Introduction
In the development of Swedish government policies equal opportunities, or gender equality, has been a key concept since the 70ies. Most policy areas today include more or less successful recommendation on means to achieve equality between women and men as well as ways of mainstreaming gender into everyday political work. However, it was not until the mid 90ies that government paid any attention to develop gender equality in the field of spatial planning.

How successful has the policy of gender equality been in the field of spatial planning? What lessons can be learned from ongoing planning practise? How can a gender perspective be developed in planning? Can planning be a tool to develop gender equality? What may be the links between feminist theory and planning theory? These are some of the questions I will address in this paper.

My presentation takes its starting point in the results of a research project carried out with the overall aim to find out what a gender perspective in planning praxis is, or what is could be. The intention was to develop the understanding of a gender perspective in strategic planning trough combining practise and theory. It was thus a research project both for and of planning.

I will focus on the issue of strategic planning (which also may be named comprehensive planning or master planning) rather than detailed planning. It is at this level in the planning hierarchy that important decisions crucial for women’s and men’s organisation of everyday life are taken. At this planning level the overall location of dwellings, work places, transport networks and the like are in focus.

1 The project was carried together with Tora Friberg. Empirical data were collected between 1995 and 2000 through a questionnaire sent to all Swedish municipalities, the analysis of about 20 planning documents and finally in-depth interviews with 20 planners who had tried to develop a gender perspective or gender equality in the field of strategic planning. The project is presented in the following working reports published by the Department of Social and Cultural Geography, Lund University : 1997: Genusperspektiv i översiktlig planering. Rapporter och Notiser (148); 1998 Gender perspective in Swedish Comprehensive Planning. Rapporter och Notiser (153); 1999: Att bedriva jämställdhet med kommunal översiktspplanering. Rapporter och Notiser (157); 2001:Steg framåt. Strategier och villkor för att förverkliga genusperspektivet i översiktlig planering.. Rapporter och Notiser (162).
I will start by clarifying my understanding and use of concepts related to gender to be followed by a short presentation of strategic planning in Sweden and some interesting finding of the research project. The next step will be to approach planning from a feminist perspective by putting some “inconvenient” questions. In doing so, an everyday life perspective will be introduced to overcome some of the shortcomings of current planning discourses. Finally I will outline a counter discourse.

The concepts gender equality versus gender
The introduction of a gender perspective into Swedish planning has mainly been the concern of practitioners, among others those responsible for the development of gender equality at various government levels (jämställdhetshandläggare). Due to this fact, the term gender equality meaning equal opportunities (jämställdhet), is the commonly used concept among practitioners. The Swedish word corresponding to gender (genus) is mainly used among academics and seldom found in policy documents. It has never got the broad use as in English. Consequently, the term gender equality was used in interviews and when referring to the comments by planners in the research reports. In contrast, the term gender perspective was used in the researcher’s analysis of collected material. The same principles are followed in this paper. I give the same meaning to the two terms equal opportunities and gender equality.

A crucial shortcoming of the concept gender equality is its focus on sameness (likhet), that is to say women are to become like men. Further, it puts women in focus without really challenging the relation between men and women. Nonetheless it is a useful concept if you want to discuss women’s promotion in work, access to higher education, legal rights, equal representation of women and men in Parliament and the like. In this respect Swedish policies to support women have reached quite far.

A gender perspective instead implies that power relations between men and women are in focus. Furthermore, gender refers to those differences between men and women that are socially and culturally constructed. This in turn means that duties, spaces, habits etc linked to men and women respectively are changing all the time. Despite much policy work to improve gender equality, women and men still do not share the same everyday life experiences. Therefore it is relevant to identify these different experiences in planning processes. It must however be done in such a way that existing patterns are not perpetuated. It is indeed difficult for spatial planning to handle the fact that conditions for men and women are different at the same time as they ought to be the same and are expected to be the same. It is necessary to find ways out of this dilemma.

Strategic planning
In the Swedish planning system each municipality is by law required to formulate a spatial plan covering its whole area. The plan does not have statutory implications; instead it should serve as a tool for creating a holistic approach to various development fields related to the use of land. With some exceptions it is the municipality, rather then the state, that has the power over deciding in land use planning. Regional planning covering several municipalities has a weak position in Sweden due to the planning monopoly of municipalities. But regional planning is emerging for two reasons: (i) the Swedish municipalities are today often too small to handle the issues they are intended to be responsible for and (ii) EU supports the development of regional planning through ESDP (European Spatial Development Perspective) and through various kinds of economic support. Although the findings of the research project are derived from strategic planning at the municipality level the overall analysis is equally relevant for the regional level.

