjects in a broader political community, including present and future generations, nature and non-human species (Kronsell & Stensöta, 2015).

Sustainability is associated with holism (cf. Gaard, 2017). A holistic perspective on transport planning acknowledges the transport system as including social, environmental, economic, and governance systems. The time horizon is long-term and includes future generations for intergenerational equity. Being holistic, the interconnection between land use and transport is addressed (Cornet & Gudmundsson, 2015). The four indicators that were used to look for EcoF norms in the documents are: holism; care; culture; equality; and rights of vulnerable groups, further elaborated below.

The two ideal types with their indicators provided the analytical framework for the analysis of transport documents.

The cases, methods, and material

Our sample came from a study of 179 Swedish municipalities and their performance on sustainability (Hiselius Winslott et al., 2019) from which we selected 8 municipalities that were ranked high performers on sustainability and varied in two dimensions, expected to lead to a variation on sustainability norms.¹ We postulated that the presence of sustainability norms would be influenced by representation and political ideas and sought variation in the degree of gender representation in transport decision-making and variation in the political constellation of decision-making bodies.

INSERT Table 1: The cases

¹ In that study we defined as high performers those municipalities that scored high on a sustainable transport index based on factors determining the municipalities ambition about sustainable transport, reflecting both their ambitions in planning and policy documents and concrete performance and implementation.

The analysis was conducted through a systematic, qualitative text analysis of 669 strategic policy documents and transport committee protocols from the period January 2014 until July 2020 of the eight municipalities.² We examined the content and meaning of sustainable transport in the municipalities via these documents and coded them in line with our framework of four ideal types: Critical masculinities (CM), Eco-femininities (EcoF), Technical masculinities (TM) and Equality femininities (EM) operationalized through a set of indicators (cf. Kronsell et al., 2020) which were used to code the documents with the software Atlas. ti. The software allowed us to code and trace the indicators, to analyze them both in terms of their numerical occurrence and qualitatively in their respective contexts, and by comparing different indicators as well as different municipalities, we also studied their co-occurrence, all was done through an iterative process which included several discussions within the research group. Below we present our findings.

Results and Analysis

EcoF and CM were found to guide transport planning and policy in the entire sample. However, indicators associated with TM and EF were more frequent with more than 50% of the codes in all our cases, except Uppsala. Yet, compared to a previous study (Kronsell et al., 2020) the frequency of sustainability norms of EcoF and CM expressed in policies, was high. Umeå and Växjö stood out as the municipalities where EcoF and CM norms were the most frequent.

In the following, we investigate the CM and EcoF norms in more detail to reveal what the indicators of the norms brought out in the municipalities in terms of sustainable transport ideas and solutions. The most frequent indicators are marked in bold in Table 2 below:

INSERT Table 2: Indicators³

Results on Indicators for Critical Masculinities

The indicators for CM were very unevenly represented in the material. The indicator *Men's responsibility* is concerned with gender in a manner that especially emphasizes the

² The project is indebted to our research assistant Jonna Håkansson who collected the material and helped code it in Atlas.it

³ The indicators in the material represented here are all tied to specific text sections of the empirical material and available in the database Atlas.it and upon request.

responsibility of men in achieving equal rights and sustainability. It contains an implicit critique of TM and argues for developing and embracing new, more sustainable forms of masculinity (Allister, 2004). Direct articulation of men's responsibility was rare in the material and there were only a few references to another indicator *critique of TM*. This was expressed implicitly and indirectly as a critique that environmental problems are caused mainly by car drivers and goods transport or in saying that the National Transport Administration's suggestions always build on problematic historic assumptions embedded in its planning practices. The emphasis on mobility management is another subtle critique of car use and TM and proposes a soft approach to changing transport attitudes and behaviors.

The indicator *Small scale solutions* includes small-scale projects that concern a section or part of the municipality and we looked for local solutions that fit a particular area or are unique for the specific municipality. There were several references to this across the municipalities. Examples are local solutions such as car-pools, in a specific area or in relation to specific groups, installing charging stations for electric cars, specific emission objectives for an area or specific objectives for reduced car travels, bicycle paths and parking, commuter parking places, rental bike systems and lanes reserved for busses.

