



NORDREGIO
Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

Demographic changes, housing policies and urban planning

Examples of situations and strategies
in Nordic municipalities

Lukas Smas with contributions by Christian Fredricsson
and Haukur Claessen

NORDREGIO WORKING PAPER 2013:4



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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland. *Nordic co-operation* has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Common Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

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is a forum for co-operation between the Nordic parliaments and governments. The Council consists of 87 parliamentarians from the Nordic countries. The Nordic Council takes policy initiatives and monitors Nordic co-operation. Founded in 1952.

The Nordic Council of Ministers

is a forum of co-operation between the Nordic governments. The Nordic Council of Ministers implements Nordic co-operation. The prime ministers have the overall responsibility. Its activities are co-ordinated by the Nordic ministers for co-operation, the Nordic Committee for co-operation and portfolio ministers. Founded in 1971.

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Stockholm, Sweden, 2013

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Preface

This report was initiated by the Nordic working group for the exchange of experience and knowledge development (urban policies), appointed by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy under the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Nordic working group's mandate is to contribute to the creation of knowledge about new trends in urban and regional development.

One issue that has gained political recognition over the latest years is the consequences and challenges for regions marked by significant demographic changes. Thus, one theme for the activities of the Nordic working group has been 'Regions and the demographic challenge'

The work carried out within this theme consists of two parts:

- a quantitative analysis of the functional labour markets in all five Nordic countries – published as a *Nordregio Working Paper with the title: Demographic trends in the Nordic local labour markets*

- a qualitative investigation into how a number of municipalities are planning for the future with regard to housing provision published in this working paper.

The specific question linked to the theme of demographic challenges in this working paper is how dramatic demographic changes, such as migration and aging, impact planning for housing in different types of municipalities. How do municipalities adapt to or counteract the current and future expected trends? And how does that impact the long term consumption of land for new urban development?

This report was written by Lukas Smas with the assistance of Christian Fredricsson and Haukur Claessen.

Many thanks also to Ole Damsgaard, Lisa Hörnström, and Lisbeth Greve Harbro, who reviewed a draft manuscript of this working paper. Thanks also to all the representatives from the seven municipalities who shared their local knowledge and experience through telephone interviews and email correspondence.

Abstract

Demographic changes, such as urbanization, ageing populations, and international migration, have significant effects on local development. This study examines the relationship between demographic changes and housing, focusing on different local demographic situations and related housing and planning strategies in the Nordic states. Nordic metropolises (Stavanger and Aalborg), regional centres with universities (Växjö and Sønderborg), medium-sized towns (Ålesund and Örnköldsvik), and rural areas (Pargas) have different local demographic challenges and potentials. In all types of studied municipalities, an ageing population is typically seen as the most important challenge for the future, especially if younger people are moving out and fertility rates are low—but there are exceptions. How this challenge is met differs somewhat across the different municipalities examined here, but there seems to

be a preference for attracting younger people rather than accommodating elderly populations, and a focus on development strategies rather than adaptive tactics. Depending on size and resources, most of the municipalities have ambitious statistical prognoses and strategic policies to integrate demographic changes and housing, but it is not entirely clear if such prognoses depend upon future housing developments or vice versa. How housing strategies are implemented differs between the municipalities, with some being very active through land politics and other forms of interventions, while others perceive their role as limited. However, it is evident that urban densification is a general spatial development strategy in Nordic municipalities, but balanced geographical development is often emphasized as well.

1. Introduction

Northern Europe is the vanguard of urbanization in Europe (Champion, 2011). However, local demographic changes are complex, especially with the increasing mobility of everyday life, diverse commuting patterns, national and international migration, and changing population composition. *The Demographic Challenges to the Nordic Countries* report from Nordregio maintained that the main driver of demographic development in the Nordic states is migration, and that there are three overarching patterns of flows: from peripheral to metropolitan regions, migration between the Nordic countries, and immigration from outside the Nordic states (Rauhut et al., 2008).

Movement from peripheral regions to metropolitan areas is the dominant internal migration pattern in the Nordic countries. Although there is a tendency toward urban sprawl in some regions, in general activities are concentrated around regional nodes. There is also migration between the Nordic countries, especially from Sweden to Norway. Many municipalities and regions depend on immigration from outside the Nordic countries, which compensates for outmigration and declining birth rates. The primary migration group is young people, and migration is also a highly gendered issue. Another crucial overarching demographic change concerns the composition of the population. Because people are living longer and fertility rates are relatively low, the population is ageing, which creates social, economic, and political challenges. Challenges related to unbalanced populations in terms of age and gender are illustrated by the demographic vulnerability map (see Map 1).

This working paper focuses on three closely interconnected research areas and policy fields: demographic changes, urban planning, and housing development. As stated in the above mentioned report, a key issue for regions and municipalities is “*the ability to adjust*” (Rauhut et al., 2008). Of course, the ability to adjust also involves issues such as infrastructure and

shifting mobility patterns, environmental and climatic changes, new social formations, and so forth. However, the objective of this working paper is to highlight some aspects of how local authorities in Nordic municipalities manage demographic changes as they pertain to urban planning and housing development. The study reviews expected housing needs in Nordic municipalities in relation to local demographic trends. It also provides examples of how local Nordic authorities manage demographic changes and their impacts on housing development, such as the types of municipal plans and strategies that are used to meet expected housing needs and demographic changes.

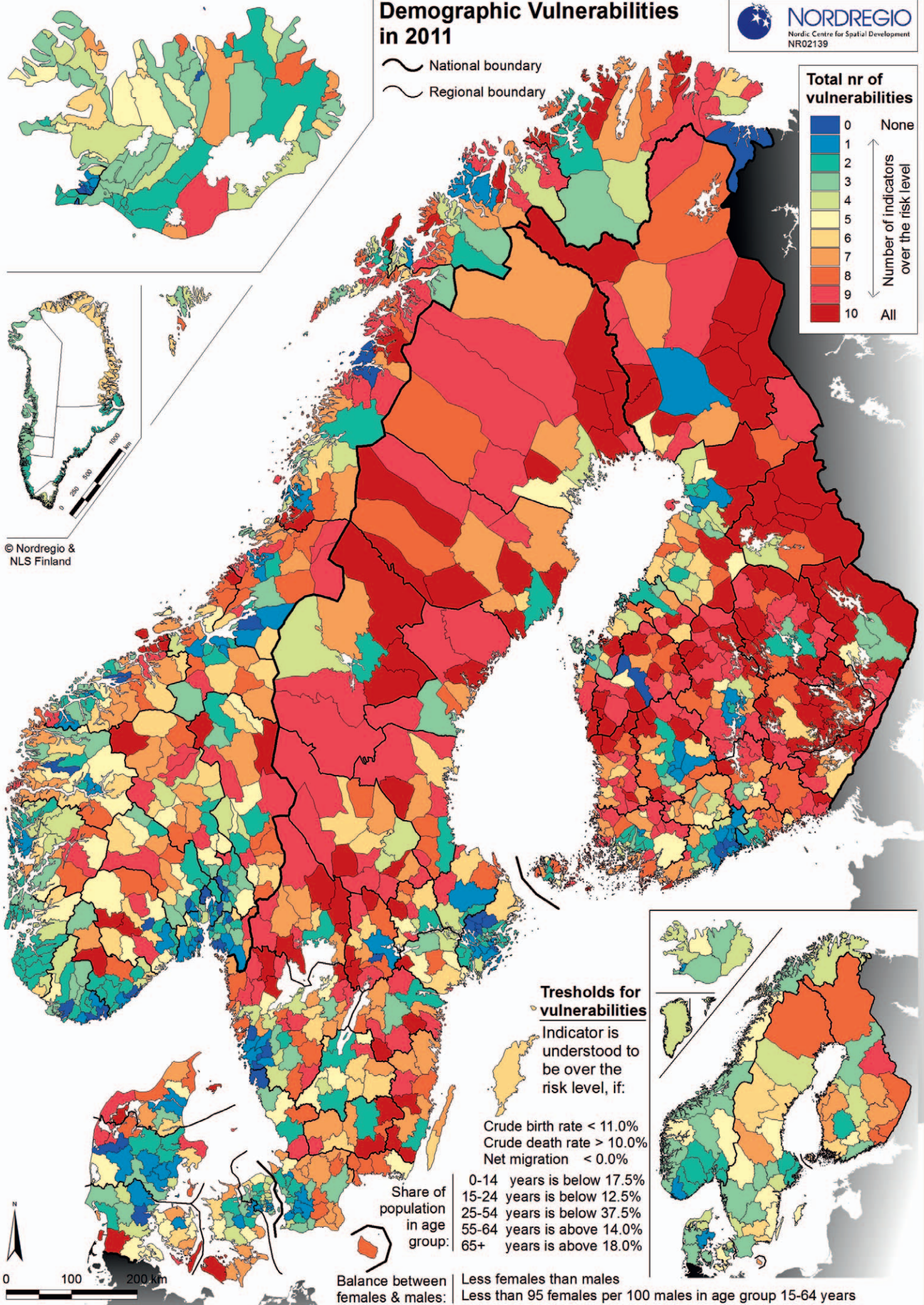
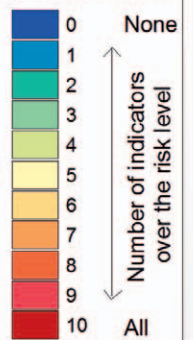
We begin with an overview of the general trends in demography, housing development, and urban planning in the Nordic states, and then examine several municipal examples more closely. The source material for this study includes key plans and policy documents (housing policies, regional strategies, and municipal plans), demographic and housing data, and semi-structured interviews with planning representatives from the municipalities we examined. These cases highlight both quantitative and qualitative demographic changes, as well as policy responses and general strategies.

In addition to quantitative changes, such as increases or decreases in the overall population, demographic changes can also be qualitative, such as when the structure of the population in a municipality or region changes. An increase in the elderly population or the number of families with children has significant implications for housing developments and urban planning. The housing stock might need qualitative adjustments, such as more detached single-family houses or more serviced apartments for elderly residents. This study will analyse both quantitative and qualitative demographic challenges, as exemplified by how several municipalities in the Nordic states are developing, planning, and adjusting their housing strategies.

Demographic Vulnerabilities in 2011

— National boundary
— Regional boundary

Total nr of vulnerabilities



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Thresholds for vulnerabilities

Indicator is understood to be over the risk level, if:

- Crude birth rate < 11.0%
- Crude death rate > 10.0%
- Net migration < 0.0%
- 0-14 years is below 17.5%
- 15-24 years is below 12.5%
- 25-54 years is below 37.5%
- 55-64 years is above 14.0%
- 65+ years is above 18.0%

Share of population in age group:

Balance between females & males:

Less females than males
Less than 95 females per 100 males in age group 15-64 years

Demography and housing policy

A safe and secure place to live is a basic human need. A recently published Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report concluded that: “As a result of falling fertility rates, many cities and regions in OECD member countries are likely to continue to ‘shrink’ in the coming decades, even with some increases in population due to migration (from within or from outside the country)” (Martinez-Fernandez, et al., 2012). Housing is an important factor in everyday life, as well as for family planning. Insufficient or inappropriate housing can cause young people to delay settling down and forming families (Malmberg, 2005).

There are direct but complicated links between migration and land-use planning, mobility, and public policy. A main finding from the OECD regarding housing markets and structural policies is that “badly-designed policies can have substantial negative effects on the economy, for instance by increasing the level and volatility of real house prices and preventing people from moving easily to follow employment opportunities” (Andrews, Caldera Sánchez, & Johansson, 2011). The demand for housing is determined by a range of demographic factors and macroeconomic conditions, but there seems to be a negative relationship between planning regulation and housing supply. International studies indicate that regulation and strict planning systems correlate with inelastic housing supplies (i.e. Vermeulen & Rouwenda, 2007; Vermeulen & von Ommeren, 2008). This research seems to indicate that governmental regulations and planning interventions can lead to an increase in housing prices by creating an inelastic housing supply. On the other hand, intensive planning and policies that increased available land for housing helped Helsinki turn a negative population trend in the 1970s into growth in the 1980s (Laakso, 2005). Thus, current research about the effects of regulations and planning does not appear to be definitive, and there are still significant research gaps that need to be addressed, such as the impacts of ageing populations on housing stocks and the effects of sprawl

and densification on existing neighbourhoods (Jacobs, 2012). The intersection between housing, planning, and demography is complex, not least because of the importance of the geographic and historical contexts.

