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Participation in planning; a study of urban development in Norway

Participation in planning – a study of urban development in Norway

Eva Irene Falleth & Gro Sandkjær Hansen

Author information

Eva Irene Falleth. Professor in Urban and Regional Planning, Norwegian University of Life Sciences. P.P Box 5003, NO- 1432 Aas. E-mail: eva.falleth@umb.no

Gro Sandkjær Hansen. Researcher in political science. Norwegian Institute for urban and regional research (NIBR). P.O. Box 44 Blindern, N – 0313 Oslo. E-mail- gro.hanssen@nibr.no

Abstract

In Norway, the dominance of neo-liberal ideas has resulted in a private planning practice whereby the developer is the principal actor in opaque negotiations between planning authorities and developers. We examine patterns of contact between stakeholders in urban development planning. Based on information obtained from a survey of the 145 most populous municipalities in Norway, as well as from case studies in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim, we find considerable interaction between the stakeholders involved in the planning process. The interaction patterns are different for civil society actors and private developers. We find that while developers have contacts with the planning authorities, the civil actors have contacts with the politicians. In the initial phase, i.e. before formal planning begins, this pattern is highly significant. Politicians frequently feel bound by negotiations and agreements that are made by the planners and the developers during the initial planning process.

1. Introduction

Recent decades have seen a subtle change in the relations between urban planning actors in Norway and in the division of tasks between them. Today, urban development is largely left to the market insofar as development plans tend to be drafted, submitted and executed by private actors[1]. Market actors tend therefore to occupy a principal role in

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[1] Private plan proposals are submitted under section 30 of the 1985 Planning and Building Act, which therefore includes all plans submitted to the municipal authorities by private actors and public authorities. This article concerns development plans submitted under the old law, not the new law which was adopted in 2008. The new law has not altered the principle of private planning, but it gives greater prominence to the planning type by setting out clearer requirements on procedural matters.

urban planning as a result. Eighty per cent of all adopted development plans were submitted as private plan proposals. In Oslo, 82 per cent (63 of 78 plans) of all development plans were private plan proposals in 2009 (Statistics Norway, 2010). The service provided by municipal planning administrations has thus become much more procedural than in the past when the departments drafted and executed the planning themselves.

Norway has therefore no longer a public planning monopoly; it was formally abolished in the Planning and Building Act from 1985. Norway is therefore currently undergoing a large-scale neo-liberal experiment in urban planning. Private actors in Norway, unlike those in many other countries, are entitled to propose draft development plans and submit them for political approval by local governments. There are strong links between these development plans and building applications in Norway. This type of planning is called project planning (Røsnes, 2005). Project plans are in-fill development plans tailor-made for small building projects in urban areas.

This entitlement, dating from 1985, is the formal opportunity to submit project plans prepared by the private sector (Falleth *et al.*, 2010ab; Kalbro *et al.,* 2010). The right to submit planning proposals, which used to be an additional democratic right of civil society, has become a planning instrument for market actors, reflecting and further enabling their strengthened role in urban development. A private project plan is prepared by private actors, i.e. they are the actual planners in terms of working out a formal proposal, and they are also responsible for the planning process right up until final political approval is granted by the local government. The public planner is more often than not reduced to an executive officer who steers the plan through the formal political decision-making process. The planning administration is still responsible for the public consultation that is carried out between the time when initial political approval is given by the planning committee and final approval is granted by the local government.

Both the old (1985) and the new (2008) Planning and Building Acts in Norway underline the importance of participation in planning procedures, with each having formal requirements concerning public and civil society participation aligned to the requirements for public notification, consultation, public inspection and objection/appeal facilities. Participation here includes being involved in the creation of the drafting of the plan, that is, that part of the planning process which market actors currently now perform. There is however reason to believe that the recent developments in planning practice, in respect of the high number of private plan proposals being made, will affect the ability of civil society and of the politicians to influence urban development. A paucity of contemporary studies of the possible consequences undoubtedly exists and, as such, the purpose of this article is to improve our knowledge of the situation. We ask the following questions. How can we best describe relations between the core actors involved in urban development? Which arenas do the various actors have access to? And, how does this affect their ability to influence planning in Norwegian towns and cities?

Planning research has tended to focus on relations between planners and local communities; on methods enabling community participation as an aspect of a planning

process managed by the planner. Very little has been done nationally or internationally on the more structural relations between actors, in relation, for example, to the role played by politics and politicians in urban planning (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005; Graaf, 2009; Granberg, 2008; Holman, 2007, 2008). There are however some exceptions to this (see, Falleth *et al.*, 2010, Saglie & Mäntysalo, 2010; Hanssen & Saglie, 2010; Tewdwr- Jones & Morphet, 2006).

