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# **Empowerment planning**

A communicative action model

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# Empowerment planning – a communicative action model <sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

With the turn from government to governance comes the need for a different form of planning. Within the government structure, the *instrumental planning* ideal is dominating and is fitted to solve many of the problems the planning is facing as far as we are talking about internal issues and efficiency. *Communicative planning* is a prerequisite for the governance structure based on partnerships between private, public and voluntary sectors, and local, regional, national and international levels. However, and in contrast to the government structure, the governance has to create its legitimacy, and therefore the process becomes very important. In the planning literature, there is now a growing understanding that the main challenge is not to choose between instrumental and the communicative planning approaches, but how to integrate them in the planning practice. From my point of view, the *policy will formatting process* or *communicative action theory* represents one very promising way of integrating them, and in this paper and I shall discuss the theory as a fundament for a planning approach that can be called *empowerment planning*. I conclude the discussion that a planning process based on communicative action theory and that consists of institutional, strategic, tactical and operative planning, can support the governance structure with the needed legitimacy.

## Empowerment planning

The term empowerment is a complicated idea. Empowerment implies a gathering of power in a dynamic way over a period of time. One way of becoming empowered is to transfer power top down, involving an empowerer and those empowered. One another way is where power is created bottom up, by somebody who previously perceived themselves to be powerless. This distinction is parallel to top down and bottom up policy, exogenous and indigenous development, and instrumental and communicative rationality. With reference to planning framework for community empowerment and health promotion, Laverak and Labonte

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented for the meeting HEPRO running in BSR INTERREG IIIB, Østfold 13-15 November 2006

(2000:255), conclude that the health promoters continue to exert power over the community through top down programs whilst at the same time using emancipatory discourses, and there has been little clarification of how to make the concept of empowerment operational in the public health work. From regional planning we now know that in practice there is a strong need for combining the two perspectives, and we have some approaches that discuss how to do that (see among others Healey 1997). Empowerment implies an increase of consciousness, but it implies more than a forced change of power in which there is a destruction of previous structures and values. People become empowered when they move up the spiral to a higher level of self understanding (spiral dynamics). Or to put it very simply: The best everyday definition of empowerment is very simple - "Helping people to help themselves" or "Leading people to learn to lead themselves". However, we seem to need practical and tested planning models that show us that the combination is possible in practice.

The empowerment approach, as an alternative approach to traditional top down regional planning, places the emphasis on direct democracy, autonomy in the decision-making of territorially organised communities, local self-reliance, and experiential social learning. Its starting point is the locality, because the civil society is most readily mobilised around local issues. Civil society is the many-standard order that arises from those values and interests which are shared by most of the people in particular communities. In the alternative development approach the aim is to mobilise the civil society and transfer the social power to political power. In this way, the regional planning becomes a process of regional *institutional capacity building* (Healey 1999). But a region is neither reducible to an empirical given, nor merely a "container" of social processes (MacLeod and Goodwin 1999). According to Paasi et al. (1994) a region represents the condensation of a complex history of economic, political, and social processes into a specific cultural image. Central to Paasi's analysis is the institutionalisation of the region, defined as the socio-spatial process during which some territorial units emerge as part of the spatial structure of a society and become established and clearly identified in the distinct spheres of social action and social consciousness (Paasi 1986:121). Elements or phases in this process are: localisation of organised social practices, formation of identity, emergence of institutions and the achievement of administrative status as an established spatial structure.

In regional planning in Norway we have found it fruitful to separate sectoral planning from spatial planning. The first is mainly a part of a top-down regime dominated by central

planning and control of the welfare state production. The second is mainly a part of a territorial bottom-up regime of mobilisation, innovation and competition between regions. The *sectoral* regional planning is an integrated part of the top down nation building process and the government structure, and is regarded as legitimate when it provides technical and economical efficiency seen from the different sectors. For the *spatial* regional planning, the situation is different. This is mainly a bottom up institution building process based on social mobilising and governance (Amdam 2002). In many ways, spatial planning will come to oppose and challenge the sectoral planning and power, but the spatial planning will not generate more legitimacy than the process itself can create and the sectorised national authorities want to give the planning. As a consequence, the spatial regional planning becomes very dependent on the acceptance from the national state authorities. As far as I now this two parallel planning system is not a particular issue for Norway. With references to Netherlands, Hajer and Zonneveld (2000) are arguing in favour of a “societal turn” in planning in order to handle the network society. Their alternative is to allow regions a greater autonomy in a system of spatial development planning, and make the national government more selective in its involvement.

Consequently, it is important that the planner not only has knowledge of planning as a tool, but also knows the political reality in which the tool is to be used. Planners who lack the necessary insight in the political structure, culture and processes can make mistakes that can lead both the planner and the planning into a state of discredit. Let us therefore look a bit closer on the signs of political processes, before I go further into the design of the empowerment planning model.

Jacobsen (1964) has given a definition of politics that has been much used. He writes that politics can be seen as an activity that evolves around finding ways of formulating problems, trying to get these formulations accepted as binding and eventually organise continuous problem solving activities around these problems. In comparison to this, Lundqvist (1976) has defined planning as a futuristic process where the actors seek to achieve control over their surroundings so that they through this can achieve their intentions. A similar definition has been given by Østerud (1979:12) who writes that planning is a system of strategic resolutions to form futuristic ways of action. These definitions expresses much the same, they express that the point is to put problems on the political agenda, to achieve control or power, and thus influence the production of problem solving.