Even though there are strong similarities between the Nordic states, there are significant historical differences in their housing policies. For example, the housing policies in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway can be characterized as “universal”, i.e. not targeting any specific income group, whereas they are “selective” in Finland and Iceland (Bengtsson & Ruonavaara, 2010). Housing policies in both Denmark and Sweden have focused on rental housing. In Sweden, municipal housing companies have managed and owned the rental estates, whereas housing estates in Denmark have largely been owned and managed by public associations “organized in small self-governed units where local tenants have a high degree of self-management – so-called ‘resident democracy’” (Bengtsson & Ruonavaara, 2010, p. 197). Norway’s housing policy has been framed around individual and co-operative ownership, as has Iceland’s, but in the latter case there is a greater focus on owner occupation and self-built units. Finland has not discriminated between forms of tenure in any particular way. Housing policy seems to be rather path dependent, embedded in institutional practices, and differences between the states are still evident in current “system shifts” in Denmark and Sweden (Bengtsson & Ruonavaara, 2010).

However, housing regimes in the Nordic welfare states are changing. In Sweden, housing policy was a crucial part of family policy and the creation of the welfare state (Malmberg, 2005). Since the 1990s, Swedish housing policies and the housing market have changed radically from being regulated to being one of the most liberal markets in the region. A neo-liberal policy shift has had far-reaching consequences, resulting in a socially and economically polarized (and geographically uneven) housing market. This is most clearly manifest in a housing shortage, growing gaps between different forms of tenure, increasing super-gentrification, and low-income filtering (Hedin et al., 2011). This is also directly related to shifting planning policies and practices within and between the Nordic states.

Map 1. Demographic vulnerabilities in 2011:

The demographic vulnerabilities map shows the total number of demographic components that are crossing the threshold of vulnerability.

A vulnerability threshold (i.e. a limit) has been set for each component to determine whether it is at risk. The thresholds for the age-structure components were calculated based on Nordic averages and the potential for replacement.

For the other components, the threshold values were set to a balanced situation. For example, a female rate below 100 (female shortage) will result in a distorted gender structure that reduces the natural reproduction rate. Using the risk/non-risk status of each component, the level of vulnerability was calculated by adding the number of components at risk.

Shifts in Nordic planning

In the European context of administrative and legal families, the Nordic/Scandinavian planning system can be characterized by comprehensive planning (for an overview see e.g. Nadin & Stead (2008)). Individual countries in Europe have different planning traditions and they tend to conceptualize planning differently. The Swedish term “samhällsplanering”, for example, is slightly different to the English concept of “urban and regional planning”, to which it is most often translated. Since the adoption of the European Spatial Development Plan in 1999 (which often refers to strategic planning approaches), “spatial planning” has become a widely used and accepted concept in the EU (Albrechts, Healy, & Kunzmann, 2003; Healy, 2004). One of the initial definitions of spatial (regional) planning can be found in the *European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter of 1983*:

Regional/spatial planning gives geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of society. It is at the same time a scientific discipline, an administrative technique and a policy developed as an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach directed towards a balanced regional development and the physical organisation of space according to an overall strategy. (CoE, 1983, p. 13)

Spatial planning thus has a distinct regional dimension, but it is also very similar to what is usually conceptualized as urban planning:

State-related policies and programs for neighbourhood, local and metropolitan areas, aiming to: effect broad-scale allocation of land uses to areas; order boundaries between them; manage ongoing uses of land, the spatial aspects of economic and social activities and connections between them; and ensure the optimal functioning of urban economic processes and social interactions. (Huxley, 2009)

One of the similarities between the Nordic countries is that their planning systems have an urban development and municipal focus (Harvold et al., 2008), with generally weak regional planning. Iceland is seldom included in planning overviews, which is not that surprising because Iceland is not part of the EU, and many of the overviews originate in EU projects. However, this omission is nevertheless interesting, because “[I]n many regards Icelandic spatial planning and develop-

ment presents the Nordic system in a nutshell, both regarding the spatial imbalances and the tabooing of radical solutions, as well as the weak but emerging regional level and decision-making structures” (Böhme, 2002, p. 151).

During the last few decades, there has been a shift toward more neo-liberal urban planning policies in many parts of Europe and the rest of the world (Sager, 2011). This has involved a general move away from land-use-oriented planning toward more strategic forms of planning; from planning by rules to planning by goals (Castells, 2002). This tendency is also evident in the Nordic states, which have seen an increased focus on strategic spatial planning, this is however occurring, in for example Denmark, alongside more traditional regulatory frameworks (Olesen & Richardson, 2012). There seem to be increased tensions between a transparent, inclusive, and democratic planning process on one hand and efficiency and new forms of market-oriented management on the other hand; or, as others have put it, between “input legitimacy and output efficiency” (Mäntysalo, Saglie, & Cars, 2011).

All Nordic states have comprehensive municipal plans, but their legal status, form, and content vary, as does the involvement of regional- and state-level governments in physical planning. Furthermore, there are significant differences between the Nordic planning systems, especially with respect to interactions between different levels and the planning instruments (i.e. plans). In Sweden, the comprehensive plan is not legally binding, whereas regional land-use plans in Finland are legally binding, as are comprehensive municipal land-use plans. In both Denmark and Norway, legally binding comprehensive plans are complemented by more flexible planning strategies. Whereas there is regional land-use planning in Norway, the regional level is detached in the Danish land-use planning system (and thus it is more similar to Sweden’s). Institutional and structural reforms in Denmark and Norway in recent years have further diversified the Nordic spatial planning system. However, urban planning is definitely on the political agenda in all Nordic states.

Over the past few decades, spatial planning in Denmark has had a more strategic role, with less emphasis on steering and more on balancing (Galland, 2012). In an effort to create larger and more efficient administrative units, Denmark reduced the number of its municipalities in 2007 from 271 to 98, and the former counties were replaced by five new administrative regions. The reform also included significant legal and administrative changes in the planning system, such as reducing the importance of the regional level. Land-use planning is now only carried out at the national and local levels

(Miljøministeriet, 2007). In the Danish planning system, there are two legally binding planning documents at the municipal level: local plans and comprehensive plans. The comprehensive plan covers the entire municipality. Since 2000, each municipality has also been required to produce a municipal planning strategy. In addition, Denmark has government policies for physical planning in the form of national planning reports and overviews of national interests, as well as national planning directives, such as the Finger Plan for the Copenhagen region.

In 2009, Norway adopted a planning act that emphasizes the strategic parts of planning and co-ordination between national, regional, and municipal levels. According to the new act, regions must develop strategic plans and regional plans, and municipalities must develop strategic plans and comprehensive plans. The new system appears to be well integrated, but there are no strict juridical hierarchies; instead, the Norwegian system could be regarded as a “power-positioning system” in which the regional level has the right to intervene, but the local municipality has the power to decide (Harvold & Nordahl, 2012). As in Denmark, the Norwegian system has both municipal planning strategies and a comprehensive municipal plan. However, the comprehensive plan includes both a strategic part and a land-use part. Only the second part, the land-use plan (which directly guides local plans) is legally binding, but there are also national area plans that are binding (Miljøverndepartementet, 2011). A key issue with the strategic plans at the municipal and regional levels is that they should be updated regularly, i.e. every new

election period.

The Swedish planning act was revised in 2011 to create a more efficient planning system, and the importance of strategic planning was emphasized. Planning is still mainly done at the municipal level, as there are neither national land-use guidelines nor regional land-use plans, and it is often said that Swedish municipalities have a planning monopoly. The compulsory (but not legally binding) comprehensive plan outlines the public interest, and it often includes both strategic development policies and land-use guidelines. However, there is sectoral national planning for infrastructure, and it is possible for regions to make guiding plans, which has been done to some extent in the Stockholm and Gothenburg regions. The regional structure is further differentiated in Sweden, with different responsible authorities and mandates in various regions (Smas et al., 2012).

There are ongoing discussions in Finland about reforming the planning system and the municipal and regional structure. The Finnish planning system has four key planning instruments: national land-use guidelines, regional land-use plans, comprehensive municipal plans, and local plans (Miljöministeriet, 2004). Physical planning is primarily practiced at both the municipal and regional levels. The comprehensive municipal plan is more or less a land-use plan that directs and locates development (and other functions), but it cannot contradict the principal land-use directions outlined in the general regional plan. The municipal plan directs the local plans, which regulate what can be built and the functions of the buildings.

2. Nordic trends and municipal contexts

Nordic demographic trends and challenges

As indicated in the Introduction, the Nordic states face three overall demographic challenges: migration, age, and gender (Rauhut et al., 2008). First, migration is the main driver of demographic development, with populations being increasingly concentrated in larger cities and regional centres (see Map 3 and 4). Second, the Nordic population is ageing, although this varies both in extent and in the actual rate of increase throughout the Nordic region (see Map 5). Third, there are gender imbalances across the Nordic region as well as significant variability within countries (see Map 6). These demographic challenges are unevenly distributed, and they lead to uneven geographical development. There is a general trend in the Nordic region toward younger urban populations, but there are differences between the countries. Older populations are more pronounced in the rural and sparsely populated areas of Sweden and Finland relative to comparable areas in Denmark and Norway (see Map 4).

All of these trends in the flows and composition of the population have created new demands for housing development, and present challenges for planners and politicians in municipalities and other regions in the Nordic states. The challenges for some municipalities are related to population growth, whereas others are experiencing population loss. Thus, some municipalities must expand their housing stock and others need to manage vacant housing. Challenges related to unbalanced populations in terms of age and gender are, as mentioned, illustrated by the demographic vulnerability map (see Map 1). Regardless of the nature of the challenge, there is often a need to adapt the housing stock to a changing population. Population increases and decreases can be both natural and caused by migration patterns. An increase in population can occur when there is a surplus of births and in-migration, outmigration compensated by a surplus of births, or declining population compensated by in-migration. Similarly,

population decreases can occur despite in-migration when there is a declining population, despite a surplus of births when there is outmigration, and when outmigration coincides with a declining population (see Map 1, and Hörnström, Hansen, & Roto (2012)).

Two crucial demographic challenges for the Nordic states have been identified: outmigration in sparsely populated regions, and “a growing mismatch between what, in population terms, is needed for stable societal reproduction and who is actually living in these sparsely populated areas – both in respect of labour market and family structure” (Hansen, Rasmussen, & Roto, 2011). Increasing and more flexible mobility patterns (such as new commuting patterns) are another demographic challenge for municipalities. However, these demographic challenges are unevenly distributed geographically; they differ from region to region within the Nordic countries (as illustrated by Map 1). At the local level, these overarching demographic challenges have paradoxical consequences for municipal planning.

The Nordic municipalities

We selected seven municipalities to study, two in each of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and one in Finland. We selected municipalities with different demographic structures and changes, as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2. New and updated urban typologies were the starting point for the selection of these municipalities (see Roto, 2012). Even though this is a limited group, it includes a range of municipalities from Nordic metropolises with approximately 200,000 inhabitants through regional centres and medium-sized towns to a rural municipality with a population of approximately 15,000 people (see Table 2). What is important is that these municipalities have different demographic possibilities and challenges, and they have used different strategies, plans, and policies to address these issues. Thus, these cases are illustrative rather than representative.

Table 1. Population change and density in the Nordic municipalities studied

Municipality	Area (km ²)	Population 2011	Population density 2011	Total Population change 2001–2011	Total population change (%) 2001–2011	Annual average change (%) 2001–2011
Aalborg	1144	199,188	174	9007	4.74	0.46
Stavanger	66	126,021	1898	17,173	15.78	1.46
Växjö	1676	83,005	50	9104	12.32	1.16
Sønderborg	497	76,193	153	719	0.95	0.09
Ålesund	93	43,670	470	4481	11.43	1.08
Örnsköldsvik	6421	55,073	9	–629	–1.13	–0.11
Pargas	882	15,501	18	206	1.35	0.13

Sources: National statistical institutes: Danmarks Statistik (Statistics Denmark); Statistiska Centralbyrån (Statistics Sweden); Statistisk Sentralbyrå (Statistics Norway); Tilastokeskus (Statistics Finland).