There are certain exceptions in political science as well: one is Stone's 1989 classic on regime theory, which focuses on stakeholder relations and urban development in Atlanta City. A similar study was carried out in Norway (Lyngstad, 2000); there is also Flyvbjerg's study of urban planning in Ålborg (Flyvbjerg,1991); and there are some individual studies of actors and roles in Norwegian planning (Bowotz & Høegh, 2005; Falleth *et al.*, 2010; Nyseth, 2008). Little has however been done to elucidate how market actors *as actual planners* generate civil society participation in urban planning. This article should therefore provide new and important insights into a little studied theme.

The article in structured within a theoretical framework and a presentation of the research design. The presentation of the findings is divided into the presentation of participation, the interactions between actors and the effects of the planning process on planning outcomes. Lastly, we sum up our findings and raise some further issues for planning research.

2. Actors, governance and arenas

The public sector in Norway rests very firmly on a foundation of neo-liberal thinking, as does the public sector in other European and Nordic countries (Mydske *et al*., 2007). This is perhaps best exemplified by the implementation of a raft of New Public Management reforms in these countries. Public–private partnerships and the increasing use of market-related mechanisms have been introduced into urban planning in line with this reform agenda.

The rapid rise, in Norway, of private actors in planning can be interpreted in the light of these neo-liberal trends, something which has given private developers an extremely powerful position in urban development (Børrud, 2005; Røsnes, 2005; Nordahl, 2006; Falleth *et al*., 2010; Falleth & Saglie, 2011). The new division of labour between the public authorities and market actors is a politically desired arrangement – and an example of the much-discussed international shift from "government to governance" (Rhodes, 1997). Governance and joint management in particular is typified by a greater preponderance of market and network forms of management in the public sector and specifically in urban planning. As is increasingly acknowledged, political authorities should govern not only by means of traditional hierarchical authority but also by working together with the private sector and civil society to achieve desired political goals for urban development (Stoker, 2000; Agger, 2005:28; Inns & Booher, 2004; Burns, 2000; Sehested, 2002). To identify the actors and factors influencing urban planning, we thus clearly need a more broadly conceived analytical approach.

This article addresses the roles of, and interactions between, the planning administration, politicians, developers and other local organisations. It emphasises the initial and informal stage of the planning. That is to say the process before formal regulation occurs in terms of planning legislation. It is at the conclusion of this stage that private plan proposals are submitted to the municipal authorities for political approval. Formal routines have been developed in this context by the local municipality where the local authority meets the developers to discuss their planning ideas and proposals. There are no other arenas in which the other actors meet. The locally developed routines, bringing together local authorities and developers, provide for a closed meeting between developer and planning authority. They are often referred to as "preliminary conferences" or "advance meetings".

Politicians are rarely involved in the planning process *per se*. They are generally limited to participating in the final decision-making arrangements in the various political committees and in the context of local government structures more generally. This is in line with the logic of New Public Management with a clear division between politicians who set the wider regulatory framework and public administration staff who administers and implements planning decisions. Politicians have the formal power to reject, adapt or change a plan proposal later in the process, but the informal process nevertheless often binds them to a particular decision. Indeed they often acknowledge that they are bound by prior contacts with the actors involved, primarily those made in the initial meetings between the developer and the public administration as well as those proposals made in relation to development agreements (Falleth *et al.,* 2010; Hansen & Saglie, 2010).

Such preliminary conferences and meetings take place at an early, informal stage of the planning process – a period where statutory participation and consultation provisions do not yet formally apply. The legal requirement here is simply to make the planning requirements publically known. The timing of this announcement is legally unclear and unknown in practice. An actual opportunity to participate does not arise until the formal planning stage has been reached. The right to raise objections applies only *after* the plan has been adopted, termed here the execution stage. The purpose of active involvement in the preparation of the plans has not been spelled out in supplementary provisions, but for participation to occur it would normally have to take place during the drafting of the plan, before the formal procedures have been implemented and the plan has been considered by the municipality. At this stage of the planning process responsibility for the plan lies with the developer.

The Planning and Building Act does not specify who is entitled to participate. Nor does it tell us how much power the actors involved should have. Schmitter (2002) classified several factors which in his view confer participatory rights. He divides actors into formal right-holders, holders of voting rights in a particular area, knowledge-holders, asset and entitlement-holders, stake-holders and status-holders. Status here refers to planning authority, financial means and social position. It is, however, difficult to circumscribe ownership rights. In relation to planning, this means that the local community is conceived of as a rights holder in a dual sense, by enjoying formal rights under the planning law and territorial rights associated with political elections. These local

community participation rights are therefore both direct participatory rights and indirect participatory rights through the representative democracy system. Popularly elected representatives, for their part, possess two rights in the process: as representatives of the public and as the planning authority.

