

## **Sustaining Everyday Life through Psychological Presence, Time and Space**

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Besides the social, ecological, economic and political aspects of sustainability, I wish to bring forth the concept of psychological sustainability. It refers here to the external and intra-psyche conditions that enhance mental and physical well-being with benevolent consequences for everyday life and the environment. One of its criteria is the ability to experience 'psychological presence'. I argue that sustaining everyday life can be enhanced through the practice of psychological presence in interaction with certain spatial and temporal conditions that deal with the co-creation of a supportive infrastructure of everyday life through the application of time planning and time politics. The aim of the chapter is to present the framework consisting of the main concepts around space, time and psychological presence, to describe how the concepts have been applied in a five-year long case study in a neighbourhood of Helsinki, and to discuss the results. On the basis of the literature and the case study it was possible to build a preliminary model of psychological presence as an experience, a mode of mind and an interactive process. The results illustrate that psychological presence can be considered one of the indicators and even a means to support everyday life in a psycho-socially sustainable way. Time planning might be regarded as a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the practice of psychological presence.

## Introduction

Sustainability has been a heated subject for the past decades, but the operationalisation of the term is still under construction. Sustainability is not the same everywhere, as the ecological thresholds are different. The issue becomes even more difficult, when the focus is on sustainable development. Unfortunately, there is so far no holistic or even integrative theory of sustainability. Among the many unsatisfactory definitions on sustainable development I have chosen one in which sustainable development refers to the multidimensional pattern of resource use that meets the gendered needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (GDUS-network, 2009). This definition implies conflicts between the different interests concerning the economic growth and efficiency, socio-cultural equality and environmental protection (Campbell 1996; Salleh 2009).

Although most studies on sustainability deal with questions around the social, ecological, economic and political aspects, I wish to bring forth still another one, namely the psychological dimension and its relation to sustaining<sup>1</sup> everyday life. Environmental psychologists have worked for a better understanding of the psychological processes involved in the development of a positive environmental awareness and concern for people's use of natural resources. This also includes the fundamental connections between human behavior and the environmental crisis, which can be treated as social traps or dilemmas (Gifford 2007). According to Bonnes and Bonaiuto (2002:35-47), the ecological revolution has spurred environmental psychology to emerge from a field that has mainly focused on the spatial-physical environment to one that deals with sustainable development in a manner, where environmental issues are studied and acted upon at different interdependent levels, ranging from the individual to the collective and from the local to the global.

*Psychological sustainability* refers here to the external and intra-psychic conditions that enhance mental and physical well-being with benevolent consequences for everyday life and the environment. One of its criteria is the ability to experience the so called 'psychological presence'. It means having experiences of being and doing that imply an approving (mindful) attention to the immediate reality, now and here, without automatic responses or compelling intentions and control (Kabat-Zinn 2003). Besides having consequences for both mental and even physical wellbeing, 'psychological presence' as part of restoration or instoration processes may also lead to a re-perception of values concerning, for example the environment and its care in everyday life (Shapiro et al. 2006; Hartig et al. 2008).

As psychological sustainability does not emerge from a void, I will also focus on the conditions that may promote its appearance. I argue that sustaining everyday life can be enhanced through the practice of psychological presence or mindfulness in interaction with certain spatial and temporal conditions, namely the co-creation of a supportive infrastructure of everyday life through the application of time planning and time politics.

The aim of the chapter is to present the framework consisting of the main concepts around space, time and psychological presence, to describe the application of the concepts in a five-year long case study in a neighbourhood of Helsinki, and to discuss the results. Thus, the context is a North European welfare state at the time of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century recession.

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1 To sustain is used here as a synonym of to support, nourish, keep up and prolong.

## Building an integrative framework for sustaining everyday life

The framework consists of three core concepts: the co-creation of a supportive infrastructure of everyday life, time policies and planning, and the practice of psychological presence.

### *Sustaining everyday life through a supportive infrastructure*

Self-evidence characterises the logic of everyday life. Everyday life refers to the subjective experience of everyday, in contrast to the structures or systems made of institutions, financial flows etc. Scientifically everyday life can be approached as a process and practices in which people shape in their homes, at work or in the living environment the structural conditions into lived life (Beck-Joergensen 1987). Sustaining or even mastering everyday life means then the enhancement and coordination of those multi-dimensional and multi-level processes and practices with which people shape the conditions (Saariaho 2009).

The enhancement of the conditions can take place, among other things, through the co-creation and shaping of a supportive infrastructure of everyday life. The latter refers to a critic, vision, concept and model first developed by the Nordic women's movement and later by their European colleagues in the EuroFEM-network of human settlements (Forskargruppen för det nya vardagslivet 1987; Gilroy & Booth 1999).

