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Communicative Planning on Women's Conditions in
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Public Participation in Local Planning – Communicative Planning on Women's Conditions in six communes in Norway.¹

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Abstract

Although there are more women than men in Norway, they are less visible in local politics and local planning processes. An important goal therefore is to get more women involved in public planning. This in turn is believed to lead to greater participation of women in the political process.

The planning process in six rural communes (municipalities) in Norway which participated in a National Project "Municipal Planning on Women's Conditions" (1989 -1992), was an attempt to make local planning less frightening and more commonplace. Participate methods were used to engage inhabitants, especially women, in strategic planning for local development and based on theories and methods for communicative planning. The experience was that high political and administrative involvement and engagement, as well as high mobilisation of women, was needed to implement changes and tasks introduced and developed during the planning process. This activity must be integrated with the political and administrative system on local level and that women themselves must decide how they shall participate and they must have strong influence on the design of planning processes and projects.

In this paper I try to discover what kind of long time effects this project have had regarding local communicative planning and women's perspective in planning and politics. Information from local leaders and indicators show that the six local communes have higher participation of women in local politics etc. then in Norway at all and also gives priority to communicative processes and methods in local planning.

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Introduction

Theories and methods for communicative planning is a dominating perspective in planning today (Forester 1989, Friedmann 1987, Healey 1997, Sager 1994). The view is that planning is essentially a communicative process involving multiple, interacting actors. But there are limits to pure communicative approaches when power is uneven distributed among actors as Forester (1988), Flyvbjerg (1998) and others have shown. The context of the planning process, the influence of institutions, must also be considered (Healey 1997).

In Amdam (1995) I presented a Norwegian experiment on communicative planning. The national project "Municipal Planning on Women's Terms", in which six rural municipalities (communes) participated from 1989 to 1991 (Amdam 1995), was an attempt to make the local planning process less frightening and more commonplace – to build confidence (Amdam 2000). Participatory and communicative methods were used to involve the inhabitants, especially women, in strategic planning for local development. It was experienced that a high level of political involvement and interest, as well as extensive mobilization of women, was needed to implement the changes and measures introduced and developed during the planning process.

After assessment, it was concluded that all six projects functioned well as isolated experiments (Amdam et al 1993, Amdam 1995). The project leaders and project groups made a tremendous effort, mobilising a lot of women in the planning process. They did good work on all the problems they could solve themselves, such as preparing a municipal programme connected to women's situation, promoting high participation of women in this activity, and cooperating with the municipal planners.

There was greater variation as regards the integration of the women's perspective into the municipal planning, and the political and administrative acceptance of this perspective. In general, the experiment influenced the content of the strategic municipal plan towards less emphasis on material values and more concern for human values, with the emphasis on (Amdam et al 1993):

- A holistic perspective
- Caring
- Protection of the environment and ecology
- People's everyday lives
- Greater consideration for individuals and groups with poor resources
- New ideas and creativity.

Often, however, to influence plans is only symbolic. To have real influence a planning process must influence political and administrative decisions and actions. The assessment of the experiment in 1993 showed that (Amdam et al 1993, Amdam 1995):

- Two municipalities were very successful according to the goals for the national project (Leksvik and Ramnes). These two municipalities had the most enthusiastic top leaders (mayor, municipal executive and sector heads), and it is obvious that when the role of leader was combined with "ownership" of the project, this gave results.
- Two other municipalities (Gausdal and Sunndal) achieved some success but needed more than three years to achieve their goals. Both got off to a difficult start, and needed more time than planned to motivate the administration. A change of municipal executive in both municipalities during the process led to a more positive attitude in the administration. It is thought that, with a longer project period, these two municipalities would have produced results equal to those achieved by the "top" two.
- Two municipalities had meagre success as regards integrating a women's perspective into politics and the administration (Bremanger and Nesna). Neither the mayor nor the municipal executive was particularly interested in the project.

In this paper I will visit this experiment 10 years after it finished and try to give some answers to these questions:

- Have the experiment lead to more local communicative planning in the six municipalities?
- What have happened regarding integration of women's perspective in local planning and politics?

The Project

The initiative for the project came from the Ministry of Environment, which is responsible for local and regional planning in Norway. This ministry also employed the national project leader and administered the experiment, with financial support and participation from other ministries, i.e. the Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries, Local Government and Labour, and Industry, and from the Norwegian Association of Local Authorities (The national project group).

