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What can we learn from previous attempts at Master Planning in Norwegian Rural Municipalities?

Abstract

This article provides an account of Norwegian master planning in rural municipalities and discusses some of the experiences gained in relation to prevailing and future planning. Examinations of master planning in five rural municipalities conclude – contrary to criticism raised – that such planning was useful for local political practice and development and introduced a long-term strategic element into the thinking of these municipalities. The master plans seem to have balanced broad co-ordination with manageability and the need for both control and flexibility. The municipalities played a leading role in the planning work, and even if cooperation with private actors was limited the plans satisfied private interests. Further examination of these processes indicates that, given current trends, the recognition and adaptation of such experiences for future planning systems and practice would be very useful.

Key words

Norway, 1965 Building Act; 1985 Planning and Building Act, Master plans, rural municipalities

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Introduction

The Building Act of 1965 extended Norwegian planning practice establishing the basic and prevailing planning principles. The Act made master planning compulsory in all municipalities throughout the country. Previous to this some towns had voluntarily worked on master plans in cooperation with their surrounding municipalities, and some rural municipalities had local plans for their municipal centres. Master planning thus became a tool for the promotion of economic growth, welfare and the implementation of regional policy. In 1985, the Parliament approved a new Planning and Building Act. A revision to this Act has recently been approved and will probably become operative in 2009.

Most rural municipalities, with only a few exceptions, embarked upon master planning in accordance with the Building Act in years after 1965 under the supervision and assistance of the Ministry and regional authorities (KAD, 1972: 124).

Criticism against such planning simultaneously and in the following years, created some negative interpretations, which may have overshadowed the positive effects of it (Langdalen, 1991). This then is the background to the evaluation of the quality and relevance of early planning practice and the discussion of some of the aspects of prevailing and future planning in the light of these experiences.

A country's planning system is generally rooted in its particular historical, legal, and physical conditions (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 10) and is developed in relation to numerous international influences – Norway adheres to this general reflection. Based on an analysis of an EU's survey of planning systems and policies in European countries (Nadin *et al.*, 1997), focusing on legal and administrative systems, Newman and Thornley have designated the Nordic countries as representing a "family" of planning systems which are rather different from the rest of Europe (Newman and Thornley, 1996: 34). The differences are clearest with respect to the British system, where legally binding plans are not used, but are less distinct from the rest of Western Europe. Further analysis might indicate that the Norwegian planning system and practice, in some respects, also differ from the other Nordic countries.

The article initially draws out a number of the distinctive features of Norway which have influenced planning in this country. It then goes on to describe the professional and political background to the notion of extended planning, while summarizing the main arguments of the criticisms to it. The following section presents the results of an investigation on early master planning in five rural municipalities (Fiskaa, 2002). Thereafter, the article describes, in brief, subsequent political changes as well as changes in planning system practice. The concluding section summarizes the experiences gained and discusses three issues relevant to the revision of the Planning and Building Act: 1) The ambitions in respect of co-ordination, 2) Flexibility and the need for control, and 3) The public role in planning.

Some distinctive features of Norway

Nordic people share many values and political principles, such as ideas about welfare, democracy, and governance (Böhme, 2002: 50). They engage in close political and cultural cooperation, for example through *Nordisk ministerråd* (Nordic Council of Ministers), although Norway and Iceland are not members of the EU. The languages of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden retain a close resemblance. An indication of this is that most Icelanders can understand all three languages while many Finns are able to grasp Swedish and or Norwegian.

Only Denmark has a population density equivalent to most European countries, at about 120 inhabitants per km². Iceland has three inhabitants per km² and the others 14 – 20, Norway having the lowest. The density differs from south to north. Some districts in the southern parts of Finland, Norway, and Sweden have about the same density as Denmark, and the northern

parts similar to Iceland. For example the northernmost Norwegian county, Finnmark, has an area slightly larger than Denmark, and has about 70 000 inhabitants compared with 5.3 million in Denmark. In 1960, only one third of Norwegians lived in towns and more than 40 % lived outside “villages”.

The geographical and topographical characteristics of Norway include a long coastline – more than 20 000 km – and a hilly and mountainous landscape except for in the lowland areas in the southeast. This has historically influenced settlement and communications. Dependence on fisheries and agriculture forced most people live in small settlements along the coast and in the valleys. This has provided the basis for the emergence of strong local identities and the tradition of active local self-governance.

Thus, national policy has been to maintain settlements in all parts of the country (Holt-Jensen, 1997: 136). Norwegian regional policy has then been more ambitious than that of most other countries in the sense that it has a stronger connection to the scattered settlement pattern (Mønnesland, 1994: 21). The Norwegian *distriktpolitikk* – best termed a *policy for the periphery* for the want of a precise English term – was developed during the 1950s and 1960s, was specifically directed towards peripheral and sparsely populated areas and involved special incentives, transfers etc. This policy should be differentiated from the general regional policy implemented across all regions (op. cit.: 16).

In the European context, all Nordic countries have been characterised as decentralised central states. The central state has regional agencies to implement national policy, and at the same time, local self-government has a strong position (Newman and Thornley, 1996: 35). In Norway, that sees a history of 170 years of a significant degree of municipal autonomy (Naustdalslid and Tombre, 1997: 99). As local self-government is a traditional cornerstone of Nordic democracy, attention is placed on local planning, which often leads to tensions between State-level and local interests. With the exception of Denmark, national spatial planning exists to only a minimum degree. Even regional spatial planning does not have a strong tradition (Böhme, 2002: 46; Hall, 1991: 256). Nevertheless, one must understand the Norwegian Building Act of 1965 as a governmental instrument for societal modernisation. In interaction with several other instruments, such as regional policy, municipal and regional planning aimed to stimulate and regulate economic growth and welfare across all parts of the country.

Planning and the state’s intentions

The 1924 Building Act allowed rural municipalities to adopt plans for their own built up areas. This “*byplan*” (town plan) was the only type of plan used and was a legally binding physical plan in respect of the urban form. The Building Act of 1965 updated previous legislation making planning compulsory also in rural municipalities.