Table 2. Overview of the Nordic municipalities studied

Municipality (region)	Urban typology*	Demographic structure**	Demographic change 2006–2011**
Aalborg (Nordjylland)	Nordic metropole	Surplus of people entering the labour market and moderate gender balance	Surplus of birth and in-migration
Stavanger (Rogaland)	Nordic metropole	Surplus of people entering the labour market and moderate gender balance	Surplus of birth and in-migration
Växjö (Kronoberg)	Regional centre with university	Surplus of people entering the labour market and moderate gender balance	Surplus of birth and in-migration
Sønderborg (Syddjylland)	Regional centre with university	Moderate labour market replacement ratio and moderate gender balance	Declining population with in-migration
Ålesund (Møre og Romsdal)	Service-based medium-sized town	Surplus of people entering the labour market and moderate gender balance	Surplus of birth and in-migration
Örnsköldsvik (Väster-norrland)	Production-based medium-sized town	Moderate labour market replacement ratio and moderate gender balance	Declining population compensated by in-migration
Pargas (Parainen) (Varsinais-Suomi (Egentliga Finland))	n.a. (rural area)	Surplus of people exiting the labour market and moderate gender balance	Declining population compensated by in-migration

Sources: *Roto (2012); ** www.nordregio.se/handbook

Map 2. A typology of Nordic local labour markets in 2012

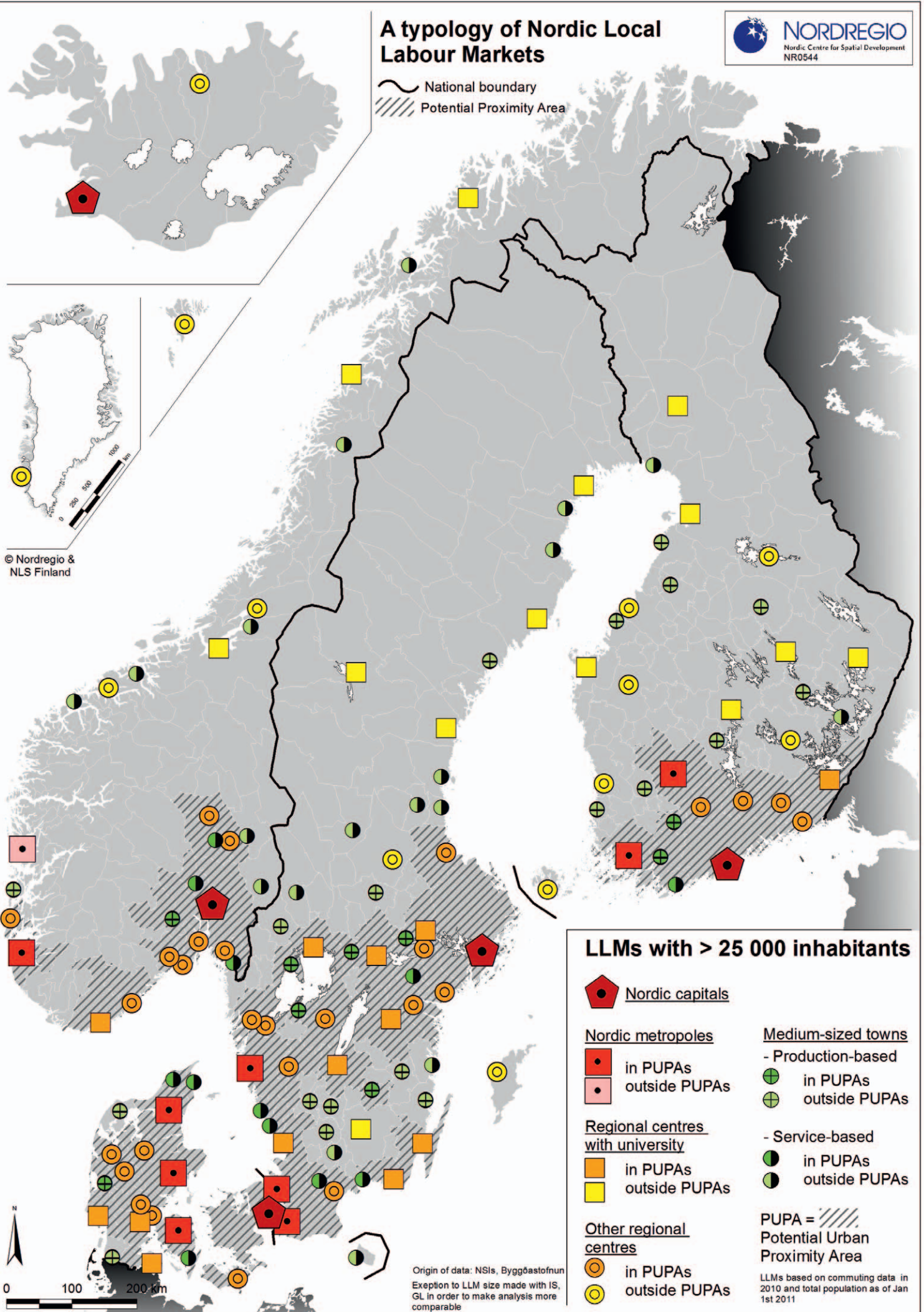
Local labour markets with 25,000 or more inhabitants are categorized based on four main aspects.

Nordic local labour markets (LLMs) can be characterized in various ways. In the “Nordic urban typology”, four main aspects are included. The first aspect is settlement structure, which is measured in terms of total population and population density in the LLMs and settlements. The second aspect concerns the administrative status of the LLM and whether

it includes a university. Third, the location of each LLM was considered with respect to its surrounding urban pattern, which indicates whether the LLM is polycentric with respect to the number and density of its localities and its neighbours. Finally, the employment structure of the smallest LLMs was characterized by whether they were based on productive industries or services.

A typology of Nordic Local Labour Markets

— National boundary
 Potential Proximity Area



Nordic metropolises

A Nordic metropole is an urban settlement area with a local labour market of between 300,000 and one million inhabitants (Roto, 2012). Outside the capital regions, there are 10 Nordic metropolises, and all except Bergen are part of a larger urban area (see Map 2). Aalborg, Denmark and Stavanger, Norway (cases in this study) are core municipalities in different Nordic urban metropolitan areas.

Aalborg is the third most populous city in Denmark, with a population in the municipality of almost 200,000 (see Table 1), and is the regional centre of North Jutland. It has a long history of industry and commerce, and is home to Aalborg University. Aalborg's economy has traditionally been production based, but in recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on knowledge-based industries. Over the years, Aalborg has undergone significant economic restructuring, and the economic base has shifted from industrial production to service based, becoming significantly more knowledge oriented. Multinational corporations such as Aalborg Portland (cement), Alfa Laval (industrial products), and Siemens (electronics) have played an important role in these changes, as have institutions of higher education.

The municipality of Aalborg lies on both sides of the strait of Limfjorden, which connects the North Sea and Kattegat, in the northern part of Jutland. Aalborg is located in the northern fringe of Jutland, in between Denmark's second largest city, Aarhus, and Skagen, at the northern tip of Jutland. Aalborg airport has grown in size and is now the third-largest airport in Denmark, with several daily flights between Aalborg and Copenhagen, as well as flights to other major cities in Europe. In 2010, almost 63% of commuters travelling outside Aalborg municipality commuted to other municipalities in the North Jutland region, and almost 10% of these commuters went to the capital region in Denmark (Aalborg kommune, 2012b). Statistics show that 25,000 people commuted to Aalborg, whereas 16,500 commuted out of the municipality in 2010, most of whom worked in public administration, teaching and health care (Aalborg kommune, 2012c).

The second metropole is Stavanger, a coastal city in western Norway. In 2011, its population was approximately 126,000 (see Tables 1 and 2), making it the fourth-largest city in Norway in terms of population. The city's boundaries have been expanded several times to accommodate population growth and commercial activities. The largest expansion occurred in 1965, when Madla municipality and parts of Hetland municipality were incorporated into Stavanger municipality. Today, the city extends into a number of so-

called "development areas", which were largely already included in the development plan of 1966–70. This is an early example of Stavanger's active land-allocation policy, the so-called Stavanger Model (Stavanger kommune, 2009).

An important milestone for Stavanger was the discovery of oil in the North Sea in 1969, which initiated a new era of population growth and economic growth as Stavanger developed into an administrative and technical centre for the North Sea oil activities. For example, the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate was established in Stavanger, along with offices and facilities for international oil companies. The oil and gas industry is still one of the most important production sectors in the area, together with public administration and health-care services. The hotel and restaurant industry is also a growing sector of the economy, partly due to growth in the tourism sector (Stavanger kommune, 2009).

Stavanger municipality is the administrative centre of Rogaland county, which includes 14 municipalities. It is also the main centre of the subregional and traditional district of Jæren, one of the most densely populated regions in Norway, with almost 217,000 people living in urban areas (of a total population of 307,000). The current urban area is basically a continuous belt stretching across the neighbouring municipalities of Stavanger, Sandnes, and Sola, forming an area between the municipalities called Fornebu, which is an industrial and commercial centre. As expected, the largest outward and inward commuting is to and from the neighbouring municipalities of Sandnes and Sola, with considerably less outward and inward commuting to and from the other municipalities in the region (Rogaland Fylkeskommune, 2012; Stavanger kommune, 2009).

Växjö is located in south-east Sweden. Half of the Växjö conurbation's 60,000 inhabitants live in the central north-east corridor that extends from north of the city centre into the eastern parts of the municipality where the university campus is located. The city centre, which has the major concentration of shops, restaurants, and services, is built on a grid and has five squares. In addition to Växjö, there are a number of smaller settlements and villages in the municipality. The residential area of Rottne is the largest of these, with about 2,200 inhabitants. The small village of Lammhult, known for its furniture tradition, is in the north-western part of the municipality.

Växjö's business sector is rather mixed, ranging from large-scale industries to a fairly large number of small- and medium-sized companies. It is situated in a region famous for its entrepreneurial spirit and milieu. Historically, the forest industry has played an important role in the region, and a number of forest-industry

firms have their head offices in the city. The municipality is also home to a cluster of furniture businesses in the northern parts of the municipality. The comprehensive plan presents the university as the engine of the local economy, with focuses on forestry, timber, IT, retailing, and bioenergy (Växjö kommun, 2005). Växjö is well situated in the national and regional transportation network. Several national highways pass through the city, as well as a number of main national and regional railway lines. Commuting in the municipality and region is significant. Since 1999, both inward and outward commuting has increased. Inward commuting to Växjö is significantly higher than outward commuting to the smaller settlement areas, with most commuters coming from Rottne and the fewest from Lammhult (Växjö kommun, 2005).

The second regional centre is Sønderborg, a city of 76,000 inhabitants (see Table 1) in south-east Jutland, near Flensburg Fjord and close to the German border. The municipality is split by the Straight of Als, with the Broagerland and Kær peninsulas on the mainland side and the island of Als on the other side. With respect to infrastructure, the Sønderborg railway network is connected to the European railway grid, and there is an airport north of central Sønderborg that has regular flights to Copenhagen. However, the city is a bit off the main infrastructure grid, such as the European motorways (Sønderborg kommune, 2012a).

Proximity to the German border presents both challenges and possibilities. For example, development opportunities in the retail trade in Sønderborg are challenging because Germany has a lower value added tax than Denmark, which makes German retail businesses very competitive. Another challenge for Sønderborg is the negative net commuting pattern. The geographic mobility of commuters is important for the flexibility of the labour market. Foreign commuters (who work in Sønderborg but live outside Denmark) are not included in the commuting statistics, which is a problematic limitation of the statistical data in border regions such as Sønderborg. The national statistics show a trend over the last ten years of slightly more people commuting from Sønderborg to work in other places than vice versa, with most commuting occurring between Sønderborg and Abenraa (Region Syddanmark, 2010.).

The economy of Sønderborg municipality is specialized in the energy/environment sector and, to a lesser extent, in the construction business sector. It is an educational centre and a major industrial actor in food production. The University of Southern Denmark has several departments in the city of Sønderborg that emphasize engineering and business. More than half of the workers in the municipality are employed by

large and medium-sized enterprises, such as Danfoss and Maersk. The economic crisis in 2008 hit Sønderborg hard (Region Syddanmark, 2010), primarily because the municipality has one dominant firm, Danfoss, which had to dismiss a large number of workers. In response to this crisis, the municipality developed a strategy to create jobs and growth based on three pillars: Project Zero (a vision for creating a carbon-free municipality by 2029); transformation of the town's old industrial harbour into a modern urban and leisure area; and becoming a candidate for the European Capital of Culture in 2017 (a wide-reaching plan for urban and regional development in Southern Jutland and Schleswig, Germany, in co-operation with the Southern Region of Denmark and municipalities south of the border) (Sønderborg kommune, 2012c).

Towns and rural areas

There are two distinct types of medium-sized towns in the Nordic urban typology, based on their economies. On the one hand, there are production-based towns with over one-third of their jobs in primary production, manufacturing, and construction. On the other hand, there are towns with over two-thirds of their employment in service-based businesses (Roto, 2012, p. 27). Towns and villages with fewer than 25,000 inhabitants in the local labour market are not considered in the Nordic urban typology.

Ålesund is a medium-sized town on the west coast of Norway. It is the largest city between the two coastal regional centres of Bergen and Trondheim. Originally, a production-based town, Ålesund is increasingly becoming a service-oriented town. It has traditionally been highly industrialized in the fishing and maritime industries, and is one of the largest exporting harbours in Norway. It plays a major role in the Norwegian fishing industry, and many large fishing companies are established in the city. The fishing industry has also generated related maritime industries and services, such as ship design, shipbuilding, equipment supplies, research and development, and maritime-based financial and consultancy firms. In recent decades, oil exploration in the North Sea has led to the growth of a small industry of offshore supply and petroleum-related services (Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune, interview, 2012-09-28). Tourism has also evolved into an important industry, partly because of the characteristic fjord landscapes in the Ålesund region (UNESCO has listed Geigangerfjord as a major attraction). Related nature-based activities have increased during the last decade, including fjord sightseeing, hiking, outdoor activities, and adventure tours (Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune, interview, 2012-09-28).