The reasons for the experiment were complex. Every year, each ministry had to prepare a national plan of action for equality between the sexes within its own domain (this was during the Brundtland regime, our first woman as prime minister). The experiment was an important initiative in connection with this planning at the ministries concerned, and was also an example of cooperation between them.

Another goal of the Ministry of Environment's planning department was to vitalize local planning. Many experiments have been and are still started with this in mind, and this was one of them. The planning department also tries (from the top) to democratise local planning, through support to experiments, by producing material with information about democratic planning, and by supporting milieus that are trying to develop methods for achieving more democratic local planning (Ministry of Environment 1993a,b).

In their project plan the national project group used arguments like these to promote the project (Amdam et al 1993, Amdam 1995):

- ❑ Men and women have different perspectives and ways of working. Women are often more concerned about the welfare of their family and local community, as well as environmental protection and social conditions. Women are greatly under-represented in political bodies and municipal and county planning departments. It is therefore important that women take part in planning activities.
- ❑ Experience has shown that women can inject new energy and enthusiasm into public planning. Women communicate more openly and directly than men do, and compared with men, find it easier to arrive at and implement practical solutions. This is why public plans in which women have been involved are more often concerned with everyday problems, and are more specific, action-oriented and easier to execute than plans characterized by men's more abstract perceptions of the world.

The National Project Group selected six municipalities (Bremanger, Gausdal, Leksvik, Nesna, Ramnes and Sunndal), and invited these to take part in the project. Except in Bremanger and Sunndal, the mayor or the municipal executive (top administrator) was a woman. Most of the municipalities were rural communities in peripheral parts of Norway, and had between 2000 and 7000 inhabitants. Their labour markets were dominated mainly by industries of interest to the ministries involved. Each municipality had to employ a woman as project leader. The National Project Group gave each municipality a grant equal to her salary over a 3-year period. Each municipality had to elect a local project group with a majority of women, headed by the mayor or the municipal executive. It was thought important to involve political organizations, women's organizations and the municipal administration, and the groups should preferably include representatives of these bodies, as well as representatives of local communities or neighbourhoods.

The National Project Group decided that they did not themselves have the capacity or competence to advise the municipalities. A group of three researchers with competence in municipal planning (an EGA-team - for Education, Guidance and Assessment, which I lead) was appointed to educate and advise the local project groups and to assess the process.

Why did the national level find it important for women to take part in local planning? The municipality's use of resources and their planning activities have a direct impact on our daily lives. It makes a difference whether public funds are used to build a day care centre or a new administrative building. That is why public planning - and women's involvement in it - is important. In Norway a lot of the public welfare production is decentralised to municipalities, who during the project (1991):

1. Controlled a local provider system to satisfy local needs related to health, education, social care, local development etc. with over 350,000 civil servants (35,000 in administration), or 18% of our work force. Over 2/3 of the civil servants was women, but very few was top managers.
2. Controlled/spend approx. 14% of our GDP.
3. Engaged over 13,000 elected representatives to Municipal Councils, or 0.3% of our population (1991) - but on municipal level, only 29 % of the representatives were women.

Low participation of women in planning and politics was also problematic in relation to democratic rights. The Norwegian Equal Status Act of 1978 states: "The public authorities shall facilitate equality of status between the sexes in all sectors of society." As more welfare tasks are decentralized to the municipality, the need for women's involvement becomes obvious.

To increase women's participation in the decision-making process at all levels was a goal in itself, and raises the chance of women's needs and wishes becoming a priority area of municipal politics. This approach also implies taking into account the existing frameworks for people's everyday lives, the need for social identity, and possible future environmental problems.

The project must be understood in relation to the complex local background described above. The objective was three-fold:

1. To acquire knowledge about how to integrate women's values and needs into the municipal plans, and develop models for achieving this goal,
2. To produce municipal plans which place greater emphasis on the women's perspective with regard to the residential environment, the industrial and employment policy, and the health and social welfare policy and
3. To spread the knowledge obtained from the project to other municipalities.

Figure 1. The project planning process.