The indicator *local anchoring* represents a bottom-up approach to decentralize power structures, encouraging participation for example through dialog with representatives from local civil society organizations or with citizens. It overlapped with the more frequent indicator *inclusion* which calls for ways to decentralize power structures, encourage more extensive democratic participation, and increase equity. Policy making is to be done by inclusion of and co-creation with civil society. The 26 instances of inclusion were found across all municipalities except in Örebro. In Helsingborg, examples are processes of listening to the views of citizens through dialogues, also argued to be a significant part of the daily activities carried out by those responsible for the maintenance and function of the transport system. It extends to engaging with the rural communities in the surrounding areas. Växjö has formalized inclusion by hosting direct meetings with citizens where citizens can talk to politicians and civil servants about traffic and climate issues. Västerås developed inclusion through safety walks, while in Danderyd inclusion was limited to web surveys to citizens, for example by asking about their willingness to shift to cycling or public transportation. In Umeå, the importance of processes of inclusion are emphasized as consultation processes and citizen dialogues. We found evidence of self-criticism in Umeå with reflections on the

insufficiency in current transport planning of the degree of inclusion and an argument that inclusion needs to be developed bottom-up in relation to local infrastructure projects and involve civil society and different professional groups in the planning process.

Reduce travelling was the most frequent indicator for CM with 312 identified codes. This indicator implies concern and willingness to reduce travelling via active interference in the habits and behavior of citizens as the mean to achieve this. The code is used broadly and relates for example to measures that stimulate sustainable modes of transport within the municipal organization. A general observation is that reducing travelling especially relates to reducing the use of cars in favour of public transport, cycling, and walking. A related response is visible throughout when the municipalities relate to parking policy and increasing prices for car parking to shift mobility to public transport, bicycle, and walking. The indicator reduce travelling reveals aspects that tend to create tensions between the different political parties and ideologies and there are interesting specificities for each of the municipalities.

In Växjö there is a strong focus on physical planning by prioritizing development in areas where car dependency does not increase as a result. Another emphasis is on increased mobility but with sustainable means of transport. Projects and measures relate to cargo bikes, electrical bikes for municipal employees, mobility management, bike-sharing pools, and a concept called bicycle libraries. This kind of approach, with a combination of policy measures to reduce car dependency, is also seen in Helsingborg where several policies and measures in combination contribute to diminishing climate gas emissions. Physical planning is complemented by initiatives related to mobility management. For example, when public transport measures are implemented, mobility management activities are expected to follow. In general, there is a strong focus on the combination between parking norms and physical planning to contribute to a shift to sustainable means of transport.

When it comes to the municipalities of Danderyd and Västerås there is an emphasis on the importance of entrance parking to facilitate commuting to work. Danderyd emphasizes multimodality with the possibility to bicycle to entrance parking. In general, there is a public opinion for sustainable means of transport, with wishes related to higher frequency and new public transport lines. There is also a focus on children's way to school. Encouraging children to walk and bicycle to school is a way to limit the number and frequency of parents driving their children to school. In Västerås, the question of entrance parking is seen in conflicts

between the political parties. The conservative party suggests Stop-and-Shop parking and entrance parking and is critical to what they call 'car-hostile attitudes'. Furthermore, there are discussions related to the use of parking fees as a policy tool to encourage those who can, to use public transport whereas securing the availability of parking places for those who need the car albeit making parking more expensive. Our empirical findings suggest that the conservative parties adhere more to free choice for everyone to choose means of transport. This is evident in Danderyd where the freedom of choice is valued highly and the sustainable dimension is included as long as it does not compromise the freedom to choose modes. Conflicts are resolved by introducing multimodality and facilitating the use of electric cars (an indicator of TM). Interestingly, the same line of conflict is found in Uppsala but articulated around the use of public space. The conservative and liberal parties are reluctant to reduce accessibility for cars (in contrast to the socialist party and the green party) and instead emphasize the role of technology (e.g., electric cars) and biofuels to deal with the climate change problem.

In Umeå, with a long domination of the social democratic party, the focus is on offering alternatives to the car through physical planning, especially in the urban areas. Infrastructure as well as parking policy and car-free areas should be designed to facilitate walking, cycling, and the use of public transport. To manage this the city should grow towards the center with mobility management and mobility-as-a-service as important components. Within the municipality's organization, accessibility is dealt with through less mobility and more digital accessibility. In Örebro, the left party wants to investigate policy measures related to parking fees and parking tickets and increase costs for car mobility. Not only the left party but also the municipality's strategic documents related to public transport, bicycle, and parking focus on shifting to sustainable means of transport through policy measures related to costs. If we look at Helsingborg, with the domination of conservative and liberal parties, policy measures related to reducing the use of cars are introduced. Interestingly, the argumentation in Helsingborg reflects a mix of economic and sustainable rationality with the argument that bicycling is fast, flexible, reliable, and increases health, thereby diminishing societies health care costs while increasing the individuals' quality of life.

