

Summary

Characteristics of walking strategies affecting their usefulness and effect

Studies of walking strategies in Haugesund, Trondheim, and Ås

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Authors: Marianne Knapskog, Sebastian Peters, Aud Tennøy

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Walking as a means of transport is rapidly becoming more relevant and important. Many municipalities develop their own walking strategies to get more people walking and to improve the experience of walking. We have examined what characteristics of walking strategies affect whether they become good and effective tools in municipal planning. Recommendations for cities planning to develop walking strategies can be summarized as: The walking strategy should consist of a long-term and holistic strategic part and a short-term and specific action plan that is revised frequently; Municipalities should develop their walking strategy themselves; The walking strategy should be broadly anchored; Multiple municipal departments and other relevant actors should be involved in the preparation of the walking strategy; Participation from the population is important – mapping of where children walk and visual presentation of data and planned interventions in maps are important tools to create involvement; Campaigns that are conducted in other arenas should be included as part of the walking strategy.

Introduction

Walking as a means of transport is an important topic in discussions about urban development and urban transport. Increased walking shares in everyday travels are important to help more people to achieve targets for daily physical activity and to achieve the goal of zero growth in traffic volumes for private car use in the largest urban regions in Norway. More people walking helps to create more pleasant and vibrant streets and cities, and it can contribute to increased social interaction. In 2012, the Norwegian Public Roads Administration published a national walking strategy with two main objectives: to improve the experience of walking for everyone, and to make more people walk more. An important purpose of this was to encourage municipalities to develop their own walking strategies.

This report has been prepared as part of the research project WALKMORE, which aims to develop knowledge about how to plan and develop small Norwegian cities in ways that help to improve the experience of walking and to make more people walk more. Through the project we follow the work of three small cities in developing their own walking strategies and assist them in this. As part of this, we have examined what characteristics of walking strategies affect whether they become useful and effective tools in municipal planning. In a previous project, we found no existing systematic investigations of walking strategies. We have therefore decided to publish our findings so that others can benefit from this work.

When starting the work of developing a walking strategy, it is natural to ask what characterizes walking strategies that function as useful and effective tools in municipal planning. We understand this as the walking strategies contributing to changes and the implementation of measures that help to get more people walking, and to improving the experience of walking. Walking strategies can contribute to this directly, for example by developing action plans with measures that contribute to goal achievement, see Figure S1. Measures may include large and small physical interventions, regulatory changes, changes in

responsibilities, campaigns, better operation and maintenance, etc. Walking strategies can also contribute to goal achievement indirectly, by affecting other plans in ways that lead to a development of land use and transport systems (and other elements) that contribute to more people walking and to improved walking experiences.

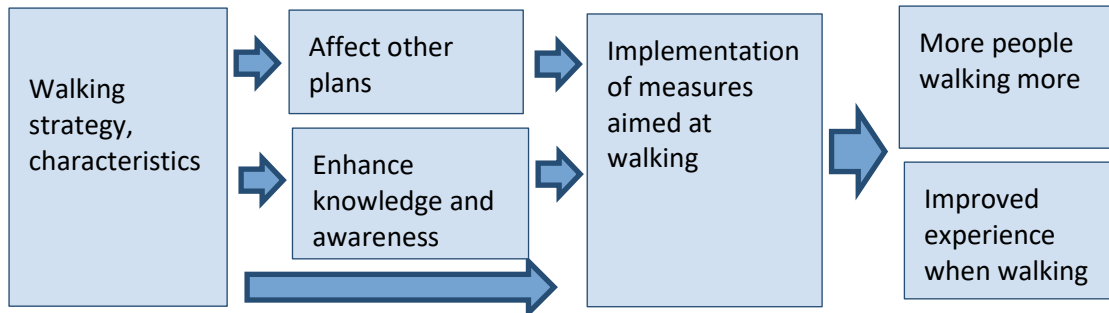


Figure S1: How walking strategies can help to make more people walk more and improve the experience of walking. Based on Hagen, Knapskog and Tennøy (2019).