The New Everyday Life is both a critic of the fragmented everyday life and a concrete utopia of a post-industrial mosaiclike society consisting of a variety of self-governing and even self-sufficient units responsible for the use of local resources. Important elements are work, care and housing the separation of which is to be replaced by their integration in the living environment in the neighbourhoods. The expansion of the concept of work is crucial. Both paid and unpaid work are seen equal, meaning that the process of work should be shared and organised in a different way. The aim is to balance the production-centred mode of thinking and acting into one in which production serves the reproduction of human beings, nature and culture, and not vice versa. This might lead to a sustainable holistic economy (Hendersson, 1996; Salleh 2009).

The central concept in the Nordic approach was the creation of an *intermediary level* between the private households and the public and commercial world of enterprises. The intermediary level was a new structure in the neighbourhoods comprising environmentally-friendly housing, services, employment, and other activities which support the residents irrespective of age and gender (Horelli & Vepsä 1994). Different types of co-housing in Denmark, Sweden and Norway are examples of well-functioning intermediary levels. However, also neighbourhoods and villages can comprise a supportive infrastructure of everyday life. It can be illustrated through a heuristic model consisting of physical, functional and participatory structures, which the actors in the neighbourhood or beyond can easily appropriate (Figure 1; Horelli 2006a). The physical structure should provide solutions of such a scale that even children and old people can appropriate them (which is contradictory to the current densification trend in building). The functional structure should provide a variety of housing solutions and accessible services. The participatory structure should imply affordances to get involved irrespective of age, gender, ethnic background and disability.

The results of the appropriation may be seen in the emergence of networks of care and mediation, which can also be supported by mobility tools (Larsen et al. 2006)<sup>2</sup>. This network capital might bring forth a supportive cultural structure that implies both local and translocal social capital<sup>3</sup>, which in turn may sustain everyday life.

It is possible to plan and even to implement the physical, functional and participatory structures of the model. However, the communal culture or social capital is something that emerges only if the residents and other stakeholders are willing to appropriate the structures, and to network in ways that create trust (Lin 2001; Allen 2004).

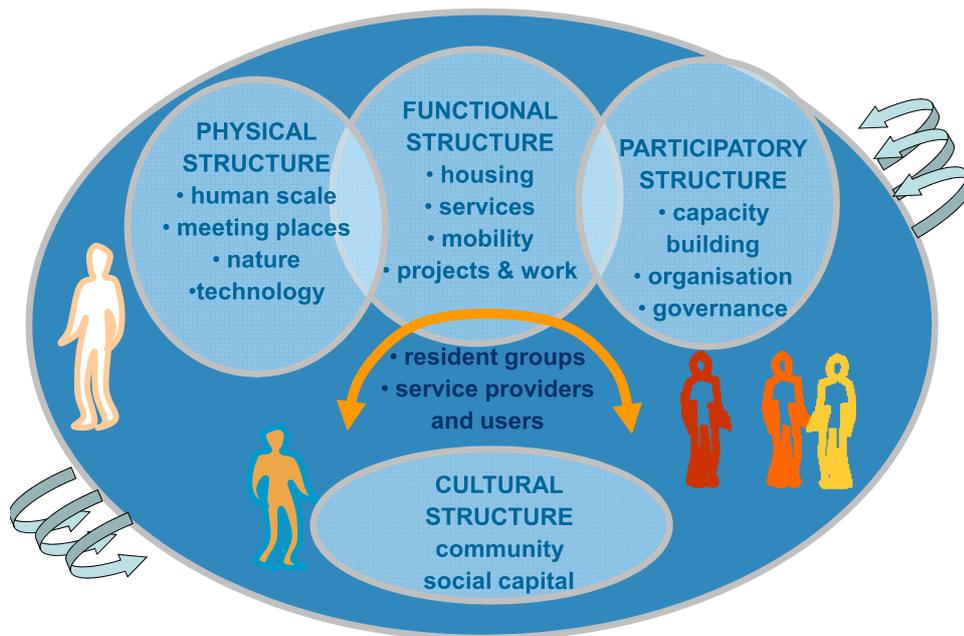


Figure 1. A heuristic model of the conditions for a supportive infrastructure of everyday life which the stakeholders can appropriate and shape into a communal cultural structure.

### ***Sustaining everyday life through time policies and time planning***

Several Southern European countries have experimented and applied for more than two decades a new approach to urban planning that focuses on the temporal qualities of and relationships with social and spatial structures (Boulin 2008). Local time policies and planning are a new phenomenon, at least in the Nordic countries. It has not been on their agenda, irrespective of the increasingly pressing working conditions, a deterioration of welfare services and a new kind of urban poverty coupled with the frantic densification of cities.

2 The relational mobility tools, such as public transport, mobile phones and the internet, are part of network capital, because they enhance the accessibility of ties in a social network, increasing the value of social resources and the support they provide (Rettie 2008).

3 Social capital refers to the possibility to mobilise resources, embedded in social relations and networks, for the benefit of some purpose (Lin 2001).