Ålesund is the administrative centre of Møre og Romsdal county, and the largest of the 36 municipalities in the region. It is also part of the subregion and traditional district of Sunnmøre, which is the southernmost part of Møre og Romsdal county. Ålesund's remote location and fjord landscapes influence its interactions with other large cities in the region. The municipality stretches from the inland mountains across two fjords and down to the sea. It is spread over seven islands, with the city centre of Ålesund located on the islands of Aspøya and Nørvøya. Ålesund is a central transportation node in the region, and approximately one-fourth of the people employed in the municipality (7,400) commute to Ålesund daily from other municipalities in the area. Most of these commuters come from the Sunnmøre district and the municipalities of Sula, Giske, and Skodje.

Örnsköldsvik is a medium-sized production-based town of 55,000 inhabitants. It is a sparsely populated municipality in the Västernorrland region that consists mainly of rural areas. More than half of the population lives in the coastal town of Örnsköldsvik and its surroundings (Örnsköldsviks kommun, 2012). Örnsköldsvik is located between the regional centres of Sundsvall and Umeå, which both have universities (see Map 2). The comprehensive plan cites Örnsköldsvik's location between these regional centres as the reason why it has comparatively few regional economic and administrative functions. In 2010, a new railway line (Botniabanan) was inaugurated. This infrastructure development is considered essential to Örnsköldsvik, because it is expected to facilitate interactions in the region and help to expand the functional labour market (Örnsköldsviks kommun, 2012).

The economy of Örnsköldsvik municipality is export oriented, and largely based on the paper and wood-pulp industries. There are approximately 300 processing and manufacturing companies, and on average they export 75–80% of their production. Compared with the national average, a large proportion of the local workers are employed in processing and manufacturing industries. Exports from Örnsköldsvik, measured in export

value per capita, are approximately twice as high as the national average (Örnsköldsviks kommun, 2012).

Pargas is an archipelago municipality of approximately 10,000 islands and islets in south-west Finland (Demo Regions Network, 2011). It is mainly a rural area, and thus is not included in the Nordic urban typology. The municipality was created in 2009 (originally named Västboland) by uniting the municipalities of Pargas, Nagu, Houtskär, Korpo, and Iniö (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2009). It has a population of about 15,000, most of which live in Pargas. The municipality is part of the South-Western Finland region. The 18 archipelago municipalities in the region are generally losing inhabitants, and the number of people in the labour market is decreasing (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2009).

Pargas is a part of the functional commuting region of Turku, and is one of four regional centres in the area. Over 20% of the work-force commutes to the neighbouring subregion of Turku. More than half of the inhabitants of Pargas are Swedish-speaking, but the Finnish-speaking share of the population has been increasing steadily (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2009). Pargas is strongly dependent on seasonal tourism as well as the local industries. The municipality of Pargas has the largest number of second homes in Finland (8,300), and the South-Western region of Finland has about 48,000 second homes (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2012). In fact, there are more second homes in Pargas than permanent homes, which underscores the importance of “seasonal” inhabitants for the local economy, the labour market, and the community as a whole. It is interesting to note that there is a strong focus in Pargas on both promoting second homes in the archipelago and encouraging the remodelling of second homes as permanent homes (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2012). It is also noteworthy that the Pargas municipality (which, along with the Kimito Island municipality, constitutes the Turunmaa subregion) participates in the Demo Regions Network, a national network focused on regions with ageing and/or declining populations (see Demo Regions Network, 2012).

3. Local situations and scenarios

The demographic situations and challenges at the local level differ significantly across the Nordic region. From a European perspective, the Nordic states are in a rather favourable position, with an overall population increase. However, at the regional level, differences between and within the Nordic states are apparent (see inset in the lower right corner of Map 3). Norway and Denmark seem to have experienced stronger development in the last five years, especially compared with northern Sweden and the northern and eastern regions of Finland. The geographical pattern of population change at the municipal level shows significant local differences (see Map 3).

Population development and composition

In many cases, international migration is the decisive factor for population development in Nordic municipalities. Between 2006 and 2010, almost all Nordic municipalities had a positive influx of international migrants (Iceland being the major exception). The patterns of domestic migration are more varied, but the larger city regions and urban areas along transport corridors have seen positive domestic migration (see Map 4).

The migration of young people and low fertility rates are often seen as the main drivers behind the ageing population (along with increased life expectancies), but this oversimplified view needs to be refined and complemented with socio-economic factors (Rauhut et al., 2008). However, the traditional pattern—of young people being more mobile and concentrating in inner city areas, and families being more stable and settling down in suburbia within commuting distance—still holds at the general level. There are, consequently, more single-family households in urban centres than in peripheral rural areas. Furthermore, there is also a tendency for gender imbalances between urban and rural regions, with more women in urban areas and more men in rural areas, a pattern that is much less obvious at the local municipal level (see Map 6). As pointed out above, appropriate housing is an important part of settling down and forming a family. The fertility rate in the Nordic

states has converged and stabilized at (or just below) replacement level.

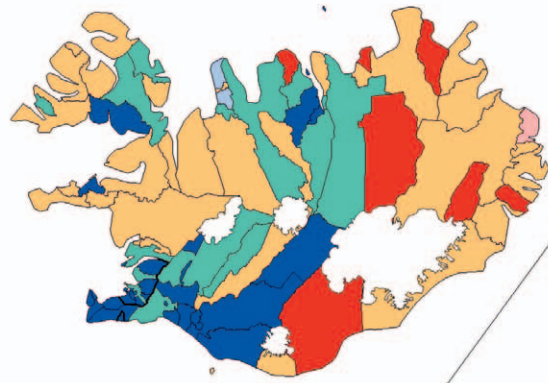
People in Nordic countries are living longer and are healthier than ever before. Low mortality rates and long life expectancies are positive outcomes (especially from an individual perspective), but when they are combined with relatively low fertility rates, a number of challenges arise. The challenges are not evenly distributed geographically, but are related to size, such that the old-age dependency ratio is generally higher in smaller towns in rural areas and less significant in larger cities (see Map 5). The growing elderly population is high on the political and policy agendas of Sønderborg (regional centre), Örnköldsvik (town), and the archipelago municipality of Pargas, but it is also an issue for regional centres such as Stavanger and Växjö.

Aalborg municipality is growing because of both in-migration and birth surplus (see Table 1). It has the potential for growth because of its relative size and economic and social importance in the region. However, Aalborg is facing a familiar Nordic demographic development pattern of falling fertility rates and an ageing population. Its continued population growth has contributed to trends of falling mortality rates and increasing numbers of young people searching for opportunities in education, employment, and leisure. The fertility rate is expected to continue to decrease, just as the fertility rates continue to fall in all of Denmark. The predictable effects of these trends will be fewer taxpayers in the labour market providing for the young and the elderly. International students coming to Aalborg University are believed to increase the number of inhabitants by a thousand each year.

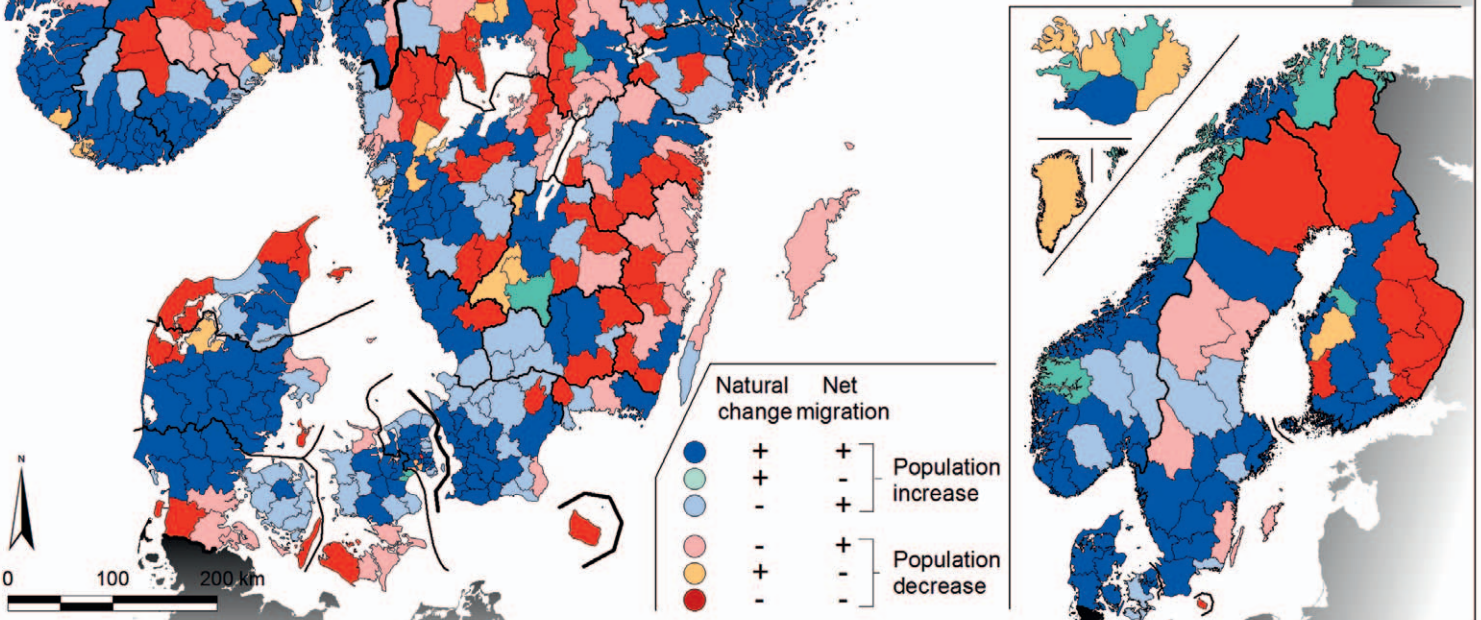
According to population projections, the number of inhabitants in Aalborg will increase by 2.7% from 2012 to 2017, to approximately 206,000 in 2017. Aalborg municipality's initial prediction of 9,000 additional inhabitants during the next 12 years is significantly lower than the prediction made by Statistics Denmark, which predicts the increase to be closer to 15,000. The municipality under-estimated the scope and pace of demographic development, and it has now revised its projection to 12,000 new inhabitants during the next 12 years. However, the revised expected population

Population Change 2006-2010 by main components

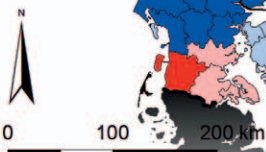
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~ Regional boundary



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	Natural change	Net migration	
Blue	+	+	Population increase
Light Blue	+	-	
Yellow	-	+	
Pink	-	+	Population decrease
Orange	+	-	
Red	-	-	



growth of about 1,000 people a year still seems to be at the lower end of recent actual increases, which in 2011 was about 2,000 people (Aalborg kommune, interview, 2012-09-13).

Although Aalborg municipality is experiencing growth, the population in the North Jutland region is growing more slowly than in other regions in Denmark. The regional increase since 2000 has been only 0.3%, compared with a national average of approximately 4%. A population projection predicts the same trend until 2020, with a slow growth rate of 0.6%, whereas the national growth rate is expected to be 2.8%. More citizens are moving away from the region than to it, which is the main reason why North Jutland has a weak population growth rate relative to other regions in Denmark. Much of the outmigration is young people who are moving to Aarhus and Copenhagen (Region Nordjylland, 2012).

Stavanger has had strong population growth in recent decades, and is expected to continue growing to around 150,000 people by 2025 (Stavanger kommune, 2011a). Because of its rapid population growth and increasing elderly population (and subsequent unbalanced demographic composition), Stavanger is struggling to meet its housing demands. Stavanger is a densely populated municipality, and has a limited amount of unused land (see Table 1).

The main reasons for Stavanger's population growth in the latest decade are international immigration and relatively high fertility rates. The 2006–2010 period was characterized by high immigration from countries with good access to the Norwegian labour market (i.e. countries in the EEA and the EFTA). For example, in 2007 Stavanger had more than 1,500 immigrants, which is higher than the national average (Stavanger kommune, 2011). Domestic migration has been declining since 2005, and in 2011 the municipality experienced its first overall decline in net migration in ten years. The municipality has not yet analysed the reasons for this, but one reason might be the housing shortage in general, and lack of affordable housing in particular. Currently, Stavanger is investigating whether this is a temporary

drop or whether in-migration will continue to decline. Depending upon the result, the municipality will have to evaluate how expected in-migration will affect population projections (Stavanger kommune, interview, 2012-09-10). Stavanger is also facing an increasingly elderly population. Older age groups increased the most from 1994 to 2010, a trend that is expected to continue (Stavanger kommune, 2011).

