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The Norwegian Planned Municipality
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Summary

This working report is a paper written to XIII AESOP Congress 7 - 11 July 1999, Bergen, Norway.

The two most central planning acts for Norwegian municipalities are the Planning and Building Act of 1985 (PBA) and the Local Government Act of 1992 (LGA). They are the primary motive force behind

- the municipal plan (a comprehensive-long-term plan including a land-use plan with minimum 12 year perspective, PBA)
- the municipal plan's program of action (4 year term, PBA)
- the economy plan (a long-term financial plan for the municipal organisation, 4 year term, LGA)
- the annual budget (a financial plan for the municipal organisation, LGA)

Independent of these two central Acts, a significant amount of planning also takes place. A Norwegian municipality typically has between 30-50 different planning documents. They are first and foremost plans dealing with municipal services such as schools, pre-schools, care of the elderly, water and sewerage and so on.

Our intention in this paper is to examine this huge planning activity. What kind of planning is this? There are few examples of a detailed mapping and interpretation of this type of planning and the issues it raises. This paper will present a wide overview.

We also reflect over why Norwegian municipalities do all this different types of planning, and how can we better understand such planning activity?

I am of the opinion that we are drowning in the demand to plan. We are drowning with the expectations to joint participation. Our capacity has reached and exceeded its limit. It is totally unrealistic to believe that all these plan processes can be implemented in a meaningful manner. If planning is to make a difference we must select with care and sensitivity which processes we want to stimulate with political attention, joint participation, professional engagement and so on. The state must understand that what they in total demand in terms of planning in local and county municipalities reaches beyond all common sense. What we now need help to is the opposite. As in Lillehammer municipality's 1999 Vision, formulated by the Cultural Department:

"... to be best at being good enough ... "

Key words: County planning, local planning, the planned municipality

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Foreword

The Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) arranges annual conferences about planning theory and planning practice. The 13th Congress took place in Bergen, Norway, 7 - 11 July, 1999.

This paper is a presentation of planning in Norwegian counties and local municipalities. I will argue that we are experiencing an increasing split between planning ambitions and the realities they face. Norwegian county municipalities and local municipalities seem scarcely capable of accomplish all this planning activity.

Lillehammer, September 1999

Aksel Hagen

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Introduction

The intention of this paper is to give a presentation of the Norwegian planned municipality, with reference to both planning as a product and planning as the actual process. What do we believe we know, what do we actually know and what would we have liked to know more about? My contention is that there is an increasing rift between ambitions and realities when it come to planning in local and county municipalities in Norway, and that a great deal of the theoretical debate on planning has increased the fissure.

Never has there been so much planning in municipal Norway. Despite a few who hold the contrary view, the majority regard planning as a concept with positive associations, connected with change, renewal and positive action, as well with management, order and control. Many groups in society look to planning as a solution to what they regard as their own or societal problems. The concept of planning functions therefore as a semantic magnet. By this it is meant that planning is a concept which "attracts" a number of different interpretations in a magnetic fashion. The choice of content in the concept is connected with what one hopes to achieve in each individual case. A large amount of planning in Norwegian county and local municipalities occurs in response to regulations for planning laid down by the state in one form or another e.g. in Acts.

The two most central planning acts for Norwegian municipalities are the Planning and Building Act of 1985 (PBA) and the Local Government Act of 1992 (LGA). They represent the primary motive force behind:

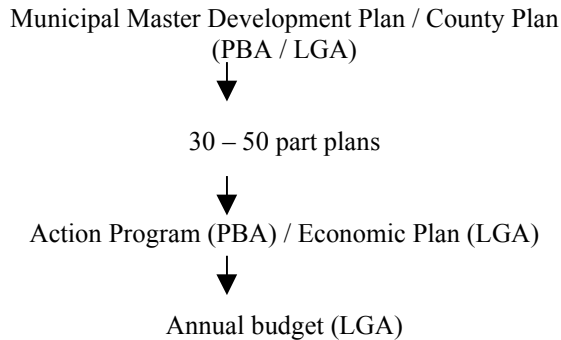
- the Municipal Master Development Plan (as specified in the PBA: comprehensive long-term plan including a land-use plan to cover a minimum of 12 years)
- the four-year action program (as specified in the PBA)
- the economic plan (as specified in the LGA: a long-term financial plan for the municipal organisation, over a 4 year term)
- the annual budget (as specified in the LGA: a financial plan for the municipal organisation)

The county municipality has a corresponding set of planning documents, but the comprehensive long-term plan lacks a section devoted to land-use.

On average a typical Norwegian municipality has between 30-50 different planning documents, a county municipality between 10-20. They are first and foremost plans dealing with municipal services such as schools, pre-schools, the care of the elderly, water and sewerage and so on.

It is perhaps a truism to say that there is actually more planning and more planning of different kinds than most of us believe, and the level of diversity is much greater than in earlier times. Much of this planning takes place outside of the local municipal and county planning processes, independently of the above mentioned Planning and Building Act and Local Government Act, and is carried out by people who don't work as planners and lack a professional planning qualification.

The ideal for the Norwegian planned municipality is the following scheme:



Perhaps it is the case that the total amount of planning expected of municipalities is far greater than most of us are aware of; - this applies as much to the state, as to local and county municipalities? Perhaps it is the case that the traditional planning segment (Planning and Building Act segment with the Dept. of Environment, county planners, local municipal planners, teaching institutions in planning) with their laws, circulars, government propositions, their models, their educational courses, their professions, are on the sidelines when it comes to what is actually happening?

I will argue that we are experiencing an increasing split between planning ambitions and the realities they face. Norwegian county municipalities and local municipalities seem scarcely capable of accomplish all this planning activity. If the number of plans doesn't suffer, then this will definitely be the case when it comes to the final plans /planning products and not the least the planning process itself.

What contribution can planning theory make? I believe that planning theory actually increases this gap, especially when it comes to the issue of processes. I mainly defer this discussion to a coming paper.

Is the Norwegian Planned Municipality about to have a fatal accident? Are planners, both practitioners and theoreticians, in the process of drowning in their own success?