If we see planning as a tool in the political process which Jacobsen define, the challenge will be to create a recognition so that problems will be accepted and then organise actions so that the problems can be solved in a futuristic and intended way. Thus, both politics and planning evolve around having the power to promote wishes, interests and values. However, great uncertainty about the future due to the complexity and the pace of change in modern society, has led to a lack of trust in rational calculations as a model of decision, and has moved the attention over to models that are based on communication and learning (Sager 1990). This change also regards the view of planning, which leads to essential changes in the relationship between planning and politics. In instrumental planning models based on rational calculations, it is in theory possible to separate politics and planning. Thus, planning can be separated to a subject-independent activity based on preparing political decisions. But, communicative planning is based on the presumption that the present and the future are being formed in inter-subjective learning processes between actors, and the planner becomes one of many actors contributing to the process. Thus, most people will see the planner and the other participants in the planning process as political actors with their own values, needs, and interests (Flyvbjerg 1993 and 1996).

If we say that planning and politics can be divided, we can easily fall into the trap of seeing planning as something positive because we believe that it is logical and functional. In addition, we can see the forming of politics as something negative because we see it as illogical and dysfunctional (Minogue 1993:20). Offerdal (1992) wrote that in order to maintain a positive presumption of the structuring of politics and the politicians, the process of politics must be underlined. With this, he means that there are political ways of solving a problem which are necessary for us to be able to maintain a society and a type of government which provides each individual with an opportunity to take part in the governing and at the same time be able to act as independent individuals. Politics involves using common principles in concrete situations, which gives the politicians both freedom and responsibility, and consequently the opportunity to learn on different levels. Thus, Offerdal maintains that politicians have a certain expertise which is often necessary in all stages of the controlling process within a political governing system, and which is not only occupied with establishing objectives. Offerdal (1992) writes further that politics is not the fixed, calculating approach which is being demanded by instrumental rationality. But it seems like politics in many ways is being coloured by this way of thinking and acting, and this makes the politics off-political or un-political. With this label he means politics where the actions that are initiated on behalf

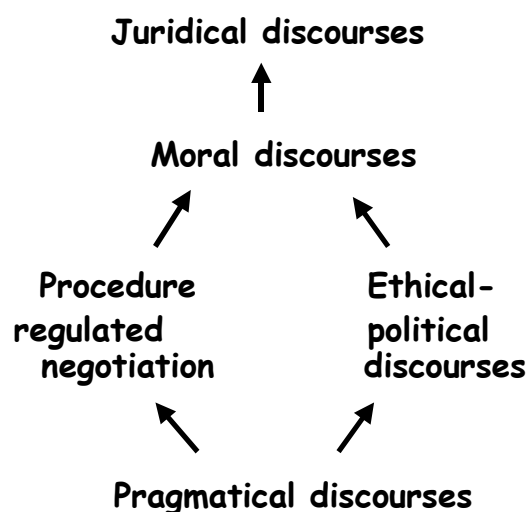
of society are argued for with focus on what is necessary (faith, facts, expertise or other types of “tyrants”). Consequently, he claims that proper political processes need democratically elected people who through dialogues and negotiations try to unite differing values, interests and needs.

### **Political institution and institution building**

According to Olsen (1988), a political institution in government or governance, is a structure between the individual and society. The structure is not a neutral mirror of micro-motives or macro-forces, but modifies and is modified by both forces. The structure manages authority and power, but also collective wisdom, ethics and norms, and shows the signs of a certain political order (March and Olsen 1976). Institutions create order in behaviour and ways of thinking, but they are still temporary and limited forms of order. Political institutions are part of the political process, and, over time, the institution itself will exercise a conservative power by defining which actors, problems, solutions and deciding factors which are to be recognised as legitimate. In this way the political institutions can be separated from community and society and become a sort of filter between the organisation and its context. It is therefore important that the political institutions are subject to a completely open public scrutiny so that citizens can monitor what the institutions are doing. The separation of political institutions from community and society can only be counteracted by a strengthening of democracy and public scrutiny through media coverage, open hearings, public meetings etc. Here we see the importance of what Habermas describes as the public sphere (Habermas 1984 and 1987). When citizens meet to discuss collectively relevant questions or to act together, they develop a communicative power that can and should exert influence on the political system.

I consider Habermas’s more recent work on discursive will formation a flexible and promising guide to future institutional reforms (Habermas 1995). In this work, he argues in favour of combining instrumental and communicative rationality in an open policy-legitimising process. In this model Habermas presents different discourses with their respective rationalities; together, these form a political legitimising process. Habermas understands the political process as a will-forming process starting with pragmatic discourses, which further lead to ethical and moral discourses depending on the kinds of conflicts present. These discourses can lead to juridical discourses, which are concerned with the degree of consistency in laws and regulations. Procedure-regulated negotiation can be an alternative to discourses, if the latter do not produce sufficient consensus.

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



The discursive process is conducted by means of public argumentation. It is through public debate among free citizens that proposals can be justified or legitimated. Communicative rationality can contribute to building morality-forming communities, and to integrating individual and collective values, interests and needs. Communicative rationality has to be made superior to instrumental rationality (Habermas 1995, Friedmann 1992, and Dryzek 1990). In the political will formatting process, instrumental rationality with its focus on facts and truth, meet with communicative rationality with its focus on sincerity, and comprehensibility. Facts and truth usually depend on paradigmatic values, morality and views.