Results on Indicators for Eco-femininities

We searched for the relevance of norms relating to EcoF by coding along several indicators that appeared in all the municipalities with varied frequency. Equality and rights of vulnerable

groups (41%) and Care (31%) were the most frequent and will be discussed in more detail in the following.

The indicator *Equality and rights of vulnerable groups* entails a focus on equal access to transportation and to urban areas. The focus is especially on inclusion of, and accessibility for, vulnerable groups with solutions that target these groups. The concepts we looked for in coding were: accessibility for a group; sensitivity to which groups travel and where they travel; designs in the transport system that consider accessibility from different physical and mental functions and safety issues in relation to that. We found that the mobility of the vulnerable group, the physically challenged, and their access to the city and to transportation has been a prioritized matter in most municipalities. It is related to a general concern for this group and in some municipalities the norms are more institutionalized, with a special advisory group on disabilities in Helsingborg and in Umeå where several bodies and functions within the municipality target problems of the physically challenged.

The focus on the physically challenged materialize in different ways in transport planning. First, as dedicated parking which addresses this group's possibility to reach services and businesses but at the same time takes the necessity of the car as given. Second, with special travel services for the physically disabled who are not easily catered for through public transport, it also concerns ways that the travel service can be better integrated with the public transport system or become easier to use for all challenged groups with improvements for example in the pay system. Thirdly, the concern for the physically challenged often materializes as a need to remove obstacles in the street space, examples include roadside concrete blocks, sidewalk billboards, slopes, stairs and curbs, snow, and slick pavements as well as lack of benches, lighting and ground surface that is difficult to maneuver.

While the removal of such obstacles that impede the mobility of the physically challenged is prioritized it can become contentious because associated with it are conflicting values and interests. For example, cobblestones in the city center often carry esthetic and cultural values appreciated by many citizens but can be treacherous to the physically challenged as can side-walk billboards which at the same time help businesses to attract customers, roadside blocks may lead to lower speeds and safety for vulnerable pedestrians but hinder mobility for car users. Recently, electric scooters have become a popular mode of transport but parked electric scooters are obstructing sidewalks and present problems, particularly for prams and the

visually impaired. Different sustainable and unsustainable mobilities come into conflict and lead to difficult priorities for the municipality particularly when the underlying norms are that all citizen groups have the right to mobility.

Rather than a focus on the freedom of mobility for everyone, *accessibility* is a concept used in some municipalities to address the equality and rights of vulnerable groups. In Örebro's cycling and public transport plans it is defined as the ease with which citizens and businesses can reach the supplies and social activities that they need. Uppsala connects mobility and accessibility and defines it in terms of closeness and safety, where safety is what will make mobility possible. Here we note how accessibility includes equality, and sometimes also equity issues and becomes more encompassing than mobility. In Örebro, the municipality strives for an accessible and equal public transport system that shortens, simplifies, and improves for the traveler and that can be used by everyone.

When accessibility is mentioned there is often a stress on the importance of safety in the city. An example from Västerås is a yearly safety project where the municipality asks for the citizens' views and suggestions on road safety issues in one city district per year. The purpose is to make improvements that increase safety. It is also exemplified in Umeå's policy on a pedestrian-friendly city – a city where everyone should be able to and *dare to* walk regardless of age, gender, or disability. Safety is about daring to move in the city. Women more often express concerns for their safety, and we note how accessibility is broadened to become a way to increase equality in the urban space. Thus, accessibility becomes part of a gender equality strategy that also includes the accessibility and safety of other groups perceived as vulnerable. In Växjö, accessibility is expressed more as a matter of equity, and the goal is to arrive at a transport system that is equitable and where equity takes a starting point in what mode of mobility people can use and with this stress the need to plan transportation from the idea that society be built as accessible as possible to as many people as possible.