Part I: Ambitions

1. Planning in practice, with reference to planning as making a planning product, a document

When county and local municipal planning in Norway is under discussion, two main over-arching types of plans, the Municipal Master Development Plan and the County Plan, form the focus of debate for us and not the least the planning section in the Department of Environment. This also applies to government reports, educational textbooks and research reports where the topic is local and regional planning.

In addition to the overall plans there are a number of part plans which deal with specific issues. The planning activity originating in these plans is without doubt the greatest in terms of quantity and perhaps also the most important because it is closely connected with

- the local and county municipal provision of services
- policy instruments which the local and county municipalities control
- state sources of funding transferred to local and county municipalities.

The Municipal Master Development Plan and the County Plan

Since 1965, Norwegian local municipalities have been under a state imposed obligation to produce a municipal plan. 9 years later the county municipalities were put under a similar obligation. Both the plans consider the long-term, and must pay attention to the local/county municipality as an organisation and as a geographically bounded community.

Amdam and Amdam (1990) describe four phases in the development of the long-term part of the municipal master plan as specified in the 1965 Planning and Building Act

- expert planning in the 60's and 70's
- total planning in the 70's and 80's
- planning based upon processes and joint participation in the 80's and 90's
- local mobilisation in the 90's.

In the first years after 1965, experts such as architects and engineers were the central figures in the formulation of the plans. Most characterised the planning as rationalistic and controlled by a central actor. With time planning ambitions changed from an interest in primarily physical/economic planning to a greater concern with coordination and the total situation. Furthermore planning looked more to the needs of individual local and county municipalities. Planning continued however to be an activity for a privileged few. In the 80's and 90's there was a drift away from plans produced only once to the revision of existing plans, from the desire for knowledge to the desire for action, from the publication of plan proposals to joint participation in the planning process. Planning became an obligatory and integrated activity in public organisations (Mydske 1988, Amdam, J. 1988, From and Stava 1988, Bukve 1997).

Long-term planning has been secured through the Plan and Building Act of 1985 and the Local Government Act of 1992. The first mentioned stipulates that all local and county municipalities are to carry out long-term planning (§2):

"Planning as stated in the law is to bring about the co-ordination of state, county and local municipal activity and provide the foundation for decision making on development and on the use and conservation of resources. Planning and specific demands placed upon individual proposals for construction are to create the conditions the use of land and buildings which will be of the greatest advantage to the individual and society. Planning in accordance with the law is to create good living conditions for children."

The above situation shows that the act embraces a wide spectre of themes. Management and the co-ordination of ambitions are at a maximum when the goal is co-ordination and a total perspective.

The Local Government Act also contains a planning obligation: local municipalities are to devise a co-ordinated plan for local municipal activity, the county municipalities are to devise a county plan. The county plan is to co-ordinate the state, county and local municipality activity in the county (§5) and the local and county councils are to pass a 4 year economic plan on an annual basis (§44).

The Local Government Act states that local municipal planning should result in a co-ordinated plan for local municipal activity. The Planning and Building Act states that local municipal planning should co-ordinate state, county and local activity (§2), and co-ordinate the physical, economic, social, aesthetic and cultural development taking place within its own areas (§20). The Planning and Building Act also states in §19 that in each county the county council are to produce a county plan. The county planning is to co-ordinate the state and county's physical, economic, social and cultural activity in the county, and at the same time provide the basic guidelines of the local municipality's involvement in these issues. The county plan consists of goals and long-term guidelines for the development of the county and a co-ordinated action program (over 4 years) for the state and county municipal sector's activity in relation to how these goals are to be realised. The action program should also cover local municipal sectors if they are involved in issues of significance for the county as a whole or large parts of it e.g. renovation or regional cultural initiatives. The action program is to be closely connected to the 4 year economic plan which the Local Government Act obligates local and county municipalities to write.

We can see accordingly how the two Acts differ with respect to what is to be main planning topic. Where the Local Government Act focuses upon the municipality as an organisation and the activity with which this organisation is involved, the Planning and Building Act places an emphasis upon the municipality as a social unit or community and as a spatially bounded area.

Together these plans underline the expectation of being in a position to discuss most of the topics and important issues encountered from the perspective of the organisation and social unit/community. The stated ambition is deliberately high - through local and regional planning Norway is to be managed:

- The government in their last report to the Storting (parliament) on planning, no. 29 1996-97, emphasises how important it is that the Municipal Master Development Plan together with the economic plan in accordance with the Local Government Act, shall form the municipality's all encompassing and over-arching steering document. (Department of the Environment 1997, p14)
- The Department of the environment in its last circular about planning, T-3/98 (Department of the Environment 1998, p10) emphasises that "planning at any point in time is to be an integrated part of the municipality's tasks in all sectors, in order to ensure a full-worthy and cost effective provision of services".
- The Regional State Administration in Oppland County and Oppland County Municipality make a point of reminding local municipalities in an "Expectation letter" of "the completely central role the Municipal Master Development Plan has for all activity." (Regional state administration in Oppland County and Oppland County Municipality 1999, p4)

The government, the planning department and the regional state administration are in agreement in the signals given to the administrative levels below them: the County Plan and the Municipal Master Development Plan are to be "The Plans" out in the local and county municipalities. We have to understand this as a directive and/or something taken for granted: That's the law, and there's no point objecting.

The part plans

Most of the state's different demands for planning are to be found in the circular T-2/98: National Goals and Interests in County and Local Municipal Planning (Department of the Environment 1998) The remainder are to be found in other Acts and circulars. The planning demands are stipulated in one of the following ways:

- "should be written", and/or
- "something to be done if the municipalities and counties want financial support from the state".

Table no. 1 provides an overview of the different types of plans which we might expect to find in a county and local municipality in Norway. For the sake of a complete picture I have also set up the plan types specified in the Planning and Building Act and the Local Government Act.