Market actors also enjoy rights of crucial importance for the execution of development plans. They have the economic means and they will often hold property or other land-related rights. Politicians are, moreover, dependent on market actors to achieve their own political goals. This is particularly true of policies aimed at accelerating the rate of home building. So while market actors lack voting rights, politicians need to take them seriously if they want their towns to grow and prosper. In addition, several public authorities enjoy formal participatory rights in planning. In this study however we shall be looking at the planning administration as the entity where the expertise resides; the entity which informs and liaises with the other actors; and that which handles private plans in line with both central and local government objectives and guidelines.
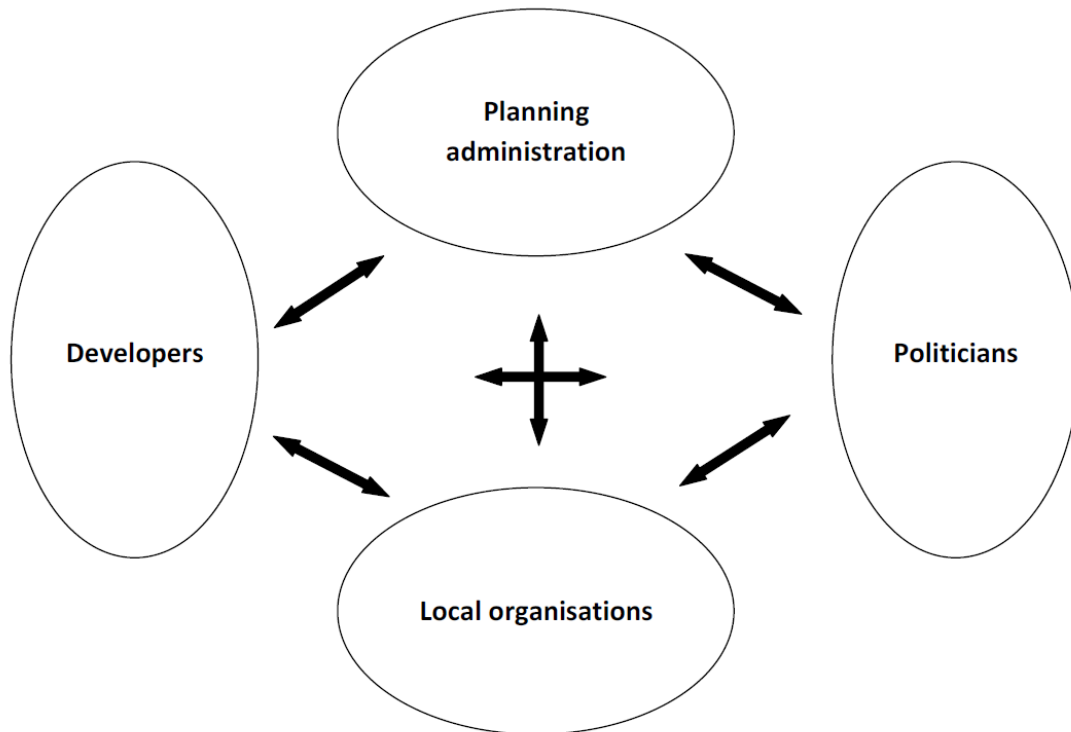

Figure 1: Actors and their interrelation in urban development planning in a network governance perspective.

Figure 1 illustrates all of the involved actors and their possible interrelations. Most planning theory addresses the planner as a conductor and the planner in interaction with the other actors in urban development. This study addresses the interactions between all actors. This opens up our ability to appreciate more fully the many interrelations involved in urban planning, interrelations which are often no specifically focused on in traditional planning research.

It must however be understood that none of these groups of actors is homogeneous. In local communities, people and organisations can hold very different opinions about a plan, which is likely to complicate internal coordination and mobilisation. Their interests range from immediate neighbourhood concerns to shared interests over a wider area. This diversity of views can make it harder for politicians and market actors to interpret what the local community wants. On the one hand, when many actors hold different opinions, the room for manoeuvre will be wide; but diversity can also hamper efforts to work together with the involved stakeholders. In the same way, there are serious and less serious market actors. Some know what planning means in practice and how the system works while others may not have been involved in a planning exercise before or are unwilling to fulfil their legal duty to consider interests other than their own. Politicians of course belong to different parties and have different opinions on planning, urban development and market actors.

The local community is perhaps the weakest institutionalised entity in planning. It is a group of voluntary actors with few available resources to spend on development plans. These people may lack the capacity to participate to the same degree as the public authorities and private actors. This gives developers, planning administrations and politicians an opportunity to align themselves with the interest groups of their choice, to a certain degree at least, and may even set groups against one another. In other words, community interest groups are used strategically by private actors to advance their own interests in a given development plan.

3. The survey

This presentation is based on a study from 2007-08 of one hundred randomly selected development plans (50 from 1987 and 50 from 2005); qualitative case studies in three of the largest urban municipalities in Norway, namely Bergen, Oslo and Trondheim; and a comprehensive survey of various respondents in the 145 most populous municipalities in Norway. The year 1987 was chosen because this was the first year in which most plans where adopted in line with the requirements of the new Building and Planning Act of 1985. The year 2005 was chosen to be sure that the planning cycle of the particular plans in the study had been concluded.