Stavanger's population projection is based on an intermediate scenario in which the population is estimated to grow at 1.2% per year between 2010 and 2025, which is a relatively high growth rate but lower than that in the 2006–2010 period. Even if the municipal comprehensive plan predicts that growth may not continue at the current record-high level, the municipality must be prepared for an increased demand for housing and changing needs in public services after 2025 (Stavanger kommune, 2011a). As mentioned, the expectation of growth is based on continued strong in-migration, but it is also based on higher birth rates and a larger number of women of fertile age. The birth rates in Stavanger declined between 1994 and 2002, mainly because of a drop in fertility rates and because there were fewer women of childbearing age. The number of births has increased since then and, according to population projections, is expected to continue to grow in the coming years (Stavanger kommune, 2011).

Växjö has experienced constant population growth since 1968. The population has increased from 56,000 in 1968 to nearly 84,000 in 2012. This growth has been concentrated in the city of Växjö, while the smaller settlements and towns outside the central parts of Växjö have experienced population decline. According to the municipality's projection, the population will continue to increase in the coming years. Continued growth is attributed to a number of factors, such as age structure, acquisition intensity, new businesses, employment growth, and low vulnerability in business, education, and health. Växjö's population growth also presents several challenges for the municipality with respect to housing demand, municipal services, and social integration (Växjö kommun, 2012b).

Map 3. Population change by main components 2006–2010

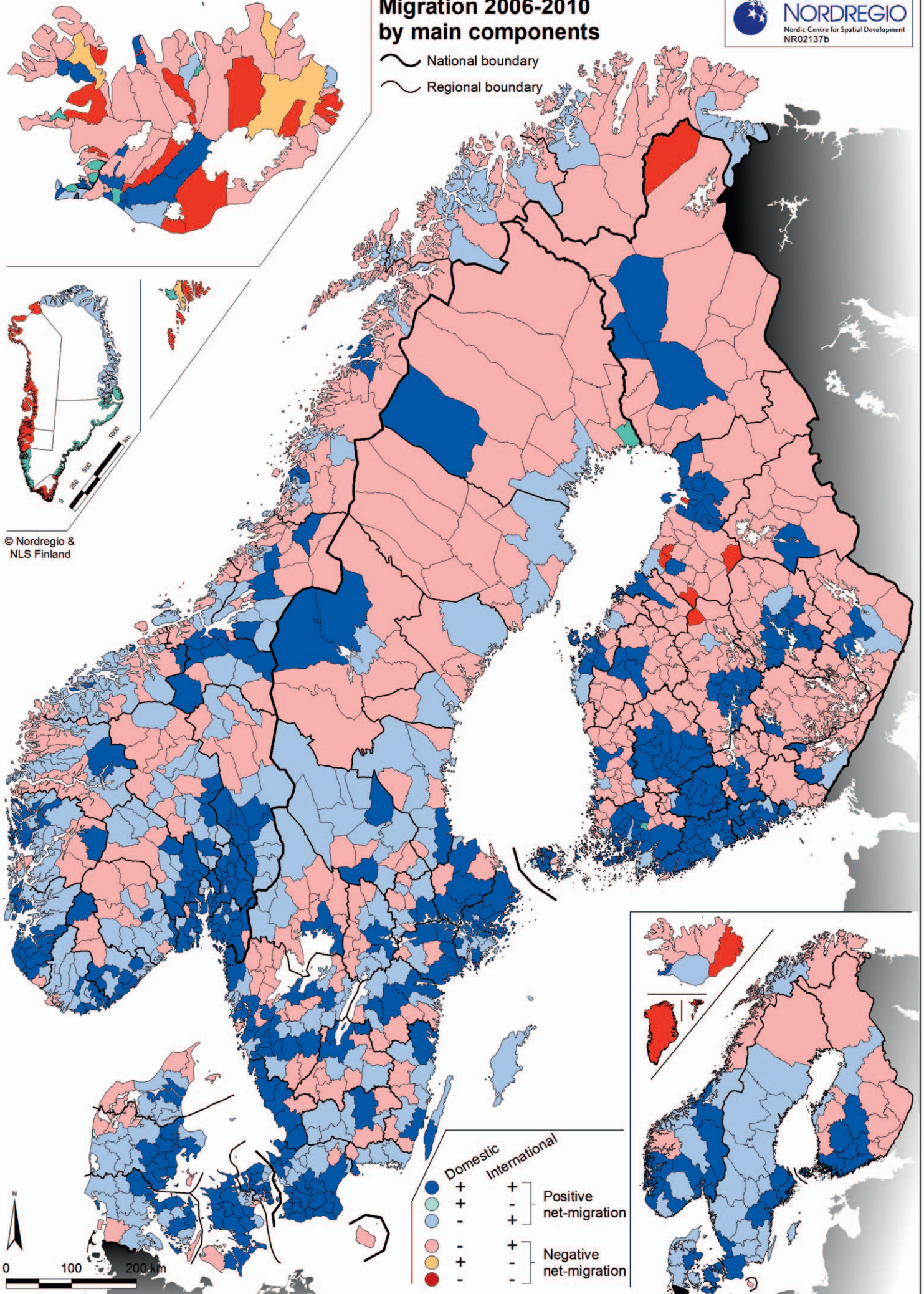
Population change by main components, combining natural change and net migration showing increases or decreases of population.

Total population change is based on births, deaths, and migration to and from the region. Because of increasing life expectancies and the increased importance of international migration, Nordic populations (at the national level) have increased rather rapidly during the last few decades.

However, there is remarkable regional variation. From a European point of view, the Nordic countries have relatively high birth rates and life expectancies. There is a trend for substantial natural population increases to compensate for negative net migration. This keeps the total population increasing, which is a rather unusual situation from a European perspective. For most of the municipalities and counties, migration is the main driver of population change.

Migration 2006-2010 by main components

~ National boundary
~ Regional boundary



One of the main demographic challenges for Växjö municipality is the impact the large number of retirements in the next few years will have on the labour market. For example, it is estimated that one-third of the people employed by the municipality will retire by 2015, which means Växjö will be challenged to maintain a functional welfare system with a growing elderly population (Växjö kommun, 2009). Uneven demographic composition seems to be even more challenging for more peripheral regional centres and smaller towns and rural areas, such as Sønderborg, Örnsköldsvik, and Pargas.

Like many other rural areas in Europe, Sønderborg is experiencing a negative demographic trend (despite in-migration) as its population has slowly declined in recent years (see Table 1). The proportion of senior citizens is growing steadily, fertility rates are falling, and younger people are moving to larger cities. Sønderborg's demographic projection for the period 2010–2022 indicates that the number of inhabitants will increase by about 1%. This growth is expected to be geographically uneven, with increases in central Sønderborg as well as in the towns of Gråsten, Broager, Sundevad, and Nordborg, and decreases in Sydals and Augustenborg. The population projection for 2010–2022 is highly dependent on the successful implementation of a planned housing programme (Sønderborg kommune, 2010), and other (less optimistic) municipal forecasts foresee a 3% population decline by 2025 (Sønderborg kommune, 2012a).

By 2025, Sønderborg is expected to have almost 19,000 inhabitants who are 65 years of age or older, an increase of more than 20%. The number of younger inhabitants is expected to decline significantly during the same period, more so than the expected average decline for the Southern Denmark region. Sønderborg municipality is also facing a significant decline in birth rates (Sønderborg kommune, 2010), which means that there are fewer children in school and many schools have under-utilized classroom space. It is likely that classes will have to be merged, and some schools may eventually have to close down (Sønderborg kommune, 2012b).

Ålesund has had moderate population growth for a long time, and the population today is more than 43,000 people (see Table 2). However, the population growth

has been relatively unbalanced because of a growing elderly population and the outmigration of young adults. Ålesund's population growth is largely attributable to international labour immigration (Ålesund kommune, 2008; Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune, interview, 2012-09-28). However, domestic outmigration has also increased during the last few years, especially amongst young adults (Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune, 2011). Outmigration of young adults is thought to be related to the attractiveness of larger urban areas. Although the county has opportunities for higher education, many young adults appear to be looking for the urban qualities of bigger cities when deciding where to study or when looking for their first job (Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune, interview, 2012-09-28; correspondence, 2013-01-22).

Another regional trend is a 15% decrease in the number of births between 1991 and 2010. According to a regional analysis, the decrease is associated with the declining number of women in the 15–49-year-old age group. Even though the number of births has increased slightly during the last five years, there has been a significant decline between 1991 and 2010. The fertility rate in the region is just below two, which is slightly higher than the national average (Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune, 2011). From 2001 to 2006, the strongest population growth in Ålesund was in the older age groups, which are expected to see the most substantial growth in the future as well (Ålesund kommune, 2008).

The Örnsköldsvik municipality experienced declining population growth for a while, but in-migration in recent years has compensated for this trend to some extent (see Tables 1 and 2). However, the projection for the foreseeable future is challenging, mainly because of a steadily growing elderly population and the tendency of young people to leave the municipality for larger cities. The number of senior citizens in the municipality is expected to increase by almost 20%, and the proportion of senior citizens in the population is expected to increase to 27% by 2035 (Statisticon, 2011). Consequently, Örnsköldsvik has decided to focus on the need for appropriate housing for the elderly (Örnsköldsviks kommun, interview, 2012-07-05). A report on senior-citizen housing found that there is a general lack of accessible apartments for senior citizens, as the current housing stock has not been adapted to suit the

Map 4. Migration by main components 2006–2010

Migration by main components, combining domestic and international net migration.

For most of the municipalities and counties, migration is the

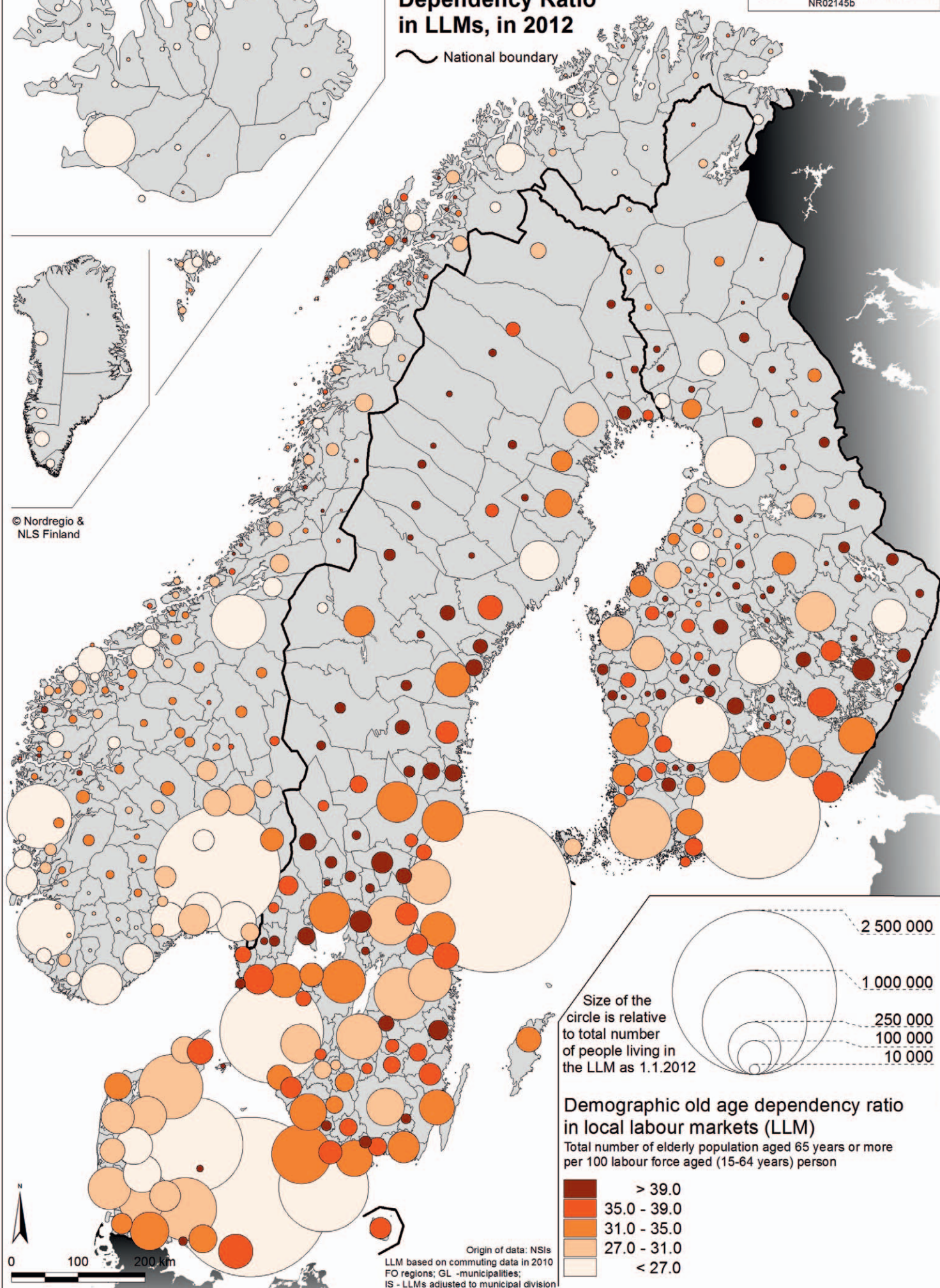
main driver of population change. Almost all of the regions gain in international migration, and thus a remarkable number of regions are able to compensate for domestic outmigration.