Time policies encompass the problematisation of time and its relationship with space, as well as new forms of participatory governance in which citizens, specialist and politicians form partnerships and contracts. Examples of new practices are the one-stop agency for the new school year in Poitiers, France, where families with children can get all tickets and registrations for hobbies at one place. The Netherlands have conducted more than one hundred experiments on the daily routines, such as the Sunday openings of libraries or help desks for the personnel of enterprises (Dialogos 2004). The new attitudes and measures concerning different social times (work, domestic, leisure), their linkages and interaction, are the result of social and societal changes situated mainly in the sphere of work, which in turn affect the other spheres of life (Boulin 2006).

Urban time policies refer to those public policies and planning interventions which affect the time schedules and time/space organisations that regulate human relationships at the local, regional, national and even European level (see Mareggi 2002). Time policies are thus connected to the globalisation and decentralisation processes that affect the reconstitution of time and the reconfiguring of space (Castells 1996; Boulin 2006). An illustration of this is the increasing demand to create models of 24 hour open cities with specific territorial characteristics and consequences.

Local time policies have striven to build up new social synchronisations of individual and collective times by legislation (in Italy), by setting up time offices, such as Zeitbuero in Bremen and Bureau des Temps in Paris, as well as by inventing a variety of new methods and praxis that enhance the infrastructure of everyday life of local actors. This takes place through *time planning*, which implies a “cubistic perspective”. It refers to participatory planning which simultaneously targets and coordinates several activities on many levels, such as child care, public transport, safety in open spaces etc. Time planning strives to increase the mastering of both collective and individual times so that the experience of time might become more satisfactory.

The rethinking of collective temporal and spatial operations has taken varying forms in different cultures. However, most countries have started to experiment with different forms of participatory governance in which new actors emerge as partners. This means a transformation of the relationship between individuals and communities, as well as between the different social times and their valuation. The latter brings forth the issue of temporal prosperity and temporal well-being, understood as the capacity to control one’s own temporal resources and the conditions to experience psychological presence.

### ***Sustaining everyday life through psychological presence***

The conception of time is dependent on the culture and phase of societal development. As time is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, there are many ways to classify it. The following dimensions are important to recognise, monitor and assess with different methods:

*Subjective, experiential time/ “objective” (linear) time.* The latter refers to the measurable time that can be monitored by time-use diaries. The tapping of the experiential quality of time, through deep interviews, is also important, because the nature of subjective time provides individual criteria for the successful balance of work and family life.

*Individual/collective, social times* (of the family, work, community, society). As people have their individual time schedules, which might be in conflict with the collective ones, it is important to conduct analyses of both of them

*Time as past, presence and shapable future.* The historical and cultural time patterns have an impact on the current and even future opportunities to manage time and space. Thus, it is necessary to analyse them (through archives, maps and surveys) and to envision future scenarios with the participants.

In addition, the *time of care* (Bryson 2007) and the *ecological time*, meaning the time it takes to restore the human activity in the ecosystem (Salleh 2009), as well as *kairos*, the right moment or opportunity, are important approaches (see also the domestication of times by Szerszynski 2002). However, "the present is the only moment in which we can live, feel and change" (Kabat-Zinn 1994:55). Being in the present is also closely associated with the quality of life. According to Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000:5), the subjective criteria for wellness are: "well-being, contentment and satisfaction (for the past), hope and optimism (for the future), and flow and happiness (in the present)".

The experiential state in which the person is consciously in contact with the present can be called by different names. I refer to it as the *psychological presence*, like William Kahn (1990; see also Senge 2004). Many others call it *mindfulness*. However, the different terms share the assumption that the sense of presence is closely associated with health and wellness, as well as with the ability to cope with stress and everyday life.

Presence is at least a 2500 year old Buddhist concept. During the centuries it has spread through Christianity and other religious movements to philosophical phenomenology, humanistic psychology and lately to cognitive-behavioural therapies (Forsell 2009). The practice of psychological presence or mindfulness can be divided into formal training, such as meditation or mindfulness-based therapeutic interventions, and to informal practice on the arenas of everyday life. Although the latter is the focus here, the mechanism of the phenomenon has been explained in the research on the impact of mindfulness-training in working life, health and education (Langer 1989).

Shapiro et al. (2006) have proposed a model of mindfulness, in an effort to elucidate potential mechanisms to explain how mindfulness affects positive change. They claim that the mindfulness process comprises the simultaneous interaction of three components. They are intention (the personal vision of the reason to practice), attention (paying attention to the operations of one's moment-to-moment, internal and external experience), and attitude (openhearted, accepting attitude). The same research group (Ibid 2006:377) claims that "intentionally attending with openness and non-judgmentalness leads to a significant shift in perspective". This shift in perception or *reperception* is a developmental process that might have an impact on the clarification of values, as well as on cognitive, emotional and behavioural flexibility. This means that the practitioner of mindfulness or of psychological presence becomes able to reflectively choose what has previously been reflexively adopted. Thus, the automatic and compelling reactions will decrease.