We shall concentrate in the main on the survey in light of the few general studies like ours in planning research. The questionnaire was sent to key actor groups involved in planning, i.e. politicians (mayors, politicians on municipal planning committees), planning administrations (chief municipal executives, heads of planning, planning officers), developers/construction firms (with more than eleven employees, selected from registers held by Statistics Norway), and local organisations (selected from the municipalities' own consultation lists and cultural heritage interests). Questionnaires were sent to some 3,600 respondents. The response rate was 20–65 per cent and was lowest from local associations and highest from mayors and chief municipal executives. Qualitative data based on semi-structured interviews was also obtained by our case studies in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim municipalities.

4. Participation in development planning

The minimum criterion for participating in planning derives from formal criteria in the Planning and Building Act on notification, consultation in terms of public inspection and the right of objection/appeal. The study of documents from Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim shows that consultations relative to the number of plans grew from thirty of the fifty plans studied in 1987 to forty of the fifty plans studied in 2005. The number of consultation responses per plan also rose. While the average number of consultations per plan was 8.5 in 1987, it was 15.2 by 2005. Consultation responses tend to come from landowners or residential and neighbourhood associations. We also asked the local organisations (N=221) whether they had (ever) taken part by submitting a consultation response. Of these, 66 per cent responded in the affirmative, this suggests that it is a fairly standard form of participation.

The number of objections has grown too. The questionnaire asked heads of planning whether there had been a rise over the past five years in the number of objections, inquiries to the civil ombudsman and litigations. While there appears to have been no change in the number of inquiries to the civil ombudsman or in the number of law suits, half of the heads of planning reported that objections are now more numerous than before. Explanations for this may include the fact that densification in build-up areas creates more conflicts than urban extension and that planning privatisation increases the tension between private and public interests.

Active involvement is generally given a great deal of attention in planning theory (e.g. Friedmann, 1987; Healey, 1997; Fiskaa, 2005). The actual frequency of participatory measures beyond the minimum required by law however seems rather limited. The document study thus shows that participation above a minimum level is rare. In only five of the hundred studied development plans was participation above the regulatory minimum. Most of this additional participation was in the form of public meetings. Local organisations reported that, 47 per cent had taken part in public meetings. Public meetings are not however the only form of participation where interested parties can exercise significant influence. In Arnstein's 1969 classification of influence via participation, the chance of making a real difference by participating in public meetings is very small indeed. The public has an opportunity to express its opinions on planning ideas or proposals. In other words, these meetings will occur at a late stage of the process (when a proposal is already drafted), often in the form of a meeting called in protest against the already drafted planning proposal.

Several other Norwegian studies reveal the low prevalence of community participation beyond the statutory minimum in planning (Fiskaa, 2005; Wøhni, 2007; Netland, 2008; Windju, 2008; Schmidt *et al*., 2011). The new division of tasks, with developers actually planning urban developments, also gives them greater responsibility to ensure participation. Could the explanation for the low incidence of participatory measures be in part that the ideal of community participation is no longer considered very important by key planning actors? The questionnaire included questions designed to elucidate these attitudes. First we had a general proposition about the importance of ensuring community

participation. This was followed by three propositions highlighting different reasons for this. The results are shown below.
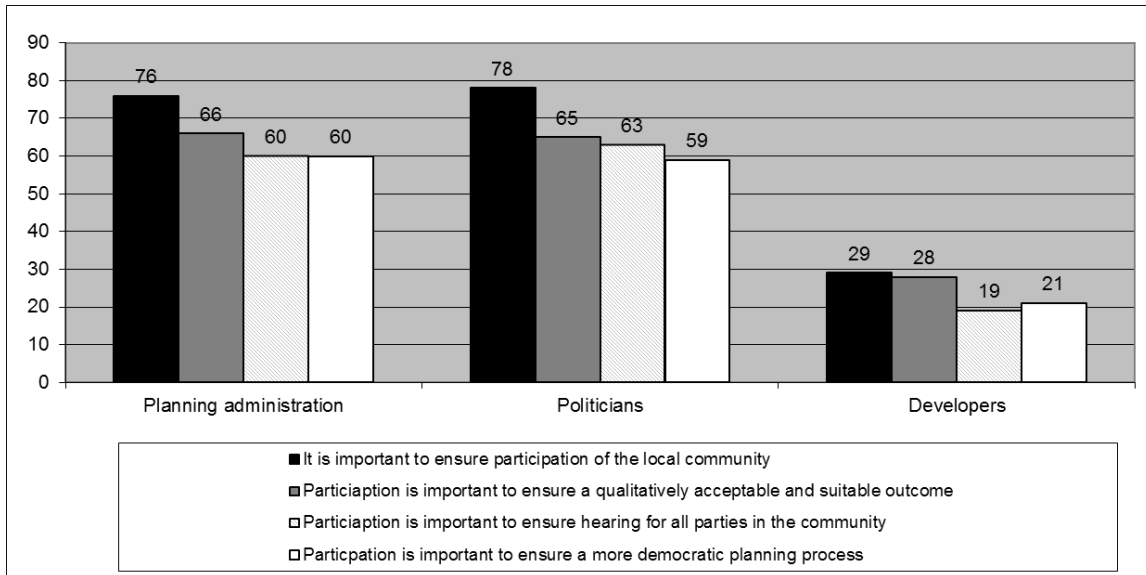