In 1988 the state stipulated with only two planning demands in addition to the Municipal Master Development Plan, the action program and the annual budget (NIBR 1988, p4). 10 years later the number is almost 50, - and the list surely contains some inaccuracies and should be somewhat longer. However, it communicates clearly the main point: Both counties and communes are planned municipalities.

There are many reasons for this growth in the different types of part plans, a growth which has mainly taken place in the 90's. The state wants the local and county municipalities to develop and provide evidence of good work routines. County and local municipal Norway commands namely a huge amount of resources. They play a decisive role when it comes to the implementation of state policy. To be deemed worthy of carrying such a responsibility the least they can do is to work seriously, which according to the state means among other things that they make plans, that they are planned municipalities.

The state wishes to take over more control of the county and local municipal levels, this is despite the official political message, as declared in one of the government's political programs:

"A living democracy, broad participation, delegation and decentralisation, the mobilisation of responsibility and participation from below." (Department of Environment 1998, p7)

The state often therefore stipulates the formulation of plans, so that in the next round the "planner"/the municipality is awarded a financial grant. With the plan follows the money - no plan means no money. From such a perspective planning can be regarded as more and more as a type of duty - if you won't, then you shall or must (Kleven 1990). County and local municipalities will only to a small degree have the chance of finding out if they themselves want and desire planning. They have more than enough with the planning directives coming from the state.

Another reason for the growth of part plans can be found in the ambitions of each sector and the interests of their respective professions. Plans represent a way of drawing attention to a topic and placing it on the agenda. Across different administrative levels it is therefore possible to voice a demand for the planning of a specific topic or area of activity.

Table 1: Plans in Norwegian counties and local municipalities

Local municipalities

1. The Municipal Master Development Plan, a comprehensive-long-term plan including a land-use plan, 12 years or longer (PBA).
2. The Municipal Master Development Plan's action program, 4 year term (PBA)
3. Municipal part plans - sector, topic, geographical part of the county, 4 years or longer (PBA)
4. Local Agenda 21
5. Economic plan, a long-term financial plan for the municipal organisation, 4 year term (LGA)
6. Annual budget, a financial plan for the municipal organisation (LGA)
7. Land-use development plan - building plan
8. Education plan
9. Plan of action to achieve equal opportunity
10. Program of action for housing policy
11. Refugee plan
12. Nursery school plan
13. Municipal plan for preventive measures for children under care
14. Primary school plan
15. Plans to improve the competence of educational personnel.
16. Adult education plan
17. Health and social plan
18. Action plan for nursing and care services
19. Municipal education and recruitment plans - health and care sector
20. Plan for physiotherapists without a contract.
21. Plan for mental health
22. Plan for the treatment of drug users
23. Plan of action for the elderly
24. Plan for school health services
25. Plan for G.P.'s
26. Cross-sector plan for the disabled
27. Drug dependency political plans
28. Strategic business plan
29. Cultural plan
30. Cultural arena plan
31. Municipal part plan for sport and the outdoor life
32. Traffic safety plan
33. Plan for pedestrian and bicycle net.
34. Conservation plans, administrative plans and water power plans.
35. Wildlife mapping plans
36. Transport plan

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37. Policy for the development of water resources
38. Main plan for sewerage discharge
39. Plan for the supply of energy
40. Risk and vulnerability analysis
41. Plan for the reduction and treatment of waste
42. Prevention of contagious infection plan
43. Local climatic plans
44. Policy for the administration of water resources
45. Biological manifold - mapping and valuation
46. Agricultural plan
47. Main plans for the development of forest pathways
48. Forest overview plan
49. Grazing and pasture plan.

County municipalities

1. County plan, a comprehensive-long-term plan, 12 years or longer (PBA).
2. County plan's action program, 4 year term (PBA)
3. County part plans - sector, topic or geographical part of the county
4. Regional Agenda 21
5. Economic plan, a long-term financial plan for the municipal organisation, 4 year term (LGA)
6. Annual budget, a financial plan for the municipal organisation (LGA)
7. County part plan - cultural heritage
8. County part plan for shopping centres/trade and service structure
9. County part plan for strategic land-use and transport planning
10. Regional health plan
11. County convalescence plan
12. County part plan for culture
13. County part plan for the structure of upper secondary education
14. Plan for upper secondary education in f education
15. Plan for adult education
16. Strategic business plan
17. Regional development plan

This type of part planning doesn't work directly against the planning directives stated in the Planning and Building Act and the Local Government Act, but it can be the source of problems when it draws attention away from co-ordination and thinking from the perspective of the totality. The planning authorities are, at least to a certain degree, clear about this through:

- the connection established when it is stated that planning is to be connected with the county and local municipal plans.
- the use of general statements of the following type:
- "... the use of part plans should be taken after careful evaluation and they should be anchored in the main plan." (Department of the Environment 1997, p14)
 - A general stipulation is that all sector plans and plans of action to be devised by the municipalities are to be anchored in the municipal plan... It is presumed that all cross-sector planning must be part of the municipal plan." (Regional State Administration for Oppland County and for Oppland County Municipality 1999, p6).

In other words, planning in county and local municipalities is taking place like never before. In this sense there is no crisis when it comes to the amount of planning. Planning has status in the Norwegian administrative system. The concept of planning functions as a semantic magnet; it "attracts" a number of different ways for the state to give attention to the local and regional level.

2. The practice of planning with respect to the planning process

§16, Consultation, public access and information is the central public participation paragraph in the Planning and Building Act:

"The planning authorities in the state, the county municipality and the local municipality shall from an early point in the planning process carry out an active information activity in accordance with the law. Individuals and groups affected are to be given the opportunity to actively participate in the planning process."

Well before the plans are to be discussed by the local council the municipality is to make sure that the most topical issues are made known and can become the object of public debate. The local municipal plan proposals are to be sent to the county municipality, involved state organs and organisations and to others who share a particular interest in the planning process, so they can express their views and these are to be made available to the public.