Through implementation of the 1965 Act the professional and political dimensions of Norwegian planning were integrated. The professional dimension had its origin in previous attempts at town planning, and developed through the process of limited comprehensive planning in some urban areas from the inter-war period onwards and up to the comprehensive planning era defined in the 1965 Act. Ideas relating to garden cities, neighbourhood units, landscaping and functionalism were, during this period, internalised gradually within the body of national planning ideals. In the rebuilding of Northern Norway after World War II comprehensive planning and regional thinking outside city areas were introduced for the first time. Here we can see the architectural and engineering planning tradition clearly being integrated with newer concepts in economics.

The tradition of economic planning also goes back to the inter-war period, partly based on Keynes’ theories (Thomassen, 1997). Keynesian ideas and methods were implemented in Government programmes, national budgets, economic planning from the immediate post-war

years, and in regional policy from about 1960 onwards. Physical planning with its roots at the local level thus met economic planning with its origins on the national level.

The political dimension was characterised by the social democratic ideology and evolving ambitions in respect of the development of the welfare state, which gave a stronger basis to planning as a political instrument for stimulating and controlling development and building, especially after World War II (op. cit.).

After the initially huge task of national reconstruction after the war, political consensus emerged over the objectives of developing public welfare and prosperity across all parts of the country. In this regard various programmes and organisations were set up to stimulate local trade and industry. From the 1960s onwards special regional policy funding mechanisms, such as the DUF (Fund for peripheral development) and SIVA (Association for industrial estates) - based on the UK model of industrial estates - emerged as important instruments in this regard. In addition, the expansion of education, healthcare and other welfare arrangements had a significant effect on employment and settlement in rural areas. Municipal mergers during the 1960s were usually the result of the land shortages in respect of building in towns and of the need for more efficient rural municipalities to handle new tasks. The Building Act of 1965 itself can thus be seen as an integral part of this package of instruments.

During the period running from the appointment of a law committee in 1954 to the implementation of the Act in 1966 planning ambitions only increased. From a position considering only the need for some minor changes and questions over whether the Act should apply to rural municipalities, the final result was to become far more ambitious, with a primary purpose of controlling building and land use, but also stimulating economic life and welfare policy.

The Act set out the requirements for a hierarchical planning system of regional plans for two or more municipalities and master plans (*generalplan*) for each municipality. Building should be according to legally binding local plans (*reguleringsplan* – functionally similar to the “town plan”). Functional zoning of land use was formalised as a planning principle, and planning was intended to be directed by elected political bodies who would decide on plans.

The aims of the master plans and regional plans were the exploitation of land and the “*solution of questions concerning construction and arrangements for meeting public needs.*” (Building Act §§ 18 and 20, translated by the author), which indicates that they would facilitate improvements across various fields and not be limited to physical issues. A by-law could give the master plan a limited legally binding nature by prohibiting building in certain areas.

Implementation of the Act saw physical and economic planning tied together both content-wise and institutionally. A master plan *ought* to include a land use plan and an economic plan. In each county, a County Governor’s Planning Department was established to assist the municipalities, co-ordinated with the local administration of the DUF. The intention here was to co-ordinate physical and economic planning as a tool for regional policy implementation. Of the Nordic countries as a whole, Norway had at that time the most integrated solution in terms of economic spatial and physical planning (Lemberg, 1981: 68). The plans sought to provide an overview of land and resource use, employment, trade and industrial and public investment. Planning thus extended its role from traditional physical planning towards a more all encompassing notion of comprehensive social planning.

The Ministry also initiated regional planning. Only a limited number of regions however installed a complete planning process mostly because of the lack of an authoritative body at the regional level (op. cit.: 39), and in 1973, a County Plan replaced the Regional Plan.

Criticisms of master planning emerge

Criticism of master planning, which had arisen, in part, from professional groups with little experience in planning (Langdalen, 1991: 8), was not consistent and was as much an outburst against the dominant policy and planning *as an instrument*, as against the *real content* of the plans. Protest was basically directed to issues with which planning did not deal, namely, the disputable and unfortunate consequences of the policy for growth and prosperity, and was also about the ideas within and behind the plans, the methods in modernistic planning, the “value-neutral” expert role, planning as a political instrument and the planning process as a whole (Ellefsen, 1993: 451).

A fundamental view here was that master planning was for building and growth within towns, municipal centres and large settlements only. Planning could not solve the real problems of rural areas, namely, the need for employment and economic development and the desire to live in a dispersed manner throughout the municipality. As such, the most important task was not land use planning (Skjeggedal, 1988: 18). In this interpretation, one can see an opposition to the idea of “decentralised centralisation”, which was, in part, a strategic element in the state’s policies for stabilising local settlements, and a fundamental rejection of land use planning.

Some critics insisted on a more comprehensive approach to sectoral planning in respect of the development of the social systems of local communities (Thuen and Wadel, 1978). Related to simultaneous international discussions about rational planning (Banfield, 1959) and ‘muddling through’ (Lindblom, 1959) other critics claimed that master planning was too comprehensive, scientific and complicated, carried out by experts, and thus more or less an undemocratic “game” between planners and leading politicians. Demands for public participation arose during the 1970s (Fiskaa, 2005).

Another type of criticism dealt with consequences of this type of approach for the environment. Such criticisms were undoubtedly influenced by international discussion. Increasing concerns were raised in respect of the protection of agricultural land based on arguments for local employment, and attention to the production of food nationally and globally. Parallel to this, interest in the preservation of landscapes, nature areas, cultural heritage monuments, old houses and building areas was also increasing.

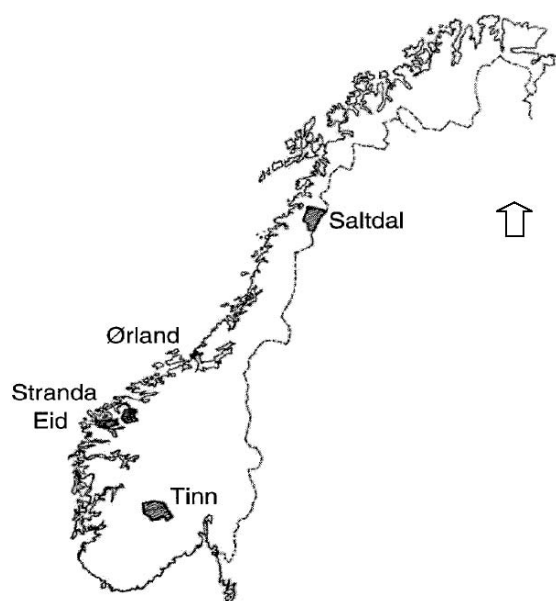
According to some critics, instrumental rationalism led to static ‘blueprint’ plans based on determined goals instead of a planning process where goals are generated and changed in accordance with possibilities and people’s choices (Brox, 1971). Contrary to this, an architectural criticism of planning for using schematic zoning principles, neglecting architectural form and landscaping, and creating “loss of space” with monotonous and wide spread centres and built up areas without any character of place (Norberg-Schulz, 1980) may be seen as a demand for more deterministic plans.