Regional planning is an increasingly important level of planning in which little attention is given to the gender perspective, at least in Sweden. Important new issues in Swedish planning are enlargements of regions, regional infrastructure and markets located in the outskirts of town. They have profound implication for both women’s and men’s organisation of everyday life. The size of local labour markets has increased as means for transport have improved. The Swedish municipalities, last reorganised in the 70ies, were meant to correspond to a local labour market. According to the spatial model for the Swedish welfare state, the municipality should offer work opportunities within its
boundaries and the local neighbourhood should provide good housing, food markets, compulsory schools and day care facilities within acceptable walking distance. Today this situation is no longer valid, neither in practise nor theory. Instead today’s local labour market covers several municipalities and shopping is referred to markets in the outskirts of towns to be reached by car. The structures of today’s regions are based on the demands of effectiveness raised by trade and industry rather than the needs and aspirations of individual women and men. As a result, women and men travel longer distances and for more hours than earlier to get to work. There are also evidences that the gap between men’s and women’s earnings has increased due to new patterns of commuting. The male member of the family travels far away to get a better paid job while the woman in the family has a nearby located and less well paid job to be able to take care of the children after school or when day care facilities close. Clearly a gender perspective is needed in the development of strategic planning, whether at municipality or regional level.

A slow process
The material collected in the research project comprised only municipal strategic planning. It did show that many planners found it meaningful to discuss gender equality in relation to strategic planning. At the same time few municipalities had developed planning documents demonstrating a gender perspective. The gender perspective was limited to a few general aims in the introduction. Rather then giving us clues to the meaning of a gender perspective in planning, our research material revealed both uncertainties and ambiguity about the meaning of incorporating gender equality into spatial planning, especially strategic planning.

Thus an important conclusion was that incorporating a gender perspective into planning is a very slow process. Mainstreaming gender perspective or equal opportunity into a policy area is always difficult but planning seems to be a more resistant field than others. Today’s planning discourse can be characterized in the following way:

- planning is a field mainly developed by practitioners;
- spatial planning is based on the assumption of being (gender) neutral with the public interest in focus;
- the meaning of public interest is not problematized;
- few planners are interested in feminist theory, few feminist theorists are interested in planning;
- the concept equal opportunities or gender equality is not supportive in planning
- government experts for gender equality (jämställhetshandläggare) and planners speak different languages.

Two approaches among practitioners
Despite the above discouraging conclusions there were interesting findings derived from interviews and planning documents to develop further analysis from. Especially two major approaches identified to develop a gender perspective in planning have been of importance. The first and most common approach was to work with, or ask for, practical tools to use in the development of current planning procedures. The planning discourse can be characterized as rational planning which in practise means a more or less explicit top-down process.

Planners using the second approach instead wanted their planning to be based on other knowledge than usually is the case. Such new knowledge was best achieved through the development of public participation, especially the participation of women. This bottom-up approach made the differences between men’s and women’s experiences visible. Their approach could be labelled communicative planning. The public participation process was developed through study groups or working groups created for a specific planning project. The groups could consist of only women and only men but other compilations also existed. The groups met regularly over a period and were given great freedom in developing the issues to be raised. Planners were at hands to answer questions and give specific knowledge when asked for. Important key words in the planners description of the process were non-hierarchy, bottom-up and everyday-life experiences as well as an emphasize on the importance of
citizens’ knowledge, experiences and “language” together with the need for a different agenda for the planning process.

**A feminist approach**

The fact that gender equality is the common concept among planners and government experts for gender equality (jämställdhetshandläggare) creates problem when developing a gender perspective in today’s planning practise. The use of the concept raises a lot of questions. Do we not plan for both men and women? Are some places for men and others for women? To look for ways to achieve sameness in a narrow sense in spatial planning leads planners into the wrong direction; it becomes almost impossible to grasp the gender perspective in planning.

Instead of trying to develop the gender perspective from current planning practise I will approach planning from a feminist perspective and use themes from gender theory to discuss how they correspond to current planning discourses. The main themes I will discuss are

- power and subordination
- how to handle what is considered to be female in planning
- knowledge production from the perspective of feminist epistemology

**Power and subordination**

The first relevant question is to what extent women participate in the planning process, as professionals, politicians or citizens. The number of women planners is quite large today, the proportion of female students in spatial planning and architecture has in Sweden been above 50% since the 70ies. But women planners are not as well represented among chief planners in municipalities or private offices as the overall number suggests.