Habermas (1995) claims that in undistorted discourses, the equal power and the duty to argue for whatever claims you make are prerequisites. For undistorted discourses, validity claims have been made which imply that the speech acts are to be tested for their truthfulness, sincerity, rightness and comprehensibility. The duties to argue, together with the demand for public transparency, force the participants to provide their statements with a defence even



towards citizens who are not presently part of the discourse. The weightiest argument shall ideally be given the most weight in the process of creating consensus. However, the outcome may well be, and often is, a compromise or a major decision. A legitimate decision does not represent the will of all, but is one that results from the deliberation of all (Manin 1987:352).

In my understanding of Habermas' political will formatting or legitimating process the *juridical discourse* concerns the rules of juridical consistency. This is planning as a systematic process of developing a frame of reference for future decisions and actions by a relevant community. These issues concern the relation between the context and the regional planning institution, and the normative influence of the planning documents compared to other juridical norms. This discussion is about the reason to exist or the mission, acceptance and legitimacy, and is the topic of *institutional planning and leadership*.

The *moral discourse* concerns the conflicts of norms and values, and is a topic for mainly communicative planning, i.e. planning as a social interactive process between actors who are seeking consensus and mutual understanding. This also involves a discussion of whose needs; interests and values are to be favoured. These are moral questions, which are the issues for mobilising and for *strategic planning and leadership*.

The *ethical-political discourse* concerns the conflicts of interests that are often connected with the utilisation of resources in coordinative planning, i.e. planning with the focus on how to deploy organisations to undertake the necessary actions at the appropriate time to accomplish mutual agreed upon outcomes. This refers to the questions of organisation, co-ordination and *tactical planning and leadership*.

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

## Adapting the legitimating model to planning

In several works, I have adapted Habermas' model of political will-formation to a model for regional planning and development by establishing links between the development variables in regional development processes and the planning tools that are relevant in regional planning. See Amdam (1997a), (1997b), (1997c), (2001), (2002), Amdam and Amdam (2000) and Amdam (2005).

I sum up existing research by claiming that regional developing processes are depending upon the existence of an appropriate balance between five variables: context, mobilising, organising, implementing, and learning. This message seems to have a generally strong statement making it count for regions that are already having dynamic processes as well as for potential dynamic milieus. This implies that we can use this model in both an explanatory way and as a normative model. In this model the five elements are linked together and a dynamic process is dependent on all the elements. The model tells us which variables we should try to stimulate if we wish to promote dynamic regions.

The strategic planning approach, as a system with the institutional, strategic, tactical and operative levels, combined with a monitoring and evaluation process seems to be a good concept for local, municipal and regional planning aimed at stimulating the five variables in development work (Amdam 1997a and 1997b).

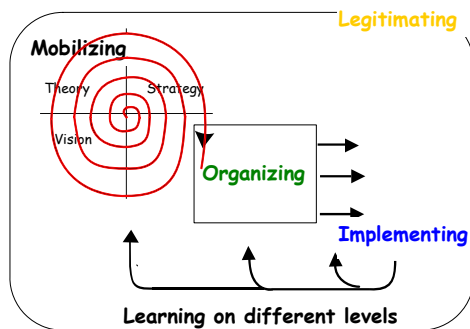
However, and in accordance with the theory, my research shows that when this planning system is used, the communicative rationality must be dominating compared to the instrumental rationality. The instrumental rationality can be used in situations where the problem is technical, the climate is consensus and the process is controlled (Gunsteren 1976). This implies that instrumental rationality can be used at the operative level, and only if the institutional, strategic and tactical planning based on communicative rationality has accomplished to reduce the uncertainty of the situation down to the level needed for instrumental rationality. The model can be summarised in three statements:

### Statement 1: Public health planning is about political power and policymaking

- Achieve legitimacy for the HEPRO project
- Put public health on the political agenda
- Take decisions about public health production
- Produce actions and contribute to sustainable public health policy
- Monitor and learn from output and outcome

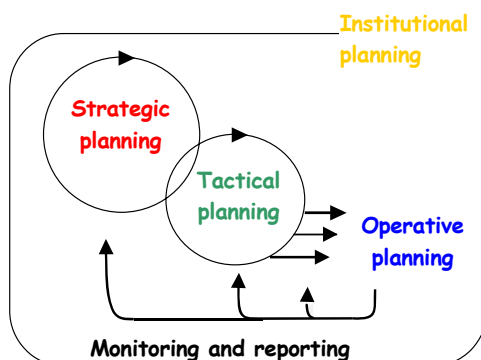
### Statement 2: Development processes have five variables that need to be stimulated

#### Development variables



### Statement 3: Planning is the tool to stimulate the variables

#### Planning tools



## **Juridical discourse, institutional planning and context**

The juridical discourses concern the actual legitimacy and the consistency of the rules of law. It also includes the planning documents' normative effect in relation to other plans and to rules of law, norms, regulations and guidelines for governing society. For all political institutions, this is one of the fundamental dimensions because it really concerns the reason of their existence. For established institutions, this involves resisting the pressure from their surroundings for change in well-established structures, processes and cultures (Olsen 1988).