Five examples of master planning

Nic Stabell’s consultancy office prepared the five master plans examined here in cooperation with the municipalities and Økoplan A/S. As Stabell was also a teacher in planning at the Norwegian Technical University and many of his students went into planning jobs when qualified, one can anticipate that his plans will likely be representative for planning in many municipalities. The various planning materials required were readily available for study as Stabell had them systematized for archiving.

The criteria for the choice of municipalities were as follows: 1) They should be rural municipalities. 2) The municipalities ought to have a population which was fairly typical for Norwegian rural municipalities, namely, around 3 – 10 000 inhabitants. 3) The plans ought to include analysis, land use plans, and economic planning.

Figure 1. The five municipalities examined each had some specific and some particular features. Four had between 4300 and 5300 inhabitants around 1970, a level quite common for Norwegian municipalities, a diverse economic life, and stable or increasing population. Tinn had about 8000 inhabitants and a declining population. All municipalities had a main centre with more than 1000 inhabitants and several smaller villages placed around the municipality. (“Village” here means the dense parts in a more or less dispersed settlement pattern.) All were in a state of transition in terms of trade and industry and undergoing development of their welfare structure. There was a need for building land and economic resources for both public and private ventures



In Eid municipality, situated at the head of a fjord on the western coast, most people lived in the main centre called Nordfjordeid and in some smaller villages near the fjord. Economic life was based on agriculture and some fisheries, from which different industries and firms have developed.

Saltdal, in the middle of Nordland County, has most settlement in the main valley, where both the main road and railway run. In addition to traditional agriculture, some larger industries established in the 1960s were important for employment and economic life.

Stranda has most settlements along and near a long fjord. Communications depend, in part, on ferries. A diverse trade and industrial structure based mainly on local resources represented more than half of the total employment in 1970.

Tinn is located in the hilly inland area of Southern Norway. Most people live in the main centre Rjukan and the rest in small villages or solitary settlements. Economic life was largely dependent on one large company, *Norsk Hydro*, which was in a process of relocating to other sites. This caused problems, for which the master planning process was supposed to contribute in respect of finding solutions.

In Ørland, situated near the coast in the middle of Norway, much of the available area is utilised as agricultural land. Most people live in the main centre, Brekstad, with the rest either in a number of small villages or scattered across the agrarian landscape. In addition to locally based trade and industry, the Norwegian Air Force pursues significant activities here.

Table 1. Some facts about the five municipalities and the plans examined

The municipalities	Eid	Saltdal	Stranda	Tinn	Ørland
Area km ²	347	2.213	846	2.063	79
Population 1970	4.530	4.320	4.800	8.300	5.250
Employment 1970 - primary ind.	27 %	16 %	15 %	9 %	22 %
- secondary ind.	33 %	32 %	59 %	53 %	18 %
- services	39 %	52 %	26 %	38 %	60 %
The plans					
Plan report completed	1973	1973	1975	1976	1974
Plan period	1973-84	1973-84	1975-86	1973-80	1972-83
Regional planning	no	ongoing	no	ongoing	approved

Why master planning?

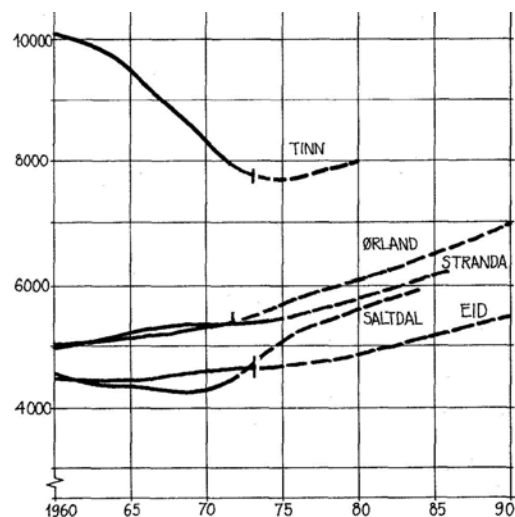
In the light of the tradition of local self-governance, the question remains whether the ambitions of the rural municipalities in respect of compulsory planning corresponded to the plans of the State or not. Norwegian municipalities were clearly in the mood for change given ongoing general trends and the nature of governmental policy at the time. Rearrangements and rationalisation in agriculture, trade and industry presented new challenges and the development of welfare arrangements generated new responsibilities for the municipalities. An increasing population demanded better homes, services etc., which, ultimately, necessitated a shift towards long term planning.

All the municipalities examined, initiated the planning themselves in the years immediately after 1965, but did not make final decisions on their plans until after about ten years later. In Tinn this was done even later when a revised plan was finalised. This was a typical situation for Norwegian municipalities and indicates that local politicians realised the need for planning, but hesitated because they wanted flexibility and, did not want to be bound to an approved plan (Hall, 1991: 255).

Comprehensive physical-economic economic planning

Though some of the municipalities initially wanted land use plans just for the urban settlements and building tasks, they saw after a while the advantage of having a comprehensive plan for the whole municipality as a tool for local development. Through the integration of physical and economic planning local resources, settlement, and the relationship between economic life, employment and population were analysed as the basis for plans. Thus, the plans dealt with a broad spectrum of issues. Based on the analysis, the plans defined the needs for housing, public and private service etc., and made proposals in respect of various actions and land use issues, all linked together with an economic plan. Land use was described by large meshed plans encompassing the total area of the municipality and more detailed, informal “zoning plans” for the villages and building areas, which had the function of providing guidelines for legally binding detailed local plans (*reguleringsplaner*).