The project emphasized that women should take an active part in the planning process. The six municipalities undertook by political decision to establish planning processes that would ensure that the women's perspective would be properly reflected in the municipal plans. A characteristic feature of the project was to work from below upwards, on women's premises, but in close contact with the municipal administration and political leaders. In all the municipalities the planning took place just as much on women's premises as on men's. The women gave just as much attention to road building, water supply and sewerage as the men did, but they were concerned with so many other issues as well, such as caring, the environment, education, jobs for women, culture, leisure and social identity (Amdam et al 1993).

This implied that the experiment tried to influence the local planning process and system directly, as well as the local plans, which in Norway consist of (Amdam 1995):

- ❑ Strategic planning with at least a 12-year perspective, and a strategic plan that is adopted by the municipal council every 4th year (4-year loop).
- ❑ The four-year action programme, including a 4-year budget, which is adopted every year. This is primarily an economic plan for the municipality's activities, but also for other activities directed at local economic and welfare development.
- ❑ It is possible to prepare special programmes for functions like schools, geographical areas of the municipality, and areas of special effort like support for new establishments and small businesses and of course women's interests.

The planning process was organized in stages (see figure 1), corresponding to the basic stages of the strategic planning and mobilisation model (Amdam 1995). All six municipalities followed this scheme, which started with education and training in planning methods and processes in autumn 1989, both at national level (project leaders and project groups) and at local level (local leaders: administrators, politicians, organizations, etc.). Approximately 50% of the respondents, who completed an assessment questionnaire in 1992, did regard support and training at local level as important for the planning process (Amdam et al 1993).

The training was followed by broad mobilization of inhabitants in order to formulate and select visions and strategies (spring 1990), a process led by the project leader and group. The objective was to develop the strategic part of the municipal plan, based on a women's perspective. Each municipality arranged a lot of local meetings for women and at least one well-prepared open meeting on municipal level. A list was prepared beforehand of leading politicians, administrators and heads of local organizations. These were asked to attend the meeting, along with women whom the project group knew were, or could be, opinion leaders among women or in their local community. Between 75 and 150 persons attended the meetings on municipal level in each municipal, more than 50 per cent of them women.

The meetings focused on the situation in the municipality in general, and for women in particular. Strengths and faults were analysed through group work, as well as future threats and opportunities in the municipality. Each municipality, at the end of the meeting, defined at least five areas of importance for further study and planning, in order to improve the situation for women.

Working groups were appointed at municipal level (at least 50% women in each group) and at neighbourhood level (mostly women) where actions were decided using creative and communicative measures (Amdam and Amdam 1990, Amdam 1995). Some of these groups worked using the strategies specific for the municipal programme built on a women's perspective. Either the project leaders or another member of the project group served as secretary. This functioned well, and the work followed a tight time schedule. A seminar was arranged in each municipality, where each group presented its proposals. Based on the results of this seminar and other material, each project group prepared during spring and summer 1990 a municipal programme built on a women's perspective, with the following content:

1. The situation of women, and perspectives for further development
2. A vision for further development
3. Strategies for change and implementation

Coordinated with this activity, the municipal planner and the planning group in each municipality prepared the strategic part of the municipal plan during summer and autumn 1990. Perspectives, visions and measures, as defined in the women's programme for the municipality, were integrated into the municipal plan. An example is the visions defined in the women's programme for Leksvik:

Municipal planning on women's terms means that:

- Women shall participate in the planning process*
- Women's and children's interests shall receive priority in the municipal plan and programme of action*
- Women and children are the most important groups for further development in Leksvik municipality*
- All actions shall be evaluated and given priority in the light of women's and children's interests*
- The consequences of actions (in all sectors) shall not be negative for women and children*
- Women shall receive priority when allocating the local development fund*
- Women's values and "practical standpoint" shall receive priority in the municipal plan*
- Leksvik municipality, as an organization and a community, is a society where women have equal opportunities for work, recreation, education and services as men.*

This vision was ambitious and difficult to realize, especially in the municipality's own programme of action which traditionally is dominated by sector activities and formal processes. The project groups tried to influence the sectoral planning through direct negotiation and communication, with some success. The project group in Leksvik concluded in its final report that (Amdam 1995): *Women's perspectives have become of importance through women's participation in the planning process and by emphasizing themes and activities that preoccupy women. This results in a municipal planning process more strongly focused on everyday problems and opportunities.*

An important goal during this period was to get inhabitants to participate in the process, inform them about it, and motivate them to propose measures and projects. During a short period, spring 1990, an

attempt was made to put municipal planning with a women's perspective on the agenda through open meetings, group work, and general information in the local press etc. This is easier to do in small municipalities than in large ones. In Nesna (1800 inhabitants) and Leksvik (3600 inhabitants) more than half of the informants thought that most of the inhabitants of the municipality had been reached, as against only 27% in Sunndal (7000 inhabitants) the largest municipality (Amdam et al 1993). In general, the project leaders and the project groups felt that the effort in this connection had been successful, and that their activities had strongly influenced the strategic part of the municipal planning process.

