



Openings and closures in the environmental planning horizon

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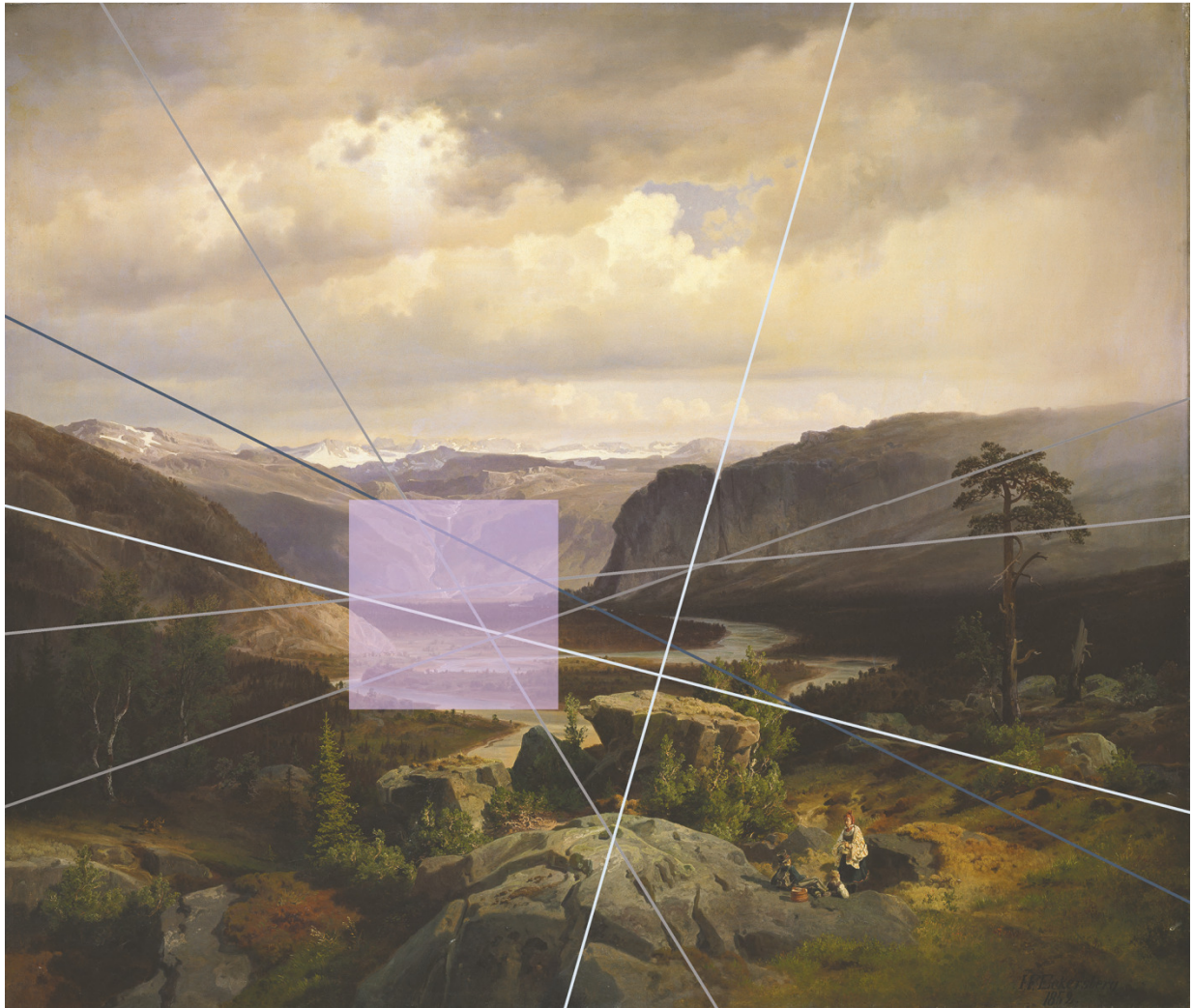
An analysis of the participatory potential
in a nature protection planning process
in Norway

Mikaela Vasström



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PhD Thesis

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Openings and closures in the environmental planning horizon: An analysis of the participatory potential in a nature protection planning process in Norway

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"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea"

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944): *The Little Prince*

Preface and Acknowledgements

The above quote is dedicated in memory to my supervisor Kurt Aagaard Nielsen, professor at Roskilde University, who passed away in April 2012. The inspiration from Kurt's academic work and personal reflexivity has inspired my understanding of human essentiality in sustainability and the quality of critical utopian action research as an insistence to the human and societal hope and potential for change. Thank you.

The process of researching and writing a PhD thesis is a long journey of learning. The learning process is not only related to the epistemological and theoretical reflections and cognitive understanding; it is also a highly experiential learning process. Doing (action) research is a process that can only partly be understood through language. Understanding and learning research involves a physical material experience – or a gestic embodied knowledge development - of being there and doing that. This experiential and embodied dimension of leaning and knowledge is also essential in the research approach described in this thesis and for the contextual endeavor for more sustainable futures. The sustainability challenges must be faced by humans as whole beings with critical reflexivity and utopian horizons.

First of all, I want to direct a great appreciation and thanks to all the citizens, municipal planners, and politicians in the three Setesdal municipalities, who opened for the action researcher's involvement in the communities, and during the formal Heiplanen process. Their engagement enabled me to learn about planning and nature relations from a local non-institutional or life oriented perspective. I would also like to express my gratitude to the project leader of Heiplanen; John Jastrej who opened the planning process to the participation of an action researcher, which developed my understanding of the institutional perspective of planning. I would also like to thank the Heiplanen steering board and Setesdal Regionråd who co-financed the local community processes. I am grateful for their support and interest in the research process. Also thank you to the County Governor representatives and county government representatives for their willingness to talk and reflect with me about the planning purpose during the process. The future creating workshops was facilitated by Kirsten Paaby and Ola Vågan Slåttan from Idébanken, Oslo. I express my gratefulness for your support during my fieldwork and as reflective partners during my PhD writing.

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I hope that this thesis will bring about reflections and discussions about the openings and closures of the environmental planning horizon towards a more deliberative, and in that sense, sustainable nature-society trajectory.

Enjoy the reading.

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Summary

The sustainability challenges faced today influence all aspects of our society. Nature protection is considered one remedy to secure nature from societal development in the overall trajectory to a more sustainable future. This thesis problematizes the participatory potential in nature protection planning in relation to the broader democratic aspects of the sustainability agenda. The research approach was concerned with understanding conflictual tensions emerging in a particular wild reindeer habitat protection process in Southern Norway. Heiplanen was a two-year planning process that attempted to bridge the dichotomous aspects of protection and use with collaborative efforts between local and central authorities. The critical utopian action research approach employed sought to understand this conflict from both the institutional planning perspective and the local community everyday life perspective, and in that process encourage the development of new understandings and practice with the participants. The analytical purpose of the research was not only to understand and contrast the different meaning aspects of knowledge, nature and participation that emerged during the planning process, but also to explore the openings and closures in the particular planning horizon for deliberative democratic participation of different rationalities.

The thesis finds that the conflictual characters in the nature protection planning process were grounded in a complexity of substantial (socio-ecological) and procedural (knowledge-steering) aspects that not only raised different interest disputes, but accentuated the different paradigmatic understandings of knowledge and nature. The descriptive analysis contrasts the sectorized institutional nature protection perspectives with the local community understandings of the area as part of their daily life in past, present, and future facets. The planning horizon, or the possible planning trajectories, was influenced by these different rationalities or paradigmatic understandings of nature, knowledge and the role of participation. The analysis of openings and closures finds that a natural scientific knowledge premise and its instrumentalization as an area map closes potential deliberations of different rationalities. It naturalizes the scientific knowledge as an objective truth, which again serves to neutralize the nature protection discourse as a value-free and fact-based necessity. Meaning perspectives different from the established nature protection discourse were pacified as irrelevant claims, which again served to reproduce the qualifications of the expert actors in the planning arena and disqualify other actors and rationalities. The instrumental planning purpose rationality, directed at establishing wild reindeer habitat boundaries, closed to participatory deliberations of different nature protection perspectives. Boundary setting was in this sense naturalized as the right trajectory of nature protection, and other nature perspectives were disqualified as irrelevant in that process.

Deliberations and collaborative participation were, however, created through the establishment of a broader regional planning arena. The arena gradually generated understanding of the procedural and substantial planning complexity as more than economic or ecological interests. This created legitimacy for deliberating different rationalities on the planning arena as qualified, but disagreeing, meaning

perspectives. The opening of more egalitarian communication made local and regional actors recognize the importance of dialogue for developing improved mutual understandings about the area on a longer term basis, as well as in developing a better and more consensual planning outcome. The planning horizon was, however, not opened to deliberations beyond the formal planning system or the fulfilment of the planning purpose. In this sense, the planning arena did not open for deliberations of the everyday life-orientated perspectives of nature protection generated by the local communities.

This thesis argues that nature protection planning, as an answer to societal sustainability challenges, requires broad public participation to deliberate nature-society trajectories beyond boundary setting, risk assessment, and interest negotiation. Participatory nature protection planning is not only a question of procedural legitimacy, but also a matter of deliberating different nature-society rationalities in order to improve the substantial ground for environmental planning trajectories. Meaningful deliberations across institutional and everyday life oriented rationalities can serve to generate emancipatory knowledge, long term engagement, and responsibility to nature-society relations as a concern of the commons.

The contributions of this thesis are firstly related to the descriptive historical analysis of a particular nature protection process in Norway that contrasts institutional and local community perspectives. Secondly, it contributes with a methodological and analytical conceptualization and approach to understanding and challenging aspects of deliberative democratic openings and closures of a planning horizon. Lastly, the analytical findings contribute to the theoretical and contextual environmental planning field by broadening the understanding of the conflicts and tensions inherent in nature protection, as well as potential new planning orientations for understanding nature protection in relation to community everyday lives.

Resumé

Alle aspekter af dagens samfund påvirkes uundgåeligt af udfordringer og problematikker som er relaterede til bæredygtighed. Naturbeskyttelse anses for at være et muligt svar på en del af denne problematik, idet den sigter mod at skærme naturen fra den generelle samfundsudvikling. Denne afhandling problematiserer graden af muligheder for at kunne deltage i planlægningen af naturbeskyttelse set i sammenhæng med de bredere demokratiske aspekter af bæredygtighedsagendaen. I arbejdet med at indkredse forskningsfeltet var sigtet primært at bidrage til en forståelse af de konfliktfyldte spændinger, der opstod i en planlægningsproces vedrørende beskyttelse af vildrensområder i Sydnorge. Caset, Heiplanen, omfattede en to årig planlægningsproces, som forsøgte at kombinere perspektiver vedrørende beskyttelse og benyttelse samtidigt med at samarbejdet mellem lokal og regionale myndigheder kunne styrkes. Gennem at anvende et kritisk utopisk aktionsforskningsperspektiv blev det muligt at forstå denne konflikt fra både det institutionelle planlægningsperspektiv og det lokale hverdagslivs perspektiv. Herigennem kunne projektet initiere udviklingen af nye forståelser og praksiser i processen med deltagerne. Den analytiske ambition var dermed ikke bare at forstå og kontrastere de forskellige forståelser om viden, natur, og deltagelse, som voksede frem i løbet af processen, men også at udforske og udfolde åbninger i og lukninger af planprocessens horisont for en frisættende, demokratisk deltagelse af forskellige rationaliteter.

Afhandlingen demonstrerer hvorledes de konfliktuelle aspekter i naturbeskyttelsesprocessen var grundet i såvel en substantiell (socio-økologiske) som processuel (videns-styring) kompleksitet, som ikke bare medførte forskellige interessekonflikter, men også fremhævede forskellige paradigmatisk forståelser af viden, nature og deltagelse. Den deskriptive analyse kontrasterer planlægningsinstitutionernes sektoriserede naturbeskyttelses perspektiver, mod de lokale samfunds forståelse af området som en del af et dagligt liv i fortid, nutid og fremtid. Planlægningshorisonten, eller de mulige planlægningsorienteringer, blev påvirket af disse forskellige rationaliteter eller paradigmatisk forståelser. Analysen af åbninger og lukninger fandt, at etableringen af et naturvidenskabelige premis for beslutningstagning i processen, og dets instrumentalisering som et arealkort, lukkede mulighederne for en frisættelse og diskussion af andre rationaliteter. Det naturaliserede naturvidenskabelig viden som en objektiv sandhed, hvilket igen bevirkede, at naturbeskyttelsesdiskursen blev neutraliseret som en værdifri og faktabaseret nødvendighed. Meningsorienteringer som var forskellige fra den etablerede naturbeskyttelsesdiskurs kunne dermed pacificeres som irrelevante krav. Dette reproducerede og forstærkede eksperternes position på planlægningsarenaen som repræsentanter for den kvalificerede viden hvilket dermed diskvalificerede andre aktører og rationaliteter. Det instrumentelle planlægningsformål, at definere grænser for vilde rensdyrhabitater, lukkede for bredere deltagerbaserede perspektiver på naturbeskyttelsen. Grænsedefineringen blev dermed naturaliseret som den rigtige naturbeskyttelses orientering, mens andre naturperspektiver blev diskvalificerede som irelevante i processen.

Der blev alligevel skabt rum for frisættelse og diskussion af naturbeskyttelsens premisser, og udvikling af et lokalt-regionalt samarbejde gennem etableringen af bredere regionale planarenaer. Disse arenaer skapte gradvist en større forståelse af den iboende komplekse substantielle og processuelle konflikt, som mere end bare økonomiske eller økologiske interesser. Disse nye forståelser gav legitimitet til at udtrykke og diskutere forskellige rationaliteter på planarenaen som kvalificerede, skønt uenige, meningsperspektiver. Åbningen af en mere ligeværdig kommunikation bevirkede også, at de lokale og regionale myndigheder anerkendte vigtigheden af at udvikle en bedre dialog sig imellem, både for at styrke den fælles forståelse for området på lang sigt, men også for at kunne generere et bedre og mere konsensusbaseret planlægningsresultat. Planlægningshorisonten blev dog ikke åbnet for at udtrykke og diskutere aspekter af naturbeskyttelsen som ikke svarede til det formelle planlægningsformål. Planlægningsarenaen åbnede dermed ikke op for at diskutere de hverdagsorienterede perspektiver af naturbeskyttelsen som lokalsamfundene havde givet udtryk for i de forsker initierede fremtidsværksteder.

Denne afhandling argumenterer for at naturbeskyttelse, som et svar på de bredere, samfundsmæssige udfordringer i relation til bæredygtighed, behøver en bred offentlig deltagelse, hvor natur- og samfundsorienteringer kan diskuteres som noget andet og større end vurdering af risiko, etablering af grænser, og forhandling af interesser. Deltagelse i planlægning af naturbeskyttelse er dermed ikke bare et spørgsmål om processuel legitimitet, men også om at udfolde forskellige natur-samfunds rationaliteter, hvilket kan skabe en bedre substantiel forståelse for miljøplanlægningens orientering (eller horisont). Meningsfyldte frisættende samtaler på tværs af institutionelle og hverdagslivsorienterede rationaliteter kan skabe emancipatorisk viden, langsigtet engagement, og ansvar for natur- og samfunds relationer, som berører det almene eller fælles.

Afhandlingens bidrag relaterer sig for det første til en descriptive analyse af en speciel naturbeskyttelsesproces i Norge, for at kunne kontrastere de institutionelle forståelser set i relation til de lokale samfunds. Dernæst bidrager den med en metodologisk og analytisk konceptualisering og tilnærmning til at forstå og udfordre aspekter af åbninger og lukninger i planlægningshorisonten for deliberative demokratiske processer. Endelig bidrager de analytiske fund til det teoretiske og kontekstuelle miljøplanlægningsfelt ved at udvide forståelserne for de iboende konflikter og spændinger i naturbeskyttelsen. Herved bidrager afhandlingen med at pege på nye mulige orienteringer i planlægningen i forhold til at involvere de lokale samfunds hverdagslivsperspektiver i definitionen af naturbeskyttelse som del av en fælles udfordring.

1. Introduction and Problématique¹

The sustainability challenges faced today influence all parts of our society. Nature protection is considered one remedy to secure nature from societal development in the overall trajectory to more sustainable futures. This thesis questions the democratic aspects of such remedies by analysing the openings and closures of the planning horizon for deliberative local participation. This chapter situates the research project in the conceptual landscape of theory and methodology, and empirically into the contextual sphere and the particular case. Finally, the specific research problématique and approach is developed, as well as a specification of the potential and limitations of this thesis.

1.1 Nature, society and the question of sustainability

Sustainability is one of the most pressing concerns in our modern society¹. Since the 1960s environmental concern has increased and become globally institutionalized (Hironaka 2003), and an understanding of sustainability now influences general discussions about societal development and planning (Elling 2008; Meadowcroft 1999; Nielsen et al. 2010). Nature protection or environmental planning can be understood as one societal answer to some of the ecological challenges of our “developed” society to secure particular nature values and areas (Clausen et al. 2010; Cowell and Owens 2011). The regulation of nature, however, also affects socio-economic and cultural aspects, and creates contested claims between different types of nature values and interests (Elling 2008; Macnaghten and Urry 1998). Current environmental or nature protection planning has proved to generate conflict in relation to a wide variety of knowledge, steering, interest, and value facets between national policies, planning institutions and the affected local communities, (Daniels and Walker 2001; Daugstad et al. 2006). The ambition of this thesis is to explore an environmental planning process with local communities and formal planning actors to find openings and closures of the planning horizon for deliberative democratic participation.

A planning process is a deliberative arena for discussing ecological, social, cultural and economic aspects of sustainability (or nature protection) between institutions, stakeholders, and affected communities (Cowell & Owens 2011). The planning horizon, or the potential trajectories of the planning process and outcome, is influenced by the understanding of nature, knowledge, and the role of participation held by the involved actors and institutions. The deliberative imperative is challenged when sustainability is defined as nature protection. A focus on nature protection can enclose the planning arena (or horizon) by valuing natural scientific perspectives as the principal (objective) knowledge contributor to a sustainable outcome. An essential characteristic of sustainability is, however, that it does not embrace any objective measures for protection or use. Sustainability is a question of iterative reflections and deliberations about our societal

¹ The French problématique concept is used to emphasize that the research interest is not reduced to a research question or a problem situation. Rather, this thesis explores challenges of environmental planning that are influenced by several different problematic and wicked aspects. Problématique is a concept that acknowledges the complexity and interrelatedness of different problematic aspects of societal environmental challenges and research (Cerf et al. 2000).

ethics, morals, and values and about how our societal actions (broadly speaking) affect our environment (Cowell & Owens 2011). An essential prerequisite for sustainability is therefore its democratic core.

This thesis bases its argument for sustainability on this democratic imperative. The definition of sustainable trajectories, and consequent nature protection, cannot be based exclusively on scientific exploration, instrumental policy measures, and expert knowledge-based management. Such trajectories are inherently related to societal development and human understanding. A search for sustainability must therefore also be a question of how the diversity, ambiguity and utopian dimensions of the human everyday life can contribute with a different understanding of nature relations (Elling 2008;Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a;Nielsen, Elling, & Jelsoe 2010). The everyday life perspective is, in this thesis, understood as the conglomeration of experiences, knowledge, values, and interests that also embrace ambiguous and contradictory aspects of our daily relationship with society and nature (Nielsen and Nielsen 2010;Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a). The phenomenological lifeworld perspective (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009;Smith 2007) or life nature orientation (Nilesen and Nielsen, 2007a) of a local community, in this sense, offers a different perspective of nature (protection) and sustainability than what is “perceived” from the environmental planning institutional perspective.

This research relates and contrasts the everyday life and institutional planning system perspectives to understand the tensions between these. The first analytical motivation was to explore different understandings of environmental planning, in a particular nature protection planning process, with the formal institutional planning actors and the authorities and citizens of three affected municipalities, during a two-year planning process in Southern Norway. The second analytical motivation was to explore how the planning process created openings and closures in the planning horizon for improved mutual understandings and new approaches to participation between planning institutions and communities. The planning horizon is understood as the potential planning trajectories that develop continuously during a planning process. This (environmental) planning horizon is influenced by: the understandings of the planning purpose, the role of knowledge, the perception of nature, and the understanding and role of participation during the process. Openings and closures of such horizon are understood as discursive and experiential factors that improve or reduce the potential for communication, deliberation, and collective experiences during the planning process. The bearing assumption (or normative foundation) of the research is that participation across everyday life and institutional rationalities could lay the groundwork for a dual understanding of the sustainable planning praxis. “Dual” in the sense that it recognizes a deliberative democratic foundation in the procedural aspects of planning, and acknowledges the development of the substantial facets of planning as rooted in knowledge generation across rationalities.

The research approach described in this thesis was inspired by critical utopian action research (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006b). This methodological perspective posits “reality” as continuously changing. Individual and social understandings and meaning horizons are therefore also constantly developing, and capable to influence their surroundings. The critical utopian action research perspective merges action research with

critical theoretical and dialectic perspectives (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). Based on this orientation, the research interest was not only to understand the current situation through qualitative methods, but also to explore potential “realities” and facilitate changes in understanding and practice during the process. The critical utopian action research was thus selected due to its potential to engage the planning institutions and local communities in a process that mutually challenges and develops their current understandings and practice.

The theoretical framework combines planning theoretical perspectives with theories about everyday life and social learning as a way to analyse and contrast understandings of nature, participation and knowledge. The planning theoretical perspective is concerned with the discourses and practices at play in the formal planning process, while the everyday life orientation is concerned with how citizens (or local communities) relate both to the planning process, its purpose and to the “materiality” of nature and community development. It is through these dual and complementary perspectives that this thesis seeks to contribute to a dialectic understanding of the current planning rationale and the potential to evolve towards a more democratic environmental planning horizon.

The following section describes a perspective of sustainability as a constituent meta-narrative of an interest for nature protection planning and the related understanding of knowledge and participation in such planning processes. Next, the research case of wild reindeer planning in Setesdal is introduced in relation to a broader context of nature protection and use. Lastly, the theoretical and analytical framework is applied to the foundation of the problem definition and research questions.

A challenge of sustainability

The ethos of sustainability has grown along with the recognition that the exploitation of nature for societal development has limitations and irreversible environmental consequences for the existence and formation of future societies (Elling 2008; Nielsen, Elling, & Jelsoe 2010; Woodhill and Röling 1998). The concept of sustainability reflects the inherent relationship between nature and society, and links perspectives of human development to understandings of planet and ecosystem boundaries (Nielsen, Elling, & Jelsoe 2010). The Brundtland report *Our common future* (United Nations 1987) lifted the sustainability challenge out of the realm of activist niche policies and onto the international agenda. The report contributed to a broad understanding of sustainability, where nature and society are considered related in the past, present, and future. The baseline definition of sustainable development from this report is: “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (United Nations, 1987, p.8). This sustainability perspective founded the concept of the social aspect of sustainability, especially for the people living directly off natural resources on an everyday basis².