Figure 2. The municipalities retained the ambition of future growth. Even in Tinn the aim was to turn the population decrease into an increase. The goals for trade and industry and population growth reflect an optimistic belief in the future and in the state's regional policy. Nevertheless, the plans partly stated that increasing the number of inhabitants was not a goal in itself, but rather a means to attain the higher goal of providing good living conditions for all inhabitants



Need for economic control

The municipalities at this time were also undergoing a period of economic difficulty, caused, in part, by a previous lack of planning. This raised the need for stronger economic control in order to cope with public tasks such as infrastructural investments in housing and industrial

premises, the construction of public institutions, and the necessary working capital in order to expand the range of, and access to, public services. The instruments used included a long term budget based on calculated tax revenues, derived from the estimated levels of employment and population, and other income. This was combined with an action plan, drawn up in accordance with the land use plans and the various proposals emanating from them. The municipalities also hoped here for financial support in light of the state's ambitious designs in respect of regional policy.

A diverse settlement pattern

New settlements were desired in several parts of the municipality, partly as a strategy for maintaining farming activity in accordance with traditional settlement, culture, and economic patterns. The plans proposed different strategies such as minimizing construction on agricultural land, possibilities in respect of the cultivation of new land, innovations in agricultural production, and increased forestry and tourism. An additional key factor here was the desire to maintain local schools and daily service institutions for the population already living in the area, which required greater attention to the needs of inhabitants in small villages. This was however clearly contradictory to the desire to strengthening the main centres and to develop a wide range of services there. In most cases, a building pattern which was, in effect, a compromise between the two considerations was chosen. The plans thus seemed to oppose the State's strategy for "decentralised centralisation" as they also proposed development in rather small local communities, contrary to what some critics had claimed.

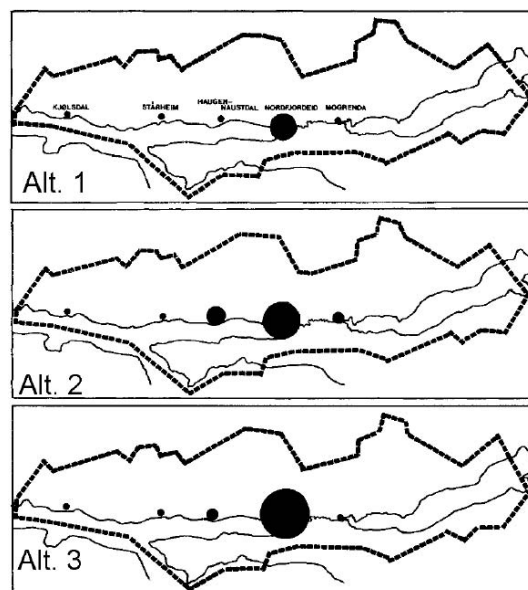


Figure 3. Alternative settlement patterns were discussed which were similar to the example of Eid, illustrated in the figure.

Alternative 1 – the existing situation and most probable development without planned action.

Alternative 2 – a concentration in the main centre and neighbouring villages.

Alternative 3 - growth concentrated in the main centre.

Alternative 2 was a compromise between contradictory considerations and was the most common proposal (Masterplan Eid: 70)

Emerging focus on environmental protection

The thorough analysis of natural resources undertaken combined with the design of the plans document a rising interest in protecting agricultural land, nature, and the landscape more generally. This was based on rising interest in food production and local employment, the value of *flora* and *fauna*, landscape aesthetic arguments, and the values attached to the tourist industry and outdoor life in general. Conservation interests determined to a large degree which areas were chosen for building.

Questions raised over nature conservation and agriculture however, were often contradictory. For example, in Tinn farmers feared that protection would hinder cabin construction, tourism, and traditional uses of outlying fields.

Culture and building conservation also became an increasingly conspicuous issue. In addition to the traditional historical and cultural heritage issue, the preservation of buildings also became important as did old building settings where the individual houses did not themselves have a high preservation value. Increasing interest in the past may perhaps be seen as a reaction to modernism. Within the context of planning and architecture, thinking diverged from a rationalist towards an increasingly humanistic or cultural trajectory (Choay, 1969; Linn, 1974).

The ideal of dense “villages”

Architectural criticism of the plans as schematic and without thought to architectural form has to be modified. Efforts were made to create liveable and pleasant environments. The municipal centres had grown over a long period, often without any plans, but from the late 1930s plans began to guide the growth. Regarding the smaller villages there were no formal land use plans at all. The new zoning plans show an ideal of more densely organised villages than had been the tradition in Norway, mostly based on technical and economic arguments and the protection of agricultural land. In addition, architectural arguments of a more agreeable outdoor environment were emphasised.

In a few cases, housing areas were located some distance away from the centre as a compromise between the ideal of dense villages and the desire to protect agriculture land and nature areas. As for industry, an argument existed for more distant location, considering among other things pollution, noise, traffic safety, and building areas with minor conflicts.

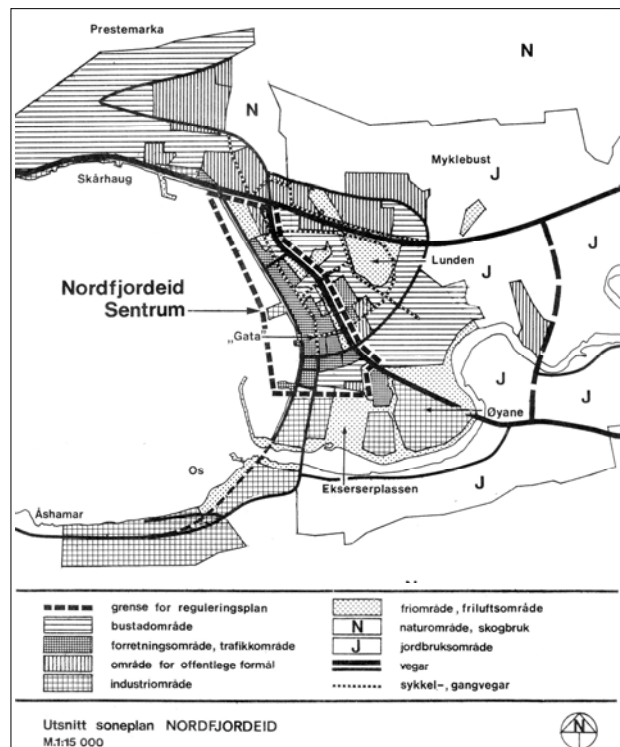


Figure 4. The plan for Nordfjordeid in Eid municipality (above) illustrates the principle of concentrating building within and close to the already built up areas. (Master plan Eid: 131)