Based on a questionnaire sent to between 50 and 100 who had participated in the process in each municipality autumn 1991 (response app. 60%, Amdam et al 1993, Amdam 1995) we found as told in the introduction that the six municipalities could be divided into three groups; high activity (Ramnes and Leksvik), some activity (Sunndal and Gausdal) and low activity (Bremanger and Nesna). Only 30% answered that they had high knowledge about the project and 54% some knowledge. Based on knowledge and evaluation of their response we found 86 "owners" of the project in the six municipalities – persons that had good knowledge about the project, strong relations to the project and who had been mobilised to promote the objectives of the project. As shown on table 1, there were very few "owners" in the low activity group.

Table 1. High knowledge about the project and positive image of the project ("owners"), 1991 (Amdam et al 1993).

Municipalities	High knowledge		% "Good results "	"Owners" (persons)
	%	N		
<i>High activity</i>				
Leksvik	57	35	63	19
Ramnes	39	44	59	24
<i>Some activity</i>				
Sunndal	12	67	26	17
Gausdal	28	36	41	13
<i>Low activity</i>				
Bremanger	33	36	24	9
Nesna	24	33	13	4
Sum:	30	251	37	86

Since only 30% of participants had high knowledge of the project in 1991, to send a questionnaire to the same persons in 2001 certainly would have lead to a very low response. In stead I have sent a questionnaire to 6 to 8 leading politicians and administrators in each municipality to get an impression of the situation today and I have also spoken with some of them over telephone or personally. My evaluation here of the situation in 2001 is a personal reflection based on this and other knowledge.

More communicative local planning?

All the project groups used methods that have been developed to promote communication between local actors, a combination of creative problem solving and strategic planning (Amdam J. 1992, 1995, 2000, Amdam R. 1997). This functioned well in the local projects, but we found high variation of "diffusion" to other local planning (Amdam 1995). In 1991 between 75% (Leksvik) and 35% (Sunndal) was of the opinion that the project and its methods have had some or a lot of influence on municipality planning (average 52%).

According to the opinion of our informants the project groups gave high priority to (Amdam 1995):

- ❑ *Participation of women in the planning process (41%) and in concrete planning activities (28%) have been the most important activities in Leksvik, Ramnes and Bremanger.*
- ❑ *Planning of actions on local level (in local communities - 51%) has been important in all communes.*
- ❑ *New methods for communicative local planning (43%) have been important in all communes, highest in Ramnes, Gausdal and Leksvik.*
- ❑ *Actions for women (30%), highest in Sunndal, Ramnes and Gausdal.*
- ❑ *Direct participation of all inhabitants in planning (30%), highest in Leksvik where the project was closest integrated with the commune plan process.*

- ❑ *Political participation of women (28%), highest in Bremanger, Ramnes and Gausdal.*
- ❑ *Planning education (23%), highest in Ramnes and Leksvik.*

But this was a short time after the project had ended – what long time effects regarding communicative planning methods can be found in different municipalities?

As in 1991 **Leksvik** is still very active in using communicative methods in all forms of local planning. A typical response today from leaders that also participated in the project 10 years ago was that they learned that the planning process itself (compared to the plan) and participation in the planning process was very important. Participative methods involving the civil society and business, as well as public sectors to (Empowerment strategy, Friedmann 1992) are used to develop new strategies and to implement these. Their latest strategic plan was politically decided in 1999 and is published on the Internet². Their strategic focus is: 1) cooperation and local democracy, 2) family and growing up, 3) health and care, 4) industry, environment and population and 5) regional cooperation.