² The right of local people to participate in decision making about their local environment was mentioned in the 1992 Rio declaration and later emphasized through the 1998 Aarhus convention (UNECE, 1998)

The concepts of sustainability in the Brundtland report are broad and inclusive, but have been challenged for not being more critical towards the existing growth paradigm of economic development and its influence on natural resource exploitation (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Nielsen, Elling, & Jelsoe 2010). Sustainability has developed into a discourse of concern for the environment, but without a critical edge of challenging the existing system, market rationality, or “western” lifestyle (Sachs 1999; Shiva 2006). “Sustainability” is in this sense, criticized for becoming a hollow conceptual framework that can cover anything, on any scale, without any rigor or consistency. This critique can also be linked to the current critique of ecological modernization. Ecological modernization is a perspective that attempts to use the logic of market economy as a strategy for more sustainable development. It is an understanding of sustainable growth as a “way out” of the ecological crisis through innovation, “greener” technology, and more ecologically sound practices that provide economic benefits. Ecological modernization can thus be understood as a technocratic project that seeks to minimize current risks to society (Hajer 1996). This “weak” sustainability concept does not include a critical discussion with the underlying growth logic of capitalism or a discussion of what kind of rationalities should be included in societal decision making (Elling 2008; Elling 2010). Ecological modernization does not take the democratic perspective into account as a *prerequisite* for sustainable societal development³.

A different line of critique, which will be pursued in this thesis, questions the increasing division of sustainability into a societal (economic) and ecological interest-logic. Sustainability is “reduced”, from the broad ethical and normative questions of freedom, equality, and justice of societal development, to concern ecological aspects of nature and isolated interests of nature i.e. ecosystem services, biodiversity, carbon emissions, etc. (Clausen, Hansen, & Tind 2010; Harste 2000). This changes the essence of sustainability to become a measure of socio-ecological resilience (Berkes and Folke 1998; Folke 2006a), or, in other words, a balance of measured indicators. Social values, cultural traditions, and economic aspects that relate everyday life with a physical place can, within this sustainability framework, become disqualified and illegitimate claims when set against ecologically measured sustainability. Such division creates an understanding of sustainability where the human and social system is undervalued the ecological system, and propagates the (positivistic) idea of nature and society as separate entities (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006a). From a critical theoretical perspective it is this “modern” separation of society from nature that creates the very fundament for a societal development that is disconnected from nature and thus in essence unsustainable (Elling 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Shiva 2006).

A division of nature and society also influences the understanding of what type of knowledge is considered relevant in environmental decision making (Brunner and Steelman 2005). The reduction and sectoring of the sustainability concept; and the emergence of the nature protection logic, create precedence and

³ Ecological modernization will not be explicitly used in the analysis of this thesis, but it is an important aspect of the sustainability perspective that has gained much attention in the market system and policy arena (Nielsen, Elling, Jelsoe, 2010). For a critique of the ecological modernization perspective, see Elling, 2008 p. 171-219 or Elling, 2010 p. 37.

legitimacy for the natural science and expert knowledge definitions of sustainability (Harste 2000). Natural sciences and the technical measurement of the physical-ecological dimension become provider of “objective” knowledge and for rational decision making (Brunner & Steelman 2005). Other types of knowledge concerned with socio-cultural or economic aspects, or even aesthetic and moral dimensions of a lifeworld-oriented knowledge are within this logic considered less relevant (Elling 2008). This logic generates a situation where the democratic values and lifeworld perspectives are unaccounted for in the decision making arena. The natural sciences are qualified as the principal agent for the generation of sustainability (or nature protection) “solutions”. Scientific knowledge is transformed into an objective truth and a premise for understanding a situation and making (rational) decisions (Cowell & Owens 2011). Science thus becomes an almost unilateral authoritative entity in societal decision making (Svensson and Nielsen 2006).

Trust in science is a basic paradox in modern society where the science that is thought to solve our problems is also an inherent part of defining and creating the problems (Elling 2008; Szerszynski et al. 1996; Woodhill & Röling 1998). Bruno Latour is one of many researchers and philosophers who, on the basis of his research of laboratory science, have warned against this thinking that natural science as value free and objective truth. Science and knowledge are created by people in research communities under certain institutionalized values and belief paradigms. The challenge in societal decision making is therefore to allow different types of knowledge to compete with each other (Latour 2004). This is especially relevant within the sustainability agenda that literally requires new ways of thinking to cultivate future oriented societal trajectories.

The domination of ecological measures transforms the agenda of sustainable development into a matter of planning societal development in relation to ecological risk (Harste 2000; Sachs 1999). The challenge of sustainability in such an understanding becomes less concerned with how to democratically develop sustainable societies in relation to our environment, and more concerned with how to protect nature from our societal development based on ecological expert knowledge (Sachs 1999). Sustainability is in this sense transformed into a strategic planning concept, where the purpose is oriented towards avoiding ecological risks, rather than developing visions for sustainable societies and ways of living (Clausen, Hansen, & Tind 2010). When the process of defining sustainability does not have a democratic foundation, the understanding of sustainable development is left to technocratic and authoritarian decision structures (Elling 2010). The concept of sustainability, as with other established “truths”, has the potential of being exploited as or by an authoritarian structure where certain institutions and actors dominate the discourse and trajectory of sustainability (or nature protection), without a broader democratic debate (Elling 2008). Such authoritarian structures thus qualify some perspectives over others, and neutralize the potential deliberation of the subject matter (Deetz 1992). The logic of nature protection can therefore leave the sustainability concept in a paradoxical situation between expert claims and democratic institutions.

This thesis understands sustainability as a concept that has numerous interpretations depending upon ontological and epistemological orientations. The understanding of nature and society as connected or divided entities lays the philosophic (ontological) basis for understanding the sustainability concept. Furthermore, it influences the (epistemological) understanding of what role knowledge should have in decision making, especially when it concerns natural scientific knowledge in relation to locally based knowledge. In a critical theoretical perspective, these considerations of the role of knowledge in decision making reflect a democratic challenge in society (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Svensson & Nielsen 2006). The considerations of sustainability create space for the overall meta-reflections and research interest: the understanding of sustainability is influenced by our understanding of knowledge, nature and the fundamental role of democracy (or participation) in societal decision making. These meta-reflections are essential to understanding why nature protection is so conflict laden in general, and to explore (and disturb the course of) such conflicts in a particular case.

Sustainability as nature protection

Current nature protection endeavours can be interpreted as an institutional answer to cope with the societal sustainability challenges. Environmental planning is thus the operationalization of sustainability policies that aims at protecting certain nature values that can “deliver” ecological benefits and thereby balance some of the “unsustainable” traits of modern society (Cowell & Owens 2011). The current development of environmental discourses is fundamentally influenced by the ontology of natural sciences and contributes to the globalization and consolidation of certain nature perspectives (Hironaka 2003). On a policy level, this has nudged development from the broad environmental concern for sustainable development (e.g. Local agenda 21) towards a more instrumental policy perspective of securing certain “measurable” nature qualities like biodiversity and ecosystem services (Cowell & Owens 2011). These types of nature qualities deliver beneficial “allowances” for humans, in the form of eco-system services, such as a diversified gene pool, CO² capture, water cleaning, etc. This emerging nature protection logic is congruent with the strategic aspects of sustainability concerned with protecting certain nature qualities from the risks of societal development (Clausen, Hansen, & Tind 2010).

The early or “original” nature conservation paradigm emerged from a more romantic perspective that was concerned with securing the aesthetic values of pristine and wild nature, untouched and unspoiled by human use (Reitan 2004). The understanding and values of nature were perceived as being contradictory to human culture and nature use (Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006). At the end of the 19th Century and the beginning and the 20th Century, national parks were established in many western countries in order to secure the possibility to experience pristine nature for future generations, and as symbols of national patriotism. Another important aspect for the national park movement was to secure the right to roam, or the common right to recreational use over private land enclosures (e.g. Peak District National Park in the UK in 1951) (EUROPARC 2009). The more recent nature protection regimes that emerged in the 1960s and 70s can be understood as a fusion between a romantic understanding of nature as a pristine wilderness

separated from human culture, and a scientific ecological understanding of nature as consisting of measurable facts in a complex system (Reitan 2004).

The (natural) scientific legitimation of nature protection policies has, on the one hand, led to international agreements and high political prioritization of environmental challenges (and sustainability aspects). On the other hand, it has laid the ground for a technocratic and expert-based decision making and a top-down steered policy and planning process (Engelen et al. 2008; Nelson et al. 2008). Nature protection policies were from their emergence in the 1960s a policy arena with strong national state responsibility (Reitan 2004). During the 1970s and 80s environmental ministries and institutions were established in 30% of the countries in the world. Their establishment can be correlated to high rates of (natural) scientific activity in the particular country (Hironaka 2003), but were also influenced by a growing international pressure for environmental policy and nature protection (Reitan 2004). Urban nature perspectives, understood as natural scientific, professional, and romantic values, were also influential for the formation and institutionalization of environmental ministries and their related agencies. The ontological perspectives of natural science became further institutionalized in such departments and agencies through the recruitment of professional knowledge predominantly from the natural sciences (Reitan 2004). Seen in this light (modern) conservation policies can be understood as the merger of romantic pristine nature perspectives with (non-human) ecological functionalism, both of which build on a positivistic natural scientific belief and the separation of humans and nature. The institutional agency of environmental policies and planning could, in this sense, be understood as managing a “state responsibility” within an objective knowledge framework to secure the best, or most rational, solutions.

The development of a strong state-based and expert-driven nature management was not only influenced by the positivistic scientific and romantic nature values, but also by economic (and political scientific) perspectives of societal growth. The growth of society and the limitations of the natural resources was problematized by Garret Hardin in the influential article *The tragedy of the commons* (1968). The article described the critical correlation between an increasing population and the limitations of natural resources. Through an economic rationalist *optique* he argued for a strong state (or market) regulation of the common resources to avoid individual actors’ overusing limited natural resources at the expense of the society at large. This article created a strong metaphor in the “natural scientific” professional bureaucracy (Laerhoven van and Ostrom 2007; Ostrom 1990). It nourished an understanding that individual interests would exploit natural resource for short term economic benefits at the expense of the collective good. In the 1980s and especially with Elinor Ostrom’s book *Governing the Commons* in 1990, this metaphor was criticized and challenged. Ostrom (1990) demonstrated with empirical data (embedded in a philosophical discussion about the rationality of humans) that local collective institutions can manage common pool resources sustainably, and in some cases even better than state agencies. My point with this reference to Garrett Hardin, is that the policy and planning practice of professional bureaucracy, was (is) not only influenced by natural scientific positivistic thinking and instrumental rationality, or romantic ideals of pure unspoiled nature, but also by the understanding of *economic rationality*. This latter understanding presumes that

reductionist economic rationality governs human behaviour and that a strong state agency is necessary to avoid a tragedy of the commons.

The argument for nature protection has in this sense changed from a romantic aesthetic perspective of “being in nature”, to a scientifically founded argument of protecting biodiversity for the resilience of the ecological system on earth. Nature protection, in this sense, bears both an instrumental utilitarian dimension and a more spiritual supra-human (meta) dimension (Cowell & Rowens, 2011). When planning processes are framed within an instrumental nature protection-logic the understanding of sustainability and the arena for deliberation will be influenced by expert perspectives grounded in natural sciences (Cowell & Owens, 2011). The question is however, if such nature protection perspectives will ensure a more broadly founded sustainability in society, or if we are simply creating protected “islands” of nature to compensate for the general unsustainability of society at large. In this thesis such “meta-questions” are relevant as a backdrop for questioning the understandings behind a particular nature protection process, and especially how these influence the perceptions and approaches to knowledge, nature and local participation. In this sense, this thesis seeks to question how perceptions of nature protection within the sustainability ethos influence the environmental planning horizon, and in particular the possibility of local participation.

Nature protection as environmental planning and management

“In the planning process the values that disport themselves with happy plurality in general policy statements must indeed be brought sharply into line, and vague generalities about sustainability have to be translated into hard decisions about the use and development of land” (Cowell & Rowens 2011, p.123).

Nature protection as planning is in other words where the discourses of sustainability and nature protection are brought down to the “dirty materiality” and the reality of many competing actors and their lives.

Nature protection planning and management has traditionally been orchestrated by state agencies as a process of implementing national policies in particular areas (Carlsson 2008; Sandström et al. 2008). Such nature protection processes can be understood as a “top-down” steering approach, where environmental authorities define the goal or the outcome of a nature protection plan in relation to stated national policies and based on the prevailing natural scientific knowledge. This type of environmental government is influenced by an understanding of the state as a superior and omnipotent actor that must take responsibility for the natural resources to avoid the “tragedy of the commons” (Björkell 2008; Nelson, Howden, & Smith 2008; Ostrom 1990). Further, it operationalizes the epistemological understanding of natural sciences as objective knowledge providers within a rational planning approach (Brunner & Steelman 2005; Innes and Booher 2010).

During the 1980s and 90s the legitimacy, efficiency, and outcome of the expert-oriented, top-down nature policies and government have been increasingly challenged (Dietz et al. 2003; Hajer 2003) and criticized for

ignoring the relationship between the socio-cultural and ecological dimensions of nature and landscapes (Berkes & Folke 1998; Folke 2006b). Engelen et al. (2008) describe how the legitimacy claim of nature conservation has changed, from a substantive legitimacy based on scientific knowledge, towards a more procedural legitimacy that requires participation from a broader public. They further interpret this, as a change from vertical expert policy making, to a more horizontal-oriented policy making incorporating public deliberation. This is in line with several other authors who discuss the perspectives and consequences of nature protection policy making changes, from a government-oriented, to a more governance-oriented approach (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Paavola et al. 2009; Rauschmayer et al. 2009) and how this change of policy making also affects the perspectives of public participation in planning (Blackmore 2006; Turnhout et al. 2010; Vandenabeele and Goordon 2007).

Public participation is now widely argued as “good practice” in nature protection policies and planning by both scientists and practitioners (Turnhout, Van Bommel, & Aarts 2010). However, as pointed out by Sherry Arnstein (1969) in her influential article, *A ladder of citizens participation*, participation has various scales of involvement, from the instrumental uses of manipulation and tokenism to levels of true deliberative practices of citizen decision making. Participation is formulized, in other words, along a wide scale of justification; it can be used as a legitimizing ingredient in a ready recipe, or as a democratic process of deliberating values, interests, and knowledge. The introduction of a participatory perspective in nature protection planning therefore calls for a critical questioning of how the underlying rationale and arguments of participation influences the premises of the process and outcome (Hansen 2007; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a).

There are many theoretical and practical arguments for public participation in nature protection planning. First of all, local participation can be interpreted as an institutional answer to the increasing conflict experienced in nature protection processes and the legitimacy crisis of environmental policies (Elling 2008; Hansen 2007; Innes & Booher 2010; Röling and Wagemakers 1998). This argumentation is based on an instrumental understanding of participation as a remedy to reduce *conflicts* and increase the *legitimacy* of national protection policies. This type of participation is similar to what Elinor Ostrom (1990) refers to as participation at the operational level. The participation is limited to the possibility to giving one’s opinion about the nature protection purpose that is already staked out, but one is not allowed to challenge opinions about the constitution of the goals themselves (Ostrom 1990). Secondly, this argument perceives participation as an answer for creating *local ownership* or *anchorage* to national policies (Lachapelle and McCool 2005). The rationality for participation thus serves an instrumental purpose of negotiating conflicts in order to improve the *effectiveness* and *efficiency* of the policy implementation (Turnhout, Van Bommel, & Aarts 2010; Vandenabeele & Goordon 2007). A third line of argumentation is that local participation contributes to increase *learning and knowledge development* in nature protection and management processes (Blackmore 2007; Folke 2004; Vandenabeele & Goordon 2007). This argument emphasizes that local communities have valuable knowledge about their area that should be taken into account in a planning processes. The local participation is, in this perspective, used to contribute to better planning and

management outcomes, as well as to generate collective learning across the expert and local citizens' perspectives (Daniels & Walker 2001; Innes & Booher 2010).

Despite the presence of a local participation ethos in nature protection planning, (the lack of) participation is still contested and conflictual in local communities (Arnesen and Riseth 2008; Björkell 2008; Carlsson 2008; Clausen 2011; Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006; Daugstad 2011; Grönholm 2009; Sandström, Hovik, & Falleth 2008). The implementation of nature protection policies mobilizes many different perspectives of interests and values (Zachrisson 2009), and not least knowledge and legitimacy (Björkell 2008). Local communities have different perspectives on how to plan the nature of their area, and often different types of knowledge about how to manage nature (Grönholm 2009). The question is, in other words, what the current local participation approaches based on legitimacy, efficiency and effectiveness do *not* answer.

One common problem could be the underlying institutional presumption that participation is merely a tool to fulfil the planning system purpose rationality (Elling 2008). Instrumental participation becomes concerned with reaffirming a planning purpose within the system agenda, but is not able to transcend this premises and enable discussion of the subject matter in a "free arena" (Elling 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). Participation based on an instrumental-legitimizing rationality creates an ethical democratic deficit and participation fatigue, i.e. people become uninterested in participating in pre-ordained planning processes and this further erodes the democratic essence of planning (Elling 2008; Hansen 2007; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). In addition, it can lead to the erosion of local knowledge and responsibility for the surrounding nature and landscape (Clausen 2011; Svennevig and Clausen 2009; Vandenabeele & Goordon 2007). Rational instrumental participation arguments thus limit the planning arena to a concern by the actors (experts or stakeholders) that are considered relevant from the planning system perspective, i.e. those that can serve to fulfil the purpose of the plan. The very deliberation of values and knowledge about the subject matter is reduced to the concerns of a pre-defined public, leaving the democratic core of broad public involvement neglected and eroded. Participation on these terms compromises the very foundation of democratic participation (Clausen, Hansen, & Tind 2010; Hansen 2007). The argument put forth here is that if planning is to be a democratic endeavour to create more sustainable societies, then it must involve the citizens as constituents in the very purpose of the planning. The argument of participation must therefore be based on a democratic rationale of giving people the right to deliberate and influence the planning horizon in relation to society and everyday life.

In the "real" world, different rationales and arguments of participation are intertwined in the process of policy making and in the interpretation of planning authorities and agents (in 't Veld 2009). The interesting question is not whether there are instrumental or democratic rationalities at play, but how these are played out between institutions, local citizens and stakeholders, as well as where (or how) there is potential for more democratic orientation in the planning horizon. To inquire into such issues it is necessary to generate knowledge from based on the empirical reality, in this case a particular planning processes. To learn about the tensions at play between the planning institutions and local communities it makes sense to,

on the one hand, explore and question the institutional planning actor perspectives of nature protection, participation, and the role of knowledge in such processes. On the other hand, the understanding of this tension also requires exploration and questioning of “the other side” of the planning process, namely the local community’s (municipal authorities, citizens, and stakeholders) perspective of nature planning, participation, and knowledge.

Based on the above reflections the research interest of this thesis was to explore the perceptions and understanding developing *between* the regional planning institutions and the local community in a particular planning process in Southern Norway; and to analyse the *openings and closures of the planning horizons* towards more democratic local participation. The motivation is *not* to study the conflict dimensions of use and protection or local-national steering as such, but to challenge these understandings reciprocally through an action research-based approach in an on-going planning process. The empirical case is a particular wild reindeer habitat protection planning process with specific attention to the involvement of the three Setesdal municipalities. Although distinctive in time and place, the empirical “reality” was affected and embedded in a socio-cultural, political and historical context that affected the planning institutions’, as well as the local communities’ perceptions of the planning purpose and process. The following section will further introduce the contextual landscape of this particular case.

1.2 The Contextual Landscape

Norwegian conservation policies have, since their appearance on the political agenda, been centralized at the state level, and later devolved to regional state agencies (the environmental agency of the county governor) (Hovik and Reitan 2004; Sandström, Hovik, & Falleth 2008). The environmental institutionalization at the state level has also contributed to reinforce values and perceptions related to the natural scientific paradigm and rational planning perspectives (Hironaka 2003; Reitan 2004). Since the 1990s, conservation policies have become more ambitious in their natural protection area goals and more differentiated in the scope of their protection. In this sense the political agenda protects a larger amount of Norwegian nature, but also uses this protection for value creation and rural development perspectives (Ministry of Environment 2007b; Ministry of Finance 2003). During the same decade, conservation policies were also to a higher degree politicized and subject to ideological conflicts between use and protection (Reitan 2004). The broadening of conservation policies along with increasing global trends of participation (even from international conservation organizations (IUCN 2009)) have resulted in policies more directed at participatory and governance-related steering in Norway (Falleth and Hovik 2009; Reitan 2004). In addition, they have increased the focus of combining nature protection and use for supporting rural development (Ministry of Finance 2003).

Norwegian rural policies and nature conservation policies can be viewed as a juncture of ideologies, between subsistence economic-based thinking where nature is considered a resource and linked with a cultural understanding of humans and nature, and the urban-recreational based thinking where nature is

considered pristine and preferably untouched by man (Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006). The latter view has been influential on the conservation policies in Norway and on its underlying conceptual understanding of a romanticized nature perspective and the ideal of scientific rational planning (Reitan 2004). These differences in perceptions and conceptions illustrate the three dimensional conflict of nature-society in Norway: the protection-use dimension, the nature-culture dimension, and the local-national steering dimension (Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006). Wild reindeer is a particular case of this conflict between nature protection and rural development. Wild reindeer have special cultural value nationally and internationally, and they have demanding habitat requirements due to their population ecology. In latter decades there has been increasing societal claims to the mountain areas of Norway where wild reindeer have lived for 10 000 years (Andersen and Hustad 2004).

The challenge of wild reindeer and (modern) rural development

The European wild reindeer is the symbol of Norwegian re-settlement after the last ice age approx. 10 000 years ago, when people and animals followed the reindeer from Southern and Central Europe to the North. The wild reindeer has for 30 000 years been a source of food, clothing and material for human survival. The last herds of European wild reindeer now live in large desolate mountainous areas in Norway (Andersen & Hustad 2004). Wild reindeer are gregarious and nomadic animals with a yearly migration cycle adapted to seasonal habitat areas for summer and winter feeding, and calving in the spring. Their population ecology requires large areas to ensure continuous feeding quality for the entire herd and buffer areas in years with extreme climatic conditions. The animals have developed a profound shyness to humans and human physical barriers (30 000 years of hunting has ostensibly affected behaviour), and they are unlikely to use areas where there is continuous human activity (Strand et al. 2010b).