In the circular on planning, T-2/98 (Department of the Environment 1998) it is possible, as noted above, to find the following phrases in the government's political platform: living democracy, broad participation, delegation and de-centralisation, the mobilisation of responsibility and participation from below. An instrument in this respect is co-ordinated planning, built upon the following basic principles (Department of the Environment 1998, p7):

- the decentralisation of planning decisions
- steering by elected representatives
- joint participation by the population
- co-operation with the authorities

The general public are to be informed while those affected are to be given the opportunity for active participation. The intentions are, according to Holsen and Swensen (1998), to ensure the general rights to public participation, create better plans and to ease implementation because all involved parts will have had the opportunity to influence the result. The attempt is made to preserve democracy and also achieve at the same time effectiveness.

The most recent report to the Storting on planning, St. melding no. 29, 1996-97 (Department of the Environment 1996) emphasises the special challenge faced in mobilising women and securing the interests of children. It is further emphasised that the focus should be more upon the consumer, the client.

As county and local municipal planning involves the planning of communities and organisations the main four actors in a comprehensive municipal planning process will be:

- Local and county councillors
- Planners
- The municipal administration with the town clerk and heads of departments as the most senior members
- The general public (individuals, organisations...etc)

The Planning and Building Act clearly signals the ambition that each of these four groups are to allocated a role in the planning process. Each of the part plans has different ambitions as regards the planning process. Some are clearly oriented towards users, others place most emphasis on the technical presentation in the plans and so on. Few of the approx. 50 part plans have arguably as high joint participation ambitions as those signaled in §16 of the Planning and Building Act. It is perhaps the case that on average they are not so clear on the need to actively involve politicians in the planning process.

3. A summary about ambitions

Kleven (1990) draws a distinction between planning as a duty, as a willed intentional action and as a symbol and ritual. Norwegian county and local municipalities increasingly demonstrate a planning activity based upon planning as a duty (demanded by the state) and planning with an important symbolic function

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(communicated by the municipalities to the state to encourage good will and financial support). There is perhaps little opportunity of finding out to what extent county and local municipalities would have freely embarked on planning.

Norwegian county and local municipalities are exposed to significant pressures when it comes to planning. This applies to both the magnitude and implementation. It is probably the case that expectations are larger today than they have ever been before:

- Will we be able to define goals and find meaning in so much planning?
- Should we commit so much of our scarce public resources to planning?
- Will we manage to think in a comprehensive holistic manner when the state places such a heavy emphasis upon part planning?
- Will we manage to follow up the ambitions towards joint participation in all these plan processes?

From the perspective of politicians and professionals, - are we willing to develop and maintain such planned municipalities?

Part II: Practice

There are few difficulties in gaining an overview of ambitions. They are clearly visible from 1965, when the state first demanded that all municipalities should make an overarching municipal plan, and up to the present day. Without doubt, one of the reasons for this is the fact that these ambitions have been a topic in the theoretical and practical debate. It is these which we have steadily tried to improve.

However, we don't know so much about how the planning takes place and functions in practice when it comes to the over-arching county and local municipal plans, all the other planning which takes place in and by local and county municipalities and not in the least the connections between the different planning activity. This concerns:

- the planning as a product; which plan documents are written, are passed and what kind of content do they have.
- the planning as the actual processes; who takes part and how in local and county planning.
- if the planning achieves its purpose.

In particular, the long-term part of planning has received little attention. Evaluation has focused primarily upon physical planning / land use planning. In addition, central authorities have through the years focused more upon programmes to improve planning than upon a sober evaluation of the planning which has been carried out or is as yet unfinished. Researchers have shown a greater interest in developmental work than in evaluation dedicated to establishing at a critical distance from the planning authorities. There seems to have been a shared understanding that together an effort should be made to save and improve the Norwegian planned municipality. "We all wish our best for planning." All these things have combined to provide the impetus behind the continual growth in ambitions described in Part I.

It is symptomatic of the situation that the last government report on planning from the Department of the Environment, St. meld. no. 29 (1996-97), doesn't contain any concrete details on the present status of the Municipal Master Development Plan. All that is said is that a process of evaluation is to be established. Otherwise, we can read about how important such planning is and how it should be further developed.

It is also symptomatic that the same government report on planning is only minimally aware of the problem created by the state's increasing demand in the 1990's for more and more planning. There has been no evaluation and the report doesn't signal in a straight forward manner that evaluation is necessary.

NIBR, Norwegian institute for urban and regional planning, have provided an overview of planning and research in the 1990's (NIBR 1998). They found only three evaluations of county municipal planning and three on the topic of joint participation. No evaluation has been carried out of The Municipal Master Development Plan, neither when it comes to planning as making documents or planning as the actual

processes. This type of planning has only received minimal critical attention from the department and researchers.

As regards county planning, it has been clearly noted that there can easily arise a gap between ambitions and results and "that there is still significant room for improvements" (Department of Environment, 1997, p27).

When central researchers into planning met to a working seminar, "Arena Seminar" in 1998, one of their goals was among other things "... to contribute to the discussion about the challenges facing Norwegian research into planning". One topic discussed was "Shifts and changes in the relationship between the state and the municipal administration." (NIBR 1999, p11, p267-270) It was confirmed that the state's steering of the municipalities is full of contradictions, in the sense of allowing for greater freedom in some issues and less in others. However, the County Plan, The Municipal Master Development Plan and the state's planning directives weren't mentioned with a single word.

4. Planning in practice, with reference to planning as making a planning product, a document

We know that county plans are made regularly and methodically every 4 year as the law stipulates. This is also the case with the economic plans every 4 years in both the county municipalities and the local municipalities. 4 year action programmes can be found in the county municipalities, but only among about half of the local municipalities. For the other half the economic plan has the same function. The Municipal Master Development Plan's land-use part also exists in most of the municipalities (89%), even if they are sometimes of older date because they haven't been revised as often as every 4 years (Department of Environment 1997). The comprehensive, general part of the Municipal Master Development Plan is also in evidence, but then of even older date and unrevised. We therefore know something about the magnitude of the planning.

What then about the planning's function, does it "make a difference?" (Benveniste 1989, p1).