On the other hand few meetings or cooperative activity have taken up the interests of young women or local communities. Specific participative methods like “work books” (Amdam 1992, 1995) developed and used by the project groups are used only a little. Leksvik have learned from the project to use communicative principles in their planning efforts. And they are enthusiastic in their communicative planning efforts. I sent my questionnaire to 6 leaders and got response from 5 inside 2 weeks!

Ramnes is also using communicative methods in their planning efforts as in 1991. Their last strategic plan was politically decided in 1999 with focus on childhood, family and living quality and was based on high participation from inhabitants and local organisations. Some of the methods introduced by the project is in use like SWOT analysis, creative methods (brainstorms) etc. Today the municipality is in the process of a voluntary merging with their neighbour Våle to the new Re commune. My informers are of the opinion that they learned to cooperate better with inhabitants, local organisations and business, as well as other communes – which eventually have lead to the merging process. The merging process and the following change in political and administrative structure takes a lot of planning capacity today.

Development of industries is mainly on the planning agenda in **Sunndal**. Hydro Aluminium is carrying out an extensive modernization of its aluminium production in Sunndal and is investing more then 600 mill \$ in the period 2001 - 2005.³ This has a tremendous influence on local life and on planning activity. Sunndal have not audited their strategic plan the last 5 years but in 1998 these strategic objectives were politically decided⁴:

- ❑ *Security and well being for all inhabitants, especially young families*
- ❑ *Strengthen culture to promote identity and quality of life*
- ❑ *Diversified and sustainable industries*
- ❑ *Sustainable development*
- ❑ *Sunndalsøra as regional centre*
- ❑ *Information and participation in municipal activity*
- ❑ *Quality and cost-efficiency in commune welfare production*

As in Leksvik and Ramnes they learned from the project that the planning process and participation in the process was important and they are still using some of the communicative methods that was introduced during the project. But participation from young women is still a problem. My informers tells me that the project itself, the integration of it to the communes strategic planning and participation in the strategic planning process worked well, but later active use of the plan have been a problem because of the economic situation in the commune and other challenges.

Employment and politics in Sunndal are dominated by Hydro who employs directly or indirectly around 1000 of the 7.500 inhabitants in 2001 or more then 25% of the work force. A reduction of employment have been the challenge in the 1990-ies, and the decision by Hydro in 2000 to invest in a new plant was very welcome – and have of course set the agenda for politics and planning activity.

² <http://www.leksvik.kommune.no/data/Kp-tekst.doc>

³ <http://www.hydro.com/hits/osl02100.nsf/site/hampeng>

⁴ <http://www.sunndal.kommune.no/sunndal/frame.nsf/?Opendatabase>

Strategic planning activity in **Gausdal** has been low since 1991, first in 2001 did they start the revision of the strategic plan using communicative methods and active participation in this process and as well as in other planning activity. My responders are of the opinion that land use planning and planning of public activity is working well, while strategic planning has been given low priority. They also have problems regarding participation of young women in the planning process, while the challenges and welfare of children and especially development of industries are higher on their agenda. Their main learning from the project was how to do communicative planning processes and use methods that stimulated participation and creativity in planning.

The main learning of **Bremanger** from the project was related to new knowledge of commune planning and new communicative methods. Their strategic plan have not been revised since 1992, while planning activity have been concentrated on land and sea use planning. Development of industries is high on their agenda, as well as cooperation with local organisations regarding development of local communities and welfare for children. Our evaluation in 1993 showed that the project had low impact on local planning and other activity. High expectations from many local actors that the project should create jobs for women (an image they tells me was created by representatives from the national project group) have lead to frustration and low priority to strategic planning (Amdam et al 1993, 1995).

The situation in **Nesna** is equal to that in Bremanger. It is typical that in both these communes that was the smallest, had the most peripheral localisation etc. were from the beginning created an image that the national project “was full of money to create jobs for women”. Instead they got help to do a strategic communicative planning process that mobilised women and developed a pressure politically to “use more money” to develop welfare and activity for women and children. While Bremanger has high stability in their administration, most of the administrators involved in the project and planning activity have left Nesna. The strategic plan of Bremanger was revised in 2000, with high priority to development of industries – but also using methods like SWOT analysis, participation of inhabitants, organisations etc. in the process – so there might be some indirect learning from the project. But low priority has been given to participation of young women in the planning process.