In regional policy and theory, there is a growing awareness of the need for regional empowerment between globalisation and internationalisation at the supranational level, and mobilisation and innovation at the regional and local level. One characteristic of empowered regions is that the social learning process and the extensive communicative and collaborative partnerships between the public, private, and voluntary sectors exist both inside and outside the geographical region. This does not mean that empowered regions are units, which are more or less independent of instrumental power from the superior government and external enterprises, and that lagging regions are units that are strongly dependent on support from the national government and external enterprises. In practice, all regions are dependent on a widespread interaction with their surroundings, but the balance of power can easily become asymmetric. The achievement of an appropriate balance of power between the regions and their surroundings is probably one of the most difficult tasks in regional development work. Both private enterprises and public governments can easily become too instrumental and dominant and send the region into a dependency relationship (Friedmann 1992, Friedmann and Weaver 1979). This kind of dependency relationship can imply that actors outside the region take important decisions and actions regarding the region and that people in the region are not actively involved in the social learning and mobilising process. In this way, the regions can enter a vicious circle (local community aids) and over time weaken their own capability for facing new challenges (Stöhr 1990).

Empowered regions seemingly have an administrative limitation or a geographical limitation given to them by nature. But, such a view misses out that these regions often are strong and dynamic because they have both a territorial and a functional extent combined with a strong regional identity. This implies that we need to take into account the character of the regions, such as history and context, when we design regional planning and development systems. Regional and local development is a slow, organic process. It takes root slowly and has to be

carefully nurtured before it begins to yield results. Friedmann (1987) claims that local development cannot be organised and supported by authority bases in the society, but has to grow from within the local communities. However, planners who come from the outside can, among other things, help to develop a new self-understanding and improve their skills in self-help, direct action, negotiating and drawing up effective plans of action to achieve changes in policy processes and structures.

The juridical discourse concerns the roles of juridical consistency and thereby also the normative influence of planning documents compared to other norms. In regional planning and development work, the responsibility for the actions is divided between many organisations and actors in the private, public and voluntary sectors. Therefore, the actions require a partnership between the actors, but the establishment of these partnerships requires the actors to share a common understanding of the present and the future, and they must be able to commit themselves to co-operative networks or formal organisations. I will use *institutional partnerships* as a term for these partnerships, and by this I mean judicially binding agreements that regulate the responsibilities between the actors for implementing the measures and changes. This is a systematic process for developing a frame of reference for future decisions and actions by a relevant community. For new political institutions, it involves obtaining power in practical politics and establishing a formal position in the system of governance. I call this process the *institutional planning*.

Essentially the institutional planning concerns the relations between the structural powers in the surroundings that create both opportunities and obstacles for the region as a political actor. The degree of emphasis on actors and structures in empirical and theoretical research varies. In my works, I emphasise the mutual relations between them in line with Giddens (1984) and others. In concrete terms, that means that the building up of an institutional capacity in a region takes place in interaction with the region's surroundings. Therefore, the planning must attempt to bring to light structural forces in the surroundings and find out to what extent they represent opportunities or threats for the region. Furthermore, we must look at the power in the region's learning process and to what extent this transforms people's values, interests and actions. This means that actor-structure relations also become important for the other discourses in Habermas' model of political will-formation.

We usually organise the planning and development effort in local communities as a project with an administrative committee as the co-ordinating body, and we often set up a team for

teaching, supervising and evaluation. The main purpose for the project is to set up a planning that stimulates mobilising, organising, implementing and learning processes in the community, and to produce plan documents with strategical, tactical, operative and evaluating content. But, the local process will usually not to give the process and plan sufficient legitimacy. There will be a need for formal decisions in several institutions in the superior political power structure. Regional planning exist in the interface between actors from both the vertical and horizontal power structure, they are in the special situation of needing approval and legitimacy from both structures. That is, from the governing levels; municipality, county and state, and from the governing systems; voluntary, private and public sectors including democratically elected representatives. In practical planning this means that, the planning process must incorporate actors from both the horizontal and vertical structure, and that the planning documents must be formally considered in the appropriate organisations that belong to the two structures.

It is important to emphasise that development work can be intensified by way of a project, but that it is nonetheless a continuous process. Organising development work as a project has appeared to be a form of working with which many local communities have little experience, but development projects can be useful when an all-out effort is required for a limited period in a limited area.

### **Moral discourses, strategic planning and mobilisation**

The moral discourse concerns norm conflicts and the choice of fundamental values. Implicit is also the choice of whose needs, interests and values are to be favoured. This activity may also be referred to as a consensus-building activity (Innes et al 1994, Healey 1997), and may involve developing a broad common understanding of development features and challenges, visions of what situation one desires and of strategies for achieving this situation. In other words, to agree on a political agenda (Lukes 1974), and build up a collective capacity for action. This is at the core of the strategic planning. In this context, perspectives and research on social movements are useful. This research shows that mobilisation can start with individuals and be expanded to become strong political powers. These movements can gradually lose their basis for existence because they have managed to put the issues they are fighting for on the political agenda, and thus made the desired solutions part of the production of the established governing system. If several people share the same values and act in a roughly similar fashion, this will form the foundation for a strong identity and a regional

culture in the form of a moral collective that defines its duties and rights. However, in order to achieve this goal, open democratic arenas are necessary where people can meet both for the exchange of views and for political action. In order to build such moral-forming collectives it is important that the people participate as “whole” people who are concerned with the common good, and not as calculating experts in their field who are only intent on advancing their own interests. Therefore, strong and active civil societies and social networks are decisive arenas for building the moral collectives; see among others Putnam (1993). Moral collectives help to create the trust between people that is necessary to encourage them to take a stand for the collective without fear of being exploited by persons who are simply out to promote their own interests, without considering the consequences for the collectives they are a part of.