County planning

NIBR have evaluated the plans for 1996-99 and concluded that the plans:

- show a low degree of politicisation
- have little co-ordination or explanatory effect when it comes to the real goals and interest conflicts, and when it comes to the plan's main topics.

The positive aspect is to be found in contacts created, the exchange of information and the networking. (NIBR 1996) The last mentioned point is also given emphasis by others (Vike 1995; Hagen 1996).

The county plans 1992-95 were evaluated by the same group of researchers, with the following result in summary (NIBR 1992):

- All the plans are alike, in among things that the national goals are given a high priority and are followed up unproblematically in all the counties.
- The county plans are primarily a planner initiative and a planner product.
- Topical issues and dilemmas in the individual counties are scarcely touched upon and less well clarified in the county planning process.

Evaluations carried out in earlier rounds of county planning say to a great extent the same thing; the gap between ambitions and realities has from the beginning of the period been great, and in general as a product the county plan has never been the concrete, conflict resolving and useful strategy document which one had originally hoped would materialise and come to exert a steering role. In terms of the process, joint participation has never been realised in the true meaning of the term. One has been most occupied with creating a certain interest and energy among the local municipalities, the regional State Agencies, the county municipality's own departments, and not to mention in the state departments at the national level. Falleth and Johnsen show that the 1996-99 evaluation shows clearly that in spite of the changes in the plan and in the planning process itself, the county plan has to a small degree improved its position as a steering instrument (Falleth and Johnsen 1997, p66).

However, as late as 1994, on the basis of a developmental program for county planning 1990-94, the Department of the Environment could only draw positive conclusions (Department of the Environment 1997, p90). In 1996 the same department was forced nonetheless to admit that one of the main problems faced was that the regional state and municipalities were reluctant to commit themselves, showing a low level of participation. Politicians have also shown little interest (Department of environment 1996). The main conclusion, after noting the low level of participation and lack of interest, is not surprisingly, that all parties must participate more.

Municipal Master Development Planning

We don't know much about master municipal planning in practice in the 1990's. The Municipal Master Development Plan has quite simply not been put on the agenda among those interested in evaluation and in the Department of Environment. A library computer search gives hardly a single reference.

The last real attempt, was typically enough, not a pure evaluation project, but a development project 1986-1990, "Utviklingsprogrammet for kommuneplanlegging, Miljøverndepartementet og Kommunenes Sentralforbund" (Local municipal development program, Department of the Environment and the Municipal Association). A status report for 1988 was made; it indicated large variations between the municipalities. In summary, only one third of the municipalities had an up to date municipal master plan and long-term budget (economic plan), despite a 20 year demand to produce a municipal master plan and several years encouragement to produce a long-term budget/economic plan. Municipal economy and planning are not joined and state sector planning, which has involved only two plans, has lived its own life. Some twenty municipalities took part in this program of development. In the summary report's introduction, edited by Kleven (Kleven ed. 1990), we can read several recommendations along the lines that ambitions should be lowered:

- "Planning which tries to solve everything, tends to solve nothing." (p7).
- "We believe municipal planning will benefit from the removal of some of its heroic and normative ambitions. Otherwise the danger that planning will become a kind of ritual lies just around the corner." (p9)

After this there follow 100 pages of recommendations on how to plan and not in the least how to connect planning with action. This will therefore scarcely appear as a down-toned planning project.

The opposite view against continually trying to save or improve the planned municipality, is found in Kleven's doctoral thesis: "It keeps rolling along" Study of an Experiment with Result-oriented Municipal Planning" (Kleven, 1990). Here he concludes among things that:

"... there seems to be a fundamental, almost unbridgeable divergence between planning rationality and political decision processes." (Kleven 1990, pixx)

He is talking about two different decision-making cultures, and he concludes that there is no explanation of how they can be connected. But it must be noted that he is looking at an experiment and not at ordinary local municipal planning.

Other types of planning in local and county municipalities

As emphasised earlier this is primarily a 90's phenomenon, and up until the present day we haven't evaluated it in connection with other forms of planning. As so many of the part plans are connected with state financial incentives, there is reason to believe that the plans will be written; planning will take place. But will it be a real process, real planning? Will it be more than the quick production of plans to satisfy the central authorities - without the local engagement necessary to connect the topic with the individual local municipality and county?

With the gaps that already exist between planning ambitions and practice, before this part planning has been fully adopted, it is difficult to imagine how this won't represent a formidable challenge. It is not made any easier by the fact that most of the planners in this connection will be people who lack both the formal planning competence and experience of leading or actively participating in planning.

The circular T-3/98, the most recent one on planning, deals with the county municipal and state's roles and tasks in county planning, and traces the realisation that much doesn't function according to its intention. The circular admits among other things how difficult it is "to relate to many, partly uncoordinated, plan processes and the programmes of development initiated centrally, regionally and locally" (Department of the Environment 1998, p6)

It is therefore said that it is necessary to reduce the number of arenas of co-operation and processes. The planning authorities in the local municipality, county municipality and state must examine the different types of plans and "create a connection between the county planning and the other plans." (Department of the Environment 1998a, p6). Nothing was said of the reduction in the number of plans or anything about toning down ambitions when it comes to the magnitude or the plan process for some of these plans. It is however important to note how the Department of Environment admits a problematic gap between theory and practice, and not the least that central departments have an unclear relationship between each other:

- The planning section in the Department of the Environment considers the totality, with the county and local plans as instruments.
- The other departments impose state initiated and somewhat strictly governed part planning.

The chief administrative officer in Oppland county municipal and Oppland County Governor, - as one example taken from among our 20 counties, - admit that the state demands for planning can appear "overwhelming and lead to a feeling of impotence" (Regional state administration in Oppland county and Oppland municipality 1999, p2) without their being able to do anything about it other than saying:

"This is what happens when each sector organ is concerned to maintain and improve their efforts in their own field, and the state have issued directives to realise specific goals (Regional state administration in Oppland County and Oppland County municipality 1999, p4).

A memorable, honest answer before it follows a 20 pages presentation of demands and expectations to topics for planning, types of plans and who is to take part in the planning.

