



**NORDREGIO**  
Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

# **Knowledge background on spatial planning and green growth: A Nordic perspective**

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**norden**

Nordic Council of Ministers



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# Setting the scale

- Cities are the driving engines of capital and globalizing/glocalizing cities have expanding economies which inevitably reflect its impacts on the physical, social and cultural background of the cities.

# Growing urban areas

- It is important to recognize that cities are stretching outward to a global scale:

***“city limits” have changed in scale and scope***

- Glocalization:

***Increasing interactions between global and local worlds***

# City-regions?

- Functional empirical city regions:

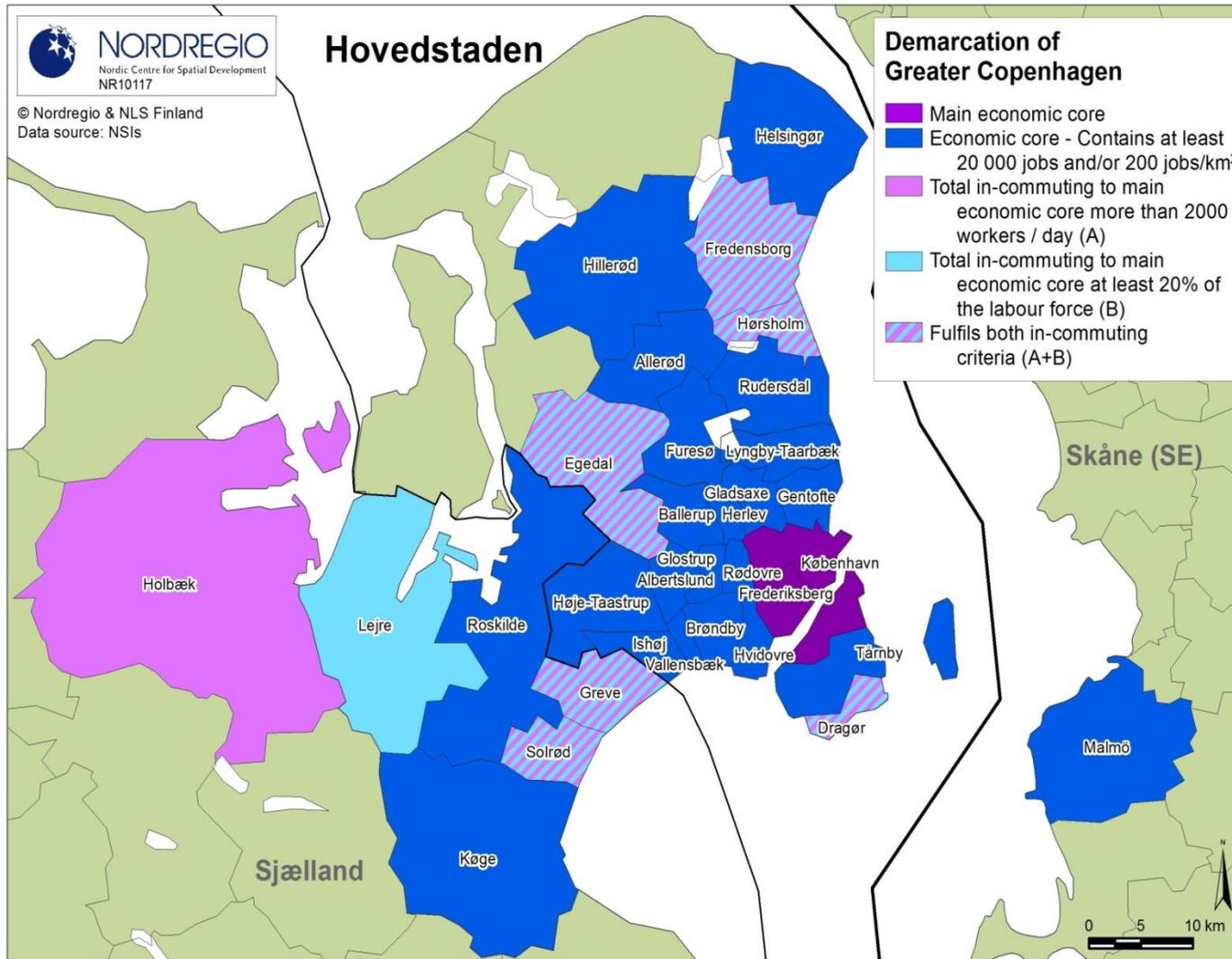
*-economically driven and based on a notion of core-periphery*

-a city core surrounded by a hinterland area that together form functional economic geographical unit (Davoudi, 2009).