Norway has a special obligation to protect the wild reindeer through the Bern Convention, but care for the wild reindeer is also culturally embedded in both recreational and traditional hunting perspectives. The increased use of mountain areas is on the one hand perceived as a threat to the wild reindeer habitat and population, and on the other hand, as a potential resource for rural development. The challenge lies in balancing the increasing and diverse claims to (mountain) area use that have developed through the societal development over the past centuries, from economical, recreational, infrastructural, and cultural perspectives, in relation to the wild reindeer habitat requirements, in a long term perspective (Andersen & Hustad 2004).

Regional planning for protection and use – the case of Heiplanen

The understanding of increased pressure on mountainous areas, and especially wild reindeer habitat, was further nourished by the international wild reindeer obligations in form of the Bern convention, and UN convention of biodiversity (UNEP 1992) that directed attention to the threat of wild reindeer habitats in Norway. In 2002, a Wild Reindeer and Society project (ViSa) was commissioned to synthesize knowledge and experience from a broad group of researchers, nature and area managers, and interest organizations.

In 2004, a report was published that gave policy recommendations to the management of the last wild reindeer herd in Europe in relation to the influencing challenges of societal and rural development (Andersen & Hustad 2004).



Figure 1.1 National wild reindeer areas and recommendations for European wild reindeer regions (Andersen and Hustad 2004; Mossing and Heggenes 2010). Area 1 (Setesdal Ryfylke) and 2 (Setesdal Austhei) indicate the planning area of Heiplanen.

In 2007, the Ministry of Environment commissioned nine regional planning processes in Southern Norway with the dual aim of securing wild reindeer habitats and exploring the potential of rural development (Ministry of Environment 2007a). The planning commission was a result of a political process in the parliament (Ministry of Environment 2005), and in line with the recommendations of the ViSa report from 2004 on how to secure the wild reindeer in a long term perspective. In a connected, but parallel process, the Directorate of Nature Management commissioned the formation of a wild reindeer map for each of the regional planning areas to provide a natural scientific knowledge base about the potential wild reindeer habitat and area use.

The regional planning initiative can be interpreted as an attempt to bridge the challenges between interests and perspectives of use and protection, and between struggles of local or national steering legitimacy. The commissioning letter emphasized the protection (but not conservation) of the wild reindeer habitats, and the exploration of rural development potentials. The steering dimension also had a dual dimension, where the steering group was commissioned as a municipal and regional political organ, but the decisions had to be grounded on updated natural scientific knowledge.

The case of Heiplanen was the southernmost regional planning area and involved 18 municipalities within 5 counties affecting app. 12000 km². The planning process was initiated in 2008 when the county governments developed and politically approved a plan programme⁴ for the further process (Rogaland Fylkeskommune 2009). The practical planning process started in the fall 2009 and ended in the spring of 2011. The plan was on public hearing in 2011 and was finally approved in 2012 by the county governments. The plan is now in the process of being approved by the Ministry of Environment.



Figure 1.2 The planning area of Heiplanen (Rogaland Fylkeskommune, 2009), and an indication of the area of the three Setesdal municipalities

Three central municipalities in Heiplanen - the case of Setesdal

The three municipalities of Setesdal are central to the plan and have some of most critical wild reindeer habitats in the region (Mossing and Heggenes 2010). Their entire municipal area is included in the planning area (Rogaland Fylkeskommune 2009). Setesdal is a narrow 200 km long valley situated in the southern mountain area of Norway. The valley is divided into four municipalities, where the three most northern and mountainous municipalities Bykle, Valle, and Bygland are large municipalities in area (app. 4500 km²), but sparsely populated (app. 3500 inhabitants). The nearest city is Kristiansand (app. 85 000 inhabitants) situated on the coast at a driving distance of 1-3 hours respectively. These rural municipalities are, like

⁴ The Norwegian Plan and Building Act require that a regional plan must develop, and politically approve, a plan programme prior to the initiation of the Regional plan process that outlines the purpose and limits, and organization of the plan.

similar peripheral rural areas in Scandinavia and Europe, facing socio-economic challenges related to workplace development and a declining number of citizens (Cruickshank and Sørheim 2009; Leknes et al. 2002). Rural development is an important issue in the municipality and understood as a broad, diverse, and long term process (Normann and Vasstrøm 2012).

There are two main use dimensions at play in Setesdal that impact on the wild reindeer: the recreational use of the mountains and hydro-power development. Similar to other mountainous regions in Norway, Setesdal is increasingly used for recreational tourism, and the amount of second homes has increased tremendously during the last 20 years (Ericsson et al. 2010). There are several second home “villages” that are especially used for winter sport activities. This perspective is central to the discussion of job development in the area. Bykle, in particular, has pursued an active tourism-based strategy for developing a recreational economy. The development of this recreational mountain use is contested (even locally) because of its effects on the natural resources and landscape, and not least on the wild reindeer habitat. Another use dimension is the large scale construction of hydropower plants by the national state during the last three decades. This energy development policy has claimed large land areas in the centre of the wild reindeer habitats in connection with the dams and the infrastructure of power lines and roads. The hydropower production generates significant economic benefits for the municipalities.

Setesdal has a long history of nature protection plans (Falleth and Hovik 2006). In the 1970s, the area of the Western mountains of Setesdal was proposed as a protected area for wild reindeer by the Directorate of Nature and the County Governors. During the 1990s, a planning process divided the area into an outer and inner planning zone, where the inner zone became a landscape protection area in 2000, Setesdal-Vestheim-Ryfylke (SVR), governed by the Nature Conservation Act. The planning process created conflict between local authorities and stakeholders, and the state government and county governors. The case was brought forward in the parliament (Stortinget) by local politicians who demanded a more outspoken local management model (Falleth & Hovik 2006). In 2001 the SVR landscape protection area became the first large conservation area to experiment with a local management model (Falleth and Hovik 2008b). The purpose of the conservation area was, however, still disputed between local and state actors (Hovik and Falleth 2003). The wild reindeer habitat boundary zone around the protection area of SVR was not included in the local management experiment. The area was managed by the municipalities, but with the County Governor as the hearing agency. This model has caused severe area management conflicts between the municipalities and the county governor during the last 10 years.

This particular case of regional nature protection planning in three municipalities reflects many of the initially described challenges of sustainability in relation to knowledge, steering, interests and values. The case illustrates that there are material socio-ecological interest conflicts between economic development perspectives and the habitat of wild reindeer, and cultural differences of nature values between (and within) the local community and national policies. The case further reflects the more “abstract” challenges related to the procedural legitimacy of steering (and participation) in the planning process, and the meeting

between different knowledge perspectives and rationalities. The aim of this thesis is not to analyse the conflict between these perspectives, but rather to explore the tensions between these understandings. The action research process was thereby an attempt to generate deliberations across this tension or diversity of understandings involved in the planning process. This ambition required that the researcher explored the planning process with the institutional planning actors, and at the same time, engaged in the planning process with the local communities, municipal authorities and citizens. The research interest, in this sense, lies in exploring the potential development of a more participatory planning horizon by analysing the openings and closures for improved understandings between the institutional perspectives and the local everyday life perspective of nature society relations.

The two initial sections introduced my path into the *problématique* by describing the meta-narrative of modern society's sustainability challenge; the linkage to an understanding of nature protection policies, institutions and planning praxis; and lastly an understanding of a particular nature protection case in southern Norway. The following section will take a step back from the contextual case to unfold how different lines of theoretical thoughts have influenced the understanding of the case and contributed to the creation of a unique analytical framework.

1.3 Theoretical perspectives

The contextual field of nature and society or environmental planning and management is treated by numerous different theoretical approaches concerned with disparate sociological, ecological, political, planning, and institutional management aspects of the environment. In the attempt to explore (the often wicked) nature protection planning that involves micro-level everyday life perspectives and macro-level policy and planning perspectives, it becomes necessary to combine different strands of theories in a reflective bricolage (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005; Midgley 2000). It is through such an eclectic theoretical framework that this thesis seeks to challenge the established (institutional and theoretical) understandings of nature protection. The following sections will try to argue my way through different theoretical strands and their relevance for nature protection and the search for a more democratic planning horizon. Lastly, critical action research will be introduced as a relevant approach for exploring current realities in a participatory (re)search for alternative horizons.

Environmental planning

The theoretical framework of this thesis takes its point of departure in environmental planning theory to understand how knowledge, nature protection and local participation is perceived and has developed in this discipline, and how it can improve the understanding of the emerging participatory planning efforts in society. In other words, how the planning tradition has developed towards more democratic participatory horizons. Environmental planning is understood as the combination of societal planning and the ecological considerations inherently integrated in our society. The core concern is thus how societal development perspectives can be balanced with ecological sustainability and area use (Cowell & Owens 2011; Innes &

Booher 2010;Meadowcroft 1999). Planning is in practice the intermediate state between policy making and governance, and the management of existing relations and institutions. A planning process is the implementation or operationalization of certain policy goals that leads to some sort of planning outcome like a management document, regional plan guidelines, or institutionalization of an agency (Innes & Booher 2010). The process of balancing societal interests and values of the ecological environment is a meta-objective in the decision making of our societal trajectory. A process that opens future potentialities for societal and everyday life improvements (Healey 2006;Healey 2009). From a traditional planning perspective such processes requires public policy making and agency to ensure legitimacy and accountability, as well as competence and capacity, to mobilize collective action (Amdam and Veggeland 2011;Amdam 2005;Friedmann 1987). The policy makers and planning bureaucracy are - in this understanding - legitimate societal agents for environmental planning (Selman 2000). However, as previously discussed, the legitimacy of this agency is increasingly challenged by the local communities affected by such planning processes, and the environmental complexity is challenging traditional sources of knowledge and government (Innes & Booher 2010). The theoretical chapter in this thesis explores how the perceptions of knowledge, nature, and participation influences the very understanding of what planning is and should be, or in other words the planning horizon.

Everyday life perspectives

In a lifeworld or everyday life-oriented theoretical perspective, the endeavour of balancing societal development and ecological sustainability is not only a matter of institutional or systemic regulations, but about of how we, as citizens in communities, relate to the environment in our daily practice – and in our future perspectives (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a;Nielsen, Elling, & Jelsoe 2010). Local citizens are connected to the nature and landscape through numerous relations of economic, social, cultural character, and of aesthetic, “embodied”, and gestic dimensions (Clausen 2011). The perspective of people living in rural areas – and sites of nature protection – are therefore not just important in order to increase legitimacy of policies or because they can contribute with knowledge to improve the efficiency of planning and management. The perspectives of local communities are important, because they constitute the practical material relation to nature and society, and their perspectives can contribute with a substantial *different* perspective in planning (Elling 2008;Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). The argument is not that local citizens have a “better” perspective of nature sustainability, but that they can contribute with different perspectives on sustainability and nature protection in their local area, than a purely institutional perspective. Such everyday life perspectives are relevant in the attempt to understand the conflicting dimensions of nature protection, and in a dialectic sense, discuss how planning praxis and nature management can become more sustainable *and* democratic (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a;Nielsen and Nielsen 2007b).

The theoretical point argued in this thesis is not that either planning or local everyday life-oriented perspectives have the “solution” to nature protection or sustainability. Rather, the point is to illustrate that, quoting Elinor Ostrom (2008), “ there is no panacea” to these complex challenges of nature society

relations, neither scientific, technocratic, nor local. The argument is that if the goal is to improve sustainability in the long run, it is necessary to generate a more democratic platform for environmental planning that can open local and scientific perspectives towards new understandings. Such collaboration requires that local perspectives are involved in a more nuanced manner than through the mere premises of technical planning categories or premises of expert agendas. The local community must in other words also be involved in setting the agenda and experience that their participation matters. The question is, however, how participatory practices can be facilitated to avoid the local-central discrepancy increasingly criticized in theories of participatory nature planning and management (Björkell 2008; Clausen, Hansen, & Tind 2010; Clausen 2011; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Daugstad 2011; Grönholm 2009; Hansen 2007).

Commons

At a theoretical level this thesis aims to explore if nature protection (or environmental) planning can learn from the emerging conceptual perspective of *commons*. Commons is in this sense not only perceived as an institutional arrangement for dealing with socio-ecological resource systems (Dietz, Ostrom, & Stern 2003; Ostrom 2009). Commons is also understood as the common concern for nature, in a broad sense, in our human nature and societal planning, management and development (Shiva 2008). The idea of commons bears a dual dimension of on the one hand considering the material dimension of ecology and society, and on the other hand the procedural dimension of how we as society organize the steering of this materiality. Commons is the “third” dimension or substance we as citizens, experts, and societal institutions can gather around in an attempt to develop a public democratic arena (Arendt 1958) for discussing nature society relations and horizons (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). Such understanding of the commons undermines a rational-instrumental perspective of environmental planning where scientific experts and strategic national politics are responsible for the dictating of the premises and purposes of a planning process. Rather, it opens for a broader lifeworld-related perspective, where citizens and authorities of the particular area collaboratively develop the purpose and premises of planning and nature management. This “reverse participatory perspective” builds on a strong democratic core and a social learning perspective (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). The theoretical contribution of the commons can thus be to point to openings in the planning horizon where the planning purpose is not defined by the system rationality, but also by the lifeworld perspective as a concern for the *common*.

Critical utopian action research

The ambition of this thesis of exploring a planning process from the institutional and local community perspective and develop insights about the openings and closures for new participatory horizons, is operationalized through a critical utopian action research approach. The research design of this project has in this sense combined qualitative research methods typically used in case study research (Yin 2003) within an critical utopian action research approach (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b; Svensson & Nielsen 2006). The critical utopian action research approach combines the ontological perspectives of action research (Greenwood and Levin 1998; Reason and Bradbury 2001; Svensson & Nielsen

2006) with the critical and dialectic epistemology of critical theory (Nielsen 2004; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). The methodology is in this sense interactively creating knowledge with the actors involved in the case through collective exploration and reflection. The development of new understandings of the situation with a diversity of actors in the case is, in this sense, also an emerging process of creating change and improvement of the particular situation. The research approach was thus not only aimed at developing knowledge about a planning process from different perspectives, but engaged in “disturbing” the planning logic through participatory reflections between different actor perspectives to explore the possible openings and closures for new orientations in the planning horizon.

1.4 Research *problématique*, questions, and approach

The meta-perspective of this thesis seeks to understand and problematize the relationship between nature and society from a sustainability perspective. Sustainability is understood as a question of how society can regulate itself through democratic processes that involves not only technical and scientific knowledge and institutional actors, but also the moral and ethical dimensions of our lifeworld (Elling 2008) and everyday lives through citizens’ participation (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). This meta-context is reflected and problematized in current nature protection planning endeavours that, despite elements of local participation, still prove conflictual on several terms. These conflicts or dissonances between nature protection and local participation testify that there is a need for understanding the nature protection issue more thoroughly. The main research interest for this thesis was therefore to explore the openings and closures in the planning horizon for new understandings and approaches of local participation. As previously described opening and closures in the planning horizon, is thus understood as potentials and limitation for deliberating the very planning trajectory during the process. In other words, how perceptions of planning purpose, knowledge, nature, and participation influence the planning trajectory or horizon. The research process was developed during a particular wild reindeer protection planning process in the southern Norway in relation to three central municipalities in the process. The action research approach engaged with both the institutional planning actors and the local communities. Figure 1.3 illustrates how the particular case of this research process is understood as embedded in such contextual layers.

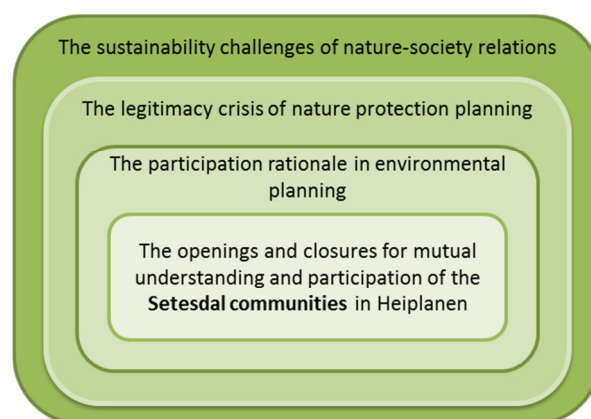


Figure 1.3 The relation of the meta-contextual understanding with the particular case.

Any research approach necessarily influences the possible research outcome (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). Many research approaches could therefore be said to be influenced by a system-rationality, or an institutional- or policy-logic. Research approaches that are influenced by the existing logics and pre-understandings of an institutional system will therefore also primarily produce knowledge that fits their theoretical assumptions. In the case of environmental planning many challenges and problems are based on established institutional understandings of the societal relation to nature (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). The role of research and knowledge development must therefore be to step out of these dominating perspectives in order to critically explore them from an emancipatory and dialectic perspective. Such a “step out” can in methodological terms be to enter the case from the “root-perspective” or phenomenological reality perception of the lifeworld (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009).

There are not many research traditions that explore the environmental problematic through an everyday life-oriented perspective. The everyday life perspective of nature protection is important to unfold broader perspectives of the local community relation to nature than the ones bound to the negotiation of particular (conflicting) interests. Such research interest requires a research approach that “enters” the situation through observations, interviews or engagement of local communities to explore their everyday life perspective of the context. The argument is not that the local everyday life perspective is a uniform or “true” understanding of reality. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the dissonance, or immanent critique, between established institutions and local life through a dual critical perspective. My role as a critical utopian action researcher has therefore been to challenge the existing understandings in the local and institutional sphere with each other, and in relation to broader societal, theoretical, and even normative perspectives of the environmental context.

This perspective has also influenced the research approach. Instead of approaching the empirical case from a political or institutional angle with the aim of analysing interest conflicts or policy discourse, this thesis aims to approach the *common* concern of the planning system and the local communities - the understanding and relation to nature. By experiencing and exploring the situation of Heiplanen from various sources and actors, I wanted to understand the complexity of the situation as well as contributing to improving it. The engagement with local communities and the parallel collaboration with institutional planning actors was not only a way of improving my understanding of the complexity by contrasting different perspectives, but also to encourage reflections with both these “spheres” about the barriers and potential of local participation in planning. The critical utopian action research approach was, in this sense, an attempt to “disturb” the existing planning logic. It was a search, *in collaboration* with both institutional planning actors and local communities, for potential new understandings and practices that could open the planning horizon for more deliberative democratic perspectives.

This endeavour is also reflected in the analytical perspective of the thesis. The first analytical “level” aimed to describe the development of the planning process chronologically, from both an institutional and community perspective. The descriptive analysis emphasized the different actor perceptions of knowledge,

nature and the role of participation, as a way of understanding the underlying conflicts in the process. Further, this description attempted to capture the emergent factors and critique that influenced and developed the actors' understandings during the process. Based on this, the second analytical "level" aimed to explore the discursive and experiential openings and closures in the environmental planning horizon for participation between the institutional planning system rationality and the local communities' everyday life perspective. That is, potentials and limitations for participation and deliberations across different rationalities that could influence the planning trajectory. The research *problématique* and analytical ambition is reflected in figure 1.4 that aims to connect the different parts of a research process into a conceptual whole. The research questions reflect these two analytical levels in four sub-questions, while the main research question tries to tie the overall understandings together.

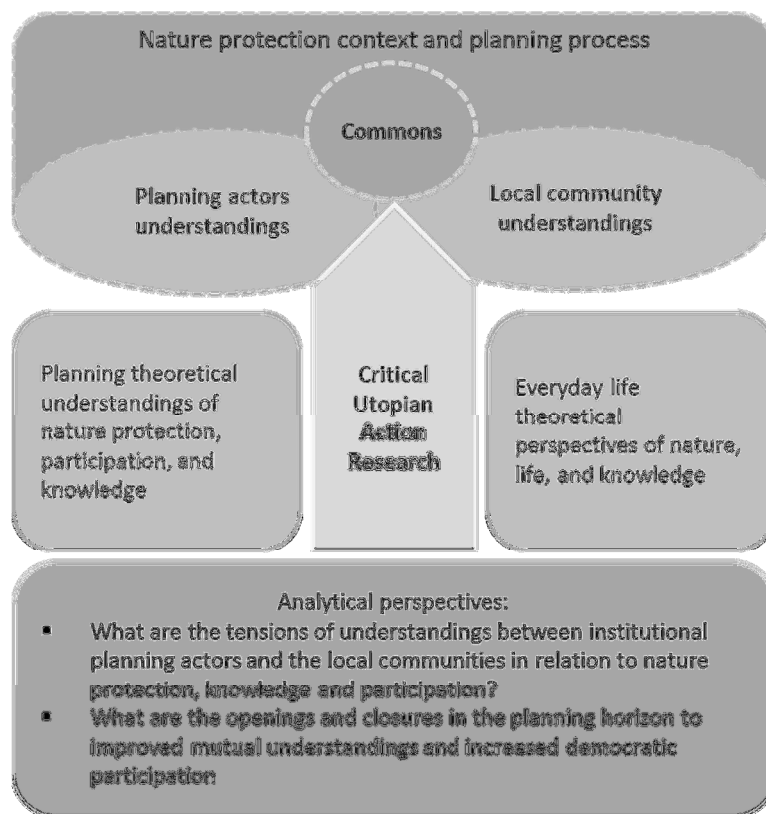


Figure 1.4 Synthesis of the conceptual research perspective

Research questions

- **What were the discursive and experiential openings and closures in the planning horizon of Heiplanen for deliberative democratic participation?**
- Why was nature protection planning so conflictual in municipalities and communities affected by Heiplanen?
- What were the different understandings of knowledge, nature protection, and participation at play among the local communities in Setesdal and the regional institutional perspectives, and how did they develop during the planning process?
- What constituted the openings and closures for improved mutual understandings and new participatory practices in Heiplanen among local communities in Setesdal and regional institutions, and how did it influence the Heiplanen process and outcome?
- What were the contributions of a critical utopian action research approach to the openings and closures of understanding and participation in Heiplanen?

The research presented in this thesis is embedded *in* a contested situation and partly created *with* the actors. The findings are thus at one level *case-particular* and related to local circumstances, changes and learning. However, they can also contain *common* perspectives when reflected in theoretical concepts and societal aspects. The case research can thus open both local and common knowledge dimensions through a reflective interpretation between local concrete experience (empirical material), like a decision making process, and abstract conceptual universals, like democracy (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010). The philosophical, theoretical, and methodological assumptions and the normative foundation behind any such knowledge claim and perspective, especially in contested realities, should be unfolded to open for critical scrutiny from the larger academic and societal sphere. This is the aim of writing this thesis.