Regarding the participation of laywomen in the planning process the general pattern is that they often participate in public meetings but are less likely than men to express their view, at least orally. But, as I see it, the number of women in the process is not the central issue n this discussion, although important from the perspective of democracy. To apply a gender perspective in planning is the responsibility for all planners, politicians and practitioners regardless of their sex. Furthermore, interviews from the research project clearly show that women planners are no guarantee for gender awareness.

Instead an investigation of power relations is necessary. Such power relations are embedded in the prevailing planning discourse, power relations that subordinate everyday life experiences of women. The mechanism of subordination in the planning system becomes evident in an analysis of its hierarchical structure together with the arguing around this structure among planners. In the Swedish planning system, like most others, strategic planning precedes detailed planning to guide it. The overall structures in the physical environment are determined through strategic planning. Most planners maintain that the strategic level is gender neutral, the public interest is in focus and this interest is assumed to be equal for all human beings, no special group is given special priority. The issue of gender equality can however, many planners argue, be identified in relation to detailed planning. Gender equality becomes synonymous with women’s issues (men’s issues in planning are never mentioned).

The interviews with planners revealed a number of issues to be considered women’s. The issues can be brought together into the following clusters: housing, security and safety, transport, services and facilities for care, the local environment, new ways of life, new perspectives in planning and public participation. The clusters are thus linked to the environment around house and home and around

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2 The following discussion has been much inspired by Sandercock, Leonie (1998): Towards Cosmpolis.Johan Wiley & Sons.

3 The role of women and men planners respectively and how they look upon their professional are other important issues which are however not dealt with in this paper.
issues related to people’s way of life, that is to say, issues that by tradition are considered to be part of women’s interests and responsibilities and consequently female. In detailed planning some planners are thus prepared to raise the issue of gender equality. Although most women agree that the mentioned issues are of importance for women, they are not the only ones. Today’s women, especially in the Nordic countries, also have paid work and often participate in political work. Women see themselves, and want to be seen, as members of both the private and the public sphere.

The way of referring women’s issues to only detailed planning is a sophisticated way to twice subordinate women’s experiences in the planning process. Firstly, by describing strategic planning as gender neutral there is no concern about women’s specific experiences related to this level (such as commuting to work) and as a result they do not have an impact on the outcome of the planning process. Secondly, as so called gender neutral strategic planning is “above” and before detailed planning in the planning hierarchy by providing the overall structure for detailed planning, detailed planning is governed by and subordinated strategic planning in this process. Women’s experiences are reduced to issues around house and home and associated mainly with the private sphere. The present view of gender neutral planning both excludes and belittles women’s experiences.

The view of women as being part of only the private sphere creates further problems. Some planners dissociate themselves from this way of looking at women’s issues in planning as they are afraid that it may perpetuate rather than change women’s traditional role in society. In some cases, however, I suggest that it may be a way to legitimise the planners’ own lack of interest for the gender perspective in planning.

Although one can be critical to planners who put equal opportunity on a par with a focus on women’s traditional roles linked to house and home, it is important from a feminist perspective to see what role these issues actually have or could have in strategic planning. Are there other means to take them into consideration in planning than through subordination and referring them to the level of detailed planning? In my process to do so, I will start with a discussion on dichotomies.

The shortfall of dichotomies

In planning, like in many other current discourses, dichotomies are embedded. Such dichotomies are discussed and questioned in feminist theory. A major objection is, especially in western tradition, that the private sphere has been associated with women and the public sphere with men and less value is given to private and women. Another objection is that the concept dichotomy implies two opposites; you are forced to make choice between the two. Rather than understanding the dichotomies as opposites I understand them as the extremes along a continuum with several meaningful values in between, like semi-private, semi-public etc.

The dichotomy public and private are embedded in the above presented arguments among planners for gender neutral strategic planning and gender aware detailed planning. The arguments can be summarised in two sets of steps in the process of reasoning which create a hierarchy. They are:

Strategic planning → municipality space/(public space) → physical structures: buildings, traffic systems, open space → gender neutrality.

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

In this hierarchy higher value is given to strategic planning and its steps. But the Swedish planning legislation does not give support to the assumptions behind higher value to strategic planning; it only requires that strategic planning in time precedes detailed planning.
Sameness/difference and production/reproduction are other dichotomies, or rather pairs of words, which are of interest in an analysis of existing planning discourse. I will shortly discuss them before suggesting an alternative way to understand the relation between strategic and detailed planning.