According to Segal et al. (2002), the mind operates in two shifting modes or mental gears. They are the modes of being and doing. The goal-oriented *doing or driven mode* is triggered, when the mind sees that things are other than it would like them to be (discrepancies between the goals and reality). It sets in motion the habitual patterns of mind to reduce the gap which are often compulsory and automatically functioning. This future or past-oriented mode is at best in true problem solving or in the intentional and mindful activities of everyday life.

In the *being mode* the individual is fully present and aware of whatever is. The focus is on the immediate reality without automatic responses or compelling intentions and control. It is not motivated to achieve particular goals. Thus, there is no need for constant monitoring and evaluation, nor for discrepancy-based processing. This mode is accompanied by a sense of freedom, freshness and the unfolding of experience in new ways (Segal et al. 2002:74). The two modes of mind can accompany any activity. However, the aim of the mindfulness-based intervention is that the individual could experience psychological presence even in the doing mode.

In sum, psychological presence is an experience, interactive process and a mode of mind that have positive impacts on behaviour and wellness. However, most research cited above have been conducted without the recognition of the role of the socio-cultural and physical

environment. An abundance of research conducted within environmental psychology indicates that the quality of the environment increases the person-environment fit which in turn provides conditions for the experience of psychological presence within the so called restorative or flow-like experiences<sup>4</sup> (Korpela et al. 2002; Csikszentmihalyi et al. 2005:600).

I found in my dissertation on the Home as a psychological environment (Horelli 1993) that most residents experienced flow in the so called breathing hole spaces, such as the bedroom, living room, the garden and the sauna. Characteristic of the conditions for these experiences were timelessness and playful activities either alone or with the family. A symbolically wrong physical solution, such as a worktable in the bedroom, could destroy the experience.

I have had the opportunity to examine the following explorative research questions in a five-year-long case study on time planning in a neighbourhood of Helsinki: Can psychological presence be considered a criterion for sustaining everyday life? Will time planning increase opportunities for psychological presence? Will psychological presence have positive consequences for sustainability?

### Application of the framework in a case study on time planning in Helsinki

The case study on time planning in the Herttoniemi neighbourhood (18.000 residents) of Helsinki (550.000 residents) was a series of three consecutive action research projects that started in 2004 and continue until 2012. The first one was called ARJA, the Management of everyday life, and the second one Ubiquitous Helsinki. The third one is the Participatory Local Community as an issue of time planning that began in January 2009<sup>5</sup>. As the last projects deal more with the co-creation of digitalised services and the application of community informatics (Wallin & Horelli in press; Horelli & Wallin forthcoming; Horelli & Wallin in press), I will concentrate here on the empirical data from the first project that are relevant in terms of the research questions.

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4 Restorative environments, such as favourite places, parks, the home or even virtual spaces, promote the restoration of depleted resources and increase the capacity to direct attention (Hartig et al. 2008). Flow is a subjective state characterised by experiential involvement in moment-to-moment activity. People report that they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue and everything else but the activity itself (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 2005:600). Flow seems to imply psychological presence, where as the latter does not always comprise flow.

5 ARJA was the first Nordic experiment on time planning. It was funded by the European Social Funds during 2004-2006. The action research was coordinated by researchers from the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies of the Helsinki University of Technology (HUT). The partners came from the Central Union for Child Welfare (services), WSP LT-Consultants and Liidea Ltd (mobility management), Statistics Finland (time-use diaries) and the Cities of Helsinki and Turku (local governance). UBI-Helsinki was funded by TEKES, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, the Innovation funds of Helsinki City and several enterprises. It was coordinated by VTT, Technical Research Centre of Finland in collaboration with HUT. The third project was funded by the Finnish Academy.

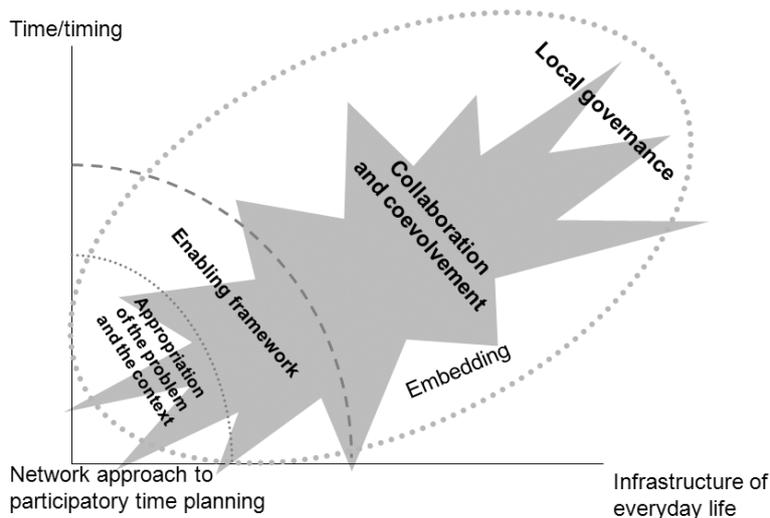


Figure 2. The adjusted framework to guide the implementation of the case study.