Potentials and Limitations of this thesis

This thesis challenges different established epistemological, methodological, and theoretical approaches to nature and society relations. Such challenges require reflections. I have therefore found it necessary to “argue my way through” these challenges in the first part of this thesis, before presenting the empirical case and process. These epistemological and theoretical discussions shape the choices of the research approach and the analytical filter for my understandings and conclusions of the empirical reality.

This introduction has reasoned that nature protection cannot be understood as separate from the societal development trajectory. Nature protection must be related to the overall discussion about sustainability. I have argued that nature protection, as sustainability, cannot only be based on natural scientific

perspectives, but also must embrace the (collective) human perspective as a legitimate “other” perspective. This thesis thus theoretically argues that the involvement and deliberative participation of local communities generates a potential to understand nature (and society) through a *different* perspective than the planning system rationality. Deliberative local participation and the development of everyday life perspectives can thus contribute to improved nature “protection” – or more sustainable nature-society relations – which in the end will also be more legitimate. It is in the tension between these two “perspectives” that I point to the concept of *commons* as a possible third perspective to approach the procedural – as well as the substantial challenges in nature and society relations.

To explore this theoretically-based argument I have challenged the positivistic natural scientific approach to environmental planning and management, with a more critically-oriented and phenomenological understanding of “reality”. The role and purpose of “objective” natural scientific knowledge science is challenged by a critical theoretical perspective of science. In this sense, I argue that the researcher can not only “know” reality through the established perspectives (and dominating truths) in the policies and institutions. Reality must also be explored and challenged from the “other” perspective, namely the everyday life perspective of the local communities.

This epistemological understanding, along with my research motivation of opening for changes in the planning horizon, was therefore influential for the action research-based approach to the empirical case. The grounding perspective of action research, which searches for action and reflection with the participants in the process, was supplemented by a critical theoretical perspective. This critical utopian action research is not only a search for change, but a change based on the participants’ critical perspectives of the current system, and the utopian horizons for nature planning and management praxis related to the everyday life of the community and the broader (common) societal aspects and responsibilities.

These layers of theoretical reflections and understandings in combination with the empirical research and experiences created ground for analytical findings that contribute to answering the research questions. The thesis reveals that the nature protection conflicts mobilize dimensions beyond protection or use, local-central steering, or culture-nature values. The procedural steering conflict and the substantial socio-ecological conflict are thus also influenced by everyday life experiences and understandings of the particular area in past and present, and considerations of the future potential for living in the area. The regional scale of wild reindeer habitats generates a particular challenge in relation to local participation. It is therefore important to unfold the regional perspective on the local arena, and vice versa, allowing local understandings to participate in the regional planning arena.

This thesis uncovers the different understandings of knowledge, nature and participation among local and regional planning actors, and explores how the development of these understandings generates openings and closures in the planning horizon for more democratic participation. The research reveals that instrumentalization and naturalization of certain knowledge perspectives marginalizes and disqualifies

certain actors and meaning spheres from the process. In the same sense, some values might be communicated as “higher ranked” than others which neutralizes the potential of deliberating contrasting values on the planning arena. The planning horizon and the possibility for participation are in this sense closed when certain rationalities are qualified to pre-define the planning purpose.

The planning horizon was however, opened during the process through the qualification of other knowledge perceptions and nature values in the planning arena. The openings of the planning horizon were in this sense generated when the planning arena was opened for different knowledge and nature perception in an egalitarian deliberation. However, these openings were limited to involving the formal planning actors and deliberating the subject matter *within* the overall planning purpose. The process was thus not able to open the horizon *beyond* the system purpose rationality of nature protection, towards everyday life-based perceptive of nature and society relations.

This thesis does not argue that planning institutions are not necessary, but that they must learn to participate in the local arena – with the “small public” – in order to understand the planning purpose from a different perspective than what was defined from the planning institutional perspective. Planning must in this sense learn to work with a “reversed participation” in order to approach nature protection – and sustainability – from a lifeworld-based perspective. The thesis therefore also points to the methodological foundation of (critical utopian) action as a possible contributor to develop the planning institutional perceptions and praxis of participation.

The case of Heiplanen is one of nine regional wild reindeer planning efforts. Two similar planning processes were ongoing during the time period of this study: Rondane and Hardanger. This thesis has not analysed and compared the development of these planning processes in relation to Heiplanen. The analysis has thus not been interested in directly comparing different institutional approaches and outcomes. That would be an analysis of the institutional “success” in nature protection planning that would serve to reproduce the nature protection logic. Rather, this thesis has explored the openings and closures for new planning logics between institutions and communities. The findings of this thesis are therefore particular and specific. The local community perspectives are specific in time and space, and not findings about “general” local community perspectives, but an indication that local communities (in different ways and with different outcome) are potential contributors with a *different* perspective in environmental planning. The openings and closures of this particular planning horizon can thus *not* be used as “best” or “worst” practice scenarios in other planning processes. However, they can point to some more generic potentials and problems of the nature protection logic and the participatory rationale in planning.

The research context of this thesis can, as argued previously, be explored from many angles. One of the main contextual limitations of this thesis is that it focuses on the *spatial planning* perspective related to the wild reindeer habitat. The wild reindeer *herd management* perspective is not particularly treated. This is mainly because the institutional separation in Norway of spatial planning and herd management. The case

of Heiplanen did in this sense not specifically deal with the herd management perspective or its relevant stakeholders. However, the management questions were of course involved in the planning of the area.

1.5 Thesis structure

The thesis is, apart from this introduction and the conclusive chapter, structured in two main parts: a theoretical part that concerns fundamental theoretical and methodological perspectives that have influenced the research process and understanding. The second empirical part is concerned with a description of the case context, the research process in relation to the actual planning process of Heiplanen, and the analytical findings. The final chapter is devoted to “conclusive perspectives” that answer the research questions and discusses them in a wider perspective.

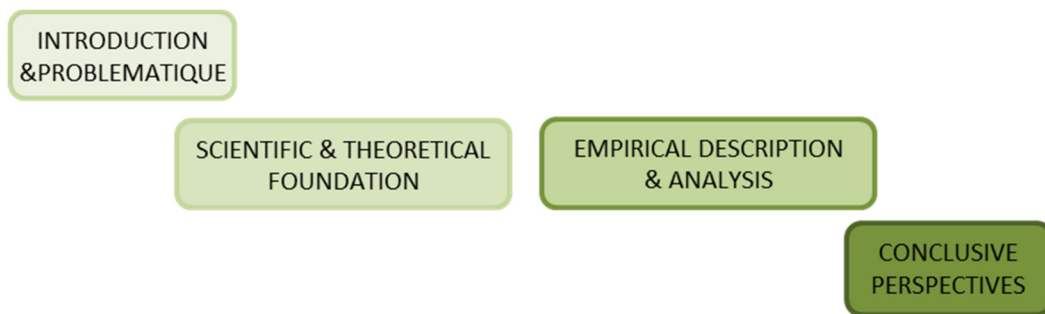


Figure 1.5 Thesis structure

Part I Scientific and theoretical foundation

Chapter 2: My epistemological understanding unfolds how I understand the production of knowledge in relation to critical theory and action research. The chapter is thus an attempt to argue my way from a more natural scientific perspective of nature planning research, towards a phenomenological, critical, and change-oriented perspective of research. The chapter seeks to link my epistemological understanding with the choice of methodology in relation to the specific case.

Chapter 3: Planning, everyday life and the perspective of the commons describes the development of the theoretical planning tradition particularly in relation to nature, participation and knowledge, and challenges this perspective with an everyday life perspective of participation in nature planning. Lastly, this chapter attempts to unfold a perspective of the commons that can address the arena between institutional and everyday life perspectives of nature and planning.

Chapter 4: Research methods, process and roles operationalize the epistemological foundation. The choice of case is described along with the particular research phases during the planning process, and the different research roles involved. It further discusses and reflects on the validity and ethics of the research process and findings.

Chapter 5: The analytical framework operationalizes the theoretical discussions. It unfolds the two levels of analysis: the institutional and everyday life understandings of knowledge, nature and participation, and their development during the process; and the openings and closures in the planning horizon for mutual understandings and democratic participation.

Part II Empirical description and analysis

Chapter 6: Wild reindeer, people, and environmental planning introduces the context and particular challenges. It describes the population ecology and habitat of wild reindeer, and the (historical) human use of mountain areas, with particular attention to Setesdal. The aim of the chapter is to give a contextual introduction to the *problématique* that influences the very premises of the planning process of Heiplanen.

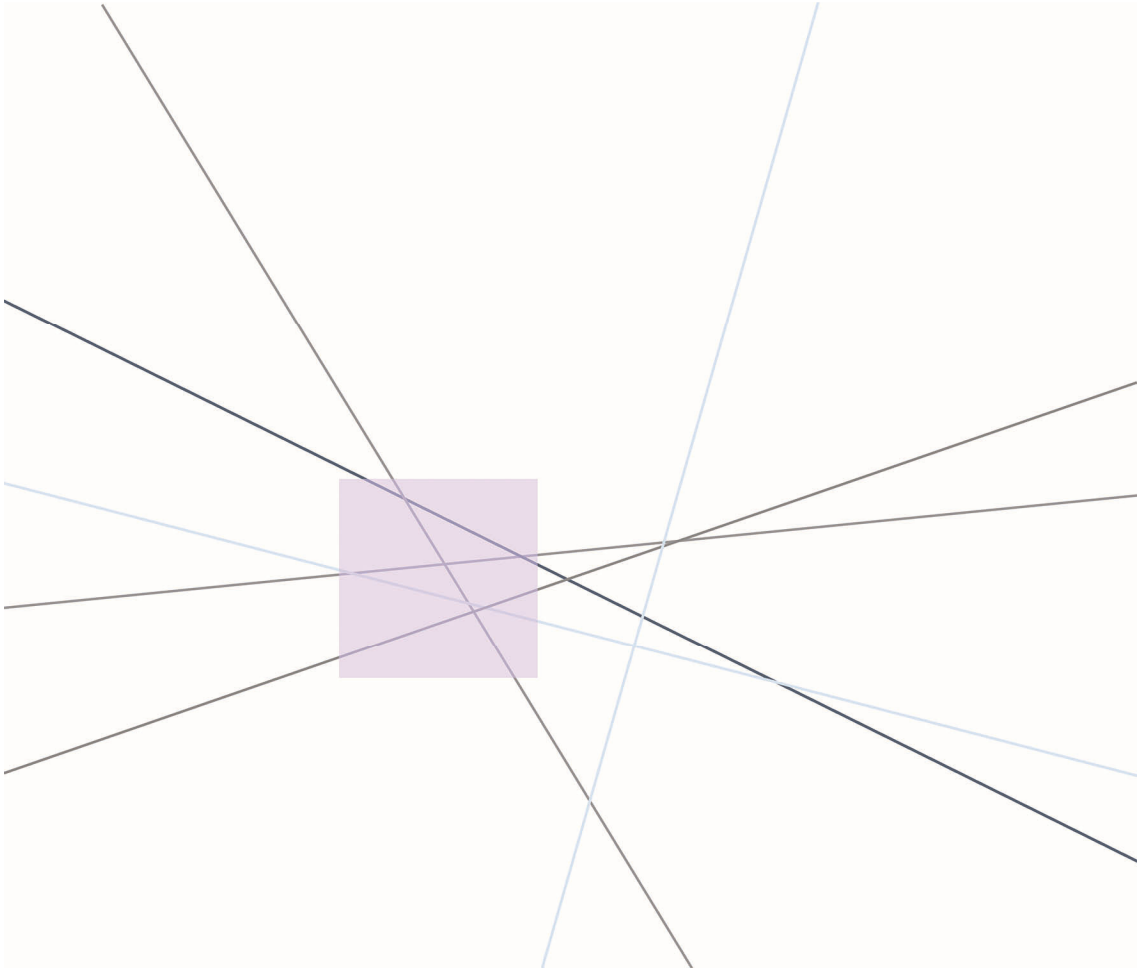
Chapter 7: The chronology of Heiplanen and the process in Setesdal unfolds, describes and interprets the development of the Heiplanen process, from the policy process prior to the planning operationalization, through the formal planning process and the informal participation process in Setesdal, to the development of a dialogue based “semi-formal” planning process, and finally to the “post-planning process” and the formal plan approval. The description and interpretation is particularly focused on the understandings of knowledge, nature, and the role of participation from the institutional planning actors and the local communities respectively. Each subchapter is concluded with a partial analysis, while the entire chapter ends with an overall conclusive analysis of the planning process.

Chapter 8: Openings and closures of the planning horizon is devoted to the critical utopian analysis of the planning process and the role of action research. The chapter seeks to analyse the influencing factors and communications that created openings and closures of improved understandings and participation during the planning process, and not least reflect on the role of critical utopian action research in this process and its implications for planning.

Chapter 9: Conclusive perspectives attempt to summarize the analytical findings to answer my initial research questions, as well as point to some further perspectives.

Part I

Scientific and Theoretical foundation



2. My epistemological understanding

This chapter seeks to describe the way I think about “the reality” (ontology) and how I believe I can perceive and understand this reality (epistemology) in order to create new perspectives of complex societal phenomena (“knowledge”). The way we perceive the world is influential for our understanding of the world. The process of creating “knowledge” about complex phenomena is therefore inherently based on subjective mental frameworks, as well as influenced by inter-subjective understandings (culture and theories) and societal norms (institutions). The recognition of science and research as inevitable “value-laded” and “subjective” introduces the necessity of a critical dimension in knowledge production, as well as transparency in the research process to allow academic and public scrutiny. The critical dimension attempts to reflexively challenge meaning and power structures in existing reality, empirically as well as theoretically, to open for new interpretations, knowledge creations, and development paths. Such dialectic tension is, however, not only a theoretical exercise, but also, at the empirical level, a possibility for reflecting the phenomenological perspective of the “reality” through an action research-based approach.

2.1. A democratic perspective of knowledge

(Scientific) Knowledge and research are intertwined with, and at times even guiding, societal development. Yet, knowledge is a pluralistic and relative phenomenon that can involve different “truths” to the same object. Knowledge production about societal (and natural) phenomena can, in other words, be contested, and different philosophical, theoretical and methodological approaches can develop different knowledge claims (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009; Irwin 2001; Svensson & Nielsen 2006).

The natural scientific (positivist) ideal perceives research as a distanced “objective” activity separated from the human culture and democratic values. Such epistemological perspective creates an authoritative distance, and even hierarchical relation, between (scientific) knowledge and social development agendas. Following this line, scientific knowledge can be converted to an instrumental and authoritarian tool for directing (technocratic) societal development horizons (Elling 2008; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b; Svensson & Nielsen 2006). Knowledge can, in other words, be used as a powerful tool (argument) for directing societal development in certain directions. If, however, we recognize the development of knowledge (research) as a process of inter-subjective and societal “self-understanding” in relation to development and materiality, then we must also consider how the knowledge production supports or challenges established meaning structures and development agendas. (Social) Research and knowledge development should therefore integrate a (self) critical perspective of its underlying presumptions and consider what kind of established development perspectives it supports (Svensson & Nielsen 2006). Scientific knowledge and research cannot “prove” the right thing to do in societal development, but must be seen as an important contribution in an overall *democratic process that critically considers various knowledge and value perspectives* (Irwin 2001; Svensson & Nielsen 2006).

The idea of linking research with a democratic norm arose at the time of the Second World War among several (social and human) academic disciplines. The critical theoretical line of thought argued that research should be critical not only to the academic discipline of theoretical development and methodological perspectives (i.e. the dispute with positivism), but also to the very *material structure of the society* and its systems of domination and exclusion. Research should thus produce knowledge at a critical distance of societal power agents and emphasize a dialectic tension between existing undemocratic aspects and the alternative realities. This emancipatory cognitive interest was aimed at scrutinizing the societal development and the influence of technical rational knowledge in relation to democratic aspects (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009;Elling 2008). Another line of thought in relation to democratic research was introduced as *action research* by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s who considered the role of research as a more direct reforming agent, but with a critical attention of not being integrated into the existing reified meaning structures in society (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). Research was in this perspective not only a matter of developing abstract societal perspectives, but about developing knowledge in participation with actors of the situation in order to change the societal situation (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a;Nielsen 2004).

The interrelation between science and society has during the last decades been discussed in relation to how science can contribute to the development of society. Conceptualized as a “Mode II” relation between science and society, Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons (2001) argue that research should include a pragmatic (instrumental) knowledge orientation, instead of universal “truths”. In my perspective the idea of Mode II research is on the one hand appealing, because it recognizes the societal dimension of research and creates room for a more participatory approach to knowledge production. On the other hand, however, it represents a problem in relation to the critical role of research in society and the development of more common knowledge dimensions. Svensson and Nielsen (2006) argue that the problem of the “Mode II”-thinking is not its participatory dimension, but the lack of a critical perspective to what and whose interests the research pursues. They problematize that the mere instrumentalization of science for development purposes can be used to legitimize certain agendas. Their argument is that any participatory research must also include a more critical perspective that can challenge the established perspectives and pursue a more *common* knowledge dimension in relation to the democratic development of society.

In the field of environmental planning these epistemological discussions are particular relevant considering the objectivity and role of knowledge in such planning processes. The planning of the environment is an area of society where natural scientific knowledge is influential on premises and decision making, and its objectivity is seldom questioned (Brunner & Steelman 2005). The ethos of “knowledge-based planning” is thus primarily based on natural scientific knowledge. Natural scientific knowledge is, however, also integrated in a larger meaning, value, and (cultural) theoretical framework that can enable one knowledge position over another, and in an instrumental perspective, support one interest over another (Irwin 2001;Latour 2004;van der Aa 2009;Wynne 1996). The “authoritative” role of natural science can, in an environmental planning perspective, challenge its democratic foundation. The conduct of research in such a

planning context must therefore consider both the dilemma of objective or subjective knowledge, and the challenge of distanced or participatory research.

The research approach presented in this thesis was designed and based on these considerations. It was thus inspired by both the critical theoretical perspective and by the action research perspective. The critical theoretical perspective contributed with considerations about how to challenge established “truths” in a dialectic process of considering alternative realities. The action research perspective inspired the participatory dimension of creating knowledge with the involved actors in a process of changing the existing reality. My research approach and position is in this sense in a double tension in relation to knowledge production. On the hand, I attempt to challenge conventional distanced research with the democratic participatory knowledge perspective of action research. On the other hand, I seek to challenge the pragmatic instrumental knowledge use in societal development, with a critical theoretical perspective on the role of knowledge in society. One could say that the positivistic “ghost” of knowledge is present at both “sides” of this tension: in relation to a conventional research position it appears as the belief in science as a higher order or “objective” knowledge. In relation to the pragmatic research perspective it appears as a belief in the instrumentalization of knowledge for societal development. The purpose of this chapter is to explain how I have tried to deal with this dilemma through critical theory and action research, and how this has informed the *critical utopian action research* approach of this thesis.

2.2. Philosophical inspirations and understandings

“In addressing environmental matters, we are unavoidably addressing the very constitution of society.”
(Irwin 2001, p. 184)

What are the ideas of Society and Nature that this thesis works with? In my understanding, “the reality” of these two concepts differs; “Nature” represents a “hard core” physical entity that we can sense and feel through our conscious (and unconscious) experiences. Nature is in other words material. “Society” is our perception, understanding, and (social) actions in this “material” world, our social constructions of our reality. This thesis (in its most ambitious moments) aims to analyze how our different social constructions of nature are part of subjective and inter-subjective mental frameworks and discourses, and how these influence how we act in “Nature”. Contrary, it also recognizes that these social constructions of reality are influenced by the very material nature we are inherently part of as humans and collective society. This perspective is perhaps especially relevant when addressing issues of sustainability and nature protection planning, where the materiality is highly influential for our perceptions and values of the societal development path. My assumption is that there are different social constructions, or a variety of subjective and inter-subjective understandings and experiences of nature present in a planning process. These (in)form a range of different discourses, institutions, and constitutional acts of the societal relation and inter-action with nature. Vice versa, these human understandings and societal actions influence the very state of “Nature”. The environmental planning horizon is in this sense understood as being influenced by

perceptions of knowledge, nature and participation; in an iteratively developing meaning construction. The planning horizon in this sense relates the social planning process with the material subject matter of planning and oriented towards the impending. It is in other words, the interrelatedness between nature and the social; our common environment, that is the area of interest in this thesis. This interrelatedness is not an absolute frozen structure, but a relation with openings for new understandings and iterative changes by social actors and institutions (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a).

The relation object and subject, or the researcher and the researched, does not have a clear distinction in this research project. The researchers sense making (analysis) is interrelated with the analysis of the case actors, the broader societal context, and theoretical perspectives, and vice versa, in a reflexive interpretive sense (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). The epistemological perspective of this research is therefore phenomenological, in the sense that understanding and meaning is created inter-subjectively through our perception of the world and in our social communication (with it). The phenomenological perspective in addition implies a *lifeworld* world perspective (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). Perception, sense making and understanding of the world is made through our “whole being” in life, and not through perspectives related to specific “roles” or out-differentiated rationalities in life⁵. The lifeworld perspective is a possibility to understand nature protection from a more holistic and diversified rationality than the institutional perspective. It can embrace different (and sometimes contrasting or ambiguous) meaning perspectives or rationalities, but also opens for the human life perspective of “reality”; or what Habermas considers as the communicative rationality (Elling 2008). The phenomenological approach to understand reality can in this sense inquire into everyday life concerns in our practical doings (experiences) and in our abstract thinking (reflections). It represents ambiguities, contradictions, and self-referential closures, but also openings for new meaning creation and developments of practice. Phenomenological analyses relates the *objective* (the material “things” in time and space), with the *subjective* (our experience and understanding of the “things”), and the *inter-subjective* (the “things” in relation to our common lifeworld) (Smith 2007). The phenomenological perspective is an important aspect of the (critical utopian) action research approach to reality. Such an approach does not only attempt to understand reality with the participants of the context, but also seeks to challenge and improve these understandings and practice through reflections and new experiences (I will return to this in the section on action research).

