Spatial County Planning as a Regional Legitimating Process

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Abstract: In Norway's new regional policy setup the 19 county municipalities have been given a key role as regional planning and development actors. This is not however a completely new role for the counties, though their role has undoubtedly been strengthened, while at the same time the locus of national regional development policy seems to have moved from government to governance. This change of policy implies that the regional planning and development work done by the counties must be a collaborative process between the international, national, regional and local levels, and between the public, private and voluntary sectors. In a regional policy process based on governance however, the counties will not be the only regional development actors. They have to cooperate and compete with other established and newly created regional development actors and agencies in order to become political legitimate institutions. As far as we have scientific knowledge about how the counties will fulfil their role, we believer that they can only do the best they can within the room for manoeuvre bequeathed to them in the context of the actual political power structure adopted. In this paper we will discuss county planning in the context of the formation of 'political will' seeing it as a legitimating process, focusing in the main on the interaction between the state level and the local authorities. As far as can be seen from a 'political legitimacy' perspective, this process is incomplete, lacking in particular the juridical discourses of national state support for the counties through the delivery of legal acceptance and the economic tools designed for the role of regional development actor. Thus the process fails to fulfil the legitimating 'bottom up' process, while in addition failing to bestow county planning with the necessarily level of 'top down' legitimacy and acceptance. As long as this weakness exists in county planning, the counties will suffer from a 'power deficit' as they will continue to lack the very tools needed to become powerful regional development actors in the new regional policy framework.

Counties as regional planning and development actors

In this article the term regional planning is used to cover spatial regional planning and sectoral regional planning. In this way focus can be placed on the differences between the spatial planning of the region as a society, and sectoral planning as the planning of different organisations in society. These organisations can be from the public, private or the voluntary sectors, they all provide the region with services, though they do not have overall responsibility for developing the region as a society. This use of these terms is in accordance with the common understanding of spatial planning:

> 'Spatial planning refers to the methods used largely by the public sector to influence the future distribution of activities in space. It is undertaken with the aims of creating a more rational territorial organisation of land uses and the linkages between them, to balance demands for development with the need to protect the environment, and to achieve social and economic objectives. Spatial planning embraces measures to co-ordinate the spatial impacts of other sectoral policies, to achieve a more even distribution of economic development between regions than would otherwise be created by market forces, and to regulate the conversion of land and property uses.' (EC 1997:24)

Norway has only 4.5 million inhabitants, and in a European context is often regarded as being one region. However, the country is 1752 kilometres from north to south. In addition, fjords, mountains and long winters with a lot of snow make travelling difficult. As a consequence, in a regional development perspective, Norway is not one region, but several regions, districts or areas, each with strong individual identities. The government structure has 19 counties with a state appointed governor and a county municipality with an elected council, and 434 municipalities each with elected councils. The average size of the municipalities is about 10000 inhabitants, though one third of the municipalities have less than 3000 inhabitants. For different statistical, planning and development, and public service production purposes, the country is often divided into 5-7 parts, 89 commercial districts, or 161 common living and working areas, i.e. areas with a lot of internal commuting.

Norway has implemented New Public Management (NPM) ideas in the public sector. NPM is a global reform movement with the main focus on efficiency, and its main characteristics are increased market orientation, devolution, managerialism and the use of contracts. NPM has a hybrid character and tensions result from contradictions between the *centralising* tendencies inherent in contractualism and the *devolutionary* tendencies of managerialism (Christensen and Lægreid 2003:19). Christensen and Lægreid (2003) conclude that Norway under the influence of NPM and political liberalism has moved from the *sovereign, rationality-bounded state* to the *supermarket state model*. This last model presumes that the state in general has a service-providing role, viewing its people as consumers, users and clients. Taken to its extreme this model implies that if governmental units do not produce satisfactory services at a low price, they shall be abolished or downsized. Thus it becomes important for the different public units to legitimate themselves. The county municipalities are one such type of unit in this situation.

What direction Norwegian regional policy will take in the future remains unclear. According to Östhol and Svensson (2002:239) regional policy in Norway can be characterised as state-led, and with partnership as an integrated part of the policy, but

this partnership element exists predominantly within the public sector. Indeed, partnership formation has thus far not created any strong movement in favour of devolution and regionalism. On the contrary, the partnerships that have emerged have only served to highlight leadership conflicts at the regional level, while the regional development process has not contributed to the strengthening of the already questioned legitimacy of the county municipalities as regional planning and development actors.