The theoretical framework that was described in the previous section guided the implementation of the case study, although it was tailored to suit the conditions of the specific projects. Figure 2 illustrates the adjusted framework which comprises the collective appropriation of the spatial and temporal structures of everyday life, enhanced by the Learning-based network approach to participatory (time) planning (Lena). This meant a form of social embedding in which the actors get involved in partnerships that will eventually lead to participatory local governance and social capital. Lena is a special version of collaborative planning that was co-created with young people and women (Horelli 2006b; Horelli & Wallin 2006). It comprises a method and a set of tools to analyse, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate planning and community development. Lena is based on communicative and post structural planning theories (Booher & Innes 2002; Hillier 2008), as well as on the theory of complex coevolving systems (Mitleton-Kelly 2003). The latter implies the parallel existence of tensions, created by order and chaos, the emergence of phenomena and processes, the self-organisation of different stakeholders, and their co-creation and embedding of products and systems.

I will first describe the implementation of the ARJA-project and then the results of the deep interviews on the experiences of psychological presence. Finally, a model of psychological presence will be presented, which helps to answer the research questions.

### ***Time planning as action research***

*The objective* of the ARJA-project was to construct and test models of time planning that suit the Finnish context. The main focus was on the ways in which the socio-spatial and temporal coordination of housing, work, services and mobility might improve the conditions to reconcile work and family life and the consequent social times of everyday life.

*The design of the action research* comprised an analysis of the context, scenario building of future work and its consequences for the residents and employers, construction of a vision around the supportive infrastructure of everyday life, and the choice of implementation strategies, entwined in on-going monitoring and evaluation.

*The methodological package* comprised, on the one hand, classical research methods. These included surveys (questionnaires to 1600 families distributed through the daycare centres and elementary schools), analysis of the stakeholders in the neighbourhood, thematic interviews with 20 families (chosen from the surveys) and their employers, time-use diaries, and the analysis of documents and field notes. Also the dwellings of the families were

assessed. The families, who were mainly upper- and lower-level employees, had children from the ages of 5 months to 17 years. The ages of the parents ranged from 31-54 years. The adults were all fully employed; four of them were single providers. The employers represented one to two person micro enterprises up till medium sized companies from both private and public sectors. The biggest employer was the City of Helsinki with 30 000 employees.

On the other hand, the methods consisted of a set of enabling tools (Horelli, 2002): diagnostic (mobilising mapping exercises and visits with actors), expressive (community art, future workshops and brainstorming with ICT techniques), conceptual (model building), organisational (networking, consensus building, forums and work groups) and political (goal setting and prioritising, panels, lobbying).

*The analyses* of the surveys, mapping and interviews disclosed that the residents of the area were quite satisfied with their living environment, especially with the closeness to nature and the good public transport. The sustaining of everyday life in the families was structured by the balancing of work and child care. Also the proactive or reactive attitude and organisational skills of the mother, as well as the division of domestic tasks in the family were seminal in the coordination of social times. In addition, the structure of the dwelling could constrain the smoothness of daily schedules. Hot spots of the dwelling were the entrance, which was usually too small, the form of the kitchen, which did not allow to have an appropriate dining table, as well as the lack of space for storage. The families were satisfied with the day care services, but complained about the lack of afternoon care for school children (the school ends around one or two pm). Also the transport for children's hobbies was a problem in many families.

The time use diaries showed that the temporal distribution of women was much more varied than that of men. Women's free time was fragmented and smaller than that of men. The only activities in which men invested more time than women were playing with children and taking care of material objects. The children did not seem to participate in the domestic chores to a great extent.

The Finnish legislation on working conditions recognises well the need to balance work and private life. Therefore, the subjects were quite pleased with the family-friendliness of their working. All of them could control at least to some extent their working time. However, the employers were not particularly interested in the opportunities to enhance the reconciliation of work and family life.

The mobilisation of local actors allowed to share the results of the research with the residents, local administrators and associations. The community worker assisted in creating new organs for local governance (the neighbourhood forum and its work group). They began to coordinate the many activities and projects that went on in the neighbourhood.

*The main result of the project* was that the development process around the enhancement of the infrastructure of everyday life was initiated. It became embedded in the new organisation and modes of working within local governance. The City of Helsinki is organised in a centralised way with no local councils. It has many local civil servants, but they belong to various centrally administered sectors. Therefore, governance means in this case a voluntary organisation and cooperation of all possible actors who have a stake in the neighbourhood: residents, users, civil servants, associations, entrepreneurs etc. The neighbourhood forum, which meets four times a year, assembled a development plan with 11 projects. The interventions that the project was involved with were:

1. the improvement of the metro-station, which was not only in a dilapidated state but also a safety-risk for children and young girls in the evenings (parents had to come and meet their daughters who otherwise could move freely in the area)

2. networking of the family services (which were dispersed and lacked the integration of social and health care, and the support from peer groups)
3. mobility management (information of mobility services, a new bussline, car pools, walking busses etc.)
4. the development and piloting within the Neighbourhood Forum of a new service format, the help desk.