The question of sustainability (or nature protection) cannot only rely on adhering to existing perspectives from established institutions or theories. The question of sustainability must also be explored in relation to the lifeworld (or everyday life) perspectives that can embrace a broader, although more ambiguous reality to understand, challenge and change current societal development trajectories (Elling 2008; 2010). It is through the analysis and understanding of the tension between the institutional perspectives and the

⁵ The Habermasian lifeworld concept integrates moral, esthetic, and instrumental rationalities into a communicative rationality. These rationalities are in the system perspective out-differentiated into separate rationalities that are oriented to fulfill certain purposes of e.g. efficiency, trustworthiness, etc. (Elling 2008). This is further described in the theoretical chapter in relation to the collaborative planning foundation.

phenomenological lifeworld-oriented (and everyday life) perspectives that it becomes possible to point to new horizons for the environmental planning that can handle deliberation of everyday life perspectives as a democratic constituent for sustainability (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007).

Complex social phenomena, like the challenges of environmental planning, are difficult to understand from a narrow methodological approach. In this thesis I have been inspired by three different methodological perspectives: methodological pluralism, reflexive methodology, and critical utopian action research. Midgley (2000) operates with the concept of methodological pluralism as a way of understanding a situation from different angles by intervening through different methods. It is not a Feyerabendsk “anything goes”, but a critical logic of methods that constitutes a better whole, as well as a flexible pragmatic practice that can adapt to the evolvement of the case. Midgley (2000) argues that methodological pluralism requires critical questioning of the underlying rationale or philosophy of each methodology in relation to how it approaches, affects, and creates understanding about the phenomena. Midgley’s systemic perspective of “creating a better whole” through a plural methodological framework is thus not only pragmatic. It also involves a *critical reflective perspective* of considering the philosophical foundation of each methodology and its relation to the contextual field. In similar patterns, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) propose a *reflexive methodology* that suggests different empirical research approaches, as well as different levels of interpretation to reach a broader and deeper understanding of the situation. The inspiration from the critical utopian action research emphasizes the relation between the researcher and the researched, action and reflection, and local experience and theory. The critical action research perspective accentuates the potential of changes in “reality”. Research is, in this sense, not only a question of understanding the current reality, but also to search, in participation with the affected actors, for alternative *critical utopian horizons*. The research process is thus both a facilitation of “space” for generating collective dialectic perspectives and changes about the situation, *and* a reflective analytical research perspective of the immanent critique of the situation and the potential alternatives.

These methodological aspects of pluralism, reflexive interpretation, and action/reflection are relevant for this research project in its attempt to understand different perspectives of nature society relations at play in a particular environmental planning process, *and* facilitate changes in that process. This project has, within a critical utopian action research approach, combined conventional qualitative methods with interactive and critical utopian methods. This combination enabled the researcher and the participants to contrast the institutional perspectives of an ongoing planning process with the broader everyday life perspectives of nature and community, and to learn and reflect on possible improvements during the process. The different methodological approaches made it possible to explore the “dissonances” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009) or the immanent critique emerging in the case, and reflexively improve the participatory research approach and theoretical understanding (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b) (I will come back to this in the action research section).

The following paragraphs will introduce the (philosophical and methodological) inspiration from critical theory and hermeneutics, and relate these to different action research approaches. Finally, I link my theory of knowledge to the particular empirical context and the resulting research approach of this thesis.

2.3. Critical Theoretical inspiration

The core of Critical Theory is to explore and understand societal phenomenon by challenging established or dominating cultural-political presumptions about “reality”. Critical Theory is in this sense an interpretative approach to societal phenomena within a critical perspective of existing society; a critical hermeneutic approach to reflect on the immanent critique of such phenomena (Willig 2007). Deep structures of social phenomena are interpreted in relation to a historic and cultural context in order to shed light on how existing power structures and dominating discourses influence and reproduce these phenomena. The interest of knowledge is thus to develop an emancipatory perspective in a theoretical and empirical perspective, as “independent” or distanced theory, and to unfold the dialectic tension in society (and in humans) between *what is* and *what could be* (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009;Elling 2008;Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

Critical Theory originated in the inter-war period with the establishment of the Frankfurter School in the 1920s. The main researchers associated with early critical theory are Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Benjamin and Fromm. Early critical theory was concerned with materialism and interdisciplinary inquiry of how societal structures and dynamics influence individuals. During the Second World War a period of cultural pessimism influenced this thinking. In the 1960s critical theory entered a phase of defining itself anew in relation to theory, methodology, and empirical matters by focusing on the (communicative) inter-subjective understanding of society. The latest “wave” argues for a reflexive sociology in empirical matters, as well as in methodological and theoretical perspectives (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009;Delanty and Strydom 2003;Willig 2007).

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) focus on the inter-subjective contribution of Habermas, and the idea of dialogue arenas and communicative action through mutual understandings. The Habermasian ideas have (re-)positioned Critical Theory (Delanty & Strydom 2003) and have strongly influenced societal ideas of steering and planning (Amdam 2005;Elling 2008;Flyvbjerg 1998). In my perspective, the idea of improved mutual understanding through dialogue arenas is important in contested situations, because it creates a theoretical understanding of the potential of “movements” in seemingly conflicting perspectives. This is in contrast to the Foucault-inspired perspective of “real conflicts” that considers the Habermasian inspired democratic process ideals as naïve in the meeting with power and interests (Flyvbjerg 1998). In this thesis, the ideas of Habermas are used as a way of opening the *potentiality* of creating mutual understanding through dialogue, instead of focusing on “real” conflicts in a situation as frozen realities or reified structures.

In a thesis dealing with the (challenging) relations of nature and society within a critical perspective it is, however, also relevant to include the early critical theoretical perspectives that had a strong critique of modern societal rationality and the relation to nature (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). The early critical theorists problematized the positivist approach to social phenomena for being unable to grasp the essence of the modern societal *problématique*. In an interdisciplinary framework they combined theories of the individual (psychoanalysis) with societal theories of economics and sociology to analyze structures in the current modern society in relation to culture and politics (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009), and the domination of nature (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). Adorno and Horkheimer criticized modern society's fundamental authoritarian nature relation, where the development of society is dependent on nature as a resource, and thus human society as a dominating force in nature. Such logic of domination serves to separate human beings and cultures from their inherent nature relations. Nature becomes reduced, objectified, and alienated from the human esthetic perspectives and sensational relations (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). The nature domination logic is also influential on the understanding of what kind of knowledge about nature that is considered legitimate. The rational cognitive observation of nature as an object is thus valued differently in environmental planning than the esthetically perceived and experientially lived relation to nature. Although social constructivism has challenged the positivistic paradigm in social science and research, it has not changed the dualistic relationship to our cognitive perception of nature. Natural sciences are still considered the legitimate knowledge providers of "nature", whereas aesthetic perspectives are considered romantic voids (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a) (this will be discussed further in the theoretical and analytical chapters).

In this thesis these critical perspectives of how the dominating societal rationality relates to nature are relevant, because it is this relation that constitutes the essence of our conception of nature protection and use, and lays the foundation for our perception of legitimate value and knowledge claims in environmental planning; i.e. shapes the planning horizon (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Nielsen and Nielsen 2005; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). The planning process (or horizon) is thus understood differently dependent on the perception of knowledge and nature (Innes & Booher 2010). (Dominating) Institutional rationalities of a plan purpose can, in this sense, disqualify other (local or layman) perceptions of nature and knowledge, based on the objectivity and legitimacy of natural scientific knowledge and nature ideals. "Other" perspectives than the "institutionalized" can thus be marginalized as illegitimate and restrict the possibility of participating in the deliberation of the subject matter. A critical research perspective can contribute to challenge established and dominating perceptions in a dialectic and emancipatory perspective. This theoretical perspective will be the theme of the following paragraph.

The Critical Theoretical Research Positions

"[...]research on the basis of an emancipatory cognitive interest which critically interprets various empirical phenomena, with the purpose of stimulating self-reflection and overcoming blockages of established institutions and modes of thought" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p.160)

Critical Theory defines itself as a contrast to traditional theory in a normative, epistemological, and methodological perspective. Science is not perceived as a neutral “truth”, but as constructed knowledge perspectives that are embedded in existing societal structures and vice versa influencing or reproducing political and societal discourses. That is why science must seek to be independent of established power structures and (academic) conceptual frameworks, in order to pursue a democratic and emancipatory obligation, as a contrast to authoritarian structures and meaning systems and towards a more just world (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren 2005). The cognitive emancipatory interest is concerned with the *collective* aspects of how we want to organize, create, and collaborate towards a more genuine democratic society liberated of dominating power structures. These collective emancipatory aspects are complemented by an individual perspective of emancipation, where the “human” as such is brought to the centre of attention for developing perspectives of how *we want to live* as humans independent of the ties of society, and in a collective whole as a society (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). In a sustainability perspective, such phenomenological approaches to understanding how citizens perceive and reflect on potential developments paths, are important to challenge the existing course of society.

These normative perspectives of Critical Theory are linked to a core epistemological concern of bringing the *dialectic tension* of what “*could be*” into play as a negation of the existing reality (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). Critical theory is, in other words, not concerned with “correlations” between phenomena, but with the structures behind these phenomena, as a critique of the existing societal structures in the tension of alternative “realities”. Social phenomena and “structures” are understood as part of or result of a certain history and culture, interests and power. The task of the research(er) is to reveal the relations between the apparent “fixed” (reified) social structures and the larger contextual frame by which they are influenced. The creation of knowledge should in this sense not only be directed at criticizing dominant structures, but also to critically engage in opening the dominating discourses that work as discursive closures for deliberating new courses for development on a democratic arena (Deetz 1992)⁶. The critical researcher in this way contrasts and questions the “existing reality” to open horizons for other perspectives of development (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). The researcher must therefore explore the immanent critique of the studied phenomena (Willig 2007). The idea of social changeable realities constitutes a fundamental purpose in Critical Theory: to emphasize that the world of tomorrow need not to be a reproduction of today. The dialectic tension – or utopian dimension – is thereby closely connected to the emancipatory perspective, both on a collective and individual level (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). The “outliving” of the dialectic tension is in other words an emancipatory endeavour.

In a context of environmental *problématiques* these critical perspectives are relevant to bridge collective and individual actions with perspectives of change. In the environmental context, there is a broad understanding that the ecological crisis of today is linked to the way we perceive and relate to nature as society, and that we need to challenge and radically change our way of thinking and doing to be able to

⁶ This conceptualization of discursive closures for democratic participation is further developed in in Chapter 5 as a framework for analysing openings and closures in the environmental planning horizon.

approach these situations in new ways (Blackmore 2007; Elling 2008; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Nielsen, Elling, & Jelsoe 2010; Woodhill & Röling 1998). There is in other words a need to challenge the dominating structures, rationalities, and discourses of our society by exploring the immanent critique in between discourses in “reality”; and to open the dialectic dimension of nature-society relations through emancipatory research and praxis.

The endeavour to avoid reproduction of authoritative structures requires research(ers) that are independent and critically distanced to established and dominating institutions and discourses (Kincheloe & McLaren 2005). This implies a self-critical ability that questions how the researcher’s conceptual and theoretical understandings contribute to re-produce or challenge authoritarian structures. In other words, a meta-theoretical reflection on how the theoretical and epistemological perspective influences the understanding of reality. Academic institutions and research communities, like other institutions, contain underlying assumptions that can reproduce certain theoretical truths and societal attitudes. The scientific community can thus in itself be a dominating structure in society and as such reproduce authoritarian practices and institutions (Svensson & Nielsen 2006). The self-critical and meta-theoretical perspective is therefore an important fundament in a methodological perspective: the questioning of personal (philosophical), theoretical, and empirical assumptions (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009).

In an environmental context – such scientific reproduction of authoritarian structures could be exemplified by a “root metaphor” (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009) [p. 126] in the natural resource management sciences. The metaphor of “The Tragedy of the Commons” was planted by Garrett Hardin (among others) in 1960s in a post Second World War perspective of the limited natural resources of the Earth and the world increasing population (Hardin 1968). His game theory suggested that individuals would act as “free-riders”, exploiting natural resources for their own benefit, if there were no central authorities that could regulate the use. The game theory thus presupposed a human behaviour that was reduced to act within an economic rationality, and assumed that a (distanced) central power would be more apt to manage the resource. This essay had enormous consequences for the thinking of natural resource management as a strategic state concern, and of natural science as a key provider of objective knowledge about “nature”. This “root metaphor” has survived in the (especially natural scientific) institutional and societal discourse for decades, and been reproduced by research projects that have contributed to affirm its underlying rationale. It influenced the nature management theories and the educational system, and consequently the normative perspective of the nature management institutions (Laerhoven van & Ostrom 2007). The understanding of nature as a *resource* was supported and reproduced by the positivistic natural science perspective that favoured a central expert-led management based on technical and natural sciences (Brunner & Steelman 2005; Dietz, Ostrom, & Stern 2003; Nelson, Howden, & Smith 2008). Elinor Ostrom challenged this perspective in the 1990s by critically questioning the very assumptions behind the societal and academic discourse of the “Tragedy of the Commons”. In short, she criticized the established assumptions of an “omnipotent” central state agent as the best suitable approach to natural resource management, as well as the assumption that humans are entirely steered by economic rationality (Dietz, Ostrom, & Stern 2003; Ostrom 1990). This

example illustrates how certain “scientific” assumptions can serve to generate authoritative structures and discourses in society, and therefore it accentuates the necessity of self-criticism in science.

From a post-structuralist perspective the meta-theoretical perspectives of Critical Theory are criticized for naivety; both in the attempt to emancipate from “dominating meaning systems” and to “reveal hidden structures”. From a post-modern view it is more relevant to interpret the actual reality and power plays in a particular situation (as in planning) (Flyvbjerg 1998). These critiques of the meta-theoretical perspective are related to a more general critique of Critical Theory that is concerned with its underdeveloped empirical relation and over-emphasized theoretical focus. This emphasis on the theoretical aspect of research is criticized for invoking a distance that can create “blind-spots” to emerging perspectives in empirical material that are ungraspable for any current theory. This critique also targets the weak empirical inquiry perspective in Critical Research and thus the lack of applied methods to fieldwork (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009).

The theoretical and empirical relations and some methodological implications in critical theoretical hermeneutics

Critical Theory has a higher abstraction level than empirical-based knowledge in its attempt to include the historical, political, and ideological dimension of social phenomena. The contextual focus is thus not “disciplinary”, but rather related to areas in society where there is a “dissonance” that can be unfolded in relation to societal “structures” and meaning systems (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009). The research concern is to question the context and the underlying assumptions and norms that have influenced the current reality, in order to query their apparent legitimacy. There is in other words an interest for exploring the immanent critique of the empirical reality. Critical theory, however does not perceive empirical reality as the “whole” truth because it, in itself, does not open for broader societal insights. In this sense, the empirical material is not generally considered the core concern for research, because observations and interviews cannot directly “reveal” the deeper societal structures. In a dialectic perspective an empirical focus might freeze our understanding of the existing and close or blur the normative perspective of alternative realities. The role of the empirical material is thus to be understood *as part of a whole*, that needs supplementing perspectives and pre-understandings to reveal a larger “whole” and to reach greater understanding. This interpretative perspectives is closely related to the hermeneutic circle and Gadamer’s interpretative argument of understanding as an iterative process (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009).

The hermeneutic circle can be criticised for being tautological because it moves in a circle where the understanding of one part presupposes the understanding of the “whole” (context), and the understanding thus moves in a closed self-referential circle. However, it opens for a continuous reflective understanding of phenomena that cannot be reached from mere correlations between phenomena. In a hermeneutic interpretation it is thus necessary to critically define your points of entry to the circle or the parts and context that are included in the circle (Taylor 1971). The hermeneutic “spiral” of understanding seeks to relate the (pre) understanding of the parts with the (pre) understanding of the whole to reach a greater

understanding than mere common sense. In this way, the interpretative perspective of Gadamer also emphasises that individual and societal meaning structures are not (absolutely) frozen and measurable, but dynamic and changeable meaning spheres that can fuse and develop new inter-subjective understandings (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). In the context of nature protection, or environmental planning, the interpretation of such tensions between different subjective understandings can thus reveal potentials and limitations (or openings and closures) for new inter-subjective and alternative meaning orientations of the common matter of concern.

Alvesson and Skjöldberg (2009) argue that critical interpretation is particularly relevant when the context demonstrates contested and problematic conceptions and when influencing concepts can be traced back to some kind of dominating ideology or political elite. Deetz (1992) further argues that critical research must attempt to reveal how dominating structures can control the (undemocratic) communication and participation in decision making, and serve to construct discursive closures in the meaning creation. I would argue that the contested relationship between nature and society is a context that is influenced by contested discourses and practices, as well as dominating meaning models and ideologies. It is thus not enough to understand the parts (e.g. a particular nature protection process) in relation to the “whole” (sustainability at large). It is necessary to interpret this “hermeneutic circle” through critical perspectives on societal rationalities, dominating institutional discourses, and everyday life perspectives that are “feeding into” the contested discourses on the parts and the “wholes”. This direct link between critical theory and empirical reality has not been very well developed by the critical theoretical tradition (which is also one of its main points of criticism).

Theoretical knowledge is, in critical hermeneutics, the counter balance to empirical material that enables a deeper interpretation of the material. According to Alvesson and Skjöldberg (2009) Critical Theory works with three theoretical levels in the interpretative process. The first layer is aimed at understanding the “real” contextual situation and the actors’ perception of this situation in relation to the grounding of their worldview. The second layer is used to analyse this situation in relation to a broader societal context and detect the “noise” or contested parts of these meaning structures (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). A third layer aims to tease out the hidden structures and tacit cultural dynamics that have affected the social meanings, and whose contrast and negation can open for new perspectives and emancipatory findings (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren 2005). The theory thus serves as a critical distance to the empirical situation and reveals (invisible) structures that influence certain development paths and close alternative perspectives. It is thus the theoretical perspective in the interpretation process that counteracts the potential “vicious cycle” where assumptions or societal discourses are simply reproduced in a spiral of tautological understanding

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) have developed a *reflexive methodological* framework for working empirically within the meta-theoretical perspectives of Critical Theory (figure 2.1). This framework for critical hermeneutics is constituted by a triple “leveled” interpretive process (but where the interpretation

reflectively slides between the levels). The perspective of “levels” is inspired by Giddens’ concept of “double hermeneutics” that seeks to illustrate that the researcher interpretation of reality, takes its point of departure in a reality that is already interpreted by the actors in the field (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2009). In the framework by Alvesson and Skoldberg the first “level” of interpretation is concerned with the “direct” subject and inter-subjective understanding of a situation, interviews, observations, etc. The second “level” is the researcher’s interpretation of the (already interpreted) situation to reveal underlying meanings and relations in the situation. The third (critical interpretative) “level” is concerned with the previous interpretations in relation to how dominating perspectives of politics, ideology, and culture affect the situation and the meaning system (or self- interpretation) of the situation. The third level thus creates the critical distance to the empirical material, and opens for a more thorough analysis of how the situation is affected, and reproduced, by dominating institutions, discourses, or cultures, and in this way attempt to avoid “the vicious cycle”. Inspired by a post-modern perspective, Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) adds a fourth “level” to the interpretation, that deals with how the empirical material is presented, what is left out or not taken into account. This level could also be seen a self- reflective “level” of how the researcher relates to both empirical and theoretical perspectives in the process of communicating the findings.

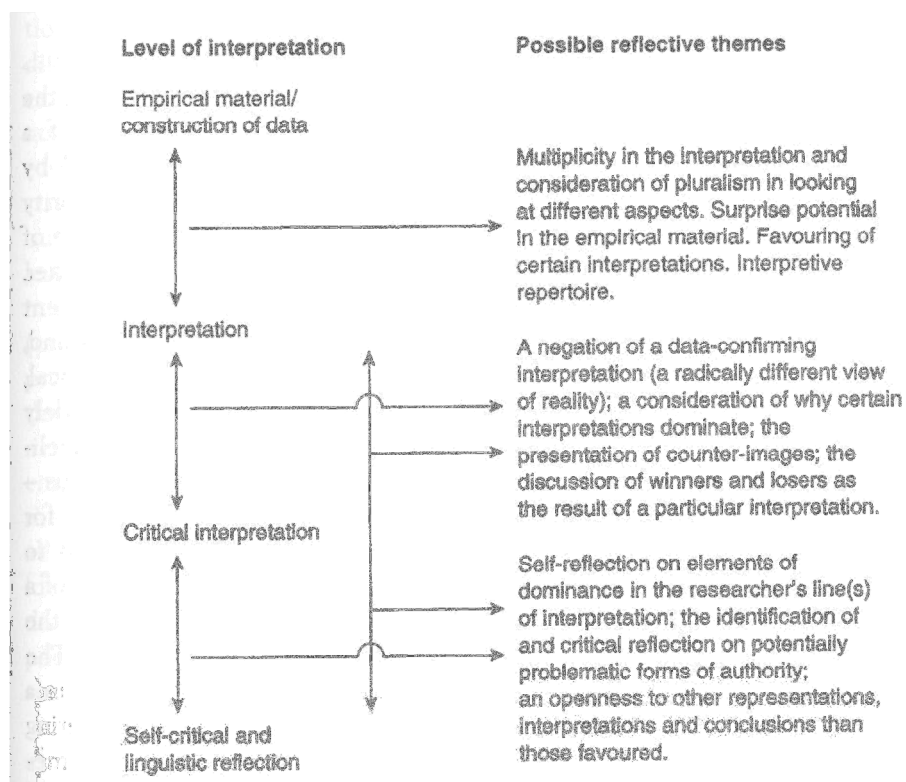


Figure 2.6 The interaction between different levels of interpretation (Alvesson and Skjoldberg, 2009, p.277)

Quadri-hermeneutics is thus a four “level” interpretation that embraces the direct interaction with empirical material, the interpretive tradition, the critical perspective, and the post-modern critique. The number of levels should not be perceived as a step-wise analytical pathway, but rather as a reflective and

interpretative flow between the different levels of interpretation. The different levels are thus not hierarchical, but rather open for reflections in the double sense; each “level” is reflected in relation to the empirical situation, but each “level” is also reflected in the interpretative understandings of the “other” levels. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) in this way argue for a *reflexive* process where interpretations are reflected between the abstract theoretical and the contextual empirical “level”, but can also be reflected in the interpretative perspectives at each level. Perspectives from one level can thus endure insights at other levels. Alvesson and Sköldbberg consider the breadth and variation of the “interpretative repertoire” an important qualitative aspect of the framework because that lays the premises for what you are ultimately able to interpret. The framework must therefore be challenged with meta-theoretical reflections on the multiplicity of interpretations in the material and how different theoretical positions relate to these (figure 2.2). The different levels of interpretations are in other words also challenges by meta-theoretical considerations.