Böhme (2002) moreover notes that the Nordic countries form a planning family of their own, but his discussion of the five Nordic planning systems illustrates a number of recent changes to the actual planning systems that point towards increasing similarities with other European planning systems. The most obvious one here is the emergence of a regional level, a trend that is definitely related to European spatial development policies with the Structural Funds as an influential factor. In addition he points to another trend that has become evident, namely, the increasing cross-sectoral perspective. It may however be too early to talk about a trend towards overcoming the strong sector orientation of Nordic regional policy, but there are at least initial signs of Nordic approaches to integrated spatial planning. Regarding Norway, he concludes his discussion with the argument that local government enjoys a fairly strong position, although there is a clear focus on local government as an instrument to be used by the state in the implementation of national policies. He notes additionally that until 1997, the Norwegian state prepared a policy report on regional planning and land-use policy every four years. Currently it is taking a low-key position in spatial planning policies, thus the mainly non-binding county plan is the only level above the local one. He does however remind us that discussion is in progress on the existence of, and suitable tasks for, the regional level in Norway. The current situation is thus likely to change in the coming years.

Each of the municipalities is expected to prepare a Master Plan consisting of two components: (1) a long-term strategic component with goals for the development of the municipality, guidelines for sector planning and a legally binding land use plan, (2) and a short-term tactical component with an integrated programme of action for the next four years. In addition, the municipalities are to draw up a one-year budget, and an annual report that includes accounts. All municipalities are to produce an action programme, annual budget and report, and most of them also have a legally binding land use plan, on the down side however the municipalities seem to pay little attention to long-term strategic planning (Falleth and Stokke 2000). The main reason for this is that the municipalities over a period of time have felt that they have very little impact on cross-sector policy making, or even the education-, health- and social services they are supposed to provide They have become important actors in the national 'top-down' policy power structure, and their legitimacy is closely linked to how well (efficiently) they manage to provide welfare services. As a consequence, they have lost some of their position in mobilising territorial political power, and they do not seem to be inspired towards using long-term strategic master planning to regain some of their lost legitimacy as 'bottom-up' actors in regional policy making.
The situation is much the same for the county municipalities. Every fourth year each of the 19 counties prepares a strategic county plan. It consists of (1) a set of objectives and long-term guidelines for development in the county, and (2) a cross sector co-ordinated programme of action. The plan is not legally binding, not even for the counties. The main planning activity is the tactical short-term action programme and

budget for welfare services provided by the counties, especially hospitals and secondary education.

Thus far, neither the municipalities nor the counties have, generally speaking, succeeded in mobilising local social power and transforming this to regional political power. They are not regarded as strong political actors in the making of regional policy. This situation is essentially then the main reason behind the efforts from both municipalities and counties to join forces through the organisation of new regional political institutions.

According to Sanda (2000), 321 of the 434 municipalities have formalised one or more regional councils, and there are now 52 active regional councils in the country. As a minimum, the mayor of each municipality is a member of the council. Administrative staff numbers differ from zero to about twenty. The municipalities finance the council's administrative activity, and there is normally only a small amount of money to spend for other purposes. The objective when establishing these councils is to make them strong political actors in the regional policy structure. The councils focus on stimulating regional economic development, improving transportation and communications, and enforcing inter-municipal co-operation for the production of welfare services (Weigård 1992, Sanda 2000). In addition, the counties co-operate across their borders when it comes to planning and development work.

Norway has recently seen two governmental White Papers, (St. meld. 34 (2001-2002) and St. meld. 21 (2000-2001)), which determine that the 19 county municipalities are the actual regions in the context of regional planning and development work, and that their county planning is to play a major role in regional development work. Here partnership between the levels of government, and between the public, private and voluntary sectors, is recommended as the key solution to promoting regional development. Furthermore, the counties have been given the responsibility for drawing up regional development programmes (RDP) in which the intention in the long-term seems to be to co-ordinate all state efforts aimed towards regional development. At the same time however the state is creating larger administrative units (5-6 state regions) to accommodate service production.

This outline of regional planning in Norway confirms the impression that regional planning is now increasingly taking on the actual form of two-parallel systems (Amdam 2001 and Amdam 2002b):

1. *Planning and development work in organisations (sectoral regional planning)*

First we have regional planning, which in the main is planning and development work that is restricted to the service production areas that are the responsibility of the municipalities, counties and the regional state. In effect this is planning and development work in organisations such as welfare state service producers. This is a form of activity planning that has many common features with private and voluntary sector planning. To the extent that these organisations refer to this form of planning as regional planning, it could be characterised as a sector-dominated and fragmented form of regional planning.