Both employers and the local actors adopted the help desk concept. The *help desk* means that either a face to face desk, a contact number or a web-site exists from which a diversity of quality assured public, private and third sector services can be acquired. The desk can be tailored for the employers or it can be organised locally in the neighbourhood. In the case of Herttoniemi, the local desks will be opened at the metro-station (after its rehabilitation), the library and the play-park. The contact number already exists, run by the Work Efficiency Institute. The latter had conducted client surveys concerning the need and type of daily services. It had also trained one hundred entrepreneurs in Eastern Helsinki to provide quality-assured services. The web-site for the help desk was put up as a prototype and it is being piloted. In addition, the City of Helsinki and two enterprises will provide their personnel a help desk in their intranets. The digitalisation of the desk has been continued in the subsequent phases of the project.

*A preliminary model of time planning and policy* for the Finnish context was built in which the help desk with a service portal acts as an interface for the mastering of individual times and the local service system. The latter comprises the coordination and production of both public, private and third sector services in a specific neighbourhood or district. The help desk as part of the service system is embedded in participatory local governance, but it is also closely linked to the welfare and economic policies of Helsinki. The concept will hopefully be reproduced and disseminated to other neighbourhoods of the capital city. So far it has not been adopted in the original sense, but the idea has been embedded in a new formula of partnership and service platforms that will be disseminated in the City (Wallin & Horelli in press).

However, the piloting of the helpdesk allowed to create service packages for the project families. For example, family X wished to have a person to fetch three children from the child-care centre, a warm meal for the whole family, as well as somebody to fix more space for storage in their apartment. Family Y wanted to have baby sitting services, as well as an option to the City Car Club that lends cars at an inexpensive price. Family Z needs cleaning and the improvement of safety at the Metro station, so that the mother does not have to fetch her daughter from the station, when she has to wait for the connecting bus.

### ***Psychological presence as an indicator and a medium***

On the basis of the survey 20 voluntary families with children and their employers were selected for further research. The adults and even the children kept time-use diaries which were analysed with a programme called Vardagen (Everyday life), constructed by Kajsa Ellegård (Ellegård & Nordell 1997). Interestingly enough, the rhythms of the families even in the same life stage varied a great deal. The diaries provided some information on the times

when the families felt stressed. However, they did not disclose experiences of psychological presence. Therefore, six families (husbands and wives) were deep-interviewed in the summer 2006.<sup>6</sup> The practical goal of the interviews was to get information concerning the use of the new internet-version of the help-desk. The theoretical goal was to find out about the role of the informal practices of psychological presence in sustaining everyday life.

The results revealed that psychological presence was a familiar experience, especially among the women. They could easily express it and provide examples in several situations. It was also an indicator for sustaining everyday life. In fact it was even a means or an instrument to enhance daily activities. One mother of three children told that “when you are present, you can choose the attitude with which you can face the task or the person. This again impacts how you feel about life”. And another mother claimed that “when you implement things in a more calm and relaxed way, life is much nicer”. She could not remember that she would have had to hurry anywhere. A third mother enjoyed a seemingly benevolent attitude, as she said that

*“When we had two small babies, and one of them cried in the night, I thought that thank God, only one baby cries, and not both of them. And when the whole family had a flue, I thought that luckily they are ill in turns.”*

In addition to an attitude of acceptance, the interviewees revealed from the mechanism of mindfulness described by Shapiro et al. (2006), also the intention to decrease stress, to avoid bad consciousness and to increase positive thinking:

*“Presence is the precondition for better mastering daily situations. If you keep on thinking what happens next, and you run in front of things, it becomes stressful. I rather do each task at a time and when it ends, then I start the next one.”*  
(A Father of two children)

*“One afternoon three milk glasses fell and I thought that I have to clean up the mess, either by shouting or calmly. Everyone has a nicer time if you just do it, without saying anything. It is no use to get nervous with children.”*  
(A Mother of four children).

The last example brought forth attention, which also belongs to the mechanism of mindfulness. In addition, it shows how it is possible to be reflective instead of being reactive. Thus, the mindful way to face the world seems to lead to a better self-regulation, flexibility and handling of emotions.

On the other hand, not all interviewees were found to be concentrated on the moment. Automatic behavior and routines were not felt as a negative phenomenon. Their daily life was also sustained through certain routines and a calm attitude:

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6 The interviews lasted about two hours. They were transcribed and content analysed, based on grounded theory and using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin 1990). The conclusions emerged from analytic induction, aided by the quasi-juridical method of Bromley (1986:194-196). The emerging argument in the interpretation was built on a network of empirical facts, relations and relevant concepts.