5. Planning practice with reference to the planning process

The last circular on planning as a process, T 3-98, places an emphasis on how dialogue and negotiation are to be the central ways of working. These encourage power equality, the need for reasoned justification and public openness (Department of the Environment 1998a, p24).

It can be advantageous if we divide the participants in these plan processes into four main groups of actors:

- Planners
- Administration, head of administration, departmental heads and right down to those who meet the public
- General public
- Politicians

When it comes to the *politicians*, the dominant ideal is that of politicians who formulate a set of goals while the professional apparatus produce the necessary policy instruments. The politicians are a lay group who say "we want such and such", and then the learned take over and do the rest. Many textbooks and handbooks in planning let the whole of the planning project rest upon these goals and their formulation. The key to success and to fiasco, lies in the goal formulation phase. Planners demonstrate different routes to the goal. Politicians make the choice.

On the other hand we know that Aarsæther is correct when he states that "most politicians are quite average people." (Aarsæther 1992, p130). Many theoreticians have criticised, even raved against, the view that politicians want to and are able to set clear goals. Let me for the sake of example quote two Norwegians, Audun Offerdal and Terje Kleven.

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"The demand to arrive at clear goals is therefore politically inappropriate and lacking in reasoned argumentation." (Offerdal 1992).

Politicians are in reality learning about a co-ordinated interaction between the acting and negotiating actor. Policy and politicians have their rightful place in all the phases of planning, including the implementation phase. In the same way that researchers and professionals ought to be participants in all of the phases. Politics is not only the formulation of clear, unambiguous steering goals. Politics is more about regarding the degree of probability associated with co-ordinating the "correct" solutions proposed by professionals. Politics is the joining of the parts in which the professionals always find themselves, all depending on the context. The rationale behind such a view is more social than logical. Politics should involve the search for the politically meaningful, effective solutions, not necessarily those defined by professionals. Just about everything can go wrong with this type of planning if we measure reality against such goal-based models.

"But most of this can be blamed... on the models, which as the basis for our investigations, are warped in relation to the world we study." (Offerdal 1992).

Terje Kleven (1990) takes the same view in his disassertion:

"... there seems to be a fundamental, almost irreconcilable opposition between planning rationality and political decision-making behaviour."

Political common sense is interested in being pragmatic and flexible. Decision-making situations are to be simplified, they should be kept open for as long as possible, and conflict generating questions must be minimised. Such a political rationality goes against the traditionally aspired to steering ideal.

When it comes to the *administrators* as actors, current organisational culture in Norwegian municipalities has a strengthening effect upon the goal steering phenomenon. Backed up by laws and a theoretical base fixed upon a goal-directed approach to the future, the typical situation in municipal organisations seems to be the stream-lining of activity so that for the sake of external appearances it gives the impression of agreement, looking to possibilities, market-oriented and effective, while on the inside, among administrators and politicians, there is the call for thinking from the perspective of the totality and showing loyalty towards resolutions and plans. If planning is to have a liberating effect, acting as a stimulant to new thinking, openness and free discussions then the administrative culture is a problem. It will at any rate work against municipal employee participation in the planning process, as stated in our different planning laws.

County and local municipal plans and the professional planners created in the wake of these plans generated by them are the source of a problem when they meet with administrators and the increasing pressure they feel towards part plans. Can it be taken for granted that administrators will loyally give first priority to the local and county plans, and to thereafter loyally adjust their part plans accordingly? We don't know much about this, but most of us believe that practice will show that the local municipal and county plans will suffer when they are caught in such priority making dilemmas; with the result that the ambitions towards the planning process will be toned down. The state imposed demands for planning, with short deadlines, will be of decisive importance.

When it comes to the *general public*, we know that most municipalities have prepared the ground for joint participation, at least when it comes to the exchange of information in connection with the formulation of land-use plans. When it comes to the program for action part of the municipal plan, only 10% have prepared the ground for joint participation (Department of Environment 1997). Municipalities say they would like to but lack the resources and that the population show little interest in participation. Holsen and Swensen (1998) argue that we have little systematic knowledge and evidence about what happens in the ordinary processes of planning. It is probably the case that one-way communication dominates and that it is difficult to establish two-way communication other than what happens in connection with public

hearings. In general there is little after the open information meetings early in the planning process and the formal letters of protest towards the end of the process. The main problems seem to be:

- participation - when and in what?
- the problem of language
- different life-worlds, different types of understanding.

These are large topics. In Norway there have been many surveys, but few of them have studied the actual joint participation in the general planning processes - both with regard to the local and county municipal plans and to all the part plans. What is the situation, not just how should it be, or not only development projects of the type "look what we have managed to realise in a specific planning process where we all really tried to bring about maximum joint participation". We know too little about what happens in daily planning life, in a general sense. And when attention is focused upon the development of methods we often assume a situation where there is only a small number of planning processes demanding our attention and interest. There are perhaps a few too many laboratory experiments instead of presenting everyday "grey reality"?

When it comes to the *planners*, we face a situation in the Norwegian municipalities where most planners aren't "planners", if by this we mean they haven't studied planning. We need figures on this: who are they, what are they able to do, what kind of opinions do they have about planning and so on. The silent majority are easily forgotten when we talk about planning. If we are of the opinion that planning is a professional activity demanding insight, skills and training then this is a problem.