2. *Planning and development work in society (spatial regional planning)*

Then we have spatial regional planning, which is carried out to a large extent across municipalities and counties, and is concerned with themes such as industrial development, transport, communications, land use planning and co-operation in the production of services. It is typical for this type of planning that it, in addition to including municipalities and counties, also attempts to involve other public authorities, as well as the private and voluntary sectors, in forms of partnership in planning and implementation. Actual regional planning would thus appear to take place to a great extent in more or less formal network organisations or on a co-operative basis between organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors, and from the various levels of government (Amdam 2002a).

In Norwegian planning practice this means that formal political institutions such as the municipalities and county municipalities give priority to the sector planning of their own activities such as health, welfare and education, while the new informal political institutions at the inter-municipal and inter-county levels that have started to appear are given responsibility for the spatial planning associated with industrial development, competence development, communications, land use planning etc.

These processes are familiar from other countries experiences; cf. among others (Zoete 2000), while the two-parallel systems of regional planning seem to be both logical and desirable in the politically liberal supermarket state model. It becomes logical that the spatial regional planning and development of society, is in the main carried out in network or partnership organisations based on the public, private and voluntary sectors, and moreover, that sector-based regional planning, which in general is the planning of the public sector services, is carried out within the domains of the public sector organisations. This type of sector planning has implications for spatial planning. Or to put it another way, the challenge of spatial regional planning is to get service providing organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to participate in the network organisations or partnerships that spatial regional planning manages to establish.

If we look at the new role of the county municipalities as a public service producing organisation and as a network builder, we discover that this is actually a double role: (1) On the one hand, the county municipality is to carry out planning and development work within the field of welfare state services for which the organisation has responsibility. In other words, it is expected that the county municipalities be integrated into the national state welfare production. (2) On the other hand, as a formal political institution it is to be a network builder both vertically and horizontally. This means that the county municipality must be accepted and enjoy legitimacy from both above and below, and that it must define its role and function in relation to other formal and informal levels of government.

In order to achieve co-action in the network organisations, partnerships need both trust and resources, and not least democratic control to guarantee openness and transparency. The county municipalities have a history of strong regional democratic control, while the planning approach has been open and transparent, though the county municipalities have increasingly been deprived of many vital services. In essence then they have now taken on the form of task-based organisations in which

the projects, defined in the network organisation, are administrated and implemented (Bukve and Amdam 2004a). Other basic organisations in these network organisations will take other forms depending on which functions they have in the new distribution of tasks between the state and the municipalities. For example, state hospitals and colleges all take on the mantle of being professional organisations, and the county governor with his emphasis on administrative responsibility functions more as bureaucratic figurehead (Amdam 2002b, Strand 2001). As a consequence of the new regional policy, the county municipalities as regional actors become a complex modality of power, contest and participation, reflecting changes both in wider political and economic issues and in localised social relations.

This shift in regional policy making is characterised by a new process of governing, from government to governance (Bukve and Amdam 2004a). Here the term governance is used with reference to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within the public, private and voluntary sectors have become blurred. This co-ordination process has been characterised rather neatly as "managing a nobody-in-charge world" (Stoker 1997), and this matrix structure is more likely to be self-selecting than designed through authoritative relationships (Hjern and Porter 1981). The concept of governance has recently gained widespread currency across many of the social sciences, but Jessop (1997) warns that the growing obsession with governance mechanisms as a solution to market failure or state failure, should not lead to a neglect of governance failure. One should avoid seeing governance as being a necessarily more efficient solution to the problems of economic or political co-ordination than markets or states. In addition, governance can be a part of a wider attempt by central government to by-pass local government through the direct appointment of single-task, dedicated agencies, accountable primarily to their paymaster – that is central government (Raco 1999). There is no linear drift from government to governance, and at present a critical part in this is played by the state. Governance still operates in the shadow of government (Jessop 1997), and governance processes and institutions tend to lack democracy and transparency (Healey 1997, Stoker 1997).

Major problems in the Norwegian regional planning and development system

Governance, partnership and collaboration are not new phenomena in the Norwegian regional planning and development context, they have already existed for some time, but have now been given legitimacy by ongoing research into regional dynamic processes and the new regional policy. There are however several problems in the regional planning system deriving from the actual situation in Norway (Amdam 2003). First of all we have the problem related to the creation of spatial administrative units that are able to integrate people and mobilize political power. Then we have the horizontal coordination problem where regional policymaking and implementation are expanded from the government structure to the governance structure. In addition, we have the vertical coordination problem, which relates to the extremely difficult balance between 'top down' and 'bottom up' policy in the multilevel power structure. Lastly, we have the policy instrument problem that has emerged in the government structure, and particularly in the new governance structure, where the counties have for a considerable period of time been without tools as regards the regional planning and development processes (From and Stava 1985).