*“Some things can be done without concentration, because they are fixed in a way that you don’t have to think about them. Just do them and the feet take you further...When I am at work, I concentrate on what I have to do. But the fussing here at home, that is something more or less...something.” (A Father of three children)*

Most of the families in the interviews had breathing hole spaces in their dwellings which enabled to experience flow. The breathing hole space for fathers was often the sofa in front of the TV. For some mothers it was the glass balcony, where one could see the landscape and the stars. For one single mother it was the kitchen table, after the children had gone to bed. “When the children are asleep, then I enjoy the calmness and the empty space around the kitchen table, where I can read the journal. They are my moments.”

### ***A model of psychological presence***

The research supported the hypothesis that psychological presence can be a criterion and an indicator for sustaining everyday life. For some families it was even a means to get by, at least ideally. In terms of content, the psychological presence appeared as a meaningful experience for oneself and as concentration on or attention to the intentions of other people. There were, however, variations in terms of how and why psychological presence appeared. On the other hand, the lack of presence did not seem to mean less control of everyday life in some cases. Daily life can also be sustained through good organisation and routines.

The space and time, structured by the environment were clearly factors that enabled to experience the moment as presence or flow in connection with the breathing hole spaces. On the other hand, the fragmented daily rhythm of some of the women and the lack of own space seemed to constrain the acquirement of calm moments.

On the basis of the literature in the framework and the results of the case study it was possible to build a preliminary model of psychological presence as an experience, a mode of mind and an interactive process (Figure 3). Psychologically the interactive process takes place between the intention, attention and attitude, just like Shapiro et al. (2006) described. It can be embedded in the two different modes of being and doing (Segal et al. 2002). However, psychological presence in everyday life is also affected by the transactive processes that take place between the person and environmental affordances. These are spatial, temporal and social opportunities that seem to structure the informal practice of presence. Participatory time planning can to a certain degree shape affordances or the infrastructure of everyday life (Figure 1), which in turn provides conditions for sustaining daily life. For example, the mobility cards co-created in the project and a new bussline from the other part of Herttoniemi to the health centre made the daily life of child families easier (Horelli & Haverinen 2008). In addition, making the Metro station safer, will affect the time budget of families and young people. Whether the additional time will increase the experience of presence is something which this research design does not allow to answer. Psychological presence, as an experience, is in the last hand a question of personal self-regulation which can be improved to a certain degree through meditation and therapeutic interventions.

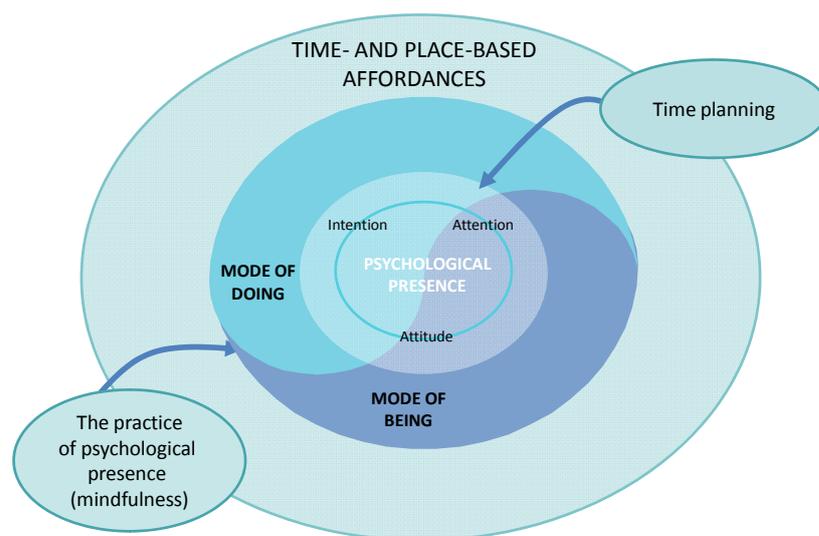


Figure 3. A schema of the psychological presence as an experience, interactive process and a mode of being and doing, structured by transactions with the environment.

## Discussion

I have argued in this chapter that sustaining everyday life can be enhanced through the practice of psychological presence in interaction with the co-creation of a supportive infrastructure of everyday life through the application of time planning. An integrative framework guided the implementation of the action research on time planning in a neighbourhood of Helsinki. The framework also enabled the examination of the pertinent questions: Can psychological presence be considered a criterion of sustaining everyday life? Will time planning increase opportunities for psychological presence? and Will psychological presence have positive consequences for sustainability?

### *Psychological presence as part of practice*

Although Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2005) claim that the societal phase of our time constrains the acquirement of flow, the residents in the neighbourhood under study had experiences of psychological presence without formal mindfulness or meditation training. It was a positive experience especially for women, as it enabled to concentrate on other people's intentions. In addition, the residents brought forth components of the mechanism of mindfulness, such as the intentions, positive attitude and focused attention (Shapiro et al. 2006). Also the two modes of mind – being and doing - that Segal et al. (2002) have described, could be diagnosed in the empirical data. Thus a model could be built in which psychological presence appears as an experience, a mode of mind and an interactive process in context (Figure 3). It also illustrates that the experience emerges from the transactions between the personal skills of self-regulation and the environmental affordances.