A sign that there is now a greater understanding of the need to acknowledge the gap between ideas and realities, is provided by the forum established last year by the Department of Environment, where practitioners, civil servants and researchers can meet. It is a forum where experiences are to be exchanged, where the focus is to be upon the long-term, strategic planning which takes place in the municipalities. In the minutes from the first seminar in November 1998, the following can be read:

"The seminar demonstrated how the practitioners of planning had a surprisingly negative picture of today's planning, in terms of how it is carried out, the seriousness with which politicians view it and the actual significance it has for developments in the municipality." (Farner 1999, p4)

It was further noted that the Municipal Master Development Plan rarely has a societal focus and that it isn't connected with all the part plans summed up in the economic plan. There are too many part plans, the 4 year perspective doesn't function (we do last minute planning at the end of each season), ownership by politicians is lacking and the interaction between politicians and the administration is stunted, the planning activity is ruled by the planners. A more negative view of the situation would be hard to imagine. The Department of Environment also now acknowledges that they have little empirical evidence of the state of municipal planning. The last government report, no.29 (1996-97) was based upon assertions. It looks as the Municipal Master Development Plan is a visionary document, while the steering instruments are in reality the many part plans summed up in the economic plan. There are too many plans, they ought to be reduced to the few over-arching planning documents that we find in the Planning and Building Act of 1985 (PBA) and the Local Government Act of 1992 (LGA) (Farner 1999, p9).

6. Summary of practice

We have too little knowledge about Norwegian planning in practice with respect to what generally takes place in the actual local and county municipalities. It seems that practice doesn't match the level of ambitions, and that this will be a particular problem when all the state initiated plan processes begin to demand resources and other types of attention. Even when these were established in the beginning of the 1990's, neither the County Plan nor the Municipal Master Development Plan had established itself as an over-arching, guiding and co-ordinating plan document, formulated in terms of an open, broad planning processes.

In this connection, it is incorrect to state as Veggeland does that we in Norway, like many other countries in Europe, have developed a state which concentrates itself on law-giving, management by goals and the control of results (Veggeland 1998, p77) The enormous growth in state planning demands, combined with detailed paragraphs in law, strict directives on the use of grants and an eagerness for reforms, has given us through and through a state which manages through details and controls activity to a far larger extent than ever before; - no freedom without responsibility, no testing just on the basis of results. Amdam seems mistaken when he argues that "it is the magnitude of and topic of the part planning which local municipalities have the opportunity to influence." (Amdam in Kleven ed. 1998, p82). The opposite is the case - it is here that one is bound and caught - while with the comprehensive-long-term part one doesn't have to "give a dam".

Based upon the level of knowledge we have, it can therefore appear that we are in the process of increasing the gap between ambitions and what we can in general achieve in practice. We are planning as never before, but at the cost thinking from a total perspective, in terms of quality in general and with respect to the process. Much of this planning can not be anything other than a hastily carried out piece of work for the benefit of the few.

I am not surprised of the negative comments after the already mentioned "Arena Seminar" (Farner, 1999). Firstly, these are thoughts we have had for a long time, - politicians, practitioners, the public and many researchers. Secondly, these thoughts mustn't be over-interpreted in a negative direction. When we have been able to document such a large gap between ambitions and practice, this might indeed reflect the fact that there is something amiss with our ambitions, rather than our practice?

Part III: The Norwegian planned municipality - drowning in own success?

7. Ambitions and realities in the field of practice

"If Planning is Everything, Maybe its Nothing" is the title of a classic essay on planning theory (Wildavsky 1973) This provocative statement can also with a bit of care be placed in this debate. We know that Norwegian local and county municipalities are "planned organisations" as never before. And soon the formidable growth in state imposed planning demands will begin to yield results for full in the local and county municipalities. Planning has status in the Norwegian system of administration, and on top of the planning pyramid sits the Municipal Master Development Plan and the County Plan.

We know that planning ambitions will then reach a near maximal point. This reflects the number of topics, how often the plans are to be revised, who is to take part, who are the objects of these plans and so on. To be truthful, we can occasionally find in circulars and reports to the Storting statements that plans should concentrate on the most important problems. At the same time we operate with laws, circulars and reports to the Storting which in practice don't exclude anyone - "all and sundry" are welcome to take part in planning. There is hardly an interest group who can't find a law, circular or government report to support their demand for attention in local or county municipal planning. We make new additions and broaden the scope of local and regional planning so that it becomes even larger, wider, deeper, more vigorous than ever before. The written laws, government reports, circulars and guidelines, and not in the least, textbooks in planning, state without any margin for doubt that "everything" is to be planned, whether the municipality likes it or not, by and for "everybody".

In a sense there is something hard to grasp in a type of planning directed towards the maximal. Nobody is allowed to come and say that this topic has been forgotten, this interest group has been ignored or that in this particular case the good will to act with others has been refused. Nevertheless, there is something unreal and little constructive with such planning ambitions?

We don't know so much about how all this planning takes place in practice and which function it has in general. And when we are developing methods and policy instruments we often assume a situation where attention should be given to only a limited number of planning processes. There are perhaps too many laboratory experiments instead of presenting "grey reality"?

We know that the planning associated with the county plan is still struggling to find a place to match its ambitions. Many are of the opinion that the gap between ambitions and reality is just as large today as it has been in the whole of the period since the county plan was introduced in 1974.

We tend to believe that the Municipal Master Development Plan faces greater difficulties than the county plan, but few evaluations have been carried out to provide confirmation of this. There is nothing to lead us to believe that the gigantic growth in part planning will not make it even more difficult for us to devote attention to comprehensive, co-ordinated planning from the perspective of the totality.

We must dare to make evaluations. What we need is not first and foremost more developmental work, but critical evaluations to help us form a picture of all this planning activity. What is taking place, why, how, who takes part and under what conditions, and what are the results of all this activity.

We must dare to give up moralising. When organisations and communities, individuals and different groups don't take part in planning in accordance with formulated intentions, this can be explained by the fact that they don't consider it a good way of using time. The reason for this disparity can be that:

- different ambitions, demands and expectations exist in a state of mutual conflict with each other; in particular between total planning / comprehensive planning and part planning. Most actors will in practice regard the situation as a choice between the total plans on the local and county level or one or a few part plans, readily combined with the 4 year economic plan.
- they make the assumption that there exists an interest for, capacity and competence for planning, which actually doesn't exist in the local and county municipalities.

The most important thing is to perhaps dare not to maximise planning, - both as a product and as the actual process. In practice there is neither the ability, will or energy among politicians, professionals, administrators, interest groups and clients/users to realise such an ambition.