The spatial integration problem

The county municipalities and their councils of elected members are now given the main responsibility for regional planning and development work. This could perhaps be a guarantee of democratic control and transparency, but on the other hand, the counties represent a stabile and firmly entrenched administrative structure. Within and across the borders of the 19 counties over 100 functional or economic regions exist, each with significant internal functions, contacts and activities, and with strong local identities. These regions can either be a threat to or useful supporters of the counties depending on how well they succeed in involving themselves in their regional planning and development work. The county municipalities have thus far chosen different approaches to this issue, ranging from total neglect to strong incorporation. There is no overall evaluation of which strategy is the most successful, but using the functional regions in regional planning and development work does seem to increase county planning's acceptance and legitimacy, creating a more common view of the situation and the future, and reducing conflicts between the actors involved (Higdem 2001).

Problems with horizontal coordination

When discussing the horizontal and vertical coordination problems faced by spatial planning and development, we must distinguish between regional units as to whether they are part of the government or of the governance structure. In the government structure the horizontal integration problem is to set up cooperation and to coordinate the activity in different public organisations and institutions. This continues to be the main issue for regional planning in Norway, while the problem remains unresolved. As long as the national state level is not able, or does not want, to coordinate the different sectors this problem will continue to be impossible for the various sub-national government levels to deal with (Tranøy and Østerud 2001).

When we see the regional unit as a governance structure, the horizontal coordination problem is expanded from the public sector to include the private and voluntary sectors. In the governance structure as it relates to regional planning and development work, the idea is that the three sectors should be more or less equal partners when they set up their partnership agreements. In this way the public sector is in a very different power situation when we are talking about horizontal coordination in government structures compared to that of governance structures. Commands, instructions, control etc. can achieve horizontal coordination in the government structure, but these power tools are not adequate as regards partnership building. Horizontal coordination between the public, private and voluntary sectors in regional planning and development must build on mutual trust, understanding and agreements, and on combining their resources to achieve common ends and to satisfy self-interest. If however the public sector takes on a dominant position in this partnership building process the other partners will become increasingly disinclined to participate.

Problems with vertical coordination

As for the horizontal coordination problems, it is important to distinguish between the regional units as government and governance structures when it comes to vertical coordination. It is easier for obvious reasons for public sector initiated spatial planning to obtain vertical coordination within the public sector itself rather than within the complex formed by the public, private and voluntary sectors. The main question then is to find an adequate balance between 'top down' and 'bottom up' power for the different productions. The government structure in Norway is now

being taken in different directions. On the one hand state owned companies are being partially or fully privatised, while on the other, management of the public hospital stock is being centralised from the county municipalities to the national government level. In this new government structure the national and municipal levels will be the most important producers of welfare state services. The counties, as the formal government level between nation and municipality, will thus become the ones responsible for regional planning and development work and for welfare state 'production' tasks such as upper secondary schools, communications, land use planning and management and so on. This new situation suggests that the county municipalities will become the main actors in the process of regional change. In this process building a regional governance structure based on partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors has become an important goal. The counties as societies must however become stronger actors in both national and global economic competition if they are to succeed in changing their societies in a goal oriented direction (Bukve and Amdam 2004a).

The policy instrument problem

In the Norwegian political power structure regional territorial and horizontal power is weak compared to that of sectoral and vertical power. This does not however have to be a particular problem for Norway. It can be argued that the situation in general is a consequence of the ongoing modernization process of our societies (cf. Giddens 1997). In this process instrumental rationality 'top down' policy initiatives seem to dominate over the communicative rationality and 'bottom up' policy. In general, modernization entails the search for such objective knowledge as can enforce greater cost efficiency in the government structure. Other values such as democracy, participation, and equality often however get neglected during this process. When this modern logic becomes dominant, powerful professions and their respective sector authorities basing their existence on instrumental rationality can achieve dominant positions in society. Regional or spatial planners can from this perspective then be regarded as a weak profession, lacking in relevant objective knowledge, because their solutions and means tend to give different results in what can be seen as similar situations (Schön 1983). Modern societies thus suffer from an excess of instrumental rational thinking, often in the process neglecting communicative rationalities. Habermas (1995), Friedmann (1992), etc argue that the solution to this problem is to mobilize territorial power to meet sectoral power head on in a political process. In a regional policy context this means that communicative 'bottom up' power can be used to counter instrumental 'top down' power, and thus contribute to the empowerment of adequate regional development institutions.