Demographic Old Age Dependency Ratio in LLMs, in 2012

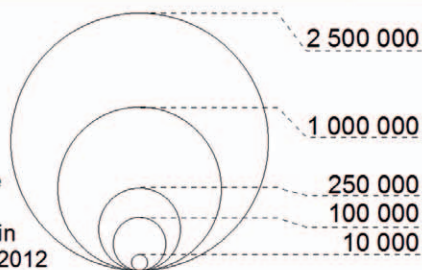
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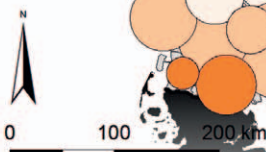
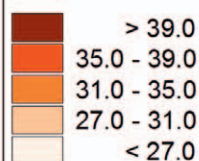


Size of the circle is relative to total number of people living in the LLM as 1.1.2012



Demographic old age dependency ratio in local labour markets (LLM)

Total number of elderly population aged 65 years or more per 100 labour force aged (15-64 years) person



Origin of data: NSIs
LLM based on commuting data in 2010
FO regions; GL - municipalities;
IS - LLMs adjusted to municipal division

changing demographic composition of the population (Wikman-konsult AB, 2012).

Örnsköldsvik is also faced with the challenge of young people moving out of the region. Young women, in particular, are leaving, but when women reach their thirties they are less prone to move than men (Statisticon, 2011). A lack of employment and educational opportunities in the Västernorrland region are thought to be the main reasons why young people (and young women in particular) are leaving the region. Traditional, male-dominated workplaces are a prominent part of the local economy, and this could partially explain why young women are much more likely than young men to move out of the municipality. Despite the emphasis on attracting and retaining young people in the municipality, there are no plans to build special dwellings for students in the next year, and there is no strategy in place to attract more families with children (Länsstyrelsen Västernorrland, 2012; Örnsköldsviks kommun, interview, 2012-07-05).

Because of in-migration, Pargas has had a small but rather stable population in recent years (see Table 2). Its main challenge is the composition of its population, which is ageing. Approximately 27% of the municipality's inhabitants are over 65 years of age, versus the national average of 17% (Demo Regions Network, 2011). Problems caused by the ageing population include the short-term and long-term provision of housing and services. According to a projection by Statistics Finland, the population is expected to reach about 15,700 by the year 2020, a moderate increase of approximately 1% (cf. Tables 1 and 2). In contrast, local projections suggest that the population will be 16,500 in 2020 (Pargas stad, 2010). The town of Pargas, however, uses demographic data from Statistics Finland as much as possible for planning, as it does not do its own statistical mapping (Pargas stad, interview, 2012-10-24).

A key challenge for Pargas is how to provide services to a population that is scattered across more than 100 islands (Demo Regions Network, 2011). For example, it takes three hours to travel from Iniö, in the most remote part of the municipality, to the town of Pargas, the municipal centre (Pargas stad, interview, 2012-10-24). As the town's population is also ageing rapidly, it is increasingly important to be able to provide services for

its inhabitants. Therefore, Pargas has decided to invest in information technology aids, most notably e-Health and distance education. The goal is to use information technology to bring remote services to everyone's home (Demo Regions Network, 2011).

Housing stock and future development

The local housing stock differs across the studied municipalities, partly because of local conditions (see Table 1). Differences between the Nordic states can also be discerned, which might be explained by different national housing policies and traditions in the states. Projected housing needs are often based on demographic analyses and forecasts, but they are also based on optimistic political expectations and compromises. On the other hand, population projections are often based on knowledge of concrete projects as well as expectations about future construction projects.

Of the 108,000 dwellings in Aalborg municipality's housing stock, about 43% are multi-dwelling buildings and nearly 36% are single-dwelling buildings (Aalborg kommune, 2012c). The 12-year housing strategy that Aalborg adopted in 2009 is based on expectations of a population growth of almost 1,000 people annually, among other things (Aalborg kommune, 2009). It is also based on the projected demographic composition, including who is expected to live in the new dwellings, i.e. whether it will be families with children, young or old couples, single persons, in-migrants from Aalborg or from outside the municipality, or whether the new dwellings will even be occupied. The validity of the housing strategy is based on the number of implemented housing projects in the period. In 2009, about 850 new dwellings were constructed, the following year about 620 were constructed, and in 2011 there were just 440 new dwellings constructed (Aalborg kommune, 2012d). Thus, Aalborg has experienced a rather sharp fall in construction in recent years. According to the 2013–2024 projection, the average number of new dwellings is expected to rise to almost 1,900 per year in the 2012–2014 period (Aalborg kommune, 2012d). In the biannual revision of current plans and projects,

Map 5. Old-age dependency ratio in 2012

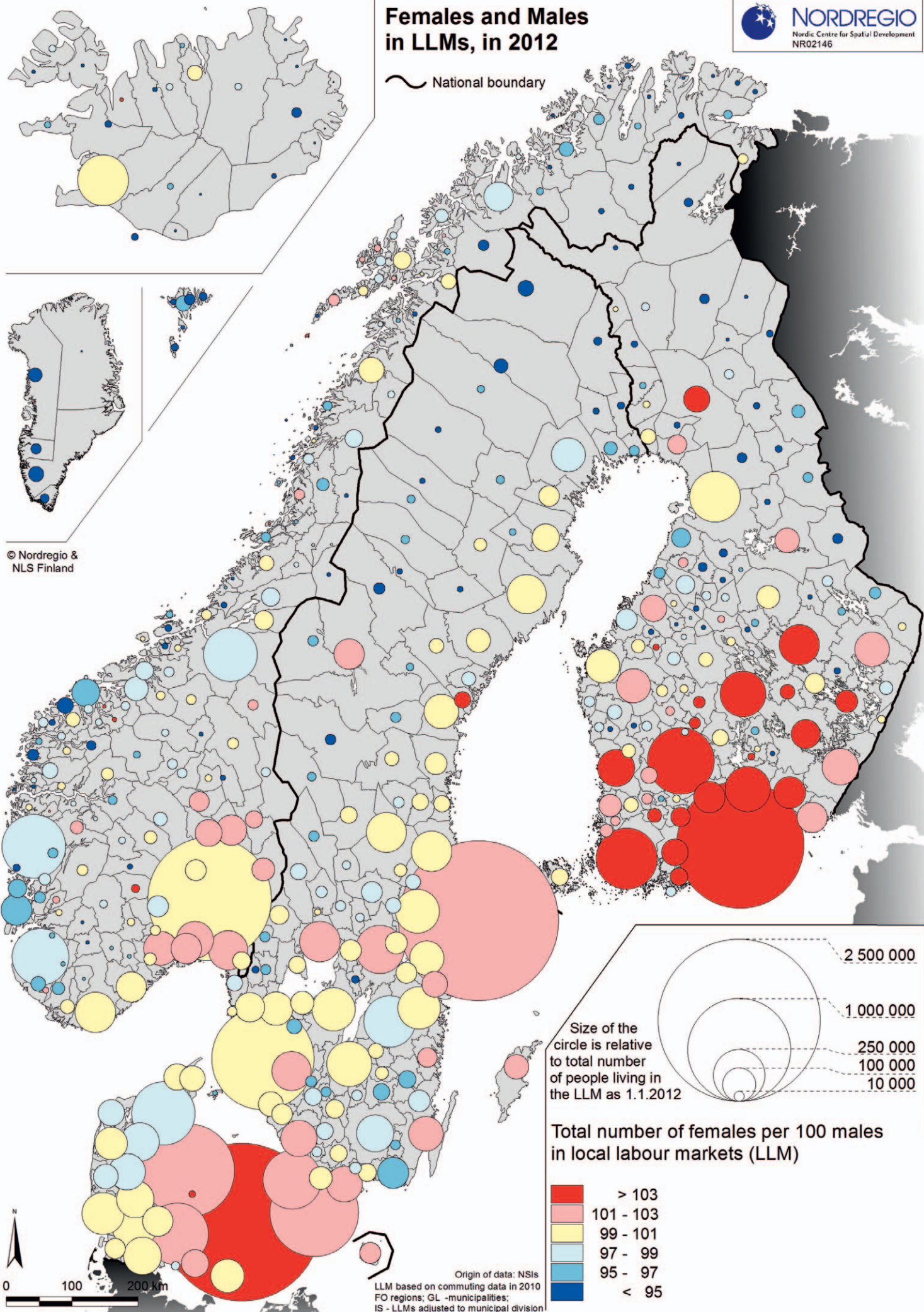
Population aged 65 years or more as a proportion of population aged 15–64 years in local labour markets.

With respect to old-age dependency ratios, the Nordic city

regions show a clear hierarchy that favours larger cities. The overall trend towards an older population is especially notable in the rural and peripheral areas of Finland and Sweden.

Females and Males in LLMs, in 2012

~ National boundary



“Plan- og projektinformation”, published in May 2012, the housing programme for 2011–2014 is projected to comprise about 3,300 public-housing dwellings, including 2,600 youth dwellings, 340 family dwellings, and 390 dwellings for elderly citizens (Aalborg kommune, 2012a).

In Stavanger, more than 70% of the existing housing stock consists of detached (or semi-detached) single-dwelling buildings and row houses (Rogaland fylkeskommune, 2012). Multi-dwelling buildings account for only 23% of the housing stock, which is considerably lower than other larger cities in Norway, such as Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim (Stavanger kommune, 2011b). To meet the expected population growth of 1.2% per year, the municipality anticipates that 850 dwellings need to be completed annually. However, only about 440 new dwellings were completed in 2010 (Stavanger kommune, 2011b), which may be attributable to the economic recession that started in 2008 and uncertainties about the housing market. The housing development strategy does acknowledge, however, that there are not enough areas designated for new housing developments, and that there have been problems between important actors in the municipality in the negotiation processes. Stavanger municipality intends to overcome these issues with a number of policy instruments, some of which are presented in the next section (Stavanger kommune, 2011b).

Växjö’s ambition is to attract 1,000 new inhabitants per year (Växjö kommun, 2012b). Växjö’s population projection assumes that in-migration will constitute 20% of the market for newly constructed houses. During the period between 2000 and 2010, Växjö approved 3,400 plans for development, and the average annual production during the 2002–2011 period has been about 460 dwellings. Växjö developed detailed plans for 2,500 new dwellings to be built from 2011 to 2013, but the market (i.e. developers) will determine whether they will be built. Most likely, Växjö will not build that many dwellings, and it is now estimated that about 800 dwellings will be constructed during this time (Växjö kommun, correspondence, 2013-01-15). When forecasting for new housing developments is done, it is assumed that three people will inhabit a detached house, that there will be two people per apartment, and that students will live alone (Växjö kommun, 2012b).

In Sønderborg, the municipality emphasizes that their demographic projection is predicated on the implementation of their housing programme during this period (Byggeboligprogram 2010–2020). However, there are significant uncertainties (Sønderborg kommune, interview, 2012-09-28). The number of inhabitants will stay the same during the next 12 years in the best-case scenario, and only if the expected housing programme is implemented. A more likely scenario is that the municipality will lose 2,000–3,000 people during this period. According to a strategic policy paper, the population in Sønderborg municipality is projected to decline by 3.2% between 2011 and 2025 (Sønderborg kommune, 2012a).

The local population projection for Ålesund is complemented by an annual regional analysis produced by Møre og Romsdal county. The regional analysis is intended to be a reference report and support tool for politicians and administrators in the municipalities. The latest projection was in 2011, and indicates that Ålesund is expected to be one of the fastest growing municipalities in Norway over the next ten years, and that Sula is the only other municipality in the region that is expected to grow as quickly. The population is projected to increase by more than 17% between 2011 and 2021, and the municipality is expected to have 51,000 inhabitants by 2020, which is slightly more than the municipal projection from 2006 of 45,000 (Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune, 2011). Housing construction in Ålesund has been relatively stable, with an average of 250 completed dwellings per year between 2001 and 2006. According to the housing analysis presented in the comprehensive plan, the new dwellings have been relatively evenly distributed in the municipality. Based on the population projection and the historic production rate, the comprehensive plan outlines a production target of 300 new dwellings per year, which means that the municipality needs to prepare land for developing 3,600 dwellings during the 2008–2020 planning period (Ålesund kommune, 2008).

Based on the current housing situation in Örnköldsvik, its comprehensive plan states that 150 new dwellings per year are needed in the near future, divided between different forms of proprietorship such as rented apartments and tenant-owned apartments (Örnköldsviks kommun, 2012). However, the munic-

Map 6. Gender balance in 2012

Total number of females per 100 males.