# Four classes of functional urban areas (OECD, 2012):

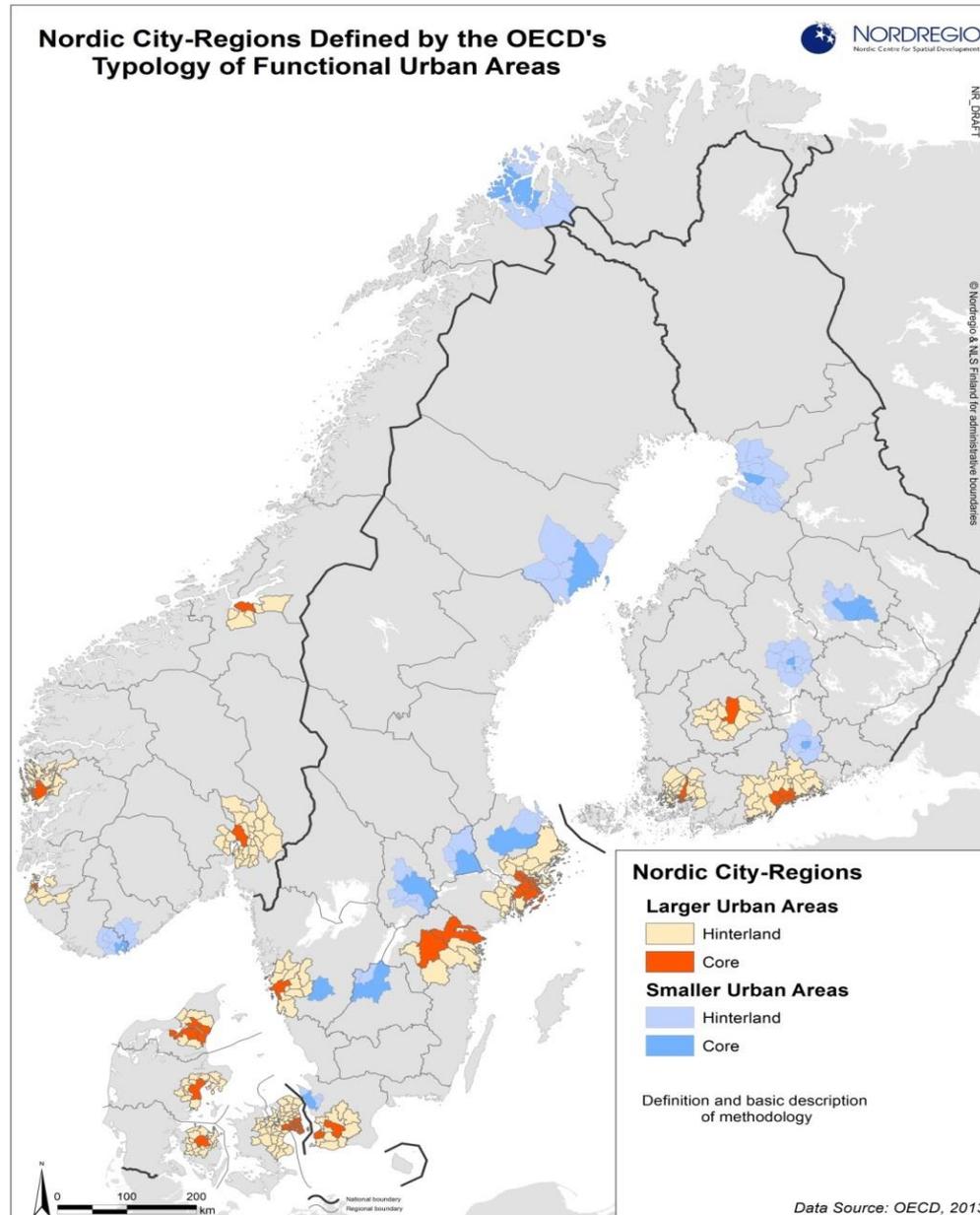
- Small urban areas, with population of between 50,000 and 200,000
- Medium-sized urban areas, with population between 200,000 and 500,000
- Metropolitan areas, with population between 500,000 and 1,5 million
- Large metropolitan areas, with population above 1,5 million

# The greater Copenhagen capital region



Source: Schmitt and Smas (2012), p. 19

# Functional urban areas in Norden according to OECD (excl. Iceland)



# Positive and negative agglomerations in city-regions

- Urban areas form a space of flows whereby agglomeration effects occur through their attractiveness and desirability for people and investment.