Figure 2: Attitudes towards participation in urban planning. Percentages stating "very important" and "quite important". (N= 1000)

Figure 2 clearly shows the clash of two value systems: planners and politicians wedded to the notions of community involvement and democracy and developers who are more aligned to economic rationality in their actions. Clearly then significant and systematic attitudinal differences exist between municipal actors and developers in respect of community participation. While politicians (mayors and political members of the standing planning committees) and planning administrators (chief municipal executive, head of planning, planning officers) are virtually unanimous in that nearly 80 per cent acknowledge the importance of securing community participation while the percentage of developers expressing the same sentiment is very much lower. These differences remain significant also after controlling for other variables (municipal size, organisations in the municipality and development activity). What these attitudinal differences tell us is that it could be difficult to get developers to do more to encourage community involvement beyond their statutory obligations.

5. Interaction patterns among actors

What does the pattern of interaction among the different actors look like, and in which arenas does contact occur? We were particularly interested in our study in exploring interaction in the initial, informal planning stage, and the questionnaire therefore included questions on contact across all stages of the planning process. One would assume that the earlier the contact, the greater the chances would be of influencing the planning process (Holm, 2007).

We find that ninety-five per cent of the responding municipalities had created internal procedures for handling submitted plans. Among these:

- Ninety-one per cent report having procedures in place to facilitate preliminary conferences and advance meetings with developers.
- Seventy-eight per cent report internal procedures for setting up development agreements.
- The majority have procedures, moreover, for arranging internal meetings in the municipality (96 per cent) and meetings with other public authorities (87 per cent) to frame the planning process.
- Eighty-two per cent have procedures in place for contacting local organisations concerning start-up and consultation matters. This relates primarily to public announcements in newspapers and routines for the provision of written information.

All in all, this shows that the interaction arena between municipality and developer is highly developed and 'proceduralised'. This gives developers a structural advantage over local community actors.

As regards the question of when interaction frequency is highest, the data reveals, perhaps rather surprisingly, that interaction between politicians on the planning committees and developers and local organisations peaks in the initial, informal stage. Sixty-seven and 62 per cent respectively report having interacted with these actors at this stage of every planning proposal. Since the role of politicians in the initial, informal stage is somewhat less defined, we were expecting the highest frequency to occur during the formal decision-making stage, when politicians give the plan their approval. Contact between these actors tails off slightly in the later stages – around 45–50 per cent of planning committee politicians report here having been in touch with the above-mentioned actors in all cases – with the frequency of contact being relatively similar for both groups of actors. With regard to the mayors, the results show significantly less contact with developers and organisations in connection with development plans. We find no major difference between stages or between actor groups (developers, organisations).

Turning to the planning administrations, we note that contact with the two external actor groups is much less balanced. While around 45 per cent of planning heads and planning officers report having consistently interacted with developers during the informal planning stage, fewer than 5 per cent report equally consistent interaction with local organisations at this stage. For the planning administration it would seem that contact with local organisations peaks in connection with consultations on the planning proposal during the formal stage – but even then, no more than 10 per cent of chief municipal executives, heads of planning and planning officers report always being in contact. Relations between planning administrations and developers are close. Sixty-seven per cent of developers are always in contact with the planning administration during the informal stage of planning. These findings echo those of previous Norwegian studies (Holm, 2007).

Given that developers are now largely responsible for many planning tasks, we were also interested in whether they made an effort to get local organisations 'on board' in terms of their planning decisions. According to our data, this is not particularly common and thus

not much effort is made to bring this about. Only 3 per cent always establish contact with local organisations during this early stage of the planning process. Our data reveals, then, that little in the way of interaction takes place between local organisations and the planning administrations and developers during this informal planning stage. One consequence of this is that local organisations generally do not have an opportunity to make their opinions, interests and knowledge known early on when the plans are being drafted and basic principles laid down.

In which arenas, or through which channels, does this interaction proceed? The formalised dialogue arena in the early drafting phase is generally thought to be between the planning administration and the developer (Røsnes, 2005; Nordahl, 2006). The survey confirms this. There, 91 per cent of the heads of planning have internal procedures for preliminary conferences and advance meetings with developers, and 78 per cent also have internal procedures for dealing with development agreements. We also asked developers and local organisations to tell us how, in general, contact with other actors is organised. The response is presented in the next table.

	With local politicians		*With planning administration*		*With organisations*	*With developers*
	Developers	Organisations	Developers	Organisations	Developers	Organisations
Closed meetings	27	20	90	27	7	14
Open public meetings	9	23	2	26	17	14
Direct contact	51	63	43	73	50	51
N	98	201	98	201	98	201

Table 1. Percentage of local organisations and developers reporting prevailing organisation of interaction between different actors in the planning process (N=201/98).