Empowering regional political institutions as a political will forming process

The main purpose of the new regional policy in Norway is seemingly to obtain co-ordination between sectors and levels through a broad process of social learning in the regions, which is supposed to stimulate the regional dynamic (Asheim 1996, Bukve and Amdam 2004a). Dynamic regions are often characterised by people participating in both professional and local communities, and by the integration of local horizontal and global vertical relationships (Amdam 1997a). Many researchers see the local community, with a strong civil society and a strong democratic process, as the key to dynamic regional development; see among others Dryzek (1990), Stöhr (1990),

Friedmann (1992), Bennett and McCoshan (1993), Putnam (1993), Forester (1993) and Storper (1997). However, development work based on instrumental rationality is concentrated on strengthening the vertical power structure through seeking cost effective organisation and a maximised utilisation of resources. This kind of development process can however lead to greater regional dependency on national level institutions and large companies. It can also weaken the local communities' capability to learn and to handle challenges (Giddens 1997, Habermas 1984, 1995 and Stöhr 1990).

From this perspective, it becomes logical to better empower regional communities to oppose the dominant vertical and instrumental power structure (Friedmann and Weaver 1979). This involves a strengthening of the horizontal power structure by activating civil society, elected representatives, and through the local embedding of private businesses. In this way, horizontal political power can be organised to supplement and oppose the sector dominated and vertical power structure. But dynamic regions cannot be seen as units that are more or less independent of central government and external companies. Nor are regions that lag behind necessarily units that are strongly dependent on superior governing institutions and external enterprises. The promotion of regional development in the new regional policy requires that the region itself takes more responsibility for its development as a political actor (Keating 1996). This regional drive to create competitive advantages from place to place has the inevitable logic that there will be winners and losers (Dunford 1994). Thus the regions continue to have a need for regional political institutions that can work on a collective level to promote their needs, interests and values in the political power structure where the different sectors' knowledge and actions dominate.

In this perspective regions are not a fixed structure, and regional institutional capacity building is a process (Paasi 1986, Healey 1999, 2001). Regimes, partnerships, networks, coalitions and 'institutional thickness' have to be constructed and managed (Amin and Thrift 1995). Thus, the new regional political institutions need a political process to make them legitimate political actors. Historically the term region as a political actor has been used in two connections (Keating 1996, Baldersheim 2000):

- In the 'top down' tradition regions are a part of the nation building process and a tool to decentralise power and responsibility to territories within the nation. Rokkan and Urwin (1983) talk of four phases in this process: territorial consolidation, cultural standardising, democratisation and the creation of a welfare state.

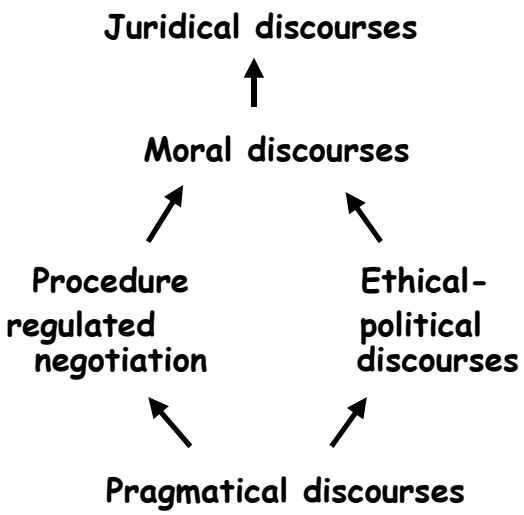
- In the 'bottom up' tradition, regions are arenas of social mobilisation. According to Paasi (1986:121) this is an institution building process. Elements or phases in this process are: the localisation of organised social practices, the formation of identity, the emergence of institutions and the achievement of administrative status as an established spatial structure.

As a consequence, a legitimate regional political institution in the new regional policy must be a fruitful combination of nation building and local mobilisation, of 'top down' and 'bottom up' politics, of government and governance, and of instrumental and communicative rationality.

Regional planning as a legitimating processes

In this context, Habermas' more recent work on discursive will formation offers a flexible and promising guide to future institutional reforms (Habermas 1995). In this work, he argues in favour of combining communicative and instrumental rationality in an open policy legitimating process. He understands the political process as a will forming process starting with pragmatic discourses, which further leads to ethical and moral discourses depending on the kinds of conflicts present. These discourses can lead to juridical discourses, which are oriented towards the consistency of laws and regulations. Procedure-regulated negotiation can be an alternative to discourses, if these do not produce sufficient consensus (see figure 1).