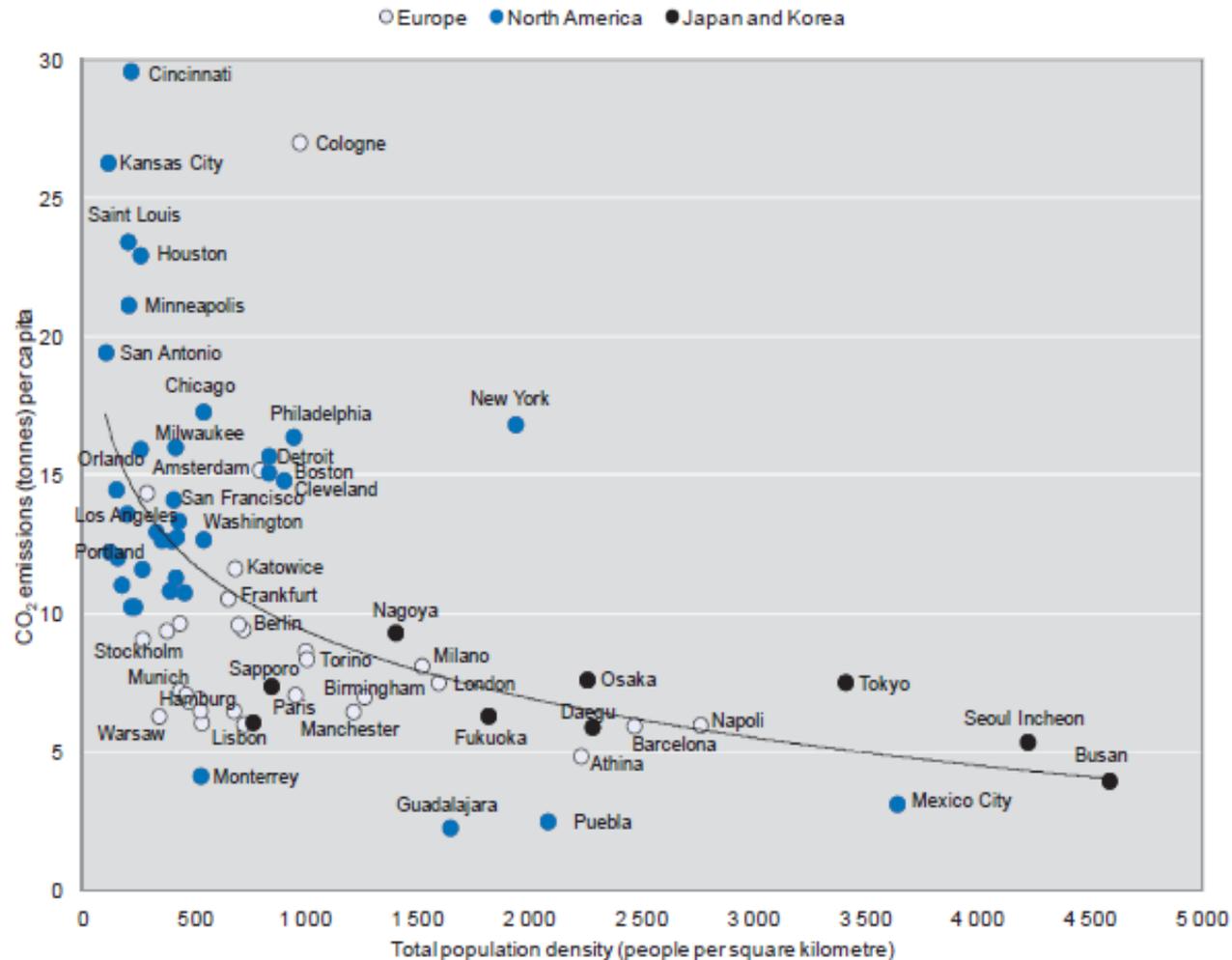
# Positive agglomerations in City-regions

- providing economic and socio-cultural opportunities that people strive for within their everyday lives

# Negative agglomerations in City-regions

- Growing populations
- Concentration of resource consumption
- Low density developments-suburban sprawl
- Pressure on local natural assets
- Social segregation, unemployment and poverty

# Urban dimension of green growth



*Population density and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita in 73 large OECD, metropolitan areas, 2006*  
 Source: (OECD, 2013a)

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## 2) Opening up the concept of green growth

### ■ Green growth

-a policy concept that characterizes tools and instruments that public institutions attempt to develop to generate growth with a reduced environmental impact,

-a general framework for how policy and investment can support prosperity while minimising detrimental effects on the environment.