Was the result that the national and local projects lead to more communicative planning on local level? In the 1990-ies all communes have been introduced to communicative planning methods especially regarding planning for development of industries but also in public sector planning. To answer the question more fully we must compare the six project communes with other communes in the same situation, which has not been done. My impression is that our conclusions in 1993 are still valid (Amdam et al 1993, Amdam 1995). The project and other communicative based planning projects and methods have had small impact on the communicative strategic planning activity in Nesna and Bremanger, but some influence on land and sea use planning. The other 4 communes have learned more deeply the importance of participation in the planning process (compared to “plan making” with focus on the plan as a document) and also to use communicative stimulating methods in planning processes. According to my informants, the project has been an important part of this learning. The impact from the project on strategic communicative planning activity seems to be highest in Leksvik.

Planning and women’s perspective

An attempt was made in the project group to clarify women’s perspective by formulating four principles for local discussion, formulation of goals, and action (Amdam et al 1992, Sæterdal and Lien 1991, Ministry of Environment 1993a):

1. Knowledge about the objective situation of women in the municipality

One strategy is to map the actual living conditions for women in the municipality. Such knowledge is important for women to understand their own situation and for actions to change a situation of inequality. Most project groups felt that open meeting and group work for women only, or where most of the participants were women, would provide the best description of women’s situation and of possible actions.

The project groups tried to produce action, not research. During the planning process goals and activities like the following were formulated: Job creation for women. Support to women from the local development fund. Education and training for women. Training of women in self-reliance and self-

employment. Better organization of everyday life - coordination between family and community life, and support both for men and for women. Equal rights for women - education and employment. Equal rights and opportunities for women in different parts of the municipality - employment, and access to services such as shops, kindergartens and schooling.

2. "Women's themes" as goals for local planning

A practical approach is to emphasize themes which women consider important. What themes occupy women in connection with local planning processes? Are all women occupied with the same themes - are some of them common to most women? Are women occupied with other themes than men are? Are women more occupied with social and family care and family and everyday experience than men, who are more concerned with employment? How can we find out what themes occupy women, and how can we integrate this knowledge into the planning process? How can "women's themes" be put on the local political agenda?

3. Women's participation in public life and all parts of the planning process

How are women represented in local politics, in the municipal leadership and administration, in the planning process, in interest groups and organizations in the municipality, in business, in the local media? In most municipalities men dominate these areas and politics especially. How can we achieve equal representation of men and women? Discussion in the project groups have emphasized two main questions:

- ❑ How can we change and organize the working conditions for local politicians, to make it possible and attractive for women to participate? Local political work is not arranged for women with children or for people who find it difficult to "escape" from job or family. This issue was put on the agenda in most of the municipalities, and some measures have been taken.
- ❑ How can we motivate women and prepare them for political activity? This led to education programmes for potential local politicians in connection with the local election in autumn 1991. The opinion in the project municipalities was that it was easier to get women to agree to be nominated for election in 1991 than it was before. The project groups believe that this was a result of their efforts.

4. "Feminine values" as a perspective in local planning

Women's values and goals are an important part of the women's perspective in planning. This was discussed in the project groups in relation to questions like: Do women have a common set of values based on their experiences as women which are different from men's values as based on their own experience. What is meant by "soft" values? Do women represent such values? If this is true, how can such values be made fundamental in public planning?

To measure the long time influence from the project related to these 4 principles is difficult and is not my ambition here. Our evaluation in 1993 showed, as told in the introduction, that in general the experiment influenced the content of the strategic commune plan in the direction of less emphasis on material values and more concern for human values (Amdam et al 1993, 1995).

What we have seen above is that attitudes (ownership) and (lack of) activities developed during the project period are still there regarding the use of communicative planning principles and methods. Is this also the situation regarding the integration of women's principles in local planning and other activity? One possible measure of the influence of women in politics and planning is the representation of women in political activity.

TABLE 2. PERCENT WOMEN IN COMMUNE COUNCILS AFTER LOCAL ELECTIONS IN 1987, 1991 and 1999.