The gender balance in the Nordic countries is almost equal, with, on average, 101 females per 100 males. However,

considerable regional variations between cities and sparsely populated areas and between eastern and western parts of the Nordic territory persist.

pality is having some difficulty estimating the number of dwellings that will be needed in the near future, in part because of the uncertain effects economic development can have on demand, but also because of the regulatory system, which may be subject to changes in the form of taxation and subsidies. Opinions differ greatly regarding the demand for apartments and houses in Örnsköldsvik, even between different municipal authorities (Örnsköldsviks kommun, 2012). New, attractive, tenant-owned apartments and small houses are what seem to be needed to adapt to the changing demographic situation (an increasingly elderly population) and to accommodate increased in-migration to the municipality.

A new report from the county administrative board in Västernorrland expects a number of new housing construction projects in the county over the coming years, mainly in Örnsköldsvik and Sundsvall. In Örnsköldsvik, about 80 multi-dwelling buildings were expected to be constructed in 2012, of which 50 were to be tenant-owned and 30 in private ownership, as well as 30 one- or two-dwelling buildings in private ownership (Länsstyrelsen Västernorrland, 2012). Corre-

sponding numbers for 2013 show plans for 80 multi-dwelling buildings, all tenant-owned, and 30 one- or two-dwelling buildings, all privately owned (Länsstyrelsen Västernorrland, 2012).

Single-dwelling buildings are the most common type of dwelling in Pargas municipality according to figures from Statistics Finland in 2011. There are about 4,700 single-dwelling buildings, 735 row houses, and about 1,450 multi-dwelling buildings. Pargas is located in south-west Finland, which has the highest number of second homes in Finland. The number of inhabitants in many archipelago municipalities increases four- or fivefold during the summer months with the arrival of seasonal inhabitants. Seasonal inhabitants tend to spend more time in the area than they used to, and they have become a significant factor in the local municipal economies, especially because of real-estate taxes (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2006). In 2010, the economic benefits (inflow of capital) from second homes in Finland amounted to almost 7.4 billion euros, including 788 million euros in south-west Finland alone (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2012).

4. Municipal plans and strategies

A new OECD report on demographic changes and local development concludes that “[I]n order to succeed in addressing the challenges associated with demographic change, it cannot be left to the markets alone to find a solution, effective policy interventions are needed” (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). On the one hand, planning is often seen as an obstacle to housing development. On the other hand, planning is needed to ensure sufficient and appropriate housing. The challenges and possibilities created by demographic changes differ from municipality to municipality. What is a challenge in one municipality can be an opportunity in another, and vice versa.

Densification dominates planning discourse. In one way or another, all the municipalities in this study emphasized that densification was a way to create sustainable yet attractive cities (similar trends can be seen in other Nordic cities and towns, as well as internationally (e.g. Hofstad, 2012). At the same time, these municipalities desired balanced development.

All the municipalities that were studied have comprehensive plans, but they also have other supporting policy documents, such as municipal planning strategies and housing strategies. In addition, there are supporting and complementary regional plans and strategic documents. For example, Stavanger has four policy documents of direct importance to urban planning and housing development in the municipality. First, they have a comprehensive plan (Stavanger kommune, 2011c) and a municipal planning strategy (Stavanger kommune, 2012). In Stavanger, the municipal planning strategy is seen as a tool for implementing the comprehensive plan (Stavanger kommune, 2012). Stavanger also has an urban development plan (Stavanger kommune, 2011b) and a specific housing development plan to support and strengthen an active housing policy (Stavanger kommune, 2010). The housing development plan is used to guide housing developments and ensure sustainable housing development. However, there are also important regional documents, such as the subregional plan for long-term urban development (Rogaland fylkeskommune, 2012).

Urban policies and comprehensive plans

During the last three years there has been a densification trend in Aalborg that is expected to continue (albeit at a slower pace) until 2014 (Aalborg kommune, 2012d, p. 4). The 2009 comprehensive plan emphasizes developments in and around the so-called growth axis, a geographical area that runs through Aalborg city from the airport in the north-west to the waterfront in the south-east (Aalborg kommune, 2009). Half of all workplaces in the municipality are located within the growth axis, and one-third of Aalborg’s population lives in this area (Aalborg kommune, 2012e). The growth-axis strategy is supplemented by three themes, “infrastructure”, “an attractive city”, and “good places in which to live”, and the focus is on a limited number of areas in which development is already underway (Aalborg kommune, 2012e).

Aalborg envisions a diversified, lively city and surrounding towns where people of all ages and social backgrounds can live. This vision eschews segregation, which should be kept in mind when new housing areas are produced and existing ones renovated. One of the municipality’s main expectations is that people will move to the city of Aalborg from the more rural parts of the municipality, but it is doubtful that this will happen (Aalborg kommune, interview, 2012-09-13).

In Stavanger, densification is seen as a crucial for dealing with both local and regional challenges, and to secure economic growth (Stavanger kommune, interview, 2012-09-10). Because of the city’s geography and the limited amount of undeveloped land, the municipality strongly emphasizes compact urban development and densification within already built-up areas. Although densification in existing urban areas is encouraged, the municipality also feels that further regional collaboration with neighbouring municipalities is needed to ensure more balanced urban development (Stavanger kommune, 2011c). The housing shortage and limited amount of undeveloped land have heightened the need for densification in existing urban areas, as well as for regional co-ordination of urban planning to meet the future housing demand (Stavanger kom-

mune, 2010).

One of the main planning challenges in Stavanger is housing development (Stavanger kommune, 2012; Stavanger kommune, interview, 2012-09-10). Over the last decade, new housing has not kept pace with the population increase, which has led to a general housing shortage and increased house prices (Stavanger kommune, interview, 2012-09-07). House prices have increased 10–15% since 2010, and Stavanger currently has the highest rents in Norway (Stavanger kommune, 2011b). This development has created socio-demographic challenges, because high house prices and rents can make people reluctant to move to the city, especially the young (Rogaland fylkeskommune, 2012; Stavanger kommune, interview, 2012-09-10).

Stavanger's 2012–2015 municipal planning strategy emphasizes the need to strengthen regional collaboration on urban planning and housing development (Stavanger kommune, 2012). Housing is perceived as a regional problem, and collaboration between municipalities and the regions is needed to meet upcoming housing demands (Stavanger kommune, interview, 2012-09-10). Thus, one priority is to enhance regional collaboration and create a more cohesive city region with better accessibility between cities in the Rogaland region, especially in the neighbouring municipalities of Sandnes and Sola (Rogaland fylkeskommune, 2012). Adopting the regional plan for long-term urban development in Jæren is seen as an important step toward increasing regional co-ordination of housing development, as well as increasing the rate of building new dwellings. Finding new areas for housing development in neighbouring municipalities such as Sola and Sandnes, and developing transport infrastructure between the municipalities are high priorities in the region (Stavanger kommune, interview, 2012-09-10).

The overarching political ambition of Växjö's urban development policy is that the city should be densified through mixed urban housing developments and made highly accessible through infrastructure development for walking, cycling, and public transport. The municipality has been focusing on densification of the city and mixed urban development since the mid-1990s (Växjö kommun, interview, 2012-09-07). Växjö has one plan and one strategic document related to housing development and demographic structures. The main document is the latest comprehensive plan (Växjö kommun, 2005), which was adopted in 2005, with revisions concerning Rottne and the city of Växjö in 2010 and 2012, respectively (Växjö kommun, correspondence, 2013-01-15). The other important policy document is the 2012 housing development plan (Växjö kommun, 2012a). The regional development plan does not deal

directly with housing issues (RFFS, 2009). Växjö's comprehensive plan is complemented by a more in-depth plan for the central urban areas of Växjö, which was adopted in 2012.

During the strong economic upturn in the mid-2000s, Växjö municipality thought that it was a good time to encourage housing development, and so they started to develop land-allocation strategies more explicitly (Växjö kommun, interview, 2012-09-07). The land-allocation policy is an important tool to manage housing development through the distribution of undeveloped land to developers (Växjö kommun, interview, 2012-09-07). Strong political support for mixed urban developments and consistent planning principles and routines were perceived to facilitate and legitimize land-allocation policies among developers. This also made it easier to make demands on developers before selling the land. However, although the municipality found it easy to develop and manage housing development strategies and land-allocation policies when the economy was strong, with economic recession it became more difficult to implement the long-term strategy of mixed urban housing development, because different projects tried to outdo each other, and there was pressure to exploit individual housing plots (Växjö kommun, interview, 2012-09-07).

Sønderborg's 2009–2021 comprehensive plan maintained that the city was a dynamo for other towns and villages in the vicinity because of its educational institutions, retail and trade functions, and other general service facilities (Sønderborg kommune, 2011). The comprehensive plan contains guidelines for the development of urban areas, indicating that it should be balanced in relation to smaller villages in more rural areas. Thus, the growth of Sønderborg city is not intended to be at the expense of the small villages. This means, for example, that local services should be available throughout the municipality in order to make it attractive to live and work anywhere in the municipality. However, the current situation of a declining residential population in rural areas and a concentration of people in the more densely populated areas contradicts this official municipal vision (Sønderborg kommune, interview, 2012-06-28).

Residential concentration is expected in the city of Sønderborg, as well as in smaller settlements in the western part of the municipality, which are close to the main motorways in south-east Jutland (Sønderborg kommune, 2011). Recent low interest rates have encouraged people to build their own dwellings. In Gråsten, for example, many people would like to build their own single-dwelling buildings, but that is not the case in more rural parts of the municipality, where the

population numbers are falling sharply and neither private nor public apartments and houses are being built (Sønderborg kommune, interview, 2012-06-28). This underscores the uneven geographical development in the municipality that favours growth in urban areas and depopulation in rural areas. This is further reflected by housing prices in the city, which are just under the average for other areas in southern Denmark. In contrast, housing prices in Nordborg (a rural town in the northern part of Als) are approximately half of the regional average (Region Syddanmark, 2010).

Ålesund is striving to make the city core more attractive and vibrant by building housing in the city centre and densifying existing residential areas near the city centre. These developments are intended to slow the outmigration of young adults and to provide needed smaller apartments for the central districts (Ålesund kommune, interview, 2012-10-02). In addition, a number of related strategies have been proposed, such as the co-ordination of urban planning with the transportation system. Ålesund's comprehensive plan acknowledges that the municipality has little influence over demographic development, but housing development is something it can influence (Ålesund kommune, 2008). To manage housing development in Ålesund, the municipality intends to implement an "active and long-term municipal land-acquisition policy". As the plan states, the municipality has a number of instruments (measures) to implement this active housing policy, especially with respect to land management (see below) and regional collaboration.

Ålesund is planning for continued population growth, and is trying to cope with ongoing challenges to housing development by implementing a more active and long-term municipal housing policy. This means that the municipality intends to secure future housing needs by guiding housing development more closely, enhancing urban planning, and devoting resources to developing high-quality housing areas. Previously, the housing market in Ålesund was largely managed by private developers, i.e. the numbers and types of houses that were built were determined by the market. This put a lot of pressure on the municipality to develop public infrastructure and services in all areas of the municipality. The more active housing strategy is intended to give politicians and policymakers the ability to guide housing development more closely.

Ålesund and the other municipalities in the Sunnmøre region have a common strategic document for developing sustainable housing and labour markets throughout the region. The document is a strategic response to ongoing challenges, reinforces regional development, and stimulates regional mobilization in

different development areas. The main strategic issue highlighted in the document is the demographic structure of the region and population development. This provides a framework for the strategy and related scenarios presented in the document (Sunnmøre regionråd, 2010). The strategy includes two basic scenarios, an "alert" scenario and a "vision" scenario. The alert scenario presents a negative view of the future by depicting weak development of the municipality in all sectors. The vision scenario ("Sunnmøre convinces") is a more positive image of the municipality's development, characterized by decisiveness and strong regional collaboration. It presents hypothetical examples of new types of regional co-operation and forms of development. The vision scenario is supported by a strategic response and platform to guide development of a more cohesive region by 2020. (Sunnmøre regionråd, 2010).

Örnsköldsvik also emphasizes densification strategies and centrally located developments. This is seen as especially important for attracting young people, who prefer centrally located apartments. At the same time, dwellings in rural areas of the municipality are becoming vacant (Länsstyrelsen Västernorrland, 2012). The supply and demand for housing is skewed along urban and rural lines. Örnsköldsvik's 2011 comprehensive plan states that the municipality has a limited ability to guide housing development, which is supposed to happen through the private market. The municipality can control the location of future planning through its planning monopoly, but implementation is determined by the market (Örnsköldsviks kommun, 2012).

Pargas has focused on its strategic geographical location in the archipelago for commuting to Turku, and has emphasized its proximity to the sea and nature as amenities that can attract people. Pargas also has an active land policy, which involves acquiring plots of land that are deemed beneficial to the social structure for planning (Pargas stad, interview, 2012-10-24). Pargas municipality strives for a diversity of housing, including single- or double-dwelling buildings, row houses, and multi-storey houses, as well as different forms of service, such as various kinds of residential care (homes for the elderly, student housing, etc.). This has resulted in the municipality owning larger plots of land in centrally located areas, which gives it a good opportunity to guide land-use development (Pargas stad, interview, 2012-10-24). A key issue is to take advantage of the unique archipelago environment (the shoreline, etc.) to attract people to the area.