The plans showed zoning for residential, industrial, central business areas, roads etc. However, zoning was not complete, even as a planning ideal – mixed-use was desired. Effective land use and short distances should connect the dwellings to other functions, reduce car transport, and provide for safer traffic solutions. A mix of dwellings, shops, restaurants, workplaces, and cultural institutions would give more life to the centre. This can be interpreted as the architectural ideal of a dense townscape equivalent to what one may find in old wooden settlements in Norway or medieval towns in other places in Europe, distinctly demarcated from the natural landscape (Ellefsen, 1986: 33). Green areas, landscaping and mostly individual houses around a centre also remind us of the garden city idea (op. cit.: 13).

The planning had synoptic-rationalistic ambitions

One can perceive synoptic-rationalistic ambitions in relating the plans to larger geographical areas and seeing a great number of issues in relation to each other, and in the goal orientation as well as systematic methods used. The plans orientated the municipality towards anticipated development in the region and in the county. Ørland was included in a regional plan prepared and approved at the same time. Derived from analysis undertaken, goals were developed for the whole municipality, for the local areas, and for several policy areas. Comprehensive plans in respect of trade and industry, population, housing, public services etc., were based on these goals.

By use of economic methods, potential developments in trade, industry, population and economics could be identified and the magnitude of the various needs and tasks revealed. In the evaluation and choice of alternative development patterns an analysis of commodity trades was used. In addition judgements and political considerations were also made. Land use plans were based on a systematic analysis of existing land use and qualities, and in some cases on an examination of local climate. Identifying conflicting interests, especially in relation to agriculture, was important when choosing the building sites.

The question as to whether planning was too ambitious cannot however be clearly answered. Some discussions in Saltdal about what tasks planning should include indicates an understanding that the ambitions were too high and the planning did not concentrate on the most important issues in the municipality. In the other municipalities, there seemed to be satisfaction and the conducting of extensive analyses was seen as necessary to create a solid basis to define goals and prepare long-term plans. Though, in Tinn efforts to establish new workplaces trumped the interest in master planning for a while.

It is understandable that the economic methods used were criticised for being too “scientific” and complicated. The projection of different needs based on desired growth in employment and population was, however, easier to understand. It should be underlined however that the purpose was not to make a fixed plan but to prepare for actions when and if the desired development became a reality. Referring to contemporary international discussions about planning’s rationality and comprehensiveness (Faludi, 1973) it should be noted that incremental planning is actually an *ad-hoc* activity, which one generally aims to avoid through a goal and means oriented planning (Ellefsen, 1985: 5).

Active authorities but limited public participation

Though consultants carried out most of the planning work, political and administrative boards were active participants in the planning process. The municipalities were also in charge of the detailed planning and implementation. A planning committee, which usually had leading politicians as members, was also active. In some cases, the municipal council discussed basic issues during the process. The municipal engineer was usually responsible for parts of the planning work, and the chief officer often handled economic issues. The agriculture authorities’ contribution to the analysis of land use and other authorities in the municipality

and on a higher administrative level was decisive for the design of the plan. Cooperation with the County Governors' planning department, the State's road authorities and the regional planning office, was also important. In some cases disagreements emerged over solutions, not between actors or bodies in the municipality as they most often modified their views during the process, but between the municipality and the county or the State's sector authorities.

Private actors were involved to a lesser degree in the planning, apart from some contact with business leaders in discussions about future needs of trade and industry as well as landowners in discussions about land use plans. Although municipalities cooperated with local newspapers to inform the public about the planning issues arising, ordinary people were more concerned about specific projects and local plans. As few other initiatives for a broader participation in the planning were taken, criticism of the lack of democracy may to some extent be correct.

Flexible plans indicate strategic thinking

The intention was not, as noted previously, to have fixed plans, but rather to define the needs in respect of leading the development in the desired direction, and to prepare for an anticipated development. The land use plans, which were not legally binding, were designed to guide detailed plans and construction if and when it might take place. Therefore, the master plans need to be characterised mainly as strategic plans (Mastop and Faludi, 1997: 819; Saglie, 2000: 84).

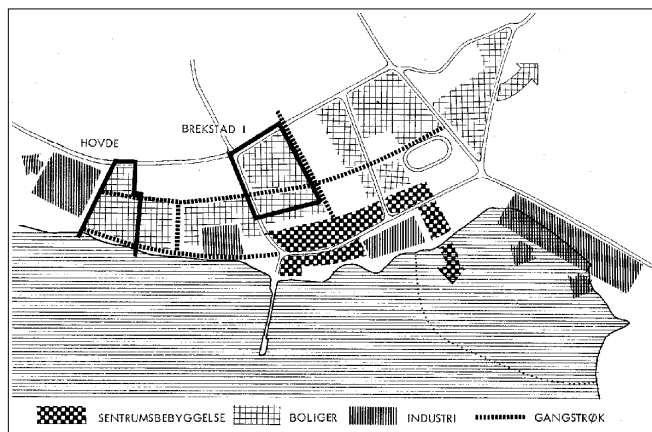


Figure 5. A sketch for the main centre of Brekstad in Ørland shows strategic thinking by pointing out directions for further development

The strategic thinking was obvious concerning the allocation of building land. Particularly in the case of industrial development larger areas than the previously calculated requirement were planned. This can be explained by belief in the State's regional policy and competition between municipalities in attracting industry. The municipalities wanted to retain a certain level of flexibility to offer potential firms alternative sites of different size and location, and to have future reserves of buildable land. For other purposes, the plans described short-term development in situations where actions were quite close in time. In some cases, there were discussions and illustrations of development beyond the plan period. The plans emphasised the need for revision according to changes in needs and conditions. By presenting tasks, which were meant to be activated in the coming years and also visions and options for some remote future, the plans included elements of both project planning and strategic planning. Thus, one can characterise the plans as either mixed-scanning (Etzioni, 1967) or bifocal (Jensen, 1975).