This table highlights several interesting tendencies. First, we see that the most important interaction arena for contact between developer and municipality is the *formal, closed meeting*. Ninety per cent of the developers surveyed report that they consider closed meetings to be their most important method of interaction with the planning administration. Second, it appears that politicians are not normally represented at these meetings. Only 27 per cent of developers record this as the prevailing form of contact with politicians. This impression gains further credence from another finding. Planning administrations and developers are more likely than politicians to attest to a rise in the number of preliminary conferences and advance meetings with developers in recent decades. Politicians are, however, rarely involved in these meetings.

Contact between local organisations and the municipality appears to take place in more informal arenas. Sixty-three per cent record direct contact as the prevailing mode of interacting with the planning administration, and 73 per cent with politicians. Developers of course interact directly; in their contact with politicians moreover it appears to be the main mode. The figures show thus show that contact with the municipality varies widely indeed between developers and local organisations. Developers have formalised arenas enabling contact with the planning administration while local organisations do not – and therefore resort to direct contact, primarily with politicians. The various parties in a planning process are therefore unequally placed to participate in and contribute to the discussions, deliberations and negotiations on development plans.

Possibly the most interesting finding concerns the central role played by politicians as liaisons between the general public and the planning process. Other studies (Wøhni, 2007; Schmidt *et al*., 2011) indicate that direct contact with politicians appears to be an important participatory channel for the local community. It remains, however, an informal channel and has not previously been systematically documented to any great extent. Our study has unequivocal evidence then that politicians are viewed and used as important links to the municipal planning process. Contact does not appear to be limited to the final stage, when the plan is up for political approval, but seems quite comprehensive throughout the whole planning process.

6. Does participation matter?

Our findings suggest then that local communities are not drawn into planning beyond what is required by law. The consultation process, which is a formal minimum requirement, is generally used. The question however remains; does this type of participation by the local community affect planning outcomes? The questionnaire included questions on the impact of suggestions and contact with different actors in relation to the outcome of development plans. The results for local communities and developers are presented in the next figure.

Figure 3 reveals some interesting differences. While nearly half of the local politicians consider submissions from the community to be important for the outcome of planning processes this is not a view generally shared by developers. Only 17 per cent of the latter group believe that contributions from the broader community influence the outcome of proceedings. The planning authority (chief municipal executive, head of planning, planning officers) consistently sees a weaker community influence in the outcome than politicians do. These differences proved significant even when we controlled them for other variables (such as municipal size, construction activity and political organisation in the municipality).

The situation as conceived by the local organisations themselves corroborates the response of the developers: organisations have little influence on the outcome. Only 5 per cent of the organisations responded – to another question – that they feel their contribution actually brings about changes to the plan. Wøhni's (2007) study of thirteen development plans in which others were involved also found the highest satisfaction level

in terms of the planning process among developers. Developers are accordingly more likely to have their views and opinions taken into account and acted upon, while involved community actors were not as satisfied, probably because their views were not taken as seriously.
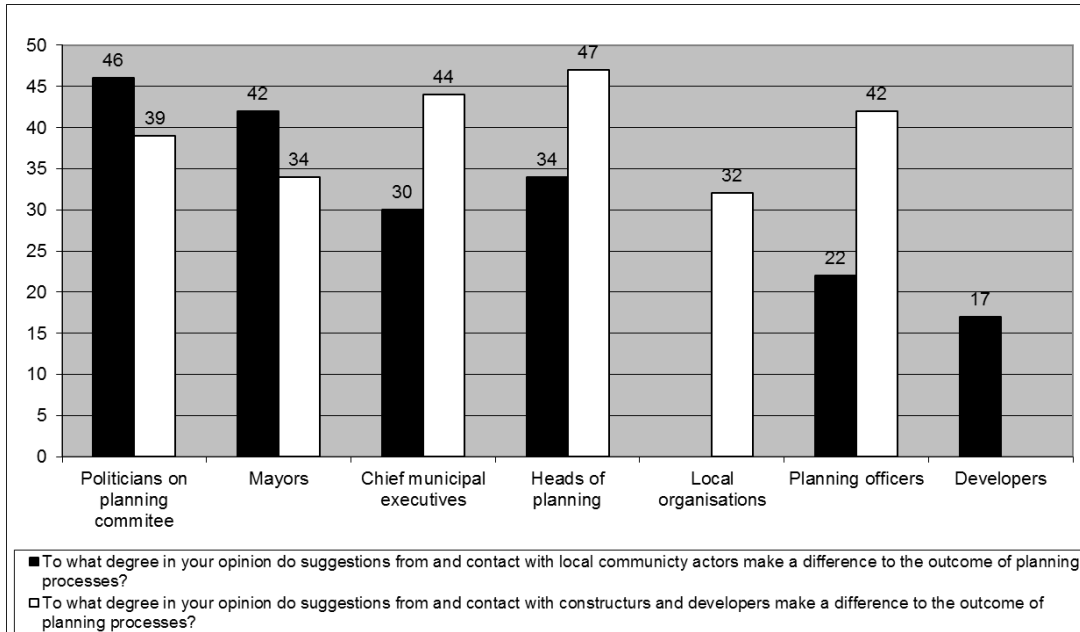

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents stating that contacts with other actors are "very important" for the outcome of the planning process (N=1221).