The pair sameness and difference are often presented as a dichotomy that means you have to decide what view you support; are you in favour of sameness or difference? If gender equality is understood to be women becoming like men a tension between difference and gender equality is the result. The tension between these concepts has caused many problems for the feminist movement. But as Dahlerup⁴ has pointed out this is a false opposition. The concept of gender equality is linked to sameness and has a political dimension while difference has an ontological dimension. These dimensions should not be mixed up. The opposite of gender equality is inequality; the opposite of sameness is difference. It is thus logical to argue for both for equal salary and for taking into consideration women’s specific experiences.

The other pair, reproduction/production, is closely linked to private/public. Reproduction⁵ refers to care in a wide sense, such as the care of old, children and sick people. It is by tradition perceived as the responsibility of women and part of the private sphere, despite the fact that much of this care in Sweden is now carried out through paid work. Production is the making of goods in a broad sense and linked to paid work and the public sector, traditionally a male area of responsibilities. Reproduction and production should not be seen as a dichotomy but a continuum lacking any sharp boundaries.

In Wägnerud’s study of the various committees in the Swedish parliament she found that the different areas of responsibilities attached to them could be placed along a scale from reproduction to production with social welfare at one end and economy/technique at the other. When she then looked at women’s participation in the committees she found that women dominated in the areas that were linked to reproduction rather than production. The interviewed members of parliament gave the importance of own experience and knowledge as a major reason for this situation. Women do have good reasons to be concerned about the politics of welfare. The existing welfare system is an important explanation to Swedish women’s participation in public life such as paid work and politics. Although women’s everyday life has always been structured by political decisions the organisation of everyday life is nowadays open for debate. This change has been described as democratisation of everyday life.

The analysis by Wägnerud concerning female and male areas in politics placed along a horizontal line has inspired me to develop the following figure that includes key concepts from planning. To be noted is that the right half of the figure is not gender neutral but, due to its gender bias, in practise mainly a male area today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reproduction</th>
<th>Production</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social welfare</td>
<td>Economy/Technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female areas</td>
<td>Male areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed planning</td>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 2

If compared to figure 1, the various pairs of terms/concepts are not presented as dichotomies in a hierarchical relation but instead as extremes in a horizontal continuum allowing each setting to have equal value. If this approach is chosen, the subordination of certain issues in planning can be avoided. In the next step it is essential to find a tool that connect reproduction to production, private to public etc. The concept of everyday life I have found to be such a useful concept.

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⁵ My discussion here is based on Wägnerud, Lena, 1999: Kvinnorepresentation. Makt och möjligheter i Sveriges riksdag. Studentlitteratur.
Everyday life as a connecting link

“To make ends meet in everyday life” is an expression that was heard several times in the interviews, especially among those women planners who seriously tried to incorporate a gender perspective into planning. But the organisation of everyday life is not only a matter for practitioners. An increasing number of researchers have tried to develop the concept.

There are different views on what the concept everyday life comprises. In line with several others the discussion here includes paid work as well as travelling to and from. It is thus broader than to include just issues around house and home.

Kerstin Bohn, interested in the role of citizens in spatial planning, emphasizes that the urban environment is the framework for everyday life. Her way of understanding the concept everyday life is thus: “the totality of individual persons’ acting for their own reproduction, which in turn creates the possibilities for the societal reproduction”. According to Bohn’s interpretation, everyday life does not have a secondary subordinated role in society. Its demands are just as necessary and important as those of production. It is through everyday life activities that the market and production can develop.

The statement by Lefebvre that “in every urban project there is a program for everyday life embedded” is the starting point for reflections by Åqvist. She interprets this statement as programs for everyday life being built into planning documents without being spelled out. Such programmes are somehow taken for granted and not allowed to be discussed. The relation between planning and the organisation of everyday life is thus central in a feminist analysis of planning.

To apply an everyday life perspective in planning is to take another starting point than in conventional planning and a means to highlight hidden assumptions. Focus is on daily routines and activities seen in relation to the social and material environment specific in time and space. Individuals and their daily activities are made visible. Thereby it is also possible to take into consideration different patterns for daily life activities among women and men as well as among other categories of people.

Thus the everyday day perspective emanates from people’s ways to handle issues related to reproduction rather than the requirements spelled out by production, that is to say the so called gender neutral requirements from trade and industry.

In practise both perspectives to planning (reproduction and production) are often necessary to apply. The important lesson is that they should be equally valued; there should be a balance between the two.