The plans were useful for a long period

None of the five municipalities had a revised plan approved before 1989, which indicates that the first plans fulfilled their function as guidance for local politics and detailed plans even beyond the intended plan period. The municipalities followed up their master plans with some adjustments in accordance with changing circumstances over the years. The most important here was lower population growth than expected, except in Eid. This occurred for reasons hardly foreseeable when the plans were prepared – industries did not develop as suggested, more women entered employment and birth rates declined radically. Because of the State's policy, agriculture was stable for a few years, but thereafter the number of farmers declined due to rationalisation. The number of employees in public service employment increased at a higher rate than was anticipated because of increasing statutory municipal service provision and rising administration costs. Faster growth than expected in the private service industry also occurred reflecting increased levels of prosperity in general.

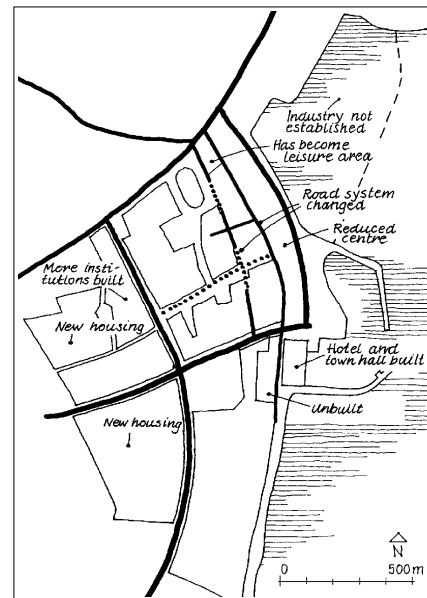


Figure 6. The changes (year 2000) from original plans concerning Brekstad in Ørland are rather minor except for a large industrial area that has not yet been prepared and developed. A need has also arisen for new dwelling areas and for new institutions. These are not fully in accordance with the sketch for the future development shown in figure 5

Most land use plans have been implemented with only minor changes and additions, determined by revised or new local plans, which is in accordance with findings in other municipalities (Saglie, 2000: 76). Despite a slower population increase, the small communities have also retained a reasonable proportion of the population. However, fewer dwellings have been built due to the aforementioned population trend, and thus in most cases, the planned areas have been sufficient up until relatively recently. Many industrial sites are not yet utilised and some centre and business areas remain undeveloped. In many cases, the plans for industrial areas have been maintained for future usage because areas for potential future development are still demanded. Not all planned new roads were constructed while in some places new plans were made or previous plans amended.

New Planning and Building Act of 1985

Throughout the 1970s master planning became an ordinary task in most Norwegian municipalities and commonly accepted as necessary to safeguard public interests (Naustdalslid and Tombre, 1997: 102). Emphasis changed in the direction of less

comprehensive plans. More focus was set on the conservation of the natural and built environment and public participation (Fiskaa, 2005). Importantly the Ministry of Environment, established in 1972, acquired responsibility for planning, while another ministry retained responsibility for the building part of the Act. We will come back to this issue in the final section.

From around 1980, most European countries turned towards deregulation, privatisation, and property-led planning (Newman and Thornley, 1996: 245 ff). Long term planning became largely discredited. The focus turned to growth in economic life and project development (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 10). New relationships between planning and the market were crucial elements in the development of planning (Davies, 1998: 150).

The neoliberal paradigm reached Norway too, which affected planning practice in the following years. Market tendency led to concentration on short-term solutions (Lorange and Myhre, 1991: 164) while interest in spatial planning weakened (Langdalen, 1991: 9). In the preparation of the Planning and Building Act, passed in 1985, different views evolved about what a master plan should include. On the one hand, the Ministry of Environment had advised municipalities to have less comprehensive plans while on the other, had proposed that they should embrace a broader range of issues.

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s →
POLITICS	Economic growth Building Regional policy Social democracy Consensus	Economic growth Environmental protection Regional policy Local communities Disagreement	Economic growth Environmental protection Local communities Neo-liberalism Disagreement	Sustainability Architecture/urban design Liberalism Disagreement
PLANNING	Rational-comprehensive Master planning in cities Public control Plan-led development	Rational-comprehensive + incremental Master planning in rural areas Public control	Incremental Private local plans Property-led development Public participation Less emphasis on master planning	Incremental + communicative Private local plans Property-led development Public-private cooperation

Figure 7. Main characteristics in the development in politics and planning in Norway over a period

The result was a master plan, which in addition to physical and economic issues would include social and cultural issues, and from 1997 also aesthetic development. The Act introduced Municipality Planning as a term, which indicated ambitions in respect of comprehensive social planning beyond the previous master plan concept. The plan should include both a social part and a land use plan, and should consist of a long-term section, describing municipal objectives, guidelines for different sectors, the land use plan itself, and a short-term section, which is a co-ordinated action programme. As parts of the total plan, one can use sector plans, and land use plans for geographically limited areas, equivalent to the previous instrument of informal “zoning plans”.

Discussions were also entered into over the regulatory aspect of land use plans. An initially proposed principle of inversion – implying that building should be prohibited unless the master plan gave permission – was too radical and controversial for Norwegian tastes. As a modification, the Parliament introduced the existing system of legally binding land use master plans and geographical limited land use plans. An additional type of legally binding detailed plan, the building plan, was also introduced.

In this way, the Planning and Building Act extended the ambitions of public planning and control, which was contradictory to the dominant policies, turning away from publicly supervised planning in the same period. An explanation for this discrepancy is not obvious.

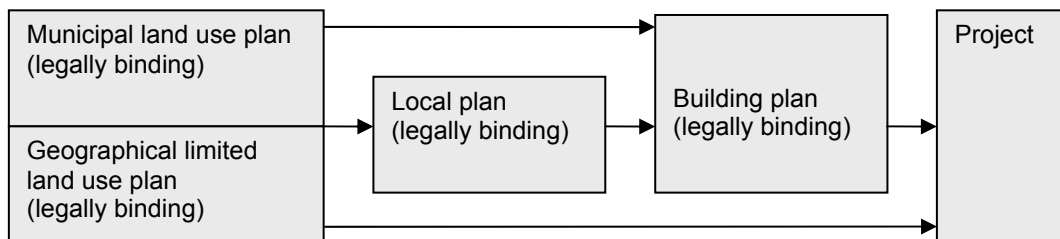


Figure 8. Types of municipal land use plans according to the Planning and Building Act of 1985

During the late 1980s and the 1990s, many rural municipalities gave priority to project planning over long-term master planning. At least in towns, private developers initiate and work out most local plans. Systems of negotiation, partnerships, and development agreements between private actors and the municipality (planning obligations) have evolved. Closer relationships between property developers and the public authorities may be the reason for less attention being paid to public interests and participation in practical planning over the years (Fiskaa, 2005).