Consequently, psychological presence or mindfulness can be considered one of the indicators and even a means to support everyday life in a psycho-socially sustainable way. However, there are other material, social, and organisational ways to master everyday life, such as the routines of daily life. So, what is the relationship between the practice of psychological presence and the routines for sustaining everyday life? Routines are the often

repeated, in-bodied, unconscious doings and sayings which are part of broader social practices. According to one interpretation of practice theory (Schatzki 2002), practice is a set of doings and sayings that are organized on different levels. They are held together by the individual and practical intelligibility; body, mind know-how; rules, knowledge and language; engagements and meanings; products, things and technologies (Gram-Hansen 2008:5-6). Thus the whole multidimensional context – the infrastructure and organization of everyday life - is important in the construction of routines. They are both shared in the same culture and individually interpreted with personal variations in the practice. Practices contain a great deal of mechanic bodily actions and thinking, i.e. they are carried out in the automatic doing mode, just like some of the interviewees narrated in the case study. However, it is possible to experience presence even in the repetitive activities (routines). This means that the being mode is then penetrating the doing mode (Segal et al. 2002; see Figure 3). Whether this will have favourable consequences for the wellbeing and sustainability in general, is something that cannot be answered in this study.

### ***Psychological presence and time planning***

An important arena for sustaining everyday life and the environment is participatory urban planning. The Learning-based network approach to time planning (Lena) that was applied in the case study, improved the supportive infrastructure with the residents, organisations, administrators and entrepreneurs. Lena could provide tools and techniques that had a positive impact on the environmental affordances, which in turn might increase the temporal and spatial prosperity of people.

The temporal prosperity increases the freedom of action and may thus impact everyday life. However, the quantitative increase does not guarantee the qualitative improvement. Consequently, time planning does not automatically increase the sense of psychological presence. Nevertheless, time planning as a process can enhance *collective experiences of presence*. This was the case when the local forum in Herttoniemi painted together visions for the Metro station and made an exhibition of its future. Later on, it led to an architectural competition. Thus, time planning succeeded in creating psycho-social sustainability, but only minor advances in economic and ecological sustainability. Examples of the latter were some improvements in public transportation and in the support to small entrepreneurs and cooperatives (Horelli & Wallin 2006).

Time planning seldom brings forth individual experiences of presence, but it can support their emergence through the provision of conditions that are more fit with the intentions of the residents. Correspondingly, poor time- or urban planning can constrain the flow of daily life. Thus, time planning might be regarded as a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the practice of psychological presence.

The role of the physical environment has not been conspicuous in the literature of mindfulness. Here it was evident that the peak experiences of presence appeared in the breathing hole spaces of the home (see also Horelli 1993; 1995).

### ***Psychological presence and sustainable development***

Meditation and therapeutic interventions increase mindfulness skills which in turn might have positive impacts on, besides stress and pain reduction, also on social relations (Kabat-Zinn 2003). Thus, the practice of psychological presence does have a close connection to social sustainability. Unfortunately, the implied attitude of acceptance, deriving from the Buddhist tradition, might be counterproductive from the perspective of sustainable development and desired change. However, psychological presence is a conscious choice. Paying attention to the present does not have to be on-going. It can be taken in use when needed, like the residents in the study did. Psychological presence can also lead to an increase in deliberation

in which it is a kind of wedge between impulsiveness and active responsiveness. It then enables the choice of the desired focus and balance between different positions. Shapiro et al. (2006) refer to this phenomenon as the change of perspective or re-perception that can enhance the finding of new ways and views. This is the foundation of psychological presence for being a criterion of psychological sustainability.

The openness to new perspectives is where the hope lies for more sustainable behaviour and for sustainable development which have to be constantly renegotiated in every context (Salleh 2009). Nevertheless, there is no guarantee that the clarification of values will transform daily activities towards a more environmentally-friendly behaviour.

Psychological sustainability is only one dimension in the holistic phenomenon of sustainable development both of which comprise many interdependent components and dimensions that interact with one another (Bonnes & Bonaiuto 2002). Thus, psychological presence recognizes besides the intra-psychic processes also the external conditions that enhance mental and physical wellbeing. Gram-Hansen (2008) claims that it is crucial to investigate which parts of the social, cultural and technological structures draw daily practices and routines towards a more or less sustainable direction. However, as sustainability is an endeavour that requires human-environment negotiations on different arenas, the skills brought forth through the practice of psychological presence seem to be seminal. Psychological sustainability is an aspect that should not be forgotten in the discourse concerning the holistic picture of sustaining everyday life. It needs, however, a great deal of further research.

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