Figure 1: The logical political will formation process (Habermas 1995:207)



The discursive process is conducted by means of public argumentation. It is through public debate among free citizens that proposals can be justified or legitimated. Habermas claims that in undistorted discourses, equal power and the duty to argue for whatever claims you make are prerequisites. For undistorted discourses, validity claims have been made which imply that the speech acts are to be tested for their truth, sincerity, rightness and comprehensibility. The weightiest argument shall ideally be given the most weight in the process of creating consensus. The duty to argue, together with the demand for public transparency, forces participants to provide their statements with a defence even towards citizens who are not presently part of the discourse.

In this political will forming process instrumental rationality with its focus on facts, truth, and causality meet the communicative rationality with its focus on sincerity, rightness and comprehensibility. Through this process social mobilising power is transformed into communicative power and through legislation towards administrative power. However, the outcome may well be, and indeed often is, a

compromise. A legitimate decision does not have to represent the will of all, but is one that results from the deliberation of all (Manin 1987:352).

This model is thus extremely helpful in understanding the policy process and in setting up criteria for a successful regional planning and development process. However, the ideal conversations and policy legitimating processes are not an easy way to create a regional collective will (Jacobsson 1997), and the model has to be made operative in practice. In this effort I have been inspired by the work Alexander (1998). He has given us a contingency framework based on four identified paradigms and rationalities in planning theory, which can help us to make Habermas' model operative in planning practice. These four paradigms exist in parallel to the model of variables in dynamic regional development developed in my own work, namely context, mobilising, organising, and implementing (Amdam 1997a, b and c, Amdam and Amdam 2000).

Habermas' model of logical political will forming can then be combined with Alexander's four paradigms and used as a model to evaluate and design the procedures and practices of planning systems. Based on our experiences with the model (Amdam and Amdam 2000), we can say that the four discourses do not operate in a hierarchy, starting with the pragmatic discourses feeding up to the juridical ones. This implies that the different discourses do not have to come in a fixed order, though a legitimating process without one of the discourses becomes an incomplete institution building process.

In table 1 the four discourses and planning paradigms are combined in a planning and development process that in a region is expected to empower and legitimate the region as a political actor. Experience suggests that when all four tools in the planning process are given active attention, and the tools are able to influence the four corresponding variables, then the process can legitimate the region as a political actor (Amdam 2003)

Table 1: A model for evaluating regional planning and development

Logical political will formation (Habermas 1995)	**Four paradigms in planning** (Alexander 1998)	**Variables in an empowering process**	**Tools and levels in a regional planning process**
Juridical discourses	Frame-setting	Context	Decision, giving the plan a formal status
Moral discourses	Communicative	Mobilising	Strategic planning
Ethical-political discourses	Coordinative	Organising	Tactical planning
Pragmatical discourses	Instrumental	Implementing	Operative planning

In Habermas' political will forming or legitimating process the juridical discourse concerns the rules of juridical consistency. This should be viewed in parallel to Alexander's frame-setting planning, i.e. planning as a systematic process of developing a frame of reference for future decisions and actions by a relevant community. In the model developed here, these issues concern the relation between the context and the regional planning institution, and the normative influence of the planning documents compared to other juridical norms. In regional planning practice this discourse includes the formal decision of the plans in the regional councils, and the acceptance of the plans by superior authorities.

The moral discourse concerns the question of the good society and thus is the main topic of communicative planning, i.e. planning as a social interactive process between actors who are seeking consensus and mutual understanding across conflicts of interest, needs and values, and across different opinions about what constitutes the good society. Typical moral conflicts are those such as the question of 'economic growth versus environmental conservation'. Moral discourses are about what is regarded as fair and just in the good society. The discourse is designed to create moral obligations and unconditional imperatives for action. This can be regarded as the main issue for the social mobilising process and for strategic planning. Through a regional debate about the actual situation, about the future situations we want, or do not want to experience, and about strategies to realise the good society, regional strategic planning intends to mobilise a form of social power that can be transformed into actions and regional development.

The ethical-political discourse concerns what constitutes a 'good life' for a given social community. The discourse is the meeting point for individual self-interest and moral obligations, of instrumental and communicative rationality, and takes the form of a collective will forming process. Ethical conflicts are often connected with the

utilisation of resources and are often rooted in the conflict of values, interest and facts. When documentation implies that action must be taken, the value-based answers from the ethical discourses can be a guide for the action needed. In planning practice this refers to the questions of organisation, co-ordination and tactical and coordinative planning, i.e. planning with the focus on how to deploy social units like organisations and communities to undertake the necessary actions at the appropriate time to accomplish mutually agreed upon outcomes. Four-year action programmes, regional development programmes, and budgets are typical examples of tactical planning and ethical discourses.