In recent years, the undesirable consequences of short-term perspectives and project orientation seem, for instance in Great Britain, to have led to a revitalisation of physical and land use planning (Healey, 1998; Davies, 1998: 150; Albrechts, 2004; Albrechts, 2006). This involves the recovery of a proactive, strategic, place-focused approach, which was dominant in planning in the 1950s and 1960s, linked to the later ideas of collaboration and partnership (Vigar *et al.*, 2000: 278). Strategic spatial planning is again being undertaken in Europe (Healey, 2004: 45).

Increasing concern seems to be being placed on the qualities of places. The Ministry of Environment has for example initiated a nationwide project for bettering the environmental qualities of towns and villages (MD, 2002). The principles of sustainability affect politics and are a main objective in the discussions about another revision of the Norwegian Planning Act (MD, 2001; MD, 2003, MD, 2008).

Discussion and conclusions

The question then is, considering recent tendencies, whether experiences gained from the early Norwegian master planning period are worth recognising and revising in respect of future planning. The first generation of master plans was undoubtedly a useful instrument for guiding development in the municipalities examined, and probably in others as well. All in all, the plans seem in retrospect to have balanced the needs for co-ordination with manageability. They balanced the wishes of certainty and control versus flexibility, and they also seem to have satisfied private interests even if private actors' involvement in the planning was limited. In the following section, these issues are briefly discussed in relation to recent tendencies and in relation to the revision of The Planning and Building Act.

1 Are the ambitions for co-ordination realistic?

Behind the recent proposal for a new Act a need for extended co-ordination between different parties and public bodies, both horizontally and vertically between sectors and political levels, is underlined (MD, 2001, MD, 2008). Lack of co-ordination between state sector bodies is the most persistent problem.

The desire to improve policy coordination means a further extension of the ambitions of comprehensive planning. Pushed to extremes it means a municipal plan would embrace all local political questions. However, such comprehensive ambition is difficult to fulfil (Holsen *et al.*, 1998). Remembering Wildavsky's question "If planning is everything, maybe it's

nothing” (Wildavsky, 1973), it is opportune to ask if Norwegian planning ambitions are realistic or not.

The proposed answer is a strong request to all affected public bodies to participate in planning work, frequent production of national reports and guidelines for planning and some changed rules for planning processes and plan types. When planning has not given the desired results, one must try harder in the same manner (Wildavsky, 1973: 139).

One can distinguish mechanisms for co-ordination in five categories – mutual adjustment, direct supervision, standardization of the work process, standardization of outputs, and standardization of skills (Mintzberg, 1979). The existing legal means in Norwegian planning is a combination of mutual adjustment and direct supervision (Holsen *et al.*, 1998). Most often planning is based upon mutual adjustment where each party acknowledges the other parties’ interests and views. The main instrument for supervision is the right of counties, neighbouring municipalities, and affected state sector authorities to object to plans. If they do, the Ministry has to take a final decision, which is in itself controversial according to the traditions of local self governance. The Planning and Building Act describes planning procedures. However, as about a hundred sectoral laws also deal with planning, procedures are not standardized. Even road planning, which is partly integrated into the Planning and Building Act, displays some different procedures. As such, the standardizing of outcomes is neither desirable nor possible. Planning skills differ in different public and private organisations participating in a planning process, which may hamper mutual adjustment.

When mutual adjustment is based on sectoral autonomy and their right to object, co-ordination is difficult. Instruction from a higher level is politically acceptable only in questions of major national importance. The municipalities, who have the greatest responsibility for planning, cannot of course instruct bodies at a higher level. The answer should therefore be some kind of state co-ordination. The Ministry of Environment is supposed to have such a role, but for the time being nothing indicates that the Ministry has sufficient political authority to command different sectors. When another Ministry is responsible for building and implementation parts of the Act, co-ordination within the Government is weak. One should consider placing the entire responsibility for the Planning and Building Act in one Ministry as was the case up until 1972, and is the case in many other countries.

According to the revised Act, the master plan shall still consist of a social section, including an action programme, and a land use plan. Though the legal reports underline a need for crossover planning and better co-ordination, they mostly deal with physical planning, which demonstrates that these issues are important and complicated in themselves. In practical planning, most municipalities seem to emphasize land use and economic planning as compared to the social part of the master plan. The master plans have no significant influence on the economic plan (Falleth and Stokke, 2000).

The co-ordination of economic and physical planning which was an important part of the previous period of Norwegian master planning, has weakened across a wide range of European countries (Newman and Thornley, 1996: 250). The issue has been discussed, but the revised Act suggests a continuation of the legal framework for economic planning included in the Municipal Act, which is the superior Act for municipal activities. It is also proposed that inclusion of the economic plan in the master plan’s action programme can be done voluntarily. This might be a way to manage the gap. Nevertheless, it seems contradictory to place the legal basis for the broad scope of planning and the economic plan in separate Acts.

As a response to the question about what ambitions for co-ordination are realistic, one should first of all consider toning them down. Then one should consider cultivating the Planning and Building Act as a law for physical planning and building, and bringing the social part of planning into the Municipal Act, connected to the economic plan. Economic issues derived from physical planning can easily be incorporated into the economic plan.

2 Flexibility and the need for control

Developers request certainty, in order to minimise their risks and maintain flexibility, in order to adjust their projects and their implementation. Neighbours and other affected people demand certainty and look to protect their own interests (Alfasi, 2006: 558). In the present market-oriented society an international trend is emerging to demand more sensitive planning which responds to changes and more flexible forms of practice (Thornley and Rydin, 2002: 9). Certainty requires more or less fixed plans, while flexibility requires that plans are more open. Though differences between European countries remain in respect of their legal systems, they combine these dichotomous and contradictory considerations in practical planning (Nadin *et al.*, 1997: 45).