While we found this connection between accessibility, equality, and equity in some municipalities there was also critique voiced. In Västerås for example, there has been a discussion on the importance of not letting one group's accessibility dominate and set the standards, all concerns should be included in transport planning, i.e., also men's accessibility. Political representation has relevance in that municipalities having the conservative or liberal coalitions in power do not elaborate on accessibility. To look for the presence of EcoF we also analyzed the indicator *Care* which stems from care ethics, developed within the field of ecofeminism, that see humans as constituted through social relations in interdependence to others. It implies a sensitivity to needs of subjects in a broader political community, including present and future generations, nature, and non-human species (Kronsell & Stensöta, 2015). In coding we looked for: signs of care for nature, care for future generations, and discussions on the needs of vulnerable groups or non-human animals.

We found expressions of care in all the municipalities analyzed. The most frequent expression of care in transport planning was the concern for different groups' need for mobility or accessibility to the transport system. Although it overlaps to some extent with the previous indicator on vulnerable groups, when the focus is on care it is about caring for *their needs*. This is sometimes discussed as a concern for one specific group in isolation, e.g., all municipalities pay specific attention to the group of elderly whose needs should be considered in transport planning. Typically, calls to care for the elderly and children, people with disabilities, or those living in peripheral and rural areas were articulated as distinct concerns, targeting the needs of each group separately.

One example of paying attention to the needs of specific groups is to call for a child perspective on transport planning. Children and youth are assumed to need to be cared for and particularly to assure their transportation routes to school are safe. Trelleborg frames children as vulnerable road users. Proposals to cater for their needs call mainly for technical solutions on roads to schools: lower speed limits, improve signposting, or changes to the road surface. In other municipalities, the child perspective is broader and includes reflections on children's access to recreational and nature areas. The care for specific groups – like children or the elderly – by calling attention to the care for their needs, is frequent in the material. In this, we note a risk that categories are homogenized, i.e., as if all the children or all the elderly have the same needs in the transport system.

An alternative way to express the care for groups was found in Umeå, framing them in terms of users of modes of transport, e.g., as cyclists or pedestrians. This suggests caring for differential needs that are closely related to transport modes. Umeå differentiates within the groups of cyclists and pedestrians and the care for their needs is linked to the *diversity* of

cyclists, from the small child on their first bike to the everyday bike commuter, the shopper, and the family on an outing. This is a way to recognize that each cyclist group may have a particular need for infrastructure and safety measures. Pedestrians too are framed in terms of a diversified group, again with different needs depending on who they are: physically challenged, youth, new to the city; or according to what they are doing: pedestrians going to work, to school, running errands, getting exercise or simply strolling along.

Some municipalities cater to groups by advancing caring perspectives that are *holistic*. Examples are attempts to evaluate the consequences of a specific transport solution from several perspectives. The elderly-friendly city is an example that involves thinking about how the whole city can become more suitable to the elderly's needs. In Umeå, children were considered holistically, their mobility needs were approached from several perspectives: accessibility and security to transport routes to school as well as to recreation. Växjö's pedestrian plan stressed the necessity of a holistic approach to obtain sustainability and endorses the intention to work toward a long-term sustainable transport system, where it is argued, pedestrians and cyclists should be prioritized throughout the city including a view to the future.

We noted holistic caring perspectives were more frequent in specific plans on cycling, or on public transport. These plans or programs were long-term and allowed for greater depth and concerns to be elaborated more comprehensively than in the regular work of the transport committees (as expressed in protocols). All the municipalities we studied have developed broader plans and policies but the three municipalities with holistic approaches – Örebro, Umeå, and Växjö – are municipalities that had either high gender representation and/or green and left-leaning political majorities.

We found some evidence of *the care for nature* in all municipalities but it was not frequent, seldom elaborated, and mostly caring about nature for human ends, most often in terms of securing access to natural areas for the benefit of humans' health and recreation. We found it in relation to the maintenance of green areas in the urban system, in the call for nature inventories to map the effects on biodiversity of future planned road construction, and by looking for ways to minimize their impact or in concerns about how forests close to living areas can best be cared for and maintained. The care for nature as a vulnerable group and of nature's needs included specific measures like the care for specific species, like bees or by

establishing fauna passages where frogs can safely cross or planting trees alongside roads to ensure the safe crossing for birds or using the road circulation spaces to plant meadows with insect hotels, all as an effort to protect these species and increase biodiversity. However, most initiatives were piecemeal and in general, the ecological dimension of sustainability weakly developed across all municipalities.