One reason for the different perceptions in respect of community actors' influence could be the existence of different opinions among the actors on what it means to influence the outcome. Some actors conceive of influence as something that halts the process or that changes plans fundamentally, while for others, influence means to redefine minor details in the plan, such as where play areas are located, how many floors or apartments should be allowed, the location of green areas etc. Other studies show that neighbours and resident associations have to work very hard indeed to influence planning decisions leading to a fundamental revision of the premises of the project (Innes & Booher, 2004; Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005; Schmidt *et al.*, 2011). When their opinions do lead to changes they are usually minor alterations such as adjusting building height or position. Several local community actors expressed - in the context of our interviews - a sense of frustration because so many of the important premises are set at an early stage.

How much influence is ascribed to developers? In Holm's (2007) and Schmidt *et al.'s* (2011) study, politicians and heads of planning report feeling under more pressure from private contractors than from other actors. Are developers therefore assumed to exert greater influence on the outcome of the planning processes? Figure 3 reveals an interesting tendency: while politicians are slightly more likely to see contact with local organisations as important to the outcome of the development plan as contact with developers, we find the opposite pattern among actors in planning administrations.

According to the chief municipal executives, heads of planning and planning officers, contact with developers has a greater effect on the outcome of planning than contact with actors from the local community. These numbers strengthen an impression of extensive interaction between developers and planning administrations in the drafting stage of development plans, where the plan's basic architecture is laid down. It also strengthens the impression that the community's contact with the municipality on matters relating to planning is mainly with the politicians.

In planning, politicians have the last word, since they are the ones who approve or reject the plan. As we have shown, almost half of the politicians surveyed believe that suggestions emanating from the community can affect the outcome. But do politicians feel constrained to act on these ideas; or rather do they allow themselves to be bound by interaction and development agreements with developers? Figure 4 shows the percentage of politicians who feel bound by the various factors included in the list.
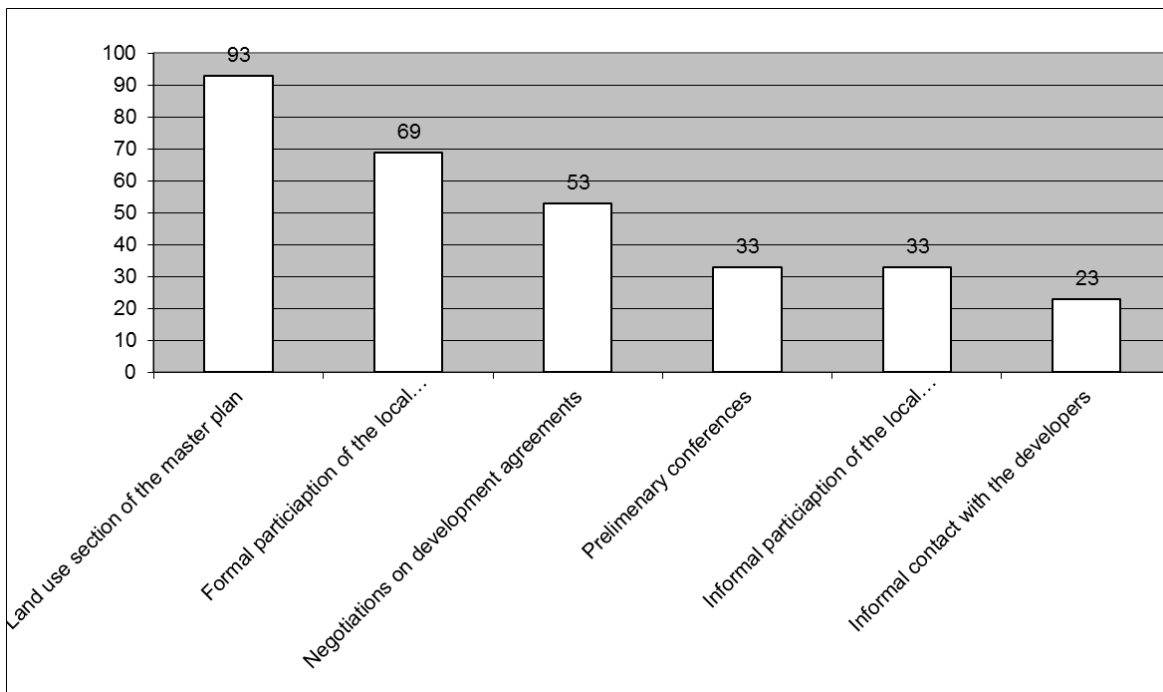

Figure 4: To what degree do politicians feel a sense of obligation towards the following factors in urban planning? Percentages answering "great sense of obligation" and "significant sense of obligation". (N=366).