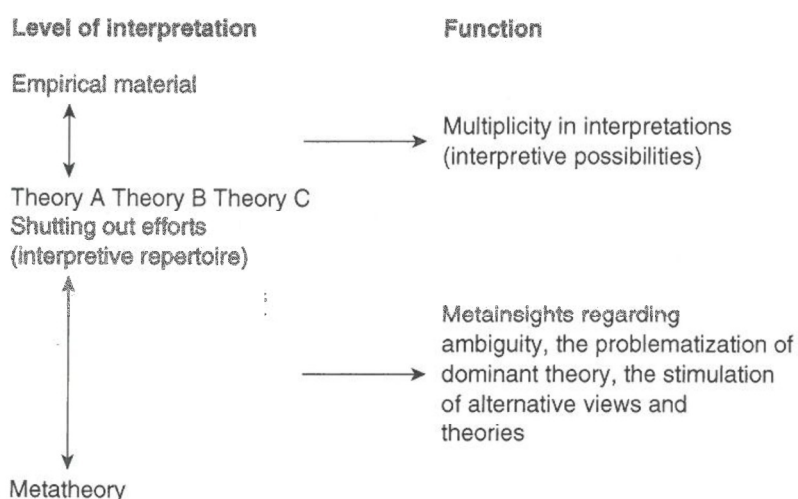


Figure 2.7 Possible effects of an interaction between empirical material, interpretative repertoire and meta-theory (Alvesson and Skjöldberg, 2009, p. 276).

The framework of Alvesson and Skjöldberg could be criticized for developing a systemic perspective of critical hermeneutics as “levelled” interpretation, or an artificial “order” of the analysis. A different perspective of analysis is the immanent critique. The interpretation of empirical materiality – as immanent critique - is in this sense to allow learning to emerge from the “inside” of the empirical material. The process of describing an empirical context is in this sense an interpretative process where the theoretical pre-understandings allow certain features of the material to come forward, and the tensions to be revealed from the material itself. The theoretical contribution in the descriptive process is to draw attention to special aspects of the empirical material that “calls” for further analysis. The descriptive interpretation is in this sense a reflective space that allows contradictions and dissonances to come forward (Eikeland 2007;Nielsen & Nielsen 2010;Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b;Willig 2007). The immanent critique is also relevant in an action research perspective – where it can be extended not only as a theoretical-analytical

perspective, but also as a practical dialogical learning endeavour for change (Eikeland 2007). The immanent critique can in this sense be perceived as a potential methodological approach to explore or open the critical perspectives of (the silent) societal actors and as such “reload” the theoretical critique (Willig 2007).

Another critique of the framework of Alvesson and Skjöldberg leads my epistemological argument further towards an action research perspective. Despite the reflexive perspective that links the “level” of empirical material with an abstract process of theorization, there is still an analytical gap to the “level” of the empirical actors’ self-analytical perspective or the *participatory interpretative perspective*. The reflexive interpretation model of Alvesson and Skjöldberg thus in itself constitutes a type of asymmetric power relation, as it reconstructs the dualism between the object and the subject, between researcher and the researched, and between theory and practice (Hansen 2007). Willig (2007) argues that critical theory is in need of being empirically revitalized and points to a more critical-oriented participatory methodological approach that can explore the critical vocabularies of the public. This is, in my understanding, an argument for critical-oriented action research that does not only facilitate change within the established societal discourses, but also facilitates a change that is critical of the established societal structures by engaging in an immanent critical interpretation *with* the participants.

The distanced interpretation, and the object-subject dualism, was challenged by Hans Skjervheim (1957). His argument was that researchers construct a “parallel” reality when they interpret a situation from the perspective of a spectator, instead of a participant. Skjervheim emphasized that the understanding and interpretation of a dialogue becomes absurd if we are not considering the common content of attention. Interpretation of understanding is therefore essentially situated in a given context shared by both the interpreter and interpreted. The commitment to the real world is in other words essential for our understanding. Research requires engagement in the contextual dialogue in the attempt to understand and explore the existing realities and the alternatives (Skjervheim 1996)[1957]. With this emphasis of the relation to the “real” context Skjervheim bridged the critical theory and hermeneutic philosophical tradition with the practical experimental aspect, where the researcher leaves the role of being spectator – to the role of being a participant (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b)⁷.

⁷ This is, as I understand it, in line with the theoretical perspectives of Hannah Arendt (1958) [pp.52-58] regarding her understanding of public spheres or *commons*. She argued that inter-subjective relations necessarily are related by some common “object”. This common context is the essence of a public sphere and thus the possibility of developing a democratic dialogue about anything. Our social relations are only possible because there is a commonness or a “something” that relates or separates us, being nature, society, or a table. It is only through the willingness to understand the common through a variety of different positions, and accepting the multitude of perspectives present in the public, that we can open a dialogue to explore the alternatives and development of the public and the common world. Arendt thus bridges the relation of creating knowledge about our world with the democratic core of open public spheres and freedom of meaning. In this perspective Hannah Arendt also argues for the inherent “sustainable” attribute in the concept of commons, because a public space must be able to transcend the generational span of humans.

The Skjervheim perspective implies that the traditional dualism of research object - subject is punctuated. The research position could in this sense be said to move towards a more “participatory worldview” (Reason & Bradbury 2001) where the researcher and the “researched” work together in the inquiry and analysis of a particular situation. The implications of such participatory research position are not only related to our epistemological understanding of knowledge creation, but also to the normative perspective of the role of knowledge in society. The following section will describe such implications in relation to various positions within action research.

2.4. Action Research

The concept of action research covers a diversity of research approaches and performances in relation to both to theoretical and practical aspects (Pålshaugen 2007; Reason & Bradbury 2001; Svensson & Nielsen 2006). This section describes and discusses various positions in action research. First a general ontological conception of action research is introduced, followed by a historical perspective. Hereafter, three different (epistemological) ramifications of action research are described, before it concludes with the *critical utopian action research* position that is applied in this thesis.

Action research entails many different perspectives and arguments concerning the role of the research and the researcher in relation to the grade of involvement, the knowledge making process, and relation to the larger societal and academic context. However, there are some common ontological perspectives (how we perceive reality) that characterize and influence the research approach. In their chapter *Methodologies in Action Research* Nielsen and Nielsen (2006b) describe some common features in the ontological orientation of action research, while presenting some different ramifications of action research in relation to their epistemological perspective.

“Action research can be seen as a research tradition in which society is understood as being created in human action and, therefore, it can also be changed by human action; human beings are themselves creators of society and specific fields of society and are participants in the research and the potential change process, but of course [...] not under conditions they themselves have chosen” (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b)[p66]

The above citation emphasizes several founding principles for action research. First of all it emphasizes that the reality is “unfinished”; our social world, as well as our understanding of it, is dynamic and changeable. Seemingly frozen realities can be challenged through developing our conceptual understanding and thereby create alternative dimensions. The research role is therefore to explore the existing reality in the tension of opening horizons of an improved reality (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). This is a reflective process of challenging our existing perceptions (and theories) with practical experiments (practice), as well as desired realities. Action research can thus be seen as a co-generative learning process that iteratively reflects on a variety of knowledge and experience, and thereby creates new perspectives and knowledge to change a situation (Greenwood & Levin 1998). The boundaries of the “situation” are perceived differently in the

distinct action research traditions; some are concerned with organizational or geographic “systems” and others with the larger societal context. The dimensions of change within the ramifications of action research therefore differ substantially, from “organizational improvement” to societal transformation.

Secondly, action research has a democratic core that aims at combining research with engagement of the “people” in order to generate a knowledge creation process that can empower the participants to change their reality (Reason & Bradbury 2001). In this way, action research is a critique of knowledge creation as an authoritative process that delivers undisputable truths. Rather, knowledge is constructed by the participation of a variety of understandings about the world in a continuous and dynamic process. The research and action is thus based on a democratic process of creating relevant knowledge for desired development (Gustavsen 2007;Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

A third aspect relates to the role of the researcher as a normative oriented actor committed to organize the knowledge creation and change process in a particular cultural and social situation with the aim of overcoming dominating structures and the reproduction of suppressive discourses (Pålshaugen 2004). The researcher is thus not a neutral value-free observer, but participates as a normative partner by encouraging (collaborative) critical reflection on existing and future realities. It is through such commitment that the researcher is able to emancipate from existing social and academic constructions, and openly engage in developing new understandings among participants and researchers (Eikeland 2007;Nielsen & Nielsen 2010;Nielsen & Nielsen 2005;Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

These common ideas of Action Research reveal that it is a research approach that has been inspired by different philosophical orientations related to critical theory, pragmatic philosophy, and systemic thinking. The pragmatic orientation focuses on (democratic) changes within the existing structural reality, i.e. an organizational reality. The critical perspective, in turn, emphasizes the need to challenge the existing structures of domination and alienation present in the existing society in order to create democratic change. In the following the different ramifications of action research will be elaborated with a main emphasis on the pragmatic and the critical tradition and their perspective on epistemology. But first, a short historical introduction to its origin.

A historical perspective

The origin of action research is linked with the Polish-German socio-psychologist Kurt Lewin (1848-1936)⁸. Kurt Lewin was concerned with human and social change processes towards more democratic cultures in society as a response to the increasing authoritarian social structures. The radical aspect in his approach was that the social sciences themselves should play a reformist role in societal democratic change processes, yet without becoming a part of the dominating and established structures. The ideas of Lewin thus had both a (local) pragmatic element of combining theoretical and practical knowledge to create

⁸ He was part of the critical German intellectuals who escaped Europe in the thirties due to the Nazi regime and later settled in USA.

suited knowledge for complex problems. But it also carried a wider critical element in relation to societal development in general. The process of creating local change should carry an element of democratic *bildung*, as an opposition to authoritarian societal structures. The action research tradition was thus founded on an idea of creating democratic knowledge and change, combined with a critical perspective on authoritarian societal structures and cultures (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

Lewin was part of the hermeneutic philosophical tradition that regarded the hermeneutic dialogue as an arena for developing new understandings and knowledge through challenging pre-understandings of the participants. In Action Research the interpretation is not only aimed at challenging and furthering understanding, but also directed at the organization of *social actions* (Greenwood & Levin 1998). The dialogue and the development of understanding are thus expressed in language, but also in the “embodied” *experiences* of change. In this way, the creation of knowledge is not only hermeneutic or interpretative, but also derived from the practical experiment (and embodied experience) in the process, that again can further the participants and researchers understanding of the context (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

The aspect of knowledge production and the relation of dialogue and change differentiate the distinct ramifications of action research. The pragmatic orientation in action research considers the dialogue and the action as a continuum; what we say is what we do. The dialogue can, in other words, develop new perceptions and understandings, and there through create social change (Pålshaugen 2004). The pragmatic understanding of dialogue and change was inspired by the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey and his perspective of theoretical and practical knowledge in societal development and planning. The critical orientation, on the other hand, perceives the dialogue as the possibility of creating a free space (Eikeland 2007; Nielsen & Nielsen 2005), where the participants are given the possibilities of stepping outside the structures of a “given reality” to generate alternative perspectives of their everyday life situation. The dialogue and action are thus interrelated in a search for change, but not “unified” (Nielsen & Nielsen 2005; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

The pragmatic, communicative, and systemic traditions

The pragmatic orientation in Action Research focuses on development of democratic communication arenas and the reflexive process between theory and practice. One branch of this orientation is inspired by the American pragmatist philosophy and especially of John Dewey (Greenwood & Levin 1998). The views of John Dewey bridged the perspectives of conceptual and theoretical thinking with human action and societal improvement. This orientation entails a democratic perspective at its core. Processes of social improvement should thus be a collective social endeavour that includes all “levels” of society in an iterative learning process. In his theory of inquiry, knowledge creation is considered an experimental and reflexive process between human action and reflection. All kinds of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, are in this sense best and most relevant when created between the reflective thinking and the materiality of a

particular situation. (Scientific) Knowledge production is created through the continuous reflection between theory and practice, and action and reflection.

These perspectives are core foundations of the pragmatic action research. It emphasizes the pragmatic perspective of scientific inquiry and the development of relevant knowledge for a specific (problematic) situation (Greenwood & Levin 1998). The center of attention is, in other words, the relevant knowledge creation for the local situation. In their co-generative learning model, Greenwood and Levin (1998) take their point of departure from the problem perspective of the participants, where insiders (the problem “owners”) and outsiders (the researchers) develop relevant knowledge through mutual reflection and learning. The arena for dialogue is thus aimed at fostering communicative action between different rationalities and knowledge claims as a mean to “solve the problem” or improve the situation. This pragmatic action research has influenced community development approaches (Midgley 2000), the new role of universities (Levin and Greenwood 1997; Levin and Greenwood 2008), and different collaborative planning theories (Fosse 2010). From a critical perspective, however, the idea of the dialogue arena for the sake of creating relevant knowledge and solution perspectives to local problems, is too instrumental in its approach to knowledge and application (and the democratic aspects), and brings up power issues with regard to the normative role of the researcher (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

A “second branch” of the pragmatic or communicative action research is the dialogue tradition that has developed strongly within work life research in Norway. It was inspired by Stephen Toulmin and John Dewey on the theoretical “pragmatic” side and Jürgen Habermas on the procedural “communicative” side. This discourse-oriented tradition emphasizes the importance of constructing democratic arenas for dialogues – or communicative action, and has especially focused on the “organization” as the unit of attention. From this perspective it is the communicative arenas that allow different pre-conceptions and rationalities to reach reciprocal or mutual understanding, and in this way change the existing patterns of communication and understanding. Communicative arenas can in other words reorganize discourses through democratic process in the organization (Pålshaugen 2004).

In this perspective the role of the action researcher is process-oriented and mainly focused on the facilitation of such arenas. The substance or content of the process is created by the participants through the development of improved mutual understandings and the development of superior arguments (Gustavsen 2007). This communicative orientation is aligned with the Habermasian perspective that considers the facilitation of the communicative process as essential for how the dialogue develops, while the substance of the dialogue should not be in focus for the researcher (Flyvbjerg 1998; Nielsen & Nielsen 2005). The Lewinian idea of the “social experiment” as a research approach to create understanding through concrete change has in a way been shadowed by the focus on the communicative perspective of reorganizing discourses (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). There is in other words a *material* dimension to the discourse and communicative action, and hence the theory development, that is not very outspoken in the dialogue tradition.

The verification and quality of the *research dimension* becomes a question of *diffusion* of local learning to a larger environment through continuous processes of democratic dialogues for societal improvement (Gustavsen 1996; Gustavsen 2007). The general knowledge development is thus concerned with the methodological knowledge dimension, the theories of dialogue, and the Habermas-inspired communicative action procedure. The development of theory from the particular context is considered situated and imbedded in a local frame of interpretation; while theory from the process might contribute to more generic theorization (Toulmin and Gustavsen 1996). This “contextual local knowledge” perspective is criticized by Nielsen and Nielsen (2005; 2006b) because they believe it reduces the research dimension to only concern challenges within the local system horizon. Knowledge without a common dimension loses its (critical) societal perspective and the broader emancipatory dimension (Nielsen & Nielsen 2005).

In a context of (wicked) environmental challenges the “solutions” are not necessarily present in the subjective understanding of the involved actors, or through the democratic inter-subjective communication per se. Although the procedural focus is important to improve mutual understanding and perspectives for possible improvements, it is not given that such a process can reveal new insights about the situation. The generation of learning and improved (inter-subjective) understandings also involves a relation to the *material* dimension of the context. There is in other words also an *experiential* dimension of understanding and learning (Kolb 1984). The inter-subjective process of understanding is in this sense related to a “third dimension”; the very social relation to nature as a context to learn from (Bateson 1972; Nielsen & Nielsen 2010). Bateson emphasizes this nature-mind relation as a radically new way of understanding our human relation to nature as both inherent and unique. Our learning (and mind frames) are thus related to our very experience of the world.

The experiential learning perspective has been influential in the environmental research that is concerned with developing knowledge for creating change (Blackmore 2007), because they deal with *problématiques* that have emerged due to our very relation and (inter-subjective or cultural) understanding of nature in modern times (Cerf et al. 2000; Ison et al. 2004; Röling & Wagemakers 1998; Woodhill & Röling 1998)⁹. Experiential learning, and experimenting, is of key interest in environmental planning and management research because it may reveal or generate learning that mere inter-subjective communicative learning cannot yield. The contribution of action research is in this perspective dual: on the one hand to build inter-subjective understanding (learning) between diverging interests and perspectives, and on the other hand develop experimental knowledge about the materiality of the context.

This systemic, “material”, and rather pragmatic participative research, has perhaps gained special interest among “natural science” students who discover the societal context of their “natural scientific research”.

⁹ Action research approaches related to this context have especially developed in Australia, at the “Hawkesbury School” at Sydney University (Bawden et al. 1984; Bawden 1991) and in Netherlands at the University of Wageningen (Leeuwis and Pyburn 2002; Röling & Wagemakers 1998; Woodhill 2002; Woodhill & Röling 1998) in relation to agricultural systems (not surprisingly in countries with severe agricultural challenges and implications), and to natural resource management in general.

Based on my own experience, and from the literature above, systemic thinking offers a platform where we (as environmental scientists) can on the one hand appreciate positivistic natural science “answers” to some challenges. And, on the other hand, become able to acknowledge the necessity of other (social) theoretical perspectives that deal with the broader social system of natural resources. Such understanding can be understood as a leveled spiral of inquiry (Bawden and Packham 1993; Sriskandarajah et al. 2010). The systemic action research recognizes the multiple perspectives at stake in “wicked” situations, both among different stakeholders, as well as among different research approaches.

The systemic action research approach is thus oriented towards purposeful activities to develop more effective and efficient ways of addressing defined ends. Although this methodological approach has functioned in practice and achieved large scale changes (Ison, Steyaert, Roggero, Hubert, & Jiggins 2004), it does not articulate a critique of the broader societal (modern) problem of nature and society relations that e.g. Elling (2008, 2010) and Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a) develop. The systemic perspective thus has a tendency of falling into instrumental actions, where different types of expert knowledge collaborate to create new improved “systems” or institutions that can deal effectively with the wicked situation. However, these perspectives do not always question who should be involved to determine what efficiency and effectiveness is. The systemic approach in this sense does not consider the broader question of everyday life perspectives as relevant in the learning and knowledge development. In this way, the systemic perspective can (although with good intentions) create processes where the agenda is set by expert knowledge and institutions, but with limited participatory (democratic and lifeworld related) openings. From a critical perspective this does not only create a problem of democratic legitimacy, but also closes the possibility of challenging the established expert agendas and knowledge perspective with a citizen everyday life and layman knowledge perspective. The opening of such possibilities could generate new perspectives for environmental planning and management in both particular contexts and theoretical aspects.

Between these contextual-experimental-participative research approaches and the meta-theoretical critical perspective, Kurt Aagaard Nielsen and Birger Steen Nielsen have developed a particular ramification of Action Research inspired by early critical theory and the practical dialectic concept of social imagination (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

The critical utopian contribution to Action Research

Critical Utopian Action Research (CUAR) bridges the abstract academic and distanced critical theoretical perspective with the empirical reality. The critical theoretical emancipatory perspective is coupled to the empirical reality as a process that must also be “lived out” at individual, as well as collective level to create a better society. The role of research is thus to encourage participants to engage in critical and dialectic reflections about their own situation and future perspectives, and in relation to a more common societal horizon. The critical theoretical contribution is, however also concerned with the generation of more generic emancipatory knowledge from the particular case that can point to critical aspects in a common societal context. Immanent critique and participatory reflections in a particular case can in this sense point

to more general dialectic tensions and emancipatory concerns in society and from there generate theoretical contributions. The emancipatory perspective, in this sense, bridges the critical dialectic *theoretical* perspectives with the *practical* contextual change perspectives of action research (Nielsen & Nielsen 2005; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b).

The emancipatory and dialectic perspective in CUAR implies developing a critique of the current situation grounded in an everyday life perspective (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a) or from a phenomenological perspective of reality. This is an approach that transcends the existing “system” perspective and opens an everyday life-oriented “utopian horizon”. The everyday life perspective is (in contrast to a sector, “system”, or organization that only represents a fragment of the life-meaning) able to create a utopian horizon with a common human dimension and thus also seeks to problematize the ambiguities and difficulties such change may endure. CUAR, in this sense, is an approach that engages people as citizens in a collective social learning sphere to conduct their own critical interpretation of a situation, as a basis for developing everyday life-oriented utopian horizons. The research and change dimensions are not only concerned with the single (case) situation, system, or organization. It is also concerned with the broader emancipatory perspective of interpreting the particular (everyday life) situation restrictions in a wider societal sphere. Grounded in this dual understanding it attempts to develop alternative horizons that can generate local, as well as broader, societal changes (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a; Nielsen & Nielsen 2005).

It is, however, not easy to open for change perspectives in an everyday life situation that is filled with routines and challenges, or even contested interests and dominating discourses (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). The creation of “free spaces” as experiential rooms for reflection and learning is therefore an important methodological concern. CUAR uses the critical perspective as a nerve of energy that allows research participants to create an emancipatory room or “free space”. The free space facilitates discussion of the current contextual situation without its existing restrictions. The critical theoretical core of dialectics is, in this sense, used as a practical method to create an opportunity for the participants to interpret their situation through a critical lens¹⁰. This free space is in essence closely combined with the utopian perspective of social imagination¹¹ inspired by the critical theoretical psychoanalytical tradition and future research of Robert Jungk (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). Social imagination is used as an “encouragement structure” in the action research process to facilitate the creation process of alternative horizons in a dialectic relation with the critique of the current situation. The theoretical concept of dialectics and emancipation is, in this way, reflected in the practical approaches of CUAR to allow the participants to

¹⁰ Rasmus Willing (2007), in his treatise for critical theory, calls for a methodology that can explore the unspoken societal critique through a phenomenological *negative* approach to empirically understand and analyze the social immanence. He perceives such an approach in opposition to the conventional “positivistic” inspired social science that tries to describe society in a neutral manner; and action research inspired approaches that explore and support positive societal development tendencies (p.203). I would argue that critical utopian action research provides that opportunity of phenomenological critique of current society, but further provides the dialectic opportunity of social imagination.

¹¹ Nielsen and Nielsen (2005) build on the concepts of exemplary learning by Oscar Negt, social learning by Regina Becker-Schmidt, and social imagination from Robert Jungk.

interpret, imagine, and create changes towards a more emancipatory future. The idea of such “free space” arenas relates the contextual *problématique* with the (local) everyday life situations, in a reflexive relation to the broader societal context (in contrast to the discourse-oriented dialogue arena) (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). I will, in the chapter of my methodology and process, describe one of the particular methodological approaches related to CUAR, namely the Future Creating Workshop.