The pragmatic discourse concerns the discussion of facts and empirical data and is a discourse tied closely to instrumental rationality, i.e. planning as a deliberative activity of problem solving, involving rational choices by self-interested individuals or homogenous social units. The objective of rational planning is for the actors to decide to what ends future actions should be undertaken, and what course of action would be most effective and efficient. These elements are at the core of the operative planning and implementation.

Evaluating and learning comes in addition to the four variables in a dynamic process, but must be regarded as an integrated part of all the four discourses in order to make a continuous process.

This model can be used to understand and explain the difference in legitimacy between sectoral and spatial regional planning and development, see tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Sectoral regional planning

Legitimating political process	**Planning for the region as provider of welfare state services**
Legitimacy and acceptance	Unimportant, because the national state decides to what extent the region is a efficient service provider
Mobilising and strategic planning	Unimportant, because the national state are setting the agenda, pointing out the areas of efforts, defining level of service standard etc
Organising and tactical planning	Important with internal long term and annual budget for each sector unit
Implementing and operative planning	Important with action plan for each sector unit, and plans for each project
Evaluating and learning	Normally limited to the operative and tactical level of planning

Table 3: Spatial regional planning

Legitimating political process	**Regional planning for the territory as a social mobilising society**
Legitimating and acceptance	Important for regions to stand up as powerful regional development actors and to get acceptance from the national state
Mobilising and strategic planning	Important to integrate people in the regional community, set at political agenda and give a direction to the development work
Organising and tactical planning	Important to coordinate actors in the horizontal and vertical power structure, and to set up common action programs
Implementing and operative planning	Important to set up partnership contracts between actors from public, private and voluntary sector and from different levels of governing
Evaluating and learning	Important to learn on all the levels of the legitimating process

The tables summarise the findings of a study on regional planning in Norway (Amdam 2003). One of the main observations was that sectoral regional planning was now an integrated part of the 'top down' nation building process and the government structure, and was thus regarded as legitimate when it provides technical and economic efficiency seen from the different sectors. As to *spatial* regional planning,

the situation is somewhat different. This is mainly a 'bottom up' institution building process based on social mobilisation and governance. As such, in many respects this process opposes and challenges sectoral planning and power, while being unable to generate more legitimacy than the process itself can create and the sectoral authorities want to give such planning. As a consequence, spatial regional planning becomes highly dependent on acceptance from the national state authorities (Amdam 2002b).

Spatial county planning in Norway as a legitimating process

Evaluating and learning. In every society there is a continuous need for learning, but when it comes to regional planning and development in Norway, there is a basic need for what can be referred to here as deep learning involving a change in values and attitudes about the place of regions in regional policy. Compared to the other Nordic countries, the dominant idea of partnership building has thus far not created any movement in favour of regionalism in Norway. As such, the policy has thus far failed to sort out responsibility for regional planning and development work, and has not contributed to the strengthening of the already questioned legitimacy of the county municipalities as the prime regional agent. In consequence, central government control is remains almost unchallenged as regards regional policy (Östhol and Svensson 2002:240).

Implementing and operative planning. The county municipalities are engaged in many projects, though they are mainly public-pubic partnerships (Bukve and Amdam 2004b). Normally, several public sector agencies and representatives from labour organisations cooperate in solving defined problems for a whole area, a sector, a cluster and so on. The county municipalities have however available only a small amount of money that they are relatively free to use for regional development purposes. However, the Regional Development Fund contains a significant amount of money, and the fund is strongly involved in partnerships with private sector firms. The county municipalities have however only limited or indirect influence on this fund. The fund is expected to take the county municipalities' different plans for regional development into account when making decisions with regard to supporting and funding projects, but ultimately it is up to the fund to decide. In addition, in some parts of the country situations arise where the private sector seems to be far more engaged in partnerships with the local municipality or cooperative grouping of local municipalities, than with the county municipality (Amdam 2003). In these situations the county municipality is not regarded as a regional development actor of any particular interest.

Organising and tactical planning. Each of the county municipalities is obliged to set up annual regional development programmes (RDP), and the programmes have to be approved by the Ministry of Municipalities and Regional Development. As a policy making process this is a state-lead initiative and almost no institutional changes are made that can enhance sector coordination and empower of the counties as regional development actors. In addition, important means such as the Regional Development Fund and the labour market authorities remain somewhat detached from the county councils. As such, the vision of the RDP as integrated action programme with coordinated activities across sectors for the regional society as a whole remains tantalisingly out of reach. Based on evaluations (Mariussen et al 2000, Amdam and Glosvik 1997), the content and acceptance of these action programmes are highly dependent on the motivating power of how well the programmes satisfy the different

actors' self interests. There must be a 'win-win' situation for the stakeholders, and that is why it becomes important for the county councils to have money available in regional development funds that can be used as stimulating instruments in the partnership building process. Compared to the EU, Norway in effect needs its own Structure Funds instrument.