By mobilisation we mean strengthening the local communities’ activity to improve their situation. Our tool is to use strategic planning to stimulate the mutual understanding of the characteristics and challenges of development work, and of how the local community can work to achieve common goals. This involves focus attention on structures and processes in the local community, on relationships between the local community and society at large, and it means that the local community must clarify how to work to influence these elements and relationships. For this reason, we stress the importance of strengthening the general understanding by establishing new arenas that allow the local inhabitants and other important actors to meet across the traditional boundaries of political administrative levels, administrative systems, political interests and regardless of personal characteristics such as age, sex, profession, status, etc. The main purpose is to stimulate the formation of groups, alliances, partnership and networks that will generate political power and which can work to improve conditions in the local communities.

The moral discourse concerns norm conflicts and fundamental value choices. In this also lies a choice of whose needs, interests and values are to be prioritised. These are moral questions, which are a theme for strategic planning. The communicative practice sees planning as a socially interactive process between actors who seek consensus and mutual understanding. This planning practice can mobilise people in a strategic planning process with main emphasis on the situation now and in the future, on formulating a vision of the desired future, and strategies for achieving this goal. The process should function as a broad learning process

encouraging personal growth in the entire population of the region, and it can be similar to the transactive planning process (Friedmann 1973).

In my opinion the transactive planning model (Friedmann 1973, 1987 and 1992) comes closest to fulfil this issue. Transactive planning focuses on how people's experience can be used to form policy. The planning is not carried out by experts for the object of the plan, but in face to face dialogue between those involved and interested. Personal growth and joint action are the key elements in this planning. Planning is not divorced from other social action in which the aim is to gain control over social processes that effect one's welfare. Transactive planning has in common with other forms of radical planning the fact that it can involve opposition to the authorities, but is more developed in the direction of using a democratic process to achieve changes in power.

The planning process transforms knowledge into action through an uninterrupted sequence of relationships between people. Transactive planning emphasises a broad grass-root mobilisation to gain the strength to take greater responsibility for one's development and to influence the conditions under which one is working. Friedmann argues that knowledge and action can be linked through critical understanding and radical practice, and that the planning process is a far-reaching learning process in which everyone can participate. He puts it like this: without a vision there is no radical practice, without radical practice no formation of a theory, without a theory no strategy, and without a strategy no action. These relationships can be illustrated as a learning spiral. After one circuit in the spiral, the actor is back where he/she started, but with new knowledge and in a different situation. The question then is whether the new knowledge and understanding of the situation are sufficient reasons to one by one reconsider the vision, the strategies, the practice and the theories. In the context of mobilisation, this learning spiral will have to operate at several levels. Levin (1988) refers to this as a process where it is usually individuals who go round the first circuit, and that they gradually get other individuals, groups and local communities to join them in the spiral of understanding and practice. In the same way, Dryzek (1990) calls this function of the planning for an inclusive democracy, and Sager (1992) is talking about integration of people and personal growth.

*Strategic planning* refers to fundamental questions such as what is typical for the situation with its development characteristics and challenges, what sort of future do we want, where should we start and how can we make changes in order to move from the present situation in



the direction of the ideal. Questions like this touch on ideological values that can be expected to be fairly stable over a period of time. It is however a moot point to what degree planning alone can manage to change such standpoints. Over a period of time, changes will certainly be likely, and therefore strategic planning may be used as a tool to stimulate the acquiring of knowledge, to increase awareness and to bring about a new understanding in the hope that individuals, organisations and communities can change their behaviour. Formalised collaboration at this planning level can be called *strategic partnerships*.

### *Mobilising, strategic planning and work book 1 and 2*

In over methodical approach the mobilising and strategic planning and strategic partnerships are about the themes in the moral discourse, and we have tried to set up these themes in work book 1. The work groups, who use this book, are to identify strength, opportunities, faults and threats for the organisation, communities and the environment. The groups and the plenary have to rank by priority the five most important areas of efforts in the future. (Work book 1: SWOT-brainstorm and choice of areas of efforts). On the same or a new conference, there are set up new work groups for each of the areas of efforts to formulate visions, strategies, changes and projects to reach the visions. (Work book 2: Visions and strategies). The products of these assembly meetings and work groups are inputs to the strategic plan with turn over every fourth year. One important experience from the method is that people easily get mobilised in the discussion of strategic issues that concern them, but in the political will formatting process there is a critical stage between the discussion and the actual involvement in organisation that can implement actions. People are more interested in talking about what someone shall do, than actually taking responsibility of getting something done.

### **Ethical-political discourses, tactical planning and organisation**

The ethical-political discourse concerns the conflicts of interest that often are connected with the utilisation of resources. These conflicts are right at the core of the tactical planning whose aim is to obtain and deploy resources among responsible actors. In relation to power dimensions, this involves having the authority to make decisions, or as the case may be to prevent decisions being taken (Lukes 1974). Therefore, organisation and co-ordination are central themes also in this type of planning, in particular in relation to partnership organisations in regional development work, because the implementation of the concrete measures normally must be carried out by the collaborating organisations in the network

organisation, and not by the partnership itself. In this way, organising becomes a critical tool in taking the step from mobilisation to implementation.