The duality between the common and the particular, and the critical and utopian, is a core foundation in the research approach of CUAR. It reflects the endeavour to open “general” societal theories and discourses through “local” human actions and learning. Vice versa, it seeks to reflect common societal and theoretical concerns in the particular action research process with the participants. Emancipation is in this regard not only a meta-theoretical concept of macro level changes, but a human everyday-related process of iterative reflection and change of individual and collective horizons (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). CUAR is in this sense not only action-oriented, but seeks the common dimensions between the local and the general, and between experience and theory, to develop reflective action and practical change (see figure 2.3).

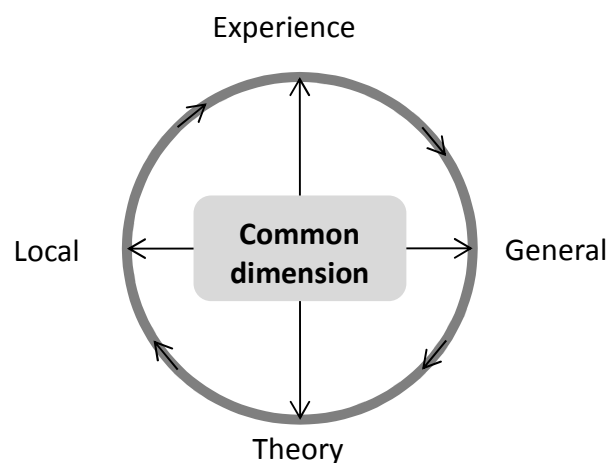


Figure 2.3 Illustrates the interrelation of the different analytical levels in a (modified) hermeneutic circle in the process of reaching a more common dimension of understanding

From this follows that the cognitive interest of critical utopian action research (CUAR) is not only a search for contextualized truths, but rather a process of reciprocally challenging theoretical and practical experiences and knowledge (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010). The emancipatory cognitive interest of critical theory described earlier (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009) is in this way brought into play at the empirical level, where it aims to develop democratic knowledge to improve the particular situation, *as well as*, to contribute with a common dimension of knowledge that can open a broader societal critique (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010). Methodologically speaking, CUAR bears similarities with the reflexive methodology of Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), but with the inherent participatory or democratically engaged orientation.

The role of the CUAR researcher is thus many faceted. The researcher seeks to be a representative of a common dimension, on the theoretical analytical level *and* in the contextual discussions. The researcher, so to speak, encourages the reflections on the common normative and societal dimensions in the social learning (and individual *bildung*) process on the local arena. The researcher thus facilitates the expression of plural values and human ambiguity, as a process of gaining improved understanding, but not necessarily consensus. The researcher is thus a critical researcher on the (meta) theoretical level, but in a reflective process with the particular situation. In the analytical work (embedded in the action research) the researcher reciprocally seeks to extract the common perspectives and immanent critique in the particular situations that can add to a better understanding of society and its democratic challenges. According to Nielsen and Nielsen (2010) this reciprocal opening and reflection between the common/universal and the local/contextual knowledge perspectives is the very core of the democratic dimension, and thus the primary task of (action) research.

The following table is an attempt to summarize the different action research orientations described in this section in relation some of the key aspects of a research process. The purpose of the table is to illustrate that different action research approaches might serve different purposes dependent on the context. However, it also illustrates some of the disputes within action research related to theory of knowledge, the role of the researcher, and the nature of action.

Table 1 A simplified matrix of the action research orientations in relation to empirical reality and knowledge generation

Orientation/ Perspectives	Pragmatic	Dialogue	Systemic	Critical-Utopian
Case/"Situation"	Problem situation	Organization or region	Problem situation	Everyday life and broader societal context
Participants	Stakeholders and organizations	Stakeholders and organizational actors	Stakeholders, experts, and organizations	Citizens (and experts as citizens)
Action/Change	"Solutions"	Organizational improvement	System efficiency	Transformative Democratic
Communication and Learning	Contextual	Contextual in substance, common in process	Contextual	Social and Exemplary
Role of Researcher	Reflective outsider Expert	Process Facilitator	Reflective participant	Critical reflective participant
(Theory of) knowledge	Local adaptive	Local theory Common process	Local	Reflective Local - common

The following section seeks to summarize my argument for a critical utopian action research approach to my specific empirical context.

2.5. Linking my epistemology with the theoretical and empirical context

The research endeavour is to create improved understanding of the contested relationship between the local communities and institutional planning system in relation to nature protection and use both in a particular situation and on a general level. I have argued that a critical reflective perspective is necessary to lift the level of abstraction from the concrete contextual case, and academic theoretical disciplines, to a broader societal perspective of ideology, culture, and politics. This critical perspective is particularly important in the context of nature-society relations or environmental planning, to understand the dissonance and conflicts at play between the local “situations” and the existing environmental institutions and policies (Elling 2008). The complexity and challenges of current environmental and societal problems can, however, not only be understood through abstract critical theory, but are dependent of an empirical and contextual understanding. The paradoxes in environmental planning require a participatory, and in that sense democratic knowledge creating process to create changes (Innes & Booher 2010). This implies a research approach that experiences and interprets the contextual situation and current process in participation *with* the involved, as a process of (social) learning (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). Action research is thus a research approach that relates to reality – and in this case a planning process – as something “unfinished” (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007b).

The environmental *problématique* cannot be reduced to fragmented parts of our life or society. Research related to the environment and sustainability must in this sense embrace an everyday life relation to nature (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). This is in contrast to institutional and policy oriented research perspectives that can discover deficiencies and challenges between espoused policies and policies in practice, but inevitably stays within a system perspective (Elling 2008). The epistemological argument is that a research approach should explore and develop the local everyday life-oriented understanding in contrast and relation to the institutionalized understandings. An everyday life-oriented perspective opens the possibility for the researcher to look at the system rationality from a “holistic” rationality of the everyday life of the involved (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010). In this way, the research aim is to open some cracks in the dissonance between the system (institutional) and everyday life perspective on nature and society as commons.

The following chapter develops my theoretical considerations about the challenges in environmental planning. These considerations are the sum of meta-theoretical reflections and emerging aspects from the empirical field work. In this sense, the chapter unfolds relevant theoretical discussions related to environmental planning and participation. The theoretical focus is, however, also reflexively influenced by the immanent critique that emerged during the action research process.

3. Planning and everyday life: the perspective of commons

Nature (protection) planning challenges our understanding of the socio-ecological materiality, as well as perceptions of knowledge and participation. This chapter combines and contrasts three theoretical perspectives that can contribute to the understanding of the empirical reality and develops these analyses in relation to a more common knowledge dimension. Perspectives of planning theory are explored and contrasted with theories of everyday life perspectives. Lastly, theories of the commons are discussed as a potential “opening” between planning and everyday life. The aim of the chapter is thus to develop a theoretical framework for an environmental planning horizon as a deliberative democratic process that orchestrates sustainable nature-society relations as a common concern of citizens and planning institutions.

3.1. Planning, nature and everyday life

Nature protection is based on an argument of sustainability. The question is then what or whose sustainability should be pursued, and how such sustainability should be addressed. One answer could point to policies and institutions as the constitutional power for generating societal planning with more sustainable ends. Another answer could be that it is the collective effort and responsibility of the public or citizens that must participate in defining and generating more sustainable societies. In my understanding, the complexity of sustainability requires engagement that stretches from micro society to macro (meta) society and therefore requires genuine deliberations of different understandings and values; between citizens’ everyday life and institutional systems. In a reflexive perspective, these fundamental questions of how to reach more sustainable societies also influence the choice of theories considered relevant for analysing the “reality”. The complexity of sustainability or nature protection thus requires meta-theoretical reflections about how to “understand” the empirical reality. This chapter seeks to explore and challenge the planning theoretical development, from rational planning ideals, over collaborative planning perspectives and the agonistic critique. The focal point is the different and developing perspectives of (democratic) participation and the role of knowledge. These planning theoretical positions are challenged by understandings of nature, knowledge and participation from an everyday life perspective. Finally, the conception of commons is introduced as a potential link between planning theoretical orientations and everyday life perspectives.

The core of the sustainability agenda challenges the societal (political) trajectory and planning practice that might have created a lot of “good” in society, but has also paved the way for the environmental challenges we are now facing. Many different theoretical perspectives and schools are therefore increasingly questioning if we can meet the challenges of “tomorrow” with the current practices of policy, planning, and science that are inherently part of the problem (Blackstock et al. 2007; Elling 2008; Elling 2010; Nielsen, Elling, & Jelsoe 2010; Woodhill & Röling 1998). The need to develop new societal development horizons is

challenged by the instrumental and purposive rationality of current environmental planning institutions. Their institutional reflexivity cannot exceed the pre-set premises and obligations of the system, and thus not explore alternative horizons (Elling 2008). When the planning premises, agenda, and results are pre-determined within the system purpose rationality, it compromises the quality and potential of democratic participation in environmental planning and management. Participation becomes reduced to legitimizing – or reproducing – pre-defined objectives, not contributing to the development of alternatives. The space for citizen participation is in this sense “colonized” or eroded before their involvement (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006a, 2007). There is in other words a democratic deficiency in the institutional planning system that makes it incapable of opening deliberations about the fundamental questions of sustainability; how we want to live with nature in a society.

Democratic participation is challenged by the tension or discrepancy between the planning system and the everyday life understanding of nature protection and use. Participation in nature (protection) planning is often based on arguments of legitimacy, efficiency or knowledge input. Such arguments intrinsically frame the understanding participation as an act to reproduce or support the planning purpose pre-defined by the planning policies and institutions, and is not open to the participation of other understandings of the subject matter. To open the planning horizon, the participatory argumentation must be concerned with citizens’ deliberation of the subject matter independent of the institutional planning objective. It is by opening the planning arena for such broader deliberations of the subject matter that the perspectives of sustainability can transcend the planning institutional rationality. The participation of citizens is thus important because it addresses aspects of sustainability from a lifeworld perspective (Elling 2010) or everyday life perspective (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a) that the (planning) system cannot define from their sectorized rationality. In an environmental planning perspective that is not concerned with implementing “objective” solutions or regulations, but with deliberations of new societal trajectories, such lifeworld or everyday life perspectives are crucial in generating new understandings, as well as practices about sustainable horizons. The meta-theoretical question is then how a democratic deliberative arena can be established, where a multiplicity of actors and knowledge perspectives are considered qualified and legitimate; and where a broader non-instrumental rationality is allowed to contribute with everyday life perspectives of nature and society that are different from the current expert orientation.

Nature protection in Norway has, as previously introduced, experienced increasing conflicts between national environmental authorities and local communities, despite elements of participation (Arnesen & Riseth 2008;Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006;Sandström, Hovik, & Falleth 2008). The existence of a local-national dichotomy does not necessarily indicate that there exists a hegemonic perception of nature or society in the local community, but it indicates that there are interested voices at local level that wish to contribute to the planning of their environment. There is in other words a democratic potential in nature planning (Hajer 2003;Hansen 2007).

From a planning perspective, the conflicts in environmental planning can be interpreted as a legitimacy crisis between the national policy rationality and the local community. This legitimacy crisis has, by the policy and planning system, been answered by increased participatory approaches in planning to improve the procedural legitimacy (Engelen, Keulartz, & Leistra 2008). Local communities and stakeholders are invited to participate in a planning process through hearings or community meetings. The participatory effort in nature planning and management does however not seem to solve the legitimacy crisis between the policy and planning institutions and the local community (Arnesen & Riseth 2008; Hansen 2007; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Zachrisson 2009). Local community perspectives seem unable to “penetrate” or influence the premises and outcome of the planning process (Björkell 2008; Grönholm 2009). Seemingly participatory planning processes create dual frustrations: firstly because the planning premises (and solutions) are experienced as pre-defined and the participation is in this sense rather a coerced legitimation than the potential to influence the planning of the local environment. Secondly, frustrations develop through the feeling of being disqualified and unrecognized as democratic individuals. Such frustrations can be expressed as rage against the system or as participation fatigue; in either case citizens cease to engage in the established planning arena (Clausen 2011; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). Such participatory rhetorics without genuine potential could be understood as a tyranny of participation (Cooke & Kothari 2001), that little by little undermines the democratic potential in environmental planning among individual citizens and in local communities (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007).

The conflicts in environmental planning and nature protection can therefore not just be reduced to a question of legitimacy or acceptability of the *content* of a certain policy, or the interest they promote or suppress. The apparent legitimacy crisis is a symptom of a deeper crisis of modernity, where the system (in this case planning institutions) cannot transcend their purpose rationality and recognize perspectives developed within a broader lifeworld-oriented rationality (Elling 2008). The policy and planning system are thus in a deeper steering-related crisis, where the question of democratic participation is fundamental (Hansen 2007). Participatory efforts in environmental planning can in this sense be challenged along two main dimensions: the procedural steering legitimacy and the material relations. The procedural challenge raises questions about whose perspectives, stakes, and knowledge are considered legitimate, and in this sense what actors are qualified participants. The substantial challenge concerns the balance of use and protection, or culture and nature (Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006), or the ecological versus the socio-cultural and economic concerns (Ostrom 2009).

This chapter explores three theoretical approaches in order to analyse the openings and closures in the environmental planning horizon for democratic participation in a particular nature protection planning process in Southern Norway. The combination of planning theory, everyday life, and commons creates a framework that is able to analyse the tensions of different understandings of nature, knowledge and participation *between* the local communities and the formal planning system. The choice of theories and the development of the theoretical framework has, as described in chapter 2, been a process of reflexive

consideration. The theoretical framework has in this sense developed during the research process in relation to the emergent or immanent perspectives of the empirical material.

The following section describes different theoretical planning traditions. The second part of this chapter explores theories of nature and everyday life in relation to participation in planning. These two theoretical perspectives can challenge each other in the analysis of a planning process and point to dissonances between established perspectives of nature protection and participation in both the institutional planning system and the local community. Based on these two theoretical lines, the last part of the chapter explores “commons” as a possible opening for new understandings and approaches to nature protection (and sustainability).

3.1. Nature protection and planning theory

Environmental planning is a public endeavour of balancing the use of natural and societal resources of the present with the desired future of tomorrow in a process of linking knowledge to action (Cowell & Owens 2011; Selman 2000). The planning process is in this sense an operational policy arena, or a public domain (Hajer 2003), for discussing and defining the meta-objectives of our societal development trajectory (Healey 2006). Planning as a public remedy to balance societal development and environmental protection has re-emerged along the increasing discourse of sustainability (Meadowcroft 1999). In an ideal perspective, planning is able to generate a holistic overview of the current and future use of our natural areas and resources, and on this basis is able to develop regulations as a measure to balance ecological and societal interests. The challenge of environmental planning is that the perspectives of a desired future, the definition of the problem, the legitimacy of knowledge grounds, and the perception of “action” are all subject of essential contested beliefs, ideologies, and values (in 't Veld 2009). Environmental planning is thus in essence concerned with *wicked* challenges (Lachapelle & McCool 2005; Rittel and Webber 1973) or the ignition of societal dilemmas, not least with the introduction of the sustainability perspective (Cowell & Owens 2011; Meadowcroft 1999; Meadowcroft 2007). Planning for the environment thus is a process of weighing multiple, competing, and loosely defined societal values and goals with the complexity and uncertainty of ecological impact and performance, in a process where the definition of the problem is contested, the knowledge about the situation is inconsistent and disputed, and the issues of legitimacy of steering and power are not settled. In addition such processes are often pressured by time and resources. Planning for the environment is in other words a deeply rooted societal question, and should therefore involve public deliberations in a democratic perspective (Hansen, 2007).

The fundamental democratic challenges of planning are in this sense complemented by challenges of defining and qualifying different knowledge claims and rationalities with the courses of action (Elling 2008; Friedmann 1987; Friedmann 1993; Innes & Booher 2010). These perspectives are relevant for the analysis of participation in a case of wild reindeer planning, where abstract concepts of nature protection and knowledge-based planning are operationalized as the definition of the problem and the understanding

of the solution. The next section will describe some lines of development within the planning theory, emphasising their perspective of process, participation and knowledge in relation to the environment.

The instrumental rational planning tradition

The planning tradition developed during the 19th Century as a necessity to deal with the growth of cities and the emerging industrialization that created challenges of both bio-physical and social character. The emerging planning rationality was influenced by engineering theory and a reductionist worldview, where problems could be defined, analysed, and solved by comprehensive planning. It was further influenced by a positivistic natural scientific paradigm that considered “knowledge” as an objective and value free entity, and a necessary foundation for making the “right” decisions (Amdam & Veggeland 2011). The tradition of rational planning has also been considerably influenced by economic rationality and the belief in cost-effective solutions as a normative goal (Friedmann 1987).

During the 20th Century the role of the nation state as the responsible entity for societal planning became increasingly legitimized (Amdam & Veggeland 2011). Within the Keynesian steering tradition, planning is considered a process of solving or improving a societal problem as defined by central decision makers and the state bureaucracy. The premises and purpose of the planning outcome is predefined by central authorities (or stakeholders) and the role of planning is to enact the policy in the public domain through planning documents, regulation, and legislation. Planning is, in other words, a policy instrument that can simplify the societal challenges and ensure a holistic or synoptic overview of the societal development trajectory through the coordination and organization of different sectors or interests. Planning, in this perspective, is a comprehensive tool that can synthesize and model solutions for our challenges. The rationality of such planning perspective is an instrumental process of efficiently reaching a pre-set purpose, based on pre-defined and sectorised understandings of the “problem” (Elling 2008; Innes & Booher 2010; van der Aa 2009). An example of this perspective in the environmental (protection) planning can be found in understanding the role of the state as a safeguard for taking holistic and prudent decisions to avoid exploitation or tragedies of the limited natural resources (Hardin 1968). The rational planning perspective is thus inherently based on strong hierarchical steering and expert bureaucracy that can stake out the course of the “right” social trajectory and ensure its implementation (Amdam & Veggeland 2011).

The societal legitimacy of such instrumental and hierarchical planning is to a large degree based on arguments for (or a belief in) scientific knowledge as a provider of truth (Elling 2008). The use of knowledge as a superior argument for action builds on a positivist conviction that “truth” or objective knowledge can be created from observing and measuring the world around us. The instrumental rationalist planning tradition understands neutral expert knowledge as *explanatory* and as such a superior knowledge ground for decision making and planning (Innes & Booher 2010). This perspective is perhaps especially apparent in the context of environmental planning, where issues of “nature” are separated and weighed against issues of “society” (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006a). In a rationalist planning tradition, which in itself has emerged from a positivistic paradigm, knowledge about nature is the domain of natural scientific science (Elling

2008;Reitan 2004). The “truthful” understanding of nature, and in this sense the ground for decision making and planning, is thus based on natural scientific knowledge (Dietz, Ostrom, & Stern 2003;Nelson, Howden, & Smith 2008).Within such a rational instrumental planning arena, non-experts are not qualified to question the legitimacy and adequacy of the predefined purpose of the process because it involves questioning the scientific knowledge base.

The belief in objective scientific knowledge inevitably also affects who are considered legitimate participants in a decision and planning process. Knowledge, in this understanding, has an authoritarian edge that influences the very steering dimension of a process. In rational planning the steering and decision-making models are based on a hierarchical structure and bureaucratic control and are in this sense a matter of *government*. Decisions are implemented from the top downwards in a unidirectional process, while the responsibility and accountability of the process and results are related to “those above” (Amdam & Veggeland 2011). Citizens are perceived as providers of opinion, while the educated planners and the expert bureaucracy are seen as providers of knowledge (Bäcklund and Mäntysalo 2010;Innes & Booher 2010). Citizens are in this sense, no longer citizens, but passive receivers of planning decisions and planning deprived their role as influents and knowledge contributors. This is also the case within nature and environmental planning, and has perhaps been especially evident in the developing world (Pretty and Smith 2004;Pretty 1995). The involvement of citizens or local stakeholders in the planning of environment or natural resources within this rationality has often had a legitimizing rather than influential character.

This planning system perspective of the citizen’s participation illustrates the modernity paradox in environmental planning. The citizens are not considered relevant contributors to the societal opinion and decision making, because the subject of the matter is too complicated. The consequence is that the planning system actors and relevant experts become the only legitimate decision makers and societal development (or nature protection) is thus steered by this institutional rationality. Approaches to democratize planning can therefore not be targeted to increasing the legitimacy of “system based” decisions or policies, through organized hearings of interests or fragmented citizens’ opinions in public meetings. New approaches to participation must generate a planning arena where different understandings of the subject matter are recognized as equally qualified, and where the planning purpose is therefore not defined before the participation begins.

The critique and development of the rational planning perspective

The instrumental rational planning perspective and steering model has been criticized from a broad range of theoretical perspectives and from practical experience and outcomes. The critique targets the understanding and use of knowledge, the perception of policy creation or problem definition, the dimension of steering and participation, and its perception of nature and society as reducible “mechanistic” realities. The critique of the rational planning model was inspired by an increasing understanding or recognition that the “modern” society is challenged by increasingly complex problems, or *wicked* challenges (Innes & Booher 2010;Rittel & Webber 1973). The critique was in this sense also inspired by a broader

theoretical dispute between natural and social sciences, structuralism, modernism, and post-modernism, etc. (Elling 2008). Scientific knowledge as an “objective entity” was thoroughly challenged along the emerging understanding of societal complexity and social constructivism, which challenged the status of providing “truth” in planning (Innes & Booher 2010). Paradoxically, the same understanding of complexity has also favoured an expert orientation within decision making in planning. It could be claimed that while the understanding of society was influenced by a social constructivist perception, the understanding of nature was still considered the domain of natural science. Nature planning and management has therefore been increasingly challenged with, on the one hand implementing expert knowledge to legitimize policies, and on the other hand involving the public to legitimize its actions (Daniels & Walker 2001).

One of the earliest critiques of the instrumental-rational planning ideology came from Lindblom in 1959 in the article “The science of muddling through” (Amdam & Veggeland 2011; Bäcklund & Mäntysalo 2010; Healey 2006). The critique was based on an empirical recognition of the practical inability of omnipotent planning. Muddling through describes how planning is an adaptive or incremental practice based on step wise processes of action, observation and reflection. *Incremental planning* is, like the instrumental planning tradition, concerned with reaching a “predefined goal”. However, it acknowledges the problem of understanding human society through a positivistic or reductionist perspective. Processes of planning and analysis are in the incremental tradition not perceived as objective or value-free, but of *prioritizing* certain types of information and knowledge. The role of the planner is to open a more pluralistic policy agenda, where different stakeholders can argue for their interests in a political arena (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo 2010). The incremental model assumes that actors can argue for their stake on a representative democratic arena to reach a negotiated outcome. The creation of policies therefore becomes a matter of assembling interests through a coalition of actors (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo 2010; Sabatier 1988). The governance perspective¹² challenges areas of traditional government by arguing for more adaptive processes that can build a more legitimate and effective policy outcome (Sørensen and Torfing 2005). The question of participation is, within this tradition, thus a matter of involving the relevant stakeholders and balance interests in order to reach legitimate and effective solutions.