Mobilising and strategic planning. Every four years the counties have to rework their strategic county plan, and this plan has to be approved by the national government, though the plan remains non-binding. This is then state initiated planning, but as far as we can see, the county municipalities manage to some extant to adapt their plans to the local situation and challenges. The counties do involve different sectors and different levels of government in an open and transparent process, but as yet do not have sufficient means to force the various actors to implement their part of the plans (Amdam 2003). Normally, the political instruments designed to implement spatial planning are fewer and weaker than those to implement sector policy. So, even if the county municipalities attain a firmer grip on the state controlled means in regional policy, the fiscal balance of these instruments will continue to be in the sector policies. In the regional governance structures we are talking about here, the implication of this situation is that that regional policy can gain more momentum if the territorial advantages are made more clear-cut. Regional planning and development is today a kind of political obligation that gets national support more or less for symbolic reasons. If regional planning is however to influence sector activity and become the guiding principle of regional development, regional plans must also be included in legislation, regulations, and directives and become checkpoints for central and local government when other plans are formally decided upon, and when projects attract funding from the public purse. In addition, the counties as regions, and other territorial units, must mobilise and join forces against the instrumental logic embedded the different sector activities. Territorial logic needs then to become stronger than sector logic if regional policy is to challenge and change sectoral policy. This process must be a highly inclusive democratic and mobilising debate about the qualities of the region. The process must be based on communicative and strategic planning in order to put the region's issues on the political agenda, and to make the regional visions a moral obligation within the region and accepted outside the region (see Healey 2001). In this way, strategic county planning can play an important role in the 'bottom up' regional institution building process, but as it currently functions, county planning is far form fulfilling this role.

Legitimating, acceptance and juridical discourses. If we take into account the whole system of regional planning and development the system has all the elements that are needed in a political legitimating process, but the problem is that the system is fragmented and incomplete. There is lack of consistency in the contents of the different plans, while responsibility for implementation is divided between many actors with almost no obligation to county planning. In addition, but not less important, the focus of the dialog between the county and national levels is on the strategic (and in part also the tactical) part of the planning, but not the operative part (Amdam 2004). In other words, it is the overall situation of the region and the actors' intensions that are discussed and approved in the spatial planning process, not the concrete actions that demand obligation and common action. In this way the different actors are not forced to satisfy the validity claims of the undistorted discourses: that the speech acts are to be tested for their truth, sincerity, rightness and

comprehensibility through discourse. This fundamental problem, combined with the asymmetric power balance between the national level and regional level in respect of regional policy, explains why county planning is not able to improve the legitimacy of the counties as regional political actors.

Thus far the discussion has illuminated the difference between state-led sectoral planning and legitimacy seeking spatial planning. The discussion also illustrates the tension between the conflicting tendencies of centralisation and the devolution of policy power in the NPM inspired supermarket state model. The national state gives the different public sector units their legitimacy through legislation and funding, and by controlling their management (centralisation). For governance based spatial planning, the legislative and funding models remain incomplete, while the government has not yet decided to what extent regions will be involved in regional development (devolution). To sum up: Spatial county planning needs acceptance and formal agreements (plan contracts) with actors in the vertical power structure as well as the horizontal power structure.

Conclusions and implications

The legitimating process of spatial county planning has thus far been a mainly state-led nation building activity, rooted in the government structure and in the instrumental way of thinking. The political rhetoric about regional development is designed to stimulate partnership horizontally and vertically, but the county municipalities and other territorially based regional development actors in Norway, have not yet been fully accepted as significant actors in the political power structure. In addition, the power structure prevents them from playing this role. Horizontal partnership in county planning is mainly a public-public relation. There are of course public-private partnerships in the regional development process, but these are between private companies and the Regional development fund, which the county municipalities do not control. In the vertical partnerships the national state plays a dominant role and has thus far not implemented governance inspired plan contracts with the counties. The regional development programmes are limited to being conducted one year at a time, and involve only one ministry.

If the regional planning and development system is to be improved, the national level must be willing to decentralize some of its power over regional development to the regions, and to supply the regions with the political instruments necessary to match the responsibility they are given. The counties play this regional role, but other units can obtain legitimacy through a balanced mix of ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ policies. Compared to other regional development actors, the county municipalities do however have a transparent and democratic planning process.

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