As the figure reveals, politicians are more likely to feel bound by formal participation of the public – either by way of consultation submissions or more comprehensive activities (public meetings, workshops etc.). Fewer, but nevertheless still one third, feel bound by the informal involvement of local community actors, which tends to be direct contact. This is interesting insofar as we found this to be the predominate channel into the municipal planning process that is available to local organisations. It would appear that

politicians feel some sense of obligation, and allow themselves to be swayed by interaction with the local community.

A surprising number of politicians feel bound by the municipality's negotiations with developers. Half report a sense of obligation to the municipality's advance negotiations on the development agreement; while a third report a sense of obligation in respect of preliminary conferences. This finding strengthens the impression of a political management of urban planning which rather than encapsulating the traditional, hierarchical approach, instead espouses a market and network-based approach to coordination. The findings also raise important questions over whether sufficient transparency, verifiability and participation in respect of third parties exits in those arenas where the most crucial negotiations clearly taken place.

7. Summing up

Greater attention is now being given to the limitations of the new forms of governance such as market and network-based approaches. Such limitations apply to the involvement of third party interests during the first dialogue between the planning administration and developer, a stage at which important project premises are often laid down. Our study extends the contours of the challenges arising from these new forms of government. It shows, among other things, how planning processes bring two completely different systems of values face to face. The planning administration and local politicians, who represent planning expertise and common ideals, appear to value participation, seeing it as an important part of the democratic decision-making process. Developers are far less likely however to view community participation as an important element of the planning process. They rely to a greater degree on an economic rationale, with planning seen more as a necessary administrative check-box to be 'ticked' before construction can get under way.

One possibly quite surprising finding of our study is the higher frequency of interaction of local community actors with politicians than with planners in the municipality. This finding could inform new perspectives on planning. A significant proportion of the planning literature ascribes to planners the role of key actor, responsible for drawing the local community into deliberative planning processes (Healey, 1997; Cars *et al.*, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2004; Agger, 2005). Our findings show, however, that Norwegian planning is, in practice, not like this at all. Here, planners are in touch with developers, and politicians with the public. The processes are typified by a contest for influence and position where the available channels of the planning process, politics and the media are used by developers and the local community alike.

The broader planning process, moreover, clearly encompasses a much broader set of activities than that seen within the context of the formal planning process alone. Most of the actual planning activity, both in terms of time and content, seems to take place outside the formal planning process, and before the available planning legislation is used to outline the rules for the process and for participation within it. The planning process begins long before it reaches the public arena, and it often ends long after political

decisions have been taken to accommodate objections and legal disputes. In other words, the planning process extends in both directions, and most of the important decisions are made outside the formal planning context. We note nonetheless that those actors with a formal role can become involved in the non-regulated stages of the planning process. The planning authority becomes an actor early in the process, and local community actors use political channels to influence matters directly.

Our study in addition reveals the complexity and intricacy of patterns of interaction among actors involved in a given planning decision. There is contact between the various actors during nearly every stage of the process, but the scale and frequency of the contact varies widely. There is definitely more contact between developers and planning authorities in the early stages, and this is formalised in most municipalities. The study also finds broader interaction between local community actors and politicians, interaction which takes place later in the planning process than that between developer and planning authority. While contact between developer and planning authority can be defined as a positive network whose ultimate purpose is to implement a plan, contact between local community and politicians will often take the form of a protest against a proposal, a negative network.

The study also shows how both positive and negative networks attempt to make use of as many of the available means of influence as they can, be they formal, political or media-related. While the negative networks use formal means of influence inherent to the planning process (objections, consultations), the positive network acts for planners enabling them to make the best out of a planning process. Local community stakeholders will attempt to gain political influence by calling their politicians – community representatives– to account for their planning policies and decisions, while private actors will tend to direct attention towards political objectives such as urban development and house building to legitimise their plans.

There is however clearly a potential danger here in the opening up of the planning system to market demands without addressing such questions in the context of an adjusted planning system. The challenge is not necessarily the new division of power and labour between the public and private sector in urban planning but rather that a predictable change, due to general development trends, has simply not been addressed in the planning system. We thus argue here that there is a clear need for stronger meta- planning where superior plans made by the local government within a democratic framework actually guide local development plans, and where the bias in power to market actors is corrected in the design of the planning process.

It is also necessary to re-think the role of planning and the focus in planning theory. The planning literature tends to see the planner as the core actor in planning and planning as a universal tool for development. It is not like this at all, at least not in Norway. The planner is not the conductor in planning, and planning is one among many processes in urban development. We argue that much that passes for planning theory has, in reality, limited the focus on important actors, processes, power and interrelations in urban planning research.

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