In the field of practice it seems at present to be the role of state which in sum is the most problematic. Each state-formulated part plan can appear sensible in itself, at least from the perspective of the respective department. For the individual local and county municipality, and also from the point of view of the Department of Environment/planning department, this is more and more regarded as wrong. It is the part at the cost of the totality.

Up until the present it looks like the Department and research groups have mutually stimulated each other to extend planning as a project, where the planned municipality occupies a steadily more inclusive role and more attention is paid to details. Is it the case that the vision of the planned local and county municipality, encompassing the planned community, is materialising itself in too high a degree? Are we about to drown in our own success?

We know too little to answer these questions.

Traditional planning in Norway is generally seen as an activity where some, - planners and the general administration - , collect / produce and present their understanding of the present situation and possible futures, while others, - politicians - , give signals about which of these futures they want for the municipal organisation and for the commune / the county . People are given information and have the opportunity to make public reactions on the planned proposals.

On occasions it is possible to bring about a more equal interaction between the main sets of actors. A conversation takes place, an exchange of facts, which is characterised by mutual respect. The view is still dominant that truth exists out there and that we can help each other to find it. A democratisation of the process has taken place as several groups, perhaps "all" of them, are envisaged as possessing valuable knowledge. But the dominant view of knowledge and development of knowledge remains unchanged. The Planning and Building Act, in particular through its joint participation paragraph (§ 16), is firmly located in the last tradition. In both cases knowledge is regarded as something unambiguous. This creates in turn an understanding of what is to be done: from facts follow actions.

An alternative view denies that such facts exist in an unambiguous manner, and it further denies that correct acts follow as an automatic consequence of being clear over the facts. From such a perspective

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the ontological basis of facts, in terms of truth/fake, right/wrong, good/evil, is somewhat transient, dependent upon the situation and deeply individual. To create an understanding, both one's own and a common one, involves exploiting the possibilities of the moment to create a consensus which functions or decisions which are based upon the support of the majority.

We know little about the kind of thinking taking place in and about the Norwegian planned municipality. There has in all probability been a move away from the view that facts and truth exist out there to the view that they have to be created, readily in a dialogue about planning (Amdam 1997). The planning demands stipulated by the state have in all probability based upon a certain planning logic in them which represents a pendulum swing back to the profession of planning and a belief in facts. The profession is raised and the price is politics and joint participation.

We don't really know much about this.

8. The contribution of planning theory

The planning theory debate contributes to a continual broadening of ambitions with respect to what planning in practice ought to be (Hagen 1998, p6):

In The Community of Planning Theory there appears to be a need or preference for dealing with normative more than descriptive issues. It is taken for granted among most theorists that planning is an activity that always intends to change societies and organisations into something better. The challenge seems to be to create theories and methods which make the planning process as excellent and outstanding as possible. The main interest involves introducing prescriptive planning in place of descriptive planning.

The Community of Planning Theory appears to depend on a vision of and a strong need for A Grand Theory, either as the One and Only or as a Rational Combination of many different theories. Grand Theory emerges from a logical process of thought. In my experience such logical theoretical constructions often end up as kind of religious musing, the need to believe in something pure and serene is placed above the "mess" of reality.

Many theorists claim however that without logically developed normative points of view and/or their basis in theories with a strong almost religious emphasis, planning will fail in society and organisations.

Theoreticians as John Friedman, John Forester, Patsy Healey, Tore Sager and Judith Innes have, among many other, given important contributions to the communicative turn in planning theory. This communicative rationality ideal has in my opinion outlived its use with an assignment of ambition beyond the meaningful, and it therefore comes in the same position as Banfield's ideal of rationality. In total, this theoretical work represents an ambition's level higher than ever before when it comes to the formulation of plan and their implementation. These somewhat oversized ideals lead to continual efforts to extend and improve planning in practice; not in the least when it comes to the communicative aspect.

In agreeing with Wildavsky (1973), it is worth studying closely the following quotation:

"Planning concerns man's effort to make the future in his own image. If he loses control of his own destiny, he fears being cast into the abyss. Alone and afraid, man is at the mercy of strange and unpredictable forces, so he takes whatever comfort he can by challenging the fates. He shouts his plans into storm of life. ... For if "God" is dead, only man can save himself"... "The greater his need, the more man longs to believe in the reality of his vision. Since he can only create the future he desires on paper, he transfers his loyalties to the plan. Since the end is never in sight, he sanctifies the journey; the process of planning becomes holy. Since he is the end of own striving, his reason becomes the object of his existence. Planning is reason and reason is embodied in the plan. Worshipping it, he glorifies himself. But a secular idolatry is no easier to maintain than a religious one. Rather than face up to actual conditions, planners are tempted to wish them away."... "Planning is not so much a subject for the social scientist as for the theologian." Wildavsky (1973, pp. 151 - 153):

What he talks of in 1973, as a comment on rational comprehensive planning, is even more applicable to the new and wider paradigms of rationality, which includes communicative rationality.

But, this prevalent paradigm works, apparently. We are planning as never before. Leading theorists seem therefore successful and vindicated in their efforts to formulate and implement plans for organisations and society.

9. Conclusion

I am of the opinion that the time is right to say "enough is enough". We are drowning in the demand to plan. We are drowning with the expectations to joint participation. Our capacity has reached and exceeded its limit. It is totally unrealistic to believe that all these plan processes can be implemented in a meaningful manner. If planning is to make a difference we must select with care and sensitivity which processes we want to stimulate with political attention, joint participation, professional engagement and so on. Politicians, the general population, administrators and planners must show the courage to choose not to plan and to tone down much of these different types of planning. The state must understand that what they in total demand in terms of planning in local and county municipalities reaches beyond all common sense. Especially if in this case all this planning is to involve joint participation and be connected with the Municipal Master Development Plan or County Plan.

I am of the opinion that little support and inspiration can be found in the planning theory debate. When it comes to the planning process, topics of interest and concepts, it continually extends the planning project. What we now need help to is the opposite. As in Lillehammer municipality's 1999 Vision, formulated by the Cultural Department:

"... to be best at being good enough ... "

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