- Green growth and sustainable development are not interchangeable
- Green growth reflects an emphasis on the economic dimension of desired future development towards a greener economy

# OECD's definition

- Fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies. To do this it must catalyse investment and innovation which will underpin sustained growth and give rise to new economic opportunities" (OECD, 2011a, pp. 9).

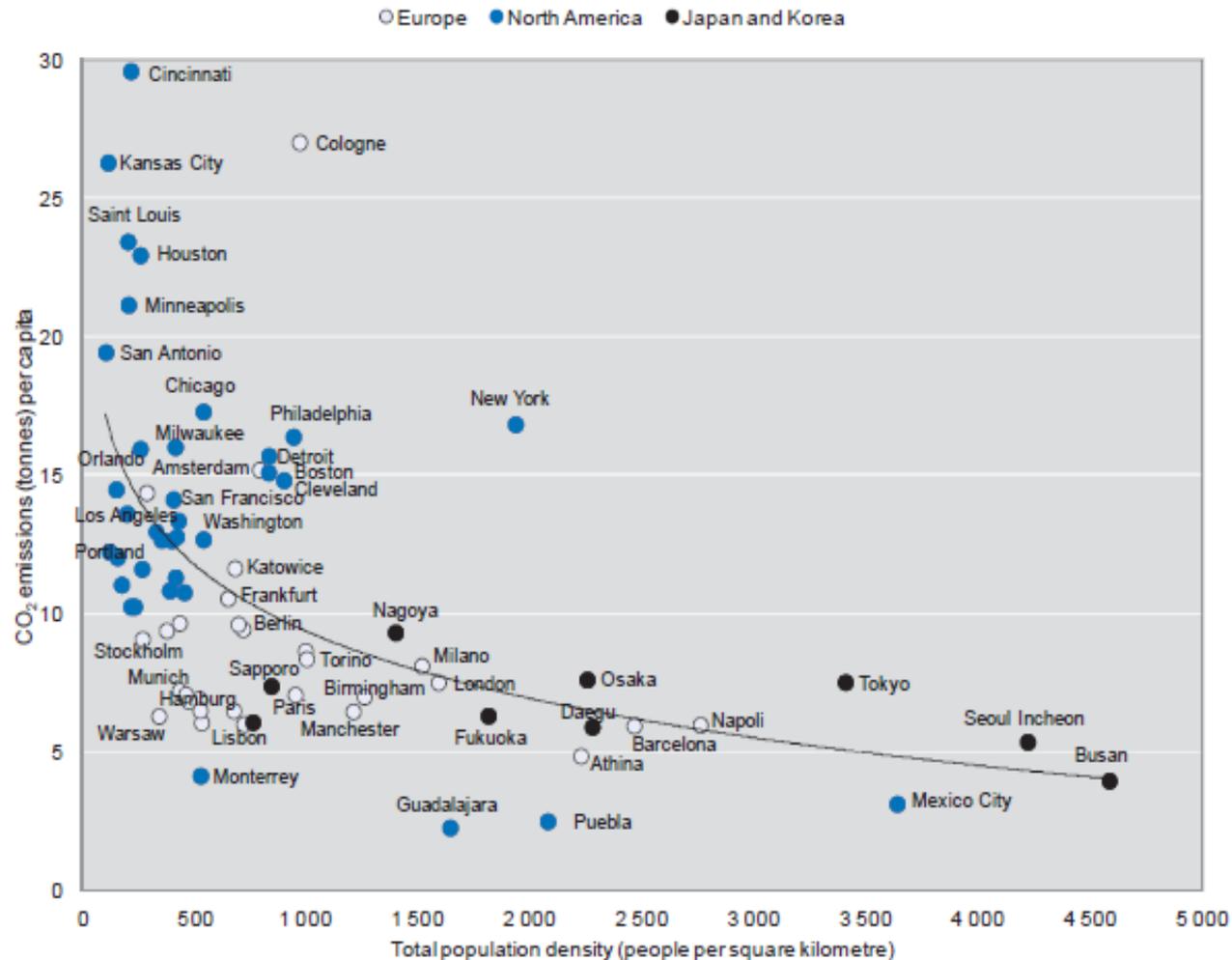
# UNEP's definition

- UNEP's *Green Economy Initiative* defined the green economy as, "...one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities" (UNEP, 2011, p. 2)

# World bank's definition

- The World Bank views green growth as, “growth that is efficient in its use of natural resources, clean in that it minimizes pollution and environmental impacts, and resilient in that it accounts for natural hazards and the role of environmental management and natural capital in preventing physical disasters. And this growth needs to be inclusive (World Bank, 2012, p. 2)