COMMUNE	1987	1991	1999	Change 87-91	Change 87 - 99
Bremanger	27	15	35	-12	+ 8
Gausdal	30	24	42	- 3	+ 12
Nesna	41	35	47	- 6	+ 6
Leksvik	28	16	28	-12	0
Ramnes	28	28	48	0	+ 20
Sunndal	27	27	38	0	+ 11
All project communes	30	25	39	- 5	+ 9
All communes Norway	31	29	34	- 2	+ 3

Reference: Amdam, Kleven and Sæterdal 1992, p. 65. <http://www.kampanjen.org/99landet.shtml>

Table 2 shows that the percent women in commune councils in Norway have increased by 3% from 1987 to 1999 (last local election) to 34%. In the 6 project communes the increase was 9 % to 39% - a lot higher increase in all communes then on national level, except in Leksvik. If we compare to the situation in 1991 (when the project finished) the increase in all six projects communes is more than 11%, highest in Ramnes and Bremanger (20%), compared to 5% on national level. Another indicator is the number of mayors. In 1991 the mayor in Leksvik and Ramnes (also local project leader) was women. In 2001 50% of the 6 project communes have women as mayors; Gausdal (former member of the project group), Ramnes and Nesna, compared to 15% on national level.⁵ It is reasonable to believe that the project has had some influence on this situation.

All six communes are small and have a rather peripheral location related to bigger towns. Bremanger, Leksvik and Sunndal are dominated by manufacturing industries, Gausdal, Nesna and Ramnes by public and private service activity. If we look at indicators like the number of women compared to men in the age group 20 to 39, the manufacturing communes have lower % of young women then the national average, the tree service dominated communes is over the national average in the strategic childbearing age group.

Table 3. Some indicators on women's conditions⁶

	Bermanger	Gausdal	Leksvik	Nesna	Ramnes	Sunndal	Norway
% Women/Men 20-39 y.	83	100	93	112	105	95	96
% Kindergarten 3-5 y	91	86	74	89	75	86	76
% Women 16-18y in education	91	94	90	97	95	93	91
% Unemployed women 25-66y	1	1,4	2,1	1,4	1,3	1,3	2,2
% Gross income W/M	58	65	62	73	59	59	60
Exp. Life age at birth, women	78,4	78,1	81,1	81,3	81,2	81,2	81,1
Exp. Life age at birth, men	74,2	75,7	77,0	71,4	71,5	74,4	75,6

An important indicator of women's position in local politics is the priority given to kindergartens. From table 3 we see that all communes are on (Leksvik and Ramnes) or high above the national average. More young women (16 – 18 years old) are also participating in the education system then the national average, less women are unemployed and women's gross income compared to men's are on the

⁵ <http://www.ssb.no/emner/00/01/20/kommvalgform/>

⁶ <http://www.ssb.no/kommuner/velkommen.html>

national average or higher. Except in Bremanger and Gausdal a newborn girl can expect to live as long as the national average. These indicators show a situation related to these factors where women have the same or a better situation than the national average (maybe except in Leksvik and Bremanger).

If we look at what my informers tell me about consequences from the project, very few mention negative impacts. If any these are connected to frustrations in some communes because activity the local women's project planned has not been fulfilled because of weak local public economy, lack of engagement from administrative leaders or political leaders. But only 12% mention such negative impacts. On the other hand 76% mentions positive impacts, the rest responded, "don't know" (most of these were new administrators or politicians who had not participated in the local project). Typical positive impacts that was mentioned, was:

- Increased knowledge about communicative local planning processes
- Increased knowledge about participative planning methods
- Increased knowledge about working in projects
- Increased local democracy, higher participation in politics and planning
- Increased consciousness among women
- More active women in politics
- Active participation of women in all political activity
- More action related planning processes
- Later planning processes have been easier to fulfill
- Better understanding of local development processes, also among women
- Priority to "soft values"
- Priority to holistic local development
- Priority to children's situation
- Priority to development of jobs for women
- Priority to care
- Public services better adapted to women's and young families situation

There is of course some variation between communes, but my opinion is that the project in one way or another have put women's perspective on the local agenda – also in the communes where the project have had little influence on local planning. The local projects seems to have functioned as a "women's school in communicative planning and politics" for some women, that have lead to higher participation of women in local politics. An exception can be Leksvik where the percent of women in the commune council are low and other indicators also shows a better situation for women in the other 5 communes. In Leksvik the local project might have functioned more as a "school in communicative planning" for political and administrative leaders – most of these men.

Conclusions

From my point of view the national project with the help of the EGA-team and local project leaders and –groups, tried to:

1. Introduce communicative and participative planning processes and methods in local planning
2. Introduce women's perspective in local planning and politics.