There is a general prohibition against housing construction along the shoreline in Finland, Sweden, and Norway. However, municipalities in Finland (and Norway) have traditionally been able to limit shoreline

protection regulations in their comprehensive plans, and thus they have been able to plan for settlements in coastal zones (Tillväxtanalys, 2012). According to the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, housing developments along the shoreline are a prerequisite for settlements in the archipelago (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2012). Thus, it is important that planning allows for new developments and for the remodelling of second homes into permanent homes. It is also important to support and improve infrastructure, such as extending the electrical power grid to permanently inhabited islands that are currently without access to power (Egentliga Finlands förbund, 2012).

Housing strategies and targeted interventions

Aalborg has decided to focus on youth housing. The main reason for this is the record-high number of students coming to Aalborg University, increasing the number of inhabitants by an estimated one thousand each year (Aalborg kommune, 2012a). The municipal housing programme for 2011–2014 comprises about 3,300 public-housing units, and about 2,600 of these are for young people. Approximately 70% of all new youth housing projects in Denmark over the next four years will be in Aalborg municipality (Aalborg kommune, 2012a). The youth housing is part of the public-housing system, which receives municipal co-financing (providing at least a loan guarantee). Direct municipal involvement in the construction of new youth housing is also seen as beneficial because it stimulates employment in the construction industry at a time of low activity (Aalborg kommune, 2012a). The success of the growth axis is regarded as crucial for attracting this segment of the population, and the development of youth housing is being encouraged in this area (Aalborg kommune, interview, 2012-09-13).

Stavanger's housing development plan emphasizes the relationship between demographic development and housing constructions, including the co-ordination of public transport and the demand for new schools. The population projection also analyses the expected geographic distribution of the population in different housing areas in the city, and estimates future demand. One important feature is that the municipality evaluates changing demands for housing construction and demographics every year (Stavanger kommune, 2011b).

Stavanger municipality uses different kinds of tools and measures to implement its active housing policy and to address existing challenges. To secure the devel-

opment of the municipality, an active municipal housing development policy has been emphasized. Since the 1970s, Stavanger has had a strong active housing policy, both for single-dwelling houses and for city development projects. One of the consequences of this long-term active housing policy is that the city has historically had little demographic segregation. Currently, however, they are struggling to meet housing demand within the municipal borders, and consequently the housing market is unbalanced. Ideally, the municipality should focus on the issues it can explicitly influence in its capacity as planning authority, landowner, contract partner, and (in some cases) adviser (Stavanger kommune, 2011b). For example, models of co-operation are seen as important tools for improving collaboration with developers and other important actors in the new housing arena (Stavanger kommune, 2011b).

Växjö has adopted a number of housing development programmes during the last decade. The latest programme was presented in 2012, and aims to analyse future housing demand and ensure that the municipality can manage upcoming challenges (Växjö kommun, 2012a). Considered in light of the city development plan and the population projection, the housing development programme sets guidelines and outlines central measures. The municipality uses different kinds of tools and other important elements to implement the housing development plan and related strategies (Växjö kommun, interview, 2012-09-07).

Växjö has developed a planning model for integrating demographic considerations into housing plans. At the beginning of each year, the municipality sends out a housing market survey to all developers asking them to report on current housing development projects and to indicate whether they plan to start new projects during the year. This survey is used to analyse potential housing developments in the coming year and to construct a housing projection. The projection is divided by type of housing and geographical area, and it is integrated with the population forecast. The material is also used in the operational planning for other activities in the municipality, such as planning for public schools, etc. (Växjö kommun, interview, 2012-09-07). The housing construction forecast is followed up later in the year. In 2012, the estimated production was 322 dwellings, but it seems that only 200 units were completed by the end of the year (Växjö kommun, correspondence, 2013-01-15).

Another important policy tool for Växjö municipality is the use of contingency plans to enable them to be prepared for new developments. The municipality tries to ensure that it has prepared land for new housing, and to match supply to demand. A typical response

in an economic recession is to offer undeveloped individual housing plots in suburban areas of the city for housing construction. This can easily generate other problems, such as urban sprawl, which is counterproductive to overarching goals such as sustainable urban development and densification of the city. A major challenge is how the municipality should handle pressure from developers to develop areas not designated for development in the municipal policy documents. An important factor in guiding housing development is that the municipality owns land. This allows the municipality to distribute land to different developers and gives the municipality leverage with construction companies. Another important factor is close collaboration between developers, construction firms, and the three municipal public-housing companies, which provides a solid support for housing development. Two of the municipal public-housing companies operate in the city-centre area, and the third focuses on building houses in the smaller cities (e.g. Vidingehem), which is believed to be rather unusual in Sweden (Växjö kommun, interview, 2012-09-07). The public-housing companies are complemented by private-housing companies, which consist of a mix of large and small developers (Växjö kommun, 2012a).

As mentioned previously, Sønderborg's planning strategy predicts a population decline of 3.2% over the 2011–2025 period (Sønderborg kommune, 2011). This implies that 1,000 to 1,500 houses and apartments might become redundant (Sønderborg kommune, interview, 2012-06-28). The effects of a shrinking population have become increasingly apparent, as housing companies have started to demolish redundant houses and the municipality has started to place more focus on maintaining and renovating existing buildings (Sønderborg kommune, interview, 2012-06-28).

Housing development strategies are given a prominent position in Ålesund's comprehensive plan (Ålesund kommune, 2008). The plan takes into account demographic changes, such as changes in population composition (age groups) and the geographical distribution of the population in the municipality. The plan identifies a number of challenges, including the geographical distribution of the population, co-ordination of new housing and existing infrastructure, and the demographic composition (i.e. an elderly population). However, the starting point for the housing development strategy and the implementation of housing policy is that the population will continue to grow (Ålesund kommune, 2008).

One of the most important elements of Ålesund's active housing strategies is a policy model inspired by Stavanger municipality. The main elements of this

strategy (described as the "Stavanger model") specify that the municipality: manages the comprehensive plan (land-use part) for future housing sites; negotiates with landowners and acquires development areas; enters into development agreements with landowners and/or private construction firms; plans the area; and facilitates the sale of acquired land and completed housing sites, including housing and municipal infrastructure (Ålesund kommune, 2008).

In Örnköldsviks, housing strategies are being developed with a dual focus on the young and elderly populations, because an ageing population and the outmigration of young people have been identified as the main challenges (Örnköldsviks kommun, interview, 2012-07-05). The municipality has not conducted a thorough analysis of the housing stock yet, nor has it addressed the question of how to attract young families, but the issue is on the agenda (Örnköldsviks kommun, interview, 2012-07-05). A report on the future housing situation for elderly citizens emphasized the need for adapted tenement buildings, general accessibility in housing areas, and linking housing demand to demographic changes (Wikman konsult, 2012). According to the report, barely one-third of the more than 10,000 multi-dwelling buildings in Örnköldsvik municipality are accessible by wheelchair, half of the dwellings are accessible with a walking frame, and half of the apartments are not accessible by wheelchair or with a walking frame (Wikman konsult, 2012). Accessibility for the elderly is deficient in most housing areas in the municipality, with only a few places having good access (Wikman konsult, 2012). This general lack of accessible housing for the elderly prompted the municipality's focus on senior-citizen dwellings. By relating the accessibility of housing to demographic changes, it will be possible to see which areas need apartments for elderly citizens (Örnköldsviks kommun, interview, 2012-07-05).

Pargas also has a dual focus related to demography and housing. First, there is an effort to help senior citizens remain in their homes as they age, reducing the reliance on costly institutional care to provide services for the elderly. Second, because it is difficult for Pargas to provide services to a population that is spread out over more than 100 islands, the municipality is investing in information technology such as e-Health and distance education (Demo Regions Network, 2011).

There are three strategic planning issues related to housing in Pargas. First, the municipality of Pargas is actively trying to promote the greater use of second homes beyond their current seasonal use and to improve possibilities for distance working. Second, the focus of land-use planning is on physical infrastructure,

so that future housing areas will have good access to services. The goal is to shorten travel distances in the municipality and region. Third, housing for the elderly

will be promoted through a focus on elderly homes and small group homes (Pargas stad, 2010).

5. Concluding comments

Densification of urban areas is an overarching spatial strategy in practically all of the municipalities studied. “Attractive urban areas”, “growth axis”, and “denser city centre” are recurring terms in many of the comprehensive plans and strategic housing policies. Despite the variations between the municipalities both within and between the Nordic states, transport-oriented developments and a mix of functions are often emphasized as strategic pathways. In addition to the emphasis on densification, many municipalities also strive for balanced local development. Local geographic and territorial contexts are crucial preconditions that set the parameters for the implementation of planning strategies. A large inland municipality such as Växjö has rather different challenges and opportunities than a rural archipelago municipality such as Pargas, which in turn differs from a densely populated city like Stavanger. Interaction between urban and rural areas seems to be a future issue for development, especially because the functional areas of people’s everyday lives often transcend administrative territories. Various forms of housing-related regional collaborations seem to be crucial in this regard. For example, both Pargas and Stavanger are working actively with these issues at regional and subregional levels in different constellations.

Challenges for planning for the future

The awareness of challenges and opportunities inherent in demographic changes is relatively good in the Nordic municipalities we examined. All of the municipalities use different demographic forecasts. The extent of the projections differs a great deal depending upon the size of the municipality and its resources. Separate demographic strategies that complement other planning documents (such as the comprehensive plan) are also a common feature. The focus is often on attracting and retaining a younger population. The housing strategies are anchored in demographic trends, but they are growth oriented. It seems to be more difficult (politi-

cally) to adapt the current housing stock than it is to construct new houses. However, there are interesting exceptions, with the most obvious example in Sønderborg, where houses are actually being demolished (although new dwellings are simultaneously being constructed). Population growth and housing development are interdependent; housing development is a tool that can be used to support positive population growth. The growing elderly population is regularly perceived as a challenge, but not often as an opportunity. Of course, there is a fine balance between statistical projections and policy scenarios, and as we saw in the Sønderborg example, the focus is partly related to the interests and competence of people in office, i.e. political priorities and realpolitik. It is interesting to note how the relationship between demography and housing developments is firmly anchored in modern rational planning ideals, which are often implicitly based on a rather traditional, idealized family structure. However, it is important to recognize new social formations, family structures, and shifting population compositions. More research on living preferences and the relationship between a growing elderly population, densification, sprawl, and housing (for example) is needed. It is also important to investigate further the scale of the household, as it has been an area of significant socio-demographic changes in recent years, with new fluid lifestyles and new forms of household composition (Buzar, Ogden, & Hall, 2005). For example, since the 1970s the proportion of one-person households has increased from around 25% to almost 50% in 2000 in Denmark and Sweden.

Potential for collaborative planning

Public-private relationships are crucial in the new forms of market-oriented urban governance emerging in the Nordic states. There are limitations to local interventions in the housing market, which is not only dependent on local regulations but also on more complex sets of relationships, including global financial re-

lationships far beyond the influence of local interventions. Municipalities claim that they are limited in their ability to influence housing development. The Swedish cases highlight the fact that public planning can guide housing developments, but implementation needs to be on market terms. By contrast, Aalborg municipality is co-financing new youth housing. In Norway, the municipalities are also directly active, through land politics and by using active housing strategies of land allocation and acquiring/preparing land for future development.

Another form of active land-use policy and regulation is municipal planning preparedness for new development projects, i.e. being able to accommodate and adjust to market demands. A key question for the future thus concerns active planning versus passive regulation. Thus, key challenges for future housing developments and urban planning are (still) to: 1) produce new houses efficiently and democratically (public-private, individual-collective), and 2) adapt and adjust the existing housing stock to new demands, such as for an ageing population or a shrinking population. It might be worthwhile here to repeat OECD's general policy recommendations for urban and regional development independent of the local demographic processes (Geröházi et al., 2012):

- to implement local employment programmes in order to activate the hidden reserves of the labour market and reduce the effect of the shrinking work-force due to ageing;
- to provide new and improved local services for the fast-ageing generations (social, health care, transport, etc.);
- to strengthen local child-care services to encourage the labour participation of mothers;
- to implement methods in housing and spatial planning to encourage the formation of mixed residential areas regarding age and social composition;
- to create an environment and strengthen the social context supporting family oriented values in order to encourage families with children to stay in urban areas;
- to provide a secure and safe urban environment in order to lower spatial segregation and increase the quality of life of all generations.

It is also important that the implementation of these policies is done through integrated strategies. That means vertical integration between local, regional, and national scales, horizontal co-ordination between municipalities and regions, and transversal collaboration between sectors.

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