# Urban dimension of green growth



*Population density and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita in 73 large OECD, metropolitan areas, 2006*  
 Source: (OECD, 2013a)

# Spatial planning response to green growth:

## Compact city concept

- aims at creating a sustainable urban form through relatively high residential density with mixed land-uses and well connected communities

### ***Sustainable transport:***

- reducing private car dependence
- increasing access to public transit
- cycling and walking

### ***Reducing energy consumption***

- location of buildings (with good proximity to high quality mobility systems, local services and jobs )
- redeveloping and integrating vacant or underused areas
- higher density buildings

# Most important actions for green growth in cities

- Urban physical planning is seen as a key component
  - the energy retrofit of buildings in order to create jobs;
  - the efficiency of transport and mobility in order to increase attractiveness to firms and citizens as well as urban redevelopment;
  - *Greening growth in urban areas* with policies, initiatives and investments that can reduce environmental impacts as potential sources of growth

Source: OECD's Report *Green Growth in Cities*, 2013

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### **3) Spatial planning and green growth policies in the Nordic countries**

- Nordic municipalities play a strong role in spatial planning
- Comprehensive planning with an urban development focus
- Promote cooperation between municipalities, as well as between administrative scales

- Finland strongly promotes the integration of regional and municipal policies in spatial planning
- Spatial planning is restricted to policies regarding regional growth in Sweden
- Regional strategy is not binding, but has a central guiding role for municipal planning in Norway
- In Denmark there is a high degree of interdependence between the municipalities and it is an example of the need to consider developments occurring beyond municipal borders

# Green growth policies in the Nordic countries

- All the Nordic countries have developed policies on green growth
- Resource efficient building, efficient use of space and resource efficient spatial planning are emphasized in Finland (especially in cities of Helsinki, Lahti and Turku)
- A strong focus on the creation of employment opportunities and on the need to reduce global environmental impacts

# Green growth policies in the Nordic countries

- Several countries also point to their comparative advantage and leadership of the cleantech market (renewable energy) as a strong argument for the prioritisation of green growth policies (especially *Denmark with Energistrategi 2050* and *Sweden with Bygginnovation 2013 programme*)
- Focus on economic development, environmental technology and business-oriented programmes (Norway)

# Green growth policies in the Nordic countries

- Proposed measures are targeted towards the private sector and job creation
- Not explicit on the social perspectives

- Iceland's green growth policies have a strong emphasis on social aspects and its main policy documents widely discuss the importance of securing high standards of quality of life

# Nordic perspective on planning for green growth

- All the Nordic countries strongly encourage sustainable urban development and compact structures,
- No explicit link between spatial planning and green growth,
- The exception would be Denmark, for which clean energy and the growth of the clean sector is clearly linked to land use and making land available for these industries.

# Initial conclusions

- link between physical planning and green growth is rarely made,
- strategies addressing green growth has a narrow view with strong focus on economic development that is environmentally sustainable,
- the importance of encouraging green growth in the private sector is highlighted.
- rarely taking into account social concerns and lifestyle perspective,

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## Green growth is also a gender issue

Women and men leave different ecological footprints. They approach environmental issues and sustainability in different ways. Their preferred means of transport vary, as do their general consumption patterns. Moreover, women in the world's developing countries are affected more severely by climate change and natural disasters than men. These are some of the reasons why the gender dimension is being integrated into all activities forming part of the Nordic Prime Ministers' green growth initiative.

### Differences in behaviour and consumption

"There is a difference in how men and women act and consume things, which is interesting from an environmental and climate perspective," says gender expert Charlotte Kirkegaard from the consulting company Unisex Progress. She will be incorporating the gender equality dimension into the programme design and implementation of three projects in the Nordic Prime Ministers' green growth initiative. The process is called gender mainstreaming.

"Sustainability has to include both genders' perspectives. If you lack the perspective of half the world's population, you will not be able to find the right solutions to achieve your goals," Kirkegaard says.

The three projects address cooperation on education and research on green growth, the inclusion of environmental and climate issues in Nordic development aid, and financing green investment and companies.

### More research on the gender perspective

By definition, gender equality is about ensuring equal access to opportunities in society, whether social, political or economic. From a growth perspective, gender inequality prevents women from fully optimising their economic potential and thus restricts their ability to contribute to the shift towards a greener economy. An unbalanced society, in other words, does not fully benefit from its human capital.

One of the solutions to this problem is more research. European studies have shown a lack of research on the significance of the gender perspective to the economy. The research segment of the green growth initiative will therefore work towards further integrating the perspective into Nordic research. The aim is to ensure funding that will be targeted specifically at the linkage between green growth and the gender dimension.