In all regions, there will be a certain density of organisations and relations between them. Amin and Thrift (1995) have demonstrated that a large density of organisations is favourable for the region's relative power and dynamics. It is, for example, a well-known fact that societies dominated by one single enterprise, which thus has a small density of organisations, normally experience great problems when the situation demands readjustment and creativity because these enterprises have to reduce staff or close down. In many contexts, getting people to come forward as entrepreneurs and if necessary co-ordinate their efforts can be a big problem. Without a necessary supportive culture that allows room for experimentation and making mistakes, many will find it too much of a burden to come forward as entrepreneurs, whether in the field of business or in other activities.

By organising we refer to the fact that the development project through the mobilisation stimulates the formation of and changes in temporary and permanent organisations that can empower the interests of the local community in both local and national politics. Self-help and local empowerment are about using local decisions, competence, creativity, motivation, raw materials, capital, technology etc., in the best possible way to satisfy needs. Apart from that, empowerment involves looking for equal partners with whom to co-operate, so that it is possible to complement each other's resources and supplement the production without the development of new centre/-periphery relationships between the partners. In self-help terminology this is called concentric solidarity.

It is therefore vital to achieve a division of labour and partnership with voluntary associations and organisations, private enterprise, public administration and politicians. It may be an ideal to seek to achieve harmony between local organisations and their surroundings, but in practice situations involving conflicts are unavoidable, simply because the organisations must fight for limited resources between different and often irreconcilable needs, interests and values.

The ethic political discourse concerns the interest conflicts that often arise around the utilisation of resources. It relates to the questions of organisation and co-ordination, which are issues for tactical and coordinative planning. The focus is on how to deploy organisations to undertake the necessary actions at the appropriate time to accomplish mutually agreed upon outcomes. Coordinative planning sees planning as anticipatory co-ordination.

The objective of tactical planning is to develop flexible short-term planning. First this involves giving priority to activities over a period of time in the form of a programme of action. The formulation of these programmes can be based on incremental planning (Lindblom 1959, 1979); a form of planning that requires that the people responsible for drawing up the plan of action are in a position of authority (Amdam and Veggeland 1998). Usually, however, these programmes of action can only consider how to use the organisation's own resources such as money and labour. Local organisations have scant resources at their disposal and are very dependent on other actors in order to get things done, but programmes of action can stimulate producing of realistic ideas about just what the local organisations are in a position to achieve, alone and in *tactical partnerships*. Advocacy planning (Davidoff 1973) can be used to create solidarity and to include poorly organised groups in the process, as done by Amdam (1995) who tried to integrate women more strongly in the municipality planning.

Lindblom (1959) acknowledges this point and presents his alternative of disjointed incrementalism as a planning theory that is close to the political reality. Such disjointed planning involves a form of approach in which by taking small steps forward and adjusting goals and measures, an attempt is made to gradually move forward. Lindblom (1959) stresses that this way of creating policies works within the framework of basic values and aims such as full employment and economical growth. It is therefore an exaggeration to claim that the small step planning that Lindblom discusses is without direction. On the other hand, it would appear to be correct to claim that the planning in the main is a tool in the hands of those with power in the community. Various forms of participatory planning are based on the participation of actors and communication between effected and interested groups. Advocacy planning (Davidoff 1965) has as its point of departure that planning must include the population in the democratic process. One way can be that the authorities give poorly organised groups in local communities a spokesperson (an advocate). The aim is to make these groups more equal negotiating actors in relation to the authorities in the process of drawing up and carrying out plans. For this reason there are obvious similarities between advocacy planning and negotiation planning. Forester (1987 and 1993) looks at conflicts and shows that planners in practice can be both negotiators and mediators, but that they in addition will be expected to be a spokesperson for poorly organised interest. Both forms of planning assume a limited number of actors in order to be operational.

### *Organising, tactical planning and work book 3*

In our planning method, the key actors in implementing the strategies are invited to tactical planning in organising or delivering workshops. In these the actors from the voluntary, business and public sector are to rank by priority the local changes and projects that they must or wish to do, are motivated to do, and can manage to in the next four years. And they have to clarify how they can manage to implement them; alone, together with others and what others only can do. (Work book 3: Priorities and division of resources). This process is set up as a political ethical discourse. The intended products of this workshop are partnership building, delivering of responsibility and division of resources. This can be the input to the local four years action program that must state whom is to do what, when and how.

We have learned that lack of responsibility and accountability is a main challenge in the action program for the society. Therefore, it is very important when the actions program for a society is set up, that each collaborating organisation takes responsibility for its part of the actions in the program, and gets that part prioritised in their own organisations and action programs.

### **Pragmatic discourses, operative planning and implementation**

The pragmatic discourse concerns discussion of the facts and data, and is a discourse linked to instrumental rationality and the operative planning. In a power perspective this involves having the knowledge and other resources to implement what has be politically decided, but it also involves preventing the implementation of such decisions (Lukes 1974). In a communicative perspective, this means having knowledge with argumentative force. When it comes to the use of knowledge in the planning, the challenge is to combine it to form definite alternative courses of action that are appropriate to the situation or the problem one is facing. In political processes, however, it is often the case that the administration and other experts put forward such knowledge as objective truths, and in that way stifle the political debate. This is particularly unfortunate since much of the relevant knowledge is based on values and is therefore not objective (Morgan and Smircich 1980).