If we look at indicators as women's participation in local politics and the priority given to themes women was most engaged in during the project period like kindergartens, five of the six communes are on or high over national level – the exception is Leksvik. My understanding of the local situation and the information from my informants, points in the direction that the local and national project activities have been an important part of this outcome.

My information also shows high influence from communicative planning principles and methods introduced during the project period on planning in the four rather successful communes. Both the project and other activity from above that tried to introduce higher participation and more communicative planning have had small general success in the other 2 communes. The lack of engagement in strategic communicative planning activity among leaders during the project period has continued up till today. In these two communes (Bremanger and Nesna) the project seems to have been more successful in introducing women's perspectives and getting a higher participation of women on the political arena.

If we relate the results shown above to theories of strategic planning (Keane and Ó Cinnéide 1990, Bryson and Roering 1987), coordination, participation and mobilization (Amdam, 1992, 1995, 2000, Friedman 1987, 1992, Healey 1997), the following arguments from 1993 still stands (Amdam et al 1993):

- Both strategic and mobilization-oriented commune planning require commitment on the part of mayors, managers and other important actors in the local community. Very few respondents in the two “bottom” communes were of the opinion in 1991 that their mayor and manager have been active promoters. These projects had few owners, especially in the administration. This lead to difficult situations when the local project group tried to integrate their proposals into the commune’s strategic plan and sectoral plans and when the commune administration was expected to implement actions. As we saw during the project period (Amdam 1995), conflicts of authority and other resistance are a likely result. As I have shown above this is also the situation in 2001. Communicative planning activity has still a low status in Bremanger and Nesna. On the other hand other objectives of the project – to introduce women’s perspective in politics and public life – have been more successful also in these two communes.
- A high level of participation is needed to create identity and ownership for strategies and actions. There is a strong correlation between participation in mass meetings, group work, etc. and ownership with regard to the project. Both of the “bottom” communes met with problems when the project group and project leader tried to engage administrators and politicians in their activities during the project. One reason seems to be their attitude toward the project; the project was not what they had expected. This lead to a lack of spontaneous mobilisation of participants. But the local projects seems to have strengthened knowledge, relations and lead to mobilisation (Healey et al 1999) on the long run based on women’s perspective. The exception can be Leksvik who was most successful in introducing communicative principles in local planning activity!
- As far as theories about communicative and mobilization-oriented strategic planning are concerned (Amdam 1992, 1995), we have tried to show that most of the six communes succeeded in creating knowledge and some acceptance in the commune organization and among inhabitants through mass meetings, group work, information activities, etc. Still, commune planning is indeed an endless process and this project lasted only three years. (Actually the national project group at first decided that the project should last only two years, but this was changed under strong pressure from the EGA-team). Even so the project had a great deal of influence on commune planning in the project period and afterwards, especially regarding the use of communicative principles and methods in local planning. The project also had influence on national material and principles for local planning (Ministry of Environment 1993 a, b).

An important factor is the local culture (Amdam 2000). Some local communities enjoy a long and positive tradition of voluntary community projects and mobilization and of doing things themselves. In these communities the methods of working used in this project can stimulate cooperation and participation and can give as results a more systematic and democratic approach, because the local development work is better coordinated and the purpose becomes more apparent for inhabitants. In these communities it is natural for them to ask what they themselves can do and what they can achieve in cooperation with their neighbours, public authorities, with enterprises etc (Amdam & Amdam 2000, Amdam R. 1997, Amdam J. 2000, 2003).

On the other hand are the communities where the initiative has to come from “the lord of the manor” or where they are used to everything coming “from above”. Instead of focus on their own activity and their own projects, they concentrate on making demands of the commune, of the state, of enterprises etc, an attitude which often breeds conflicts instead of cooperation and development.

The mobilization strategy used by the local project groups in this project is without doubt most successful in the first type of community. Communicative and mobilization planning can even increase the conflict level if the community and inhabitants are “of the demanding sort”, unless at the same time great emphasis is placed on a “cultural change” and on consciously using mobilization to this particular end. In such a case the role of the planner will not only be that of the leader of the process, but also that of the agent of change, which makes new demands and raises new problems, not least on the question of values (Forester 1988, 1993).

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