A feminist epistemology for planning

The next step when to develop a gender perspective in the planning process is to discuss how we may find relevant knowledge of people’s everyday life experiences for planning. A feminist critique does not only analyse mechanisms for the subordination of people. It also questions the prevailing ways of finding and handling knowledge.

A rational and positivistic approach to knowledge production has been criticized for omitting important knowledge about women and other subordinated groups. In planning this is illustrated by the concept of public interest, a seldom problematized concept. As pointed out earlier, the public interest is supposed to be one and more or less the same for everybody. Sandercook argues that is can

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be traced back to the Enlightenment epistemology. What is labelled gender neutral planning is in practice gender blind planning. But according to feminist critique it is not enough to introduce women as a category into current planning discourse, it is also necessary to extend the knowledge about those planning is intended to benefit.

Today there are important discussions about new planning discourses but seldom with the intention to introduce a gender perspective in planning. Nonetheless they can be used for such purposes. The two approaches presented earlier in this paper illustrated two major discourses, rationale planning and communicative planning.

Early in the research project a model was set up for our analysis to illustrate different approaches to planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top-down perspective</th>
<th>Bottom-up perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Gender neutral&quot; approach</td>
<td>Position 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender aware approach</td>
<td>Position 3</td>
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Position 1 illustrates rational planning, to be found for in for instance in most handbooks published by the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning. Position 2 illustrates a bottom up approach but with a "gender neutral" approach. Women as a category may be identified but power relations are not discussed. Position 3 illustrates advocacy planning, that is, planners make themselves mouthpieces of the objects of planning. Position 4 illustrates examples of communicative planning being aware of both new types of knowledge in the planning process and power relations between men and women.

Fig 3

In rationale top-down planning the users/citizens are made objects in planning, planners plan for them. Although there may be a new interest in taking into consideration the experiences of various groups, the overall approach is not changed in principle. Tools to check the outcome of the planning exercise are considered to be appropriate means. To change the agenda for the process is not the intention.

A communicative planning process on the other hand is supported by those who want to make the objects of planning also active subjects in the process through a bottom-up approach. Citizens/users are considered to have important knowledge that should contribute to planning.

Of special interest here is the difference between position 3 and 4. The role of the planner is evidently different for the two positions, so is the view of necessary knowledge for the planning process. Planners of position 3 ask for various tools, like checklists, while planners of position 4 incorporate women from the start of the planning process to allow new and different knowledge to direct the planning process. Position 3 is characterized by planning for those, while position 4 is characterized by planning with those planning is to benefit. It is in this position a counter discourse may be developed, a new discourse that Sandercook has chosen to call insurgent planning. Some progressive examples from the research project belong to this position.

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9 See p. 62 in Sandercock, Leonie (1998): Towards Cosmpolis. She presents not only feminist critiques but also postmodern and postcolonial critiques.
A counter discourse

In my discussions, a gender perspective in planning has become more or less synonymous with an everyday life perspective. Does this perspective not apply to men as well? Certainly but their everyday life experiences are still less likely to incorporate issues around house, home, care as well as strategies to make both paid work and family care function together. However, as men’s participation in duties related to reproduction increases (which Swedish legislation and government policies allow and support) men’s and women’s everyday life experiences are hopefully becoming more and more similar. Improvements in overall gender equality will in the future hopefully be reflected in spatial planning. Thereby, the dilemma for spatial planning of handling a situation of conditions for men and women being different at the same time as they ought to be the same and are expected to be the same, has the possibility to fade out.

Meanwhile a gender perspective has to be incorporated into planning and a new planning role derived out of “insurgent” planning has to be developed. Such insurgent planning can thus become not only a way of planning but also a tool for improving gender equality. This new planning discourse, leading to a systematic demolition of the barriers that underpin women’s subordination, comprises the following approaches:

- from the human perspective, make citizens the subjects in a planning process that ascribes experience and knowledge to the individual;
- from the knowledge perspective built upon a dialogue with citizens, assign a value to knowledge of everyday life with regard to care and working life – a value of equal dignity to that assigned to expert knowledge;
- from the concept of difference, acknowledge women’s specific experience that has its roots in cultural, social and biological factors in a given context of time and space;
- from the concept of sameness, work for equal representation of women and men among planners, politicians and citizens, and assign equal value to women’s experience in planning contexts;
- from the democratic perspective, see the possibility to strengthen women’s autonomy through identifying the link between everyday life and working life.