By implementing the actions, we mean the local organisations' possibility to control that the implementation, is as closely as possible in accordance with visions, strategies, action programs, etc. Here I agree with Friedmann (1987) when he defines planning as a political activity in which an attempt is made to establish links between knowledge and action, and which also involves the exercise of power. Flyvbjerg (1993) puts forward that a project for

local planning and development goes through the phases genes, design, decision and implementing. He has found that the most powerful parts of the process are before the design phase and after the decision phase. In this way, the genes phase and the implementation phase become the most important in the local development process. To put it in other words, he regards planning as a process that prepares for the decision and put the decision through, and that planning must be an integrated part of the whole policy making process, not only a limited piece of it. Therefore, the local organisations have to be empowered with means to force through what have been democratically decided, and the implementation must be supported from the institutional, strategic and tactical planning.

The pragmatic discourse concerns the arguing of facts and data and is a discourse tied to the operative planning and instrumental rationality, i.e. planning as a deliberative activity of problem solving, involving rational choices by self-interested individuals or homogenous social units. The objective of rational planning is for the actors to decide to what ends future actions should be undertaken, and what course of action would be most effective. Instrumental rationality or synoptical planning can be a tool to accomplish these actions, but normally synoptical planning requires an actor who has command power and full control over the implementation (Gunsteren 1976).

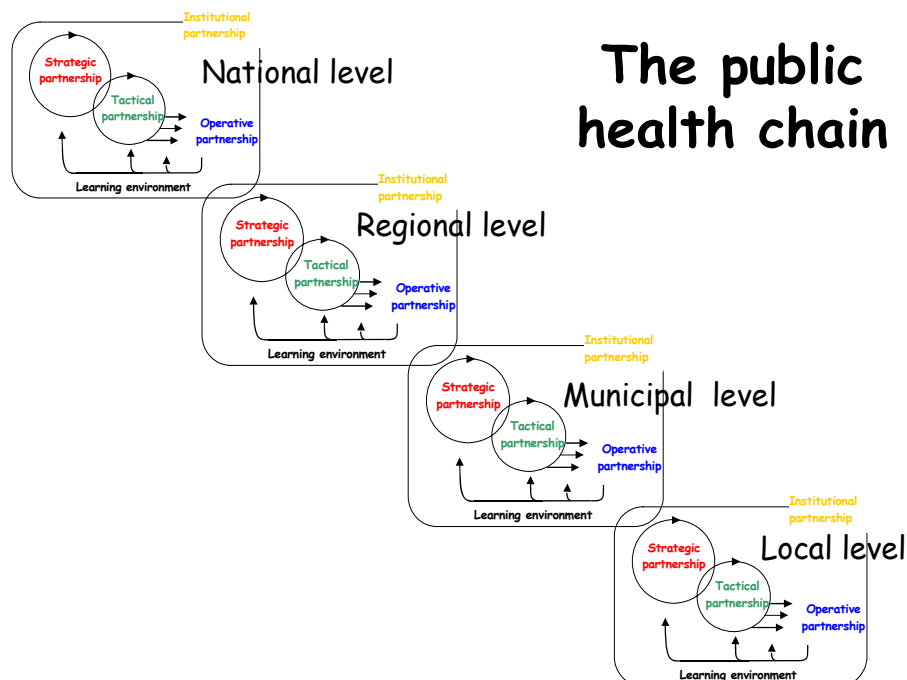
Synoptical or rational planning is often presented as an ideal model for planning. This model for planning assumes among other things full knowledge about all conditions and distinct, stable goals, and that one is in charge of the means (Banfield 1959). From community planning in practice, we know these preconditions can never fully be present. Rational planning is based in the instrumental rationality and is strongly connected with the positivists' theory of knowledge. The presumption here is that objective knowledge can be gained through a scientific, hypothetical-deductive process. The controlled experiment stands as the methodical ideal. The founding doctrine for positivism is to achieve control of society through knowledge and technique. The only true views of the world were those, which are based on empirical observations. Assertions, which were not testable in an analytical or empirical way, should be disregarded entirely. This positivist science ideal causes an interest towards research aimed at unveiling connections between cause and effect and establishing power based on causality and evidence.

Operative planning refers to the local capacity or power to implement planned action. This type of planning has as its ideal the instrumental and rational planning (Simon 1965). A

prerequisite for this planning is, among other things, that at the moment of decision there is full awareness of the present situation and clear and unambiguous objectives for the future; so that it is possible to choose which alternative offers the best course of action. In the context of practical planning we know that limited projects come closest to this ideal. However, the preceding institutional, strategic and tactical planning can be seen as an additional aid towards establishing the necessary legitimacy and power to implement actions at the operative level.

With this understanding of planning on different levels, we can talk about an implementation chain. The operative planning on one level will be a starting point and a frame for the institutional planning on the level below. In this way, planning on one level can support the planning on a lower level with much needed resources, power, acceptance and legitimacy through institutional partnership agreements, see figure 2. Or, to put it another way, on operative action in a project on one level can give birth to institutional planning and a new project on a lower level. In addition, each project can need partnership that involves different actors in the strategic, tactical and operative planning.