Different characteristics of walking strategies can influence whether and in what way they constitute useful and efficient tools and contribute to goal achievement, such as: Defined goals, strategic approaches, how specific they are, the use of proven knowledge, how results are evaluated, the design of the strategy document, what processes have been implemented, who has participated, etc.

We have examined this through comparative case studies with the walking strategies for Haugesund, Trondheim and Ås as cases. The study was conducted using document studies and interviews with relevant professionals.

Results

The three walking strategies are quite different, both because they are adapted to the local context and because they differ with regard to their focus. The walking strategy in *Haugesund* was prepared as a background document for the municipal master plan. It consists of a map that shows important links and how these connect destinations for walking. It also has an action plan aimed at four different themes: land use, urban development, design, and changing attitudes. The walking strategy for *Trondheim* focuses on shortcuts, visibility of walking in the streetscape, image, and information design (signage, logos, messages painted on streets and pavements). It highlights the playful and positive sides of walking. Trondheim has chosen to start with ‘easy’ projects that give quick results, and then address bigger challenges later. *Ås* municipality has developed a combined cycling and walking strategy which follows the procedures in the Norwegian Planning and Building Act with respect to public participation, hearings, and decisions (as the only one of the three walking strategies). It has a long-term strategic part valid for the entire strategy period, and a short-term action plan that is revised annually in connection with the adoption of the municipal budget. This ensures an active use of the strategy, and regular updates of the action plan.

In sum, all three walking strategies have a strategic and long-term part, and Trondheim and Ås also have concrete action plans. None of the strategies plan to measure the effects of the strategy and its measures within defined deadlines. All three municipalities have chosen to make the walking strategy themselves, and they agree that this helps to build knowledge, ownership, and engagement in the municipality. However, all employed consultants for

limited tasks such as design, transport distribution calculation, and surveys. Furthermore, all leaned on the national walking strategy.

All interviewees stated to the importance of anchoring the walking strategy broadly politically and administratively in the municipality, and to include relevant actors such as the county and the Norwegian Public Roads Administration. All find it important that someone is responsible for following up the strategy and providing input about walking within the municipality in various processes. Inclusion of experts across different sectors also creates trust and raises awareness around walking.

The three cities have had different degrees of public participation when developing the strategies, but all the project managers see broad participation as important. Mapping of where children walk with the help of a digital registration tool ('barnetråkk') and similar methods, as well as the visual presentation of data and measures in maps, encourage the population to become more active and involved both in the preparation and follow-up of the strategy.

The walking strategies rarely mention existing, established campaigns to promote walking and cycling such as 'Beintøft' and 'Cycle to work', compared to how important these are in cities. Such campaigns should perhaps be given a more prominent place in the walking strategies.

The results indicate that the walking strategies have had an effect both directly through the making of action plans and the implementation of measures that can contribute to more people walking more and improved experiences when walking, and indirectly by influencing other plans in directions that contribute to this. The work with the walking strategies is also likely to contribute to increased knowledge, awareness, and commitment, which can contribute to the cities being developed in ways that achieve goals related to walking.

Recommendations

We found that different characteristics of the walking strategies have affected whether and how they contribute to goal achievement related to walking. Based on our findings from the study, recommendations for other cities to create walking strategies can be summarized as follows:

- The walking strategy should have a long-term and comprehensive strategic part and a more short-term and concrete action plan that is revised frequently.
- It is advantageous that the municipality makes the walking strategy itself, because it helps to build knowledge, ownership and engagement, while help can be consulted for limited tasks.
- It is important to anchor the walking strategy broadly, both administratively, politically and in the population.
- Involve multiple departments in the municipalities (such as city planning, childhood and youth services, and operations/maintenance) and other relevant actors (especially the regional authorities/county council and the Norwegian Public Roads Administration) in the preparation of the walking strategies.
- Public participation is important - mapping of where children walk ('barnetråkk') and similar, as well as mapping of data and measures, could cause engagement.
- Yearly campaigns should be included as part of the walking strategy.