The question is then, what content and legal status a physical plan should have and what should an appropriate plan system look like? The revised Planning and Building Act include a three-level system of physical plans in the municipalities, which does not represent a radical change to existing plan types – namely municipality land use plan, land use plan for limited areas, and detailed plan, all of them legally binding. One can combine treatment of a detailed plan and a building application.

A two-level system with a direct link between the municipal plan and a detailed project plan, as in some European countries, with the purpose of making the planning and building process more effective has also been proposed (Jensen and Tellefsen, 2005). However, there is a risk that a two-level system of legally binding plans will enlarge the gap between them and require smaller-meshed and more precise master plans. The experience with the detailed and legally binding “byplan” (town plan) for the whole area of cities, which turned out to be complicated and resource-demanding to prepare and operate, was one of the arguments for implementing a master plan for the whole municipality and local plans in 1965. The informal “zoning plan” at the level between was the result of accumulated experience that suggested that a master plan was too large-meshed for building and development areas. As a zoning plan expressed desired land use in more detail, but without being legally binding, it functioned as an illustration people could deal with and as guidance for detailed plans and projects. It thus lent flexibility to the need to implement changes in a formal local plan.

Master land use plans are now legally binding in most European countries, though in some countries they simply provide indicative guidance for lower tier plans (Nadin *et al.*, 1997: 45), for example in the UK and Sweden. The legally binding nature of master land use plans in many Norwegian municipalities has led to the adoption of large-meshed plans, which provide only weak indications of what type of land use is preferred. This type of plan provides for a high degree of flexibility, but on the other hand, it may not provide for the requested certainty, at least not for affected people and probably not for developers either. In addition, such plans may be more short-term and pragmatic (Langdalen, 1991: 13). Some municipalities have tried to provide for this by means of informal vision plans. Such abstract plans are however difficult for non professional people to understand and seem to have little real influence.

Of course, one may argue that a non-legally binding master plan is easy to depart from and thus does not provide for the sufficient level of certainty. As the experience is generally believed to be that these early master plans have been to a great degree successfully implemented, and thus seem to have fulfilled the balance between certainty and flexibility, the former plan system and the principles of non-legally binding master land use plans, including the “zoning plans”, are perhaps well worth reconsidering in the context of the revised Act.

3 The public role in planning

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Norwegian municipalities and the State retained the leading role in planning and in the implementation of plans. Municipalities prepared most of the land use plans, practiced an active land policy in order to control development, to reduce costs and to build the necessary technical infrastructure. State banks offered loans and financial support

for the purchasing of land suitable for building while also financing infrastructure, housing, industrial development and the provision of public services.

The municipalities remain responsible for master planning. Private developers, however, now initiate and most often prepare local plans, which the equivalent Acts in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden do not allow. Today agreements (planning obligations) are the most common instrument for the implementation of plans.

The shift from governing to governance in the present neo-liberal period implies different ways of public/private partnership. Governance includes informal structures and the increasing involvement of private sector interests (Newman and Thornley, 1996: 47). This is what is going on in most parts of the advanced capitalist world (Geddes, 2006: 76), and will continue (Sagalyn, 2007: 17).

Few seem to oppose this although it implies a number of dilemmas about the purpose of planning and the public's role in community development. In the Nordic and in other European countries, planning is traditionally a means for the development of the welfare state (Ornskog and Bradley, 2006: 125). Planning is fundamentally about taking care of those things that market forces do not provide for. Thus, the motives are to provide space and economic growth for what is desirable and to hinder the unfortunate side effects of individual and private actions, which are often contradictory (Vigar *et al.*, 2000: 7 ff). In particular the objectives of sustainable development, underlined in the legal proposal (MD, 2008), seem to challenge the free market model. Though there are many disputes about what is "sustainable", it seems clear that long-term planning and management are necessary to encourage development in a desired direction (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 198).

The question then is how public/private cooperation should actually take place. Governance networks raise potential threats to open and democratic planning processes and political decision-making (Sørensen and Torfing, 2004: 32). If the ties between developers and planning authorities are too close openness may be restrained. One should therefore consider two issues. Firstly, when private developers have the initiative and thus conduct the planning process, public interests, and public participation may be largely neglected (Fiskaa, 2005). Several protests against plans and projects indicate that this is the reality. In order to strengthen the public interest the re-establishment of a public planning monopoly, similar to the other Nordic countries, which of course should not hinder private initiatives and public/private cooperation, should be considered. At minimum consideration should be given to having a planning programme which includes arrangements for public participation as a starting point for all planning processes, similar to the Finnish system.

Secondly, a concern emerges as to whether the practice of private/public agreements may be crucial in safeguarding the public interest. Although, the law states that the parties must not sign an agreement before the approval of a plan, the question remains whether negotiations on an agreement at an early stage may lead to informal decisions on plans and thus short-circuit the planning process (*op. cit.*). A public planning monopoly or a programme for public participation would diminish the risk of this happening.

Concluding remarks

In summary, one must conclude that the first generation of master plans offered a useful tool to Norwegian municipalities. Most criticism was not relevant, either to the actual planning or to the State's intentions. Though the master plan alone could not provide more jobs or inhabitants for the municipality concerned they were nevertheless valuable tools when combined with other means for local political practice and local development and particularly when they induced long-term and compulsory thinking.

The 1985 Act's changes in the formal system and the widening of the ambitions for planning were in some respects contradictory developments to the then rising current of neoliberalism which heralded a period of project-led and short-term planning with, it is argued, numerous undesirable consequences.

The experience of this first generation of master plans should however have been worth re-considering in respect of the revision of the Planning and Building Act. In this light what then would the realistic ambitions for co-ordination be? Additionally, if the Planning and Building Act is to be cultivated as an Act for physical planning what would this entail? Thought should also be given to best to obtain a balance between the need for flexibility and control, questioning also whether the master land use plan *ought* to be legally binding. Finally, discussion should begin on the arrangements and procedures for private/public cooperation.

Strong arguments undoubtedly therefore exist in respect of restoring the former democratic public bodies' leading role in planning in order to strengthen the long-term public interest, though this should of course be adapted to current challenges and circumstances. The need then remains for a new "proactive" kind of planning (Orrskog and Bradley, 2006).

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