**Figure 2 The public health chain**



### *Implementing, operative planning and work book 4*

The drawing up of such projects can be based on negotiations planning between actors who are dependent on each other, and it can be organised as a pragmatical discourse. In order to set up project plans we have developed the work book 4: Creative project planning. This work book can be used in meeting between actors who are involved in implementing the projects, and who are willing to build partnership and local capacity in order to obtain common interests. The out put of the work book can be used to set up *activity contracts* between the involved actors that state, among other things, what is to be done, when and by whom. Based on our experience, we will mention the enthusiasts with the knowledge, competence, capacity, creativity and time to engage in activities to the benefit of society and the common good, as a very critical in relation to putting activities into operation.

### **Discourses, learning, monitoring and reporting**

In relation to Habermas' model for political will-formatting, it is unnecessary to include these elements, because they are already indirectly parts in the process. However, since regional planning and development work is a continual process in which it is important to contribute to the various discourses, I consider monitoring and reporting as very important opportunities to promote a learning process with all the forms of discourse I have discussed above.

Learning can be regarded as a process in which the actors are seeking better ways to realise their interest and values. Learning is not only about new means to realise existing goals. Learning can also be changing old goals and taking up new goals. That is why it is important to talk about learning on different levels, and about learning as an individual process and as a process in collectives like organisations and communities.

Individuals learn in a collective interaction process, and collectives learn through the individuals. To some extent, the collectives are autonomy to the individuals, and can develop their own understanding of the situation, goals, strategies and so on. We can find what collectives as organisations and local communities have learned, by studying their plans, processes, rules, routines, positions of people in power, and how they use power. This learning is maintained through processes of decision and implementation, through socialisation and recruiting.

In my model I argue that these levels correspond to the much used terms in learning; meta-learning (how to learn), and triple, double and single loop learning. So instead of these

academic terms, I rather talk about learning on institutional, strategic, tactical and operative level, meaning meta learning and triple, double and single loop learning. Such a complete learning process can contribute to the reviewing and updating of the planning documents, and to the legitimisation of the region as a political actor.

*Learning on operative level* indicates that rules and old praxis tell us what is to be adequate praxis. In given situations, one run to the standard solutions to the problems that have been used before. No other alternatives are regarded as possible solutions. The actors do not know any other way to act. This can be an appropriate action, but it is more likely that action is dominated of routines and the action must be regarded as a pervert respond to the stimuli.

*Learning on tactical level* is based on the rational, goal orientated actor. For this actor learning is about evaluating action to his interest, goals and values. A successful action is an action that reaches the goals he has, but these goals are firm and are not changed due to learning. Action and learning on this level mean that the dominating action pattern gives opportunities to discuss several possible actions, but the goal is the same. This planning can pervert into a process just to legitimate a certain alternative. An example can be that the planning authority has created an alternative that fulfils their goals, but when the criticisms of this alternative arise, the search for other alternatives stops. The whole planning process pervert into a defence process for the first and only alternative and express that the planning authority has decided not to learn.

*Learning on strategic level* is a kind of change of paradigm including new values, norms and ends. In this situation, the actors not only evaluate the different alternatives to reach the goal, but they evaluate different goals. Planning in this situation means both a process of making sense and making action. Bukve (1991) calls this a culture revolution that can take place both in organisations and communities. Learning on this level can also pervert. The situation can become anarchy, if the communication between the actors brakes down, the interpretations are in conflict and the engagement disappears. Learning on strategic level means that we will be back in learning on tactical and operative, but now within a new kind of paradigm. Such learning happens rarely. If we what fundamental changes, we most likely need learning on strategic level, i.e. a kind of deep learning of new values. If the process does not, the action must likely turn back to old habits after a while.



In we want people in local communities to take part in development; we need a planning and monitoring process that can promote learning on all levels. To set up this system of meta learning, is the main issue fore the planning and *learning on the institutional level*.

#### *Monitoring, reporting and work book 5 and 6*

In order to deal with some of the problems in learning from action, we set up open evaluating workshops as public hearings where the whole community is to be invited. These workshops have to give room for pragmatic, ethical and moral discourse. The work groups are to use brain-storm in order to point out the positives and negatives in the process of implementing and on the results. On this basis they shall argue in plenary what to change in the institutional, strategic, tactical and operative planning, and whom to do it and how to do it. (Work book 5: Creative process and result evaluation).

In every phase of the planning and development process our method gives possibilities to have evaluating workshops as assembly meetings to evaluate the plan as documents. (Work book 6: Creative document evaluation). The work groups in these meetings are to use brain-storm in order to point out the positives and negatives in the documents, and come forward with new solutions to the discussion in the plenary.

Nevertheless, it is essential that the monitoring process, in addition to measuring measurable results, also set the stage for discourses at the other discourses and levels in the planning and development work, i.e. institutional, strategic, tactic and operative level. We have learned that reporting must be a democratic process with critical questions, but the process often becomes a cover up ritual for undone and unsuccessful activities. Accountability is a prerequisite for learning, but there is often a lack of delivered responsibility in the organisations and between the organisations to keep the leaders accountable for the outcome.

## **Conclusion**

One of the main observations from studying regional planning and development, is that the model outlined above, is a sound concept in order to stimulate local, regional and organisational development. However, and in accordance with the theoretical basis for the model, all the variables in the model have to be active, if the process shall produce empowerment. Lack of external support and lack of internal mobilisation, organisation and action can each give an incomplete process. The planning has to simulate all the variables, and stimulate most the weakest of them. In addition, we have learned that the *order of*

stimulating the variables does not matter. To stimulate the weakest variable at any time is always the most successful approach in order to create empowerment.

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