The Örebro plan for the cycle network exemplifies how care can be expressed ambitiously and comprehensively in a transport plan that aims for both social and ecological sustainability. In it, it is argued that the aim of the cycle network is to connect the city's green nature areas and blue corridors along the city's waters which will enable the spread of biodiversity across the city and enhance ecological values. Simultaneously, this is expected to enhance social values by helping citizens to experience and learn about nature through their use of the cycle network while it offers an alternative to cyclists who want to stay away from trafficked roads. It is also socially sensitive by recognizing and caring for diverse needs, the bike lanes are to gradually be adapted to the transport needs of children and elderly, to ensure everyone that their movements can be conducted safely. It is also argued that encouraging children to learn how to ride a bicycle is essential to enable lifelong sustainable transport habits when established in a new generation. These ideas about the cycle network seek to assure both social and ecological sustainability with a view to the future.

Concluding Discussion

All eight municipalities express aspects of sustainable rationality manifested through the frequency of the indicators for the ideal types. All indicators were found across the municipalities but unevenly so with 'reduced travelling' for CM and 'care', 'equality and rights of vulnerable groups' for EcoF the most prominent in our material (Table 2). Umeå and Växjö stood out in the total number of codes associated with CM and EcoF. It was surprising how differently the indicators were expressed when operationalized as policies. Our analysis revealed how sustainable transport policy and planning can be conceptualized and enacted in such diverse ways.

Across municipalities, there is recognition that groups differ in vulnerability and needs as well as expressions of a general idea that this should indeed be recognized and catered for in transport planning. However, how to cater for these different needs differ, from taking a specific group's (the children or elderly) perspective to a concern with accessibility rather than mobility. The recognition of differences can also turn the urban setting into a space of battle between different mobilities and accessibilities. The need for a reduction of private car use in favor of public transport, bicycling, and walking, is commonly recognized and frequently discussed in all municipalities while also giving rise to conflicts over priorities. When norms that roads are destined for cars and vehicles dominate, a child perspective can generate controversies as it gives priority to cycle paths and public transportation over cars. Conflicts arise around priority issues, about what land-use needs should be attended to and which road users should have priority, manifested in questions about how much parking should be made available in the city, or which mode of transport should be prioritized for snow removal. In all our cases, ecological sustainability was not prioritized, biological diversity is posed against the needs for roads and needs for schools but seemed a bit better cared for in holistic policies which included care for future generations as well as nature.

The more substantial discussions on sustainability, with CM and EcoF norms being strongly expressed by Örebro, Växjö, and Umeå, can be explained neither by representation nor political constellation. These three municipalities vary in their degree of women represented in policy-making as well as which political constellation influenced decision-making during the studied period. It is in these three municipalities that we find holistic approaches and attention to diversity of transport needs of different groups. In Umeå, historically led by a social democratic majority but with low female representation, sustainable transport policy advances solutions that are associated with EcoF, for example by recognizing that there are different types of cyclists and pedestrians. For example, cyclists are discussed as a diverse group in a way that recognizes their different needs in relation to the urban space.

Municipalities with more conservative political majorities, like Trelleborg, Helsingborg, and Danderyd, do not advance holistic approaches and are more inclined to protect personal car use. However, when reviewing the CM indicator 'reduce travelling', also Helsingborg with a conservative majority, focuses on a broad range of measures to reduce car dependency. The indicator 'reduced travelling', which rendered most hits on CM in our material, also reflects conflicts along political lines. In Danderyd and Uppsala, the conservative and liberal parties assign a high value to 'freedom of choice' mostly transferred into 'freedom to drive' with tendencies to focus on technical solutions such as electric cars as measures to mitigate climate change. A focus that is an expression of Technical Masculinity in contrast to sustainable

rationality associated to EcoF and CM. Interestingly, in Västerås with the leading coalition consisting of the socialist party, the green party and one of the conservative parties there is also a discussion on 'freedom of choice' but it is framed as 'freedom of transport choice' with the focus on measures changing the relative attractiveness between transport modes and giving priority to more sustainable choices, with a clear wish to prioritize public transport, walking and bicycling at the expense of the car.

Although our study points to the relevance of political constellations for sustainable transport policy choices we have not found any conclusive evidence on how gender representation in municipal committees handling transport planning relate to CM and EcoF sustainability norms. A possible reason, which however demands more research is that differences in male and female attitudes, behavior, and values (cf. Hiselius Winslott et al., 2019) are already manifested in different political majorities because women tend to vote to the left and men to the right and the divergence has increased over the years (Oskarson & Ahlbom, 2021). This implies that gendered norms are embedded in political parties or much more widely spread than only associated with male and female bodies represented in policy-making contexts.

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