The ideas of incremental planning and interest-based governance have heavily influenced the approaches to nature planning and management. Planning and management of areas and natural resources are increasingly perceived as a process of balancing diverse interests of use and protection (Folke 2006b; Ministry of Finance 2003; Sandström, Hovik, & Falleth 2008). New governance coalitions include stakeholders with diverse interests of protection and use in the decision making and planning arena. Stakeholders can contribute with valuable knowledge about the local context and argue for their particular

¹² The planning and organization of policies and development processes defined as a broader coalition of balancing interests has been influential in the perspective of *governance*. Governance is understood as the steering of a given sector or area through cooperation between stakeholders that represents different public, semi-public, and private interests.

interest in the area. Their participation is in this sense considered relevant as a way to reach more informed decisions about the particular area and create more effective planning implementation. Participation of stakeholders in environmental planning can, in this perspective, reduce emerging conflicts between different interest groups, and create a more broadly founded legitimacy for national policies (Berkes & Folke 1998).

Incremental planning and interest-based governance have been criticized for pursuing narrow interests of the established elite and reaffirming the existing power structures (Hansen 2007;Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). In the light of this critique, governance coalitions can be interpreted as arenas for the stakeholders that have well organized networks and agendas that are already influential in the societal and political discourse. This is also the critique in an environmental planning context where the actors present on the governance arenas tend to be either nature protection stakeholders with a strong ecological claim, or representatives of strong economic interests related to the exploitation of natural resources. An arena of negotiation and bargaining is therefore still influenced by a positivistic ghost of knowledge. Different types of scientific knowledge are used as a provider of “truths” and as such a legitimizing factor for particular interests pro and contra regulation.

But if the essence of planning is a societal endeavour to create a more sustainable trajectory of society, it is inherently dealing with a process of change, and thus also with targeting established interests and institutions. When planning is based on the negotiation and argumentation between established interests and knowledge claims, it will not be able to transcend the agenda set by these very interests. Planning of the environment, and especially within a sustainability perspective, must be able to involve a public perspective that transcends an interest-logic and discusses societal development through a broader democratic process (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a).

Collaborative planning: the inspiration from communicative theory and pragmatic philosophy

The collaborative planning perspective emerged as a deliberative planning response to the increasing interest and steering complexity in society. It is an answer, or opposition, to the hierarchical rational planning model that is not only losing its legitimacy in the public sphere, but also unable to deal with the increasing complexity in society, not least with regard to the sustainability challenge (Innes & Booher 2010). The purpose of planning is, in this understanding, to facilitate dialogue and collaboration in a broader public sphere to deal with complex and *wicked* problems that have no single solution. Collaborative planning could in this sense be interpreted as an attempt to facilitate the creation of a new type of rationality in planning that can answer to the challenges of the world today, because emerging issues, e.g. sustainability, cannot be met with the same type of rationality that created them (Elling 2008). In a Scandinavian context, it could be argued that the collaborative planning perspective does not constitute a radical planning turn. Scandinavia had thus had tradition for steering collaboration and interest negotiation between state, market and interest organisations in many societal contexts (Hansen, 2007).

The collaborative planning process is understood as an involvement of phenomenological, pragmatic, and critical theoretical perspectives, rather than as a logical step wise process informed by objective knowledge (Innes & Booher 2010). The practice of planning is thus operating in a public domain with increasing complexity of interests, claims, and problems in the material socio-ecological dimension, as well as with competing challenges of legitimacy and knowledge in the dimension of steering and action. This implies recognizing knowledge as a complex figure with a variety of legitimate sources for understanding and learning. Planning is in this sense a process of learning (and knowledge creation) through the interpretation of the context, with relevant stakeholders and experts, combined with theoretical and philosophical reflections (Innes and Booher, 2010).

A common epistemological and theoretical inspiration for the different collaborative planning ramifications is the *communicative rationality* of the critical theoretical sociologist Jürgen Habermas and the *pragmatic philosophy* inspired by, among others, John Dewey. These critical and pragmatic inspirations have served to expand the understanding of how different qualified rationalities can contribute under equal and power free deliberations on the planning arena, and how knowledge can be understood as a dynamic, experiential, and experimental democratic potential for developing the societal trajectory in a planning process. The following section describes some perspectives of the rationality and communication perspectives of Habermas based on Elling (2008), and thereafter the Deweyian democratic knowledge perspective is introduced, based on Healey (2009).

The theory of communicative rationality of Habermas problematizes decision making in our current modern society. The rationality of the system has, through modernity, been reduced and separated from the integrated lifeworld rationality (Elling 2008). Habermas differentiates three types of rationalities that have been out-differentiated from the integrated lifeworld perspective: the cognitive-instrumental rationality; the moral-practical rationality; and the aesthetic-expressive rationality. The cognitive-instrumental rationality is a system rationality that has an instrumental perspective of how knowledge and action can fulfil certain goals. The main criterion for this rationality is the perspective of *efficiency*, or the ability to reach the objectives of the particular system with appropriate means. The moral-practical rationality is based on the normative perspectives of the particular system or society. It is measured by the perceived *rightness* of the decision or objective, and is in this sense concerned with the legitimacy of the system. The aesthetic-expressive rationality is the dramaturgical action of the expert system and is validated by the truthfulness of what is said and done. The two latter rationalities are in this sense not directly concerned with the instrumental action of decision making, but rather validating it from expert criterion of moral and aesthetics. Habermas claims that the problem of the decision making in the modern society is not the use of rationality per se, but the domination of these out-differentiated rationalities, and especially the cognitive-instrumental rationality that is used to understand and take action in society within certain predefined purposes. In this optique the societal system has been professionalized and sectorized into institutions that pursue certain reduced goals that answer to their particular perception of reality. In a decision-making process, where the construction of meaning is influenced by how the world is perceived

and interpreted, the rationalities of one institution will not be able to understand the larger complexity than what is within the range of their particular purpose (Elling 2008). In the lifeworld, understood as the private sphere of life and more broadly as civil society, these rationalities are integrated in a communicative rationality. The communicative rationality integrates moral, ethical and purposive perspectives within a holistic, though fragmented, life perspective of society (Elling 2008). In an environmental planning perspective Elling (2008) problematizes the ability of environmental institutions, in a formal planning arena, to recognize and understand other perspectives of the environment than what have been predefined as the planning purpose. The problem is that although citizens are invited to participate, they are invited *within* a cognitive-instrumental rational understanding of the planning purpose. The participation of citizens on the planning arena is, in this sense, becomes reduced to a matter of fulfilling of the system legitimacy, and not to creating deliberations about the subject matter beyond the planning purpose.

The theory of communicative action is a theoretical attempt to demonstrate how decision making processes can create ideal speech arenas, where these separated rationalities, through deliberation and inter-subjective understanding, can create communicative rationalities. Democratic planning and decision making is in this understanding not only based on representation, but attempts to open a space where citizens can express their concerns and reason of society based on their non-expert and non-purposive rationalities. These rationalities are based on a different epistemological ground from the cognitive-instrumental or expert rationalities, but are in an ideal speech setting considered equally valid in the societal decision-making process. It is through democratic public dialogue arenas that society has the possibility to construct new socially constructed meanings and opinions that can transcend the purposive and instrumental rationality that dominates the current societal structure (Elling 2008). In a critical theoretical perspective it is this democratic foundation of societal planning that constitutes the most important safeguard against totalitarian regimes, and opens a dialectic and emancipatory process that can develop society towards better ends.

The Habermasian perspective of developing inter-subjective or communicative rationality has been reflected in different ramifications of planning theory. It has generated the basis for a theoretical (and philosophical) critique of the hierarchical rational instrumental planning practice, and enabled the ability to question rationality in planning. The theory of communicative action has thus founded an argumentation for new arenas for decision making that can embrace different types of rationalities and deliberatively develop improved understandings and more legitimate decisions and actions (Healey 2006; Innes & Booher 2010). The facilitation of such inter-subjective understanding requires that the dialogue arena meets certain conditions (Elling 2008; Healey 2006; Innes & Booher 2010).

Firstly, the condition of a broader public requires that the dialogue arena must involve all interested parties or actors that are affected by the decision (or plan). Secondly, the process should be self-organized and driven by collective purposes. Thirdly, the arena must meet certain conditions of speech: the dialogue must

be authentic and comprehensible for all involved, claims must be based on legitimate grounds and arguments must be sincere. The arena must facilitate a non-powerful environment where the interests and perspectives of all actors/parties are regarded equal, and all participants must have equal access to information. Fourthly, the dialogue must be able to question all presumptions and truths taken for granted, in order to open mutual understanding. Communication under such conditions should ideally be able to develop better arguments and rational (in the communicative sense) decisions (Innes and Booher 2010; Healey 2006).

The recognition of new rationalities in planning inevitably also deals with the question of how we use knowledge in action in a democratic society. Knowledge creation as a democratic endeavour for societal development has been one of the main concerns of the American pragmatic philosophy in general and of John Dewey in particular (i.e. "*Democracy and Education*" (1916) and "*The Public and its Problems*" (1927)). This democratic perspective of knowledge creation has been influential for the collaborative planning theory (Healey 2009). Pragmatism has especially contributed to the exploration of the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and action and the linkage of theory and practice. The production of knowledge is in this way also related to the practical aspects of societal development. Knowledge is considered a dynamic and developing entity informed by a multiplicity of perspectives, and adapted and changed through learning from action¹³. The development of knowledge and its use in societal development is, from a Deweyian perspective, a democratic process of collectively learning to deal with the societal challenges (Healey, 2009). In dealing with practical problematic situations – as in a particular planning process – the Deweyian perspective merges scientific inquiry, praxis (experiential knowledge), collective learning and the perspective of democracy into what Dewey called *communities of inquiry* (Healey 2009). The development of such communities of inquiry are not limited to a particular temporal situation, but are rather perceived as learning communities that iteratively explore and learn about a situation in order to improve it. The operationalization of democracy is in this perspective considered the only possible way to generate legitimate knowledge that can work to improve the particular situations (Healey, 2009).

The philosophy of pragmatism and neo-pragmatism has contributed to the formation of the collaborative planning approach on several accounts (Healey 2009; Innes & Booher 2010). The production and use of knowledge in collaborative planning is not perceived as a one-way process where certain expert perspectives are instrumentally implemented in a planning and development process. In the process of developing practical judgment in a particular situation people are not only applying abstract perspectives, but also influenced by situated practice. The perspective of experiential knowledge is in this sense just as important as theoretical considerations when people are required to act or give their opinion in practical situations. The development of mutual understandings is inspired by both practical situated experiential knowledge, as well as abstract, moral, theoretical perspectives. Following this line of argument it makes sense to argue that the practice of planning – as an art of political judgment - must open for participation of

¹³ As discussed in chapter 2 the discussion of knowledge as a theoretical and practical concept is also relevant in the broader philosophical knowledge discussion that planning theory is of course both related to and inspired by.

the “whole” of human capacities; from moral and aesthetic perspectives of feelings and intuitions, as well as analytic reason (Healey, 2009). Healey (2009) in this sense argues that the planning arena must open for a communicative rationality. Further, such inquiry must not be limited to analytical inquiries of the particular situation, but must work in a more integrative perspective with the larger holistic perspectives, or embedded in a larger system of society (Innes and Booher, 2010).

The collaborative approach, with its communicative and deliberative inspiration, is a perspective of planning that seeks to address a dual challenge in modern society: the increasing complexity of our substantial world, and the legitimacy of the democratic realm, including the type of knowledge that makes decisions about how our society relates to its substance (Innes & Booher 2010). Planning is perceived as a democratic endeavour to develop suitable knowledge through experiential and theoretical inquiry. The purpose is on the one hand to create improved mutual understanding among stakeholders, and on the other pave the way for desirable improvements of society and the local situation through collaboration. Legitimate decisions can only be generated when all interests are involved and all affected parties are heard (Innes 2004; Innes & Booher 2010). The collaborative planning arena enables the public to engage in deliberation and build capacity for problem solving. Therefore an informed public, or the involvement of relevant stakeholders, is a prerequisite to develop effective solutions to demanding problems and not least to facilitate their implementation. However, the collaborative planning theories emphasize the importance of inviting contrasting views in a process of dynamic tension to develop true deliberation and advance a broad mutual understanding (Healey 2009). The perspective of collaborative planning is thus not only aimed at creating more effective governance and management of single situations, but also of building institutions that can address the increasing complexity in society, not least the challenges of sustainability (Innes & Booher 2010).

The collaborative planning perspective is relevant in my case because it has also, as I will argue in the next section, influenced the environmental planning and management approach. The collaborative approach has in this sense contributed to challenge the natural scientific dominated environmental approach by problematizing the legitimizing rationalities and knowledge claims. These theoretical perspectives can therefore contribute to exploring the understandings at play in a particular planning process, in this case wild reindeer protection, that seek to combine local and national steering with protection and use of nature. It is however also important to explore and question what this collaborative planning rationality does not solve. The last part of this section discusses different critical perspectives of the collaborative planning approach, but I want to use a few lines to point to some of the critical points that I find important in nature planning as a backdrop for the next section devoted to collaborative nature management.

From a critical theoretical, or critical utopian action research perspective, the collaborative approach could be criticized for not transcending the system rationality, and for not opening a dialectic societal perspective or utopian perspective. Although collaborative planning accentuates the involvement of the broader public, the public are still defined as “stakeholders”, “all parts affected by the plan”, “relevant actors”. The

participatory planning arena is in this sense reduced to a matter of negotiation or collaboration between existing interests and understanding of the subject matter. Although the collaborative approach also invites contrasting views, it is still reduced to inviting actors who are perceived relevant contributors within the planning objective. The collaborative planning arena is thus interested in “hearing” the opinions and values of ordinary citizens, but not in involving them as active democratic actors who can re-define or re-direct the planning objective (that is still the responsibility of the planning institutions). Deliberative participation is in this sense colonized by particular interests that are considered relevant *within* the planning purpose.

In an environmental planning perspective, or sustainability horizon, the collaborative planning model is then problematic because it does not accomplish in broadening the horizon for the planning objective. The collaboration between stakeholders with established interests will only serve to negotiate current problems and regulate the risks of the situation. Planning becomes a matter of collaboration to reduce the (ecological) risks of the current societal trajectory (Harste 2000). The planning arena is thus not able to be open for a utopian horizon where ordinary citizens are influential on deliberating and defining alternative or dialectic societal trajectories, but are only invited to opine about the pre-defined planning purpose (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007). This generates a planning situation where the very understanding of the subject matter, i.e. nature protection, is not challenged or deliberated, but taken for granted or “naturalized”. Nature protection becomes a matter of negotiation between stakeholders, who might lead to new understandings and “better” agreements, but is not open to other understandings or rationalities of what nature protection could be. The idea of nature protection planning thus becomes a matter with agreed boundaries between “nature” and the general unsustainability of the society (Cowell & Owens 2011)

The communicative and pragmatic influence in nature planning and management

Nature planning and management, which were traditionally a matter of government and central bureaucracy steering, are also influenced by the collaborative turn and the pragmatic philosophy. The perspective of adaptive governance and collaborative management in contexts of socio-ecological complexity has inspired a range of different research efforts to understand the relation between environmental management, ecological performance and the societies they involve. Perspectives of deliberative democracy and collaborative action have developed to ensure more legitimate and effective nature management processes that can deal with the complexity (and conflict) of socio-ecological systems (Armitage et al. 2009; Carlsson and Berkes 2005; Daniels & Walker 2001). In the following I will introduce some of the key influential “schools of thought” within nature planning and management theory. One of these is the *collaborative management* perspective that is inspired by the institutional theory of Elinor Ostrom (1990) of governing the commons and by the communicative theories of Habermas as described above. This line of thought emphasizes the aspects of collaboration and governance as an institutional answer to the management of socio-ecological systems. The other of these is the *adaptive management* perspective that is inspired by American pragmatism, experiential learning theory, and systemic thinking (or

complexity theory). The emphasis within this “school” is placed on how action and reflection – as learning cycles - can improve the management of uncertain and complex socio-ecological systems. In the book *Adaptive Co-management*, Armitage, Berkes, and Doubleday (2007) attempt to bridge these overlapping approaches towards an integrated perspective that can approach situations of change, uncertainty and complexity.

Adaptive co-management combines the dimension of iterative learning with the dimension of rights and responsibility. Folke et al (2002, p. 20) define this as: “*a process by which institutional arrangements and ecological knowledge are tested and revised in a dynamic, on-going, self-organized process of learning-by doing.*” (Folke et al. 2002). Armitage, Berkes and Doubleday (2007) describe seven interrelated themes and focal areas for adaptive co-management: complex systems thinking; adaptive capacity and resilience; learning, knowledge, and social capital; institutional design; partnerships and power sharing; policy implications; and conditions of success and failures. Within this thinking, it is the holistic combination of all these perspectives that can move nature management towards resilient systems.

This theoretical perspective can contribute to understanding the complexity of nature resource planning and management. It challenges the natural scientific understanding of ecology with the importance of the social system, and acknowledges that there are many different stakeholders and institutions with different interests. In this sense, it shows a way out of the rational government-oriented management that has dominated natural resources. However, as argued above, it does not challenge the fundamental democratic aspects of the steering or consider the involvement of citizens as a fundamental democratic aspect in the management of socio-ecological “systems”.

Berkes (2007) explores some of the many theoretical perspectives of adaptive co-management that have emerged over the last two decades. They are conceptualized as: power sharing, institutional building, trust building, social learning, problem solving, and governance. These seven concepts will be elaborated below. The issue of *power sharing* emphasizes the distributive process of the responsibility and decision making over a given resource or area between local communities, institutions, and state, and problematizes perspectives of legitimacy and equity in such arrangements. From an institutional perspective, co-management is the process of how local institutions are created through processes of learning and how institutions interact in a larger governance system (Ostrom, 1990, 2005). Trust building is a fundamental prerequisite for institutional building, and hence for developing adaptive co-management arrangements. The perspective of trust in co-management is emphasized as a process of developing respect across cultures and worldviews, between locals and experts, communities and institutions, and at a multi institutional level. Trust is, in this sense, the development of social capital in the management arrangement. From these arguments follows that adaptive co-management is an iterative dynamic process of deliberation and negotiation. Co-management is thus not an end point or fixed state, but a continuously developing process without a limited timeframe allowing iterative reassessment of the management arrangement (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005). The process of adaptive co-management is in this understanding

inherently a process of social learning. The very deliberation between actors, and the reassessment of the management arrangement in relation to the environment and local society, is a continuous process of learning (Ison, Steyaert, Roggero, Hubert, & Jiggins 2004). Social learning in co-management operates with a dual perspective. On the one side learning is social through the collective management arrangement where actors (experts and local stakeholders) learn from each other's perspectives and understandings (Schusler et al. 2003). On the other side, social learning is concerned with collectively learning about the environment and its response to human practice. This adaptive perspective in social learning is emphasized in situations dealing with complex and uncertain socio-ecological systems (Folke, Carpenter, Elmquist, Gunderson, Holling, Walker, Bengtsson, & Etal. 2002), and is closely linked with the idea of building resilient socio-ecological systems that can easily adapt to change and pressure (Berkes 2003). Social learning in adaptive co-management is in this sense an organisational endeavour to build better (as in resilient) socio-ecological systems.

Adaptive co-management can be interpreted as a participatory process of solving problems of socio-ecological systems. Traditionally, the idea of problem solving has had a technocratic and expert-oriented perspective. However, co-adaptive management perceives problem solving as the process of collaboration between a broad group of stakeholders at different vertical levels that form networks able to develop and share knowledge and skills that can tackle complex problems, and develop new institutional arrangements for power sharing (Berkes 2007; Carlsson & Berkes 2005). In a governance perspective, the adaptive co-management theory uses these arguments to challenge the hierarchical and expert decision making that has traditionally dominated management and especially protection of natural resources and areas (Nelson, Howden, & Smith 2008). The adaptive co-management theory emphasizes the importance of a broader governance partnership where a diversity of public, private and semi-public actors is linked through a variety of relationships. Such governance constellations, where affected actors are involved also on the collective choice level (Ostrom, 1990) are consistent with the idea of good governance that emphasizes democratic mandate, legitimacy, accountability, transparency (Sørensen & Torfing 2005). Adaptive co-management is in other words concerned that decisions are taken at the lowest possible level as emphasised by several international nature protection and management treaties (UNECE 1998). This might entail that adaptive co-management requires the building of new institutional arrangements that can fit the particular situations and enter into collaboration with other existing institutions.

Berkes (2007) concludes that adaptive co-management has the potential to address the increasing disembeddedness (referring to Anthony Giddens and Karl Polanyi) of local communities in relation to their local environment, through the building of social and institutional capital between civil society, the state and private actors. The argument, in this perspective, is that it is through such multi-governance arrangements, linking the vertical and horizontal levels of steering and interests, the adaptive capacity for managing (resilient) socio-ecological system can be developed. The problem, in my perspective, is, however, that these theories do not problematize who has the right to define the problem. The very objective of the co-adaptive management perspective is thus not subject to critical scrutiny from a broader

public than the interested parties or stakeholders who are invited to participate. The participation, or collaboration, operates within a purpose rationality that has been defined by expert or interest perspectives, and the very deliberation of the subject matter is thus not opened for dialectic (or utopian) deliberations, but to develop resilience within the existing reality.

The development of adaptive co-management theories is, however, in many ways an important step towards more democratic and sustainable processes and results in nature planning and management. They challenge the dominating rational and hierarchical planning and management regime, as well as the role of natural scientific knowledge as a provider of “truth”. In concordance with the theoretical perspective of deliberative governance, attention (at least in theory) in planning and management is changing towards broad governance networks of private and semi-private stakeholders, public officials, and experts. The diversity of actors and the establishments of arenas for interaction, in this sense, lay the ground for improved mutual understanding, and legitimacy, of planning in wicked situations. Co-adaptive management theories can therefore contribute to analysing the socio-ecological complexity of the case of this thesis: wild reindeer planning and local communities. They serve to understand how social institutions in local communities are linked with the ecological aspects of nature and wild reindeer. Further, they contribute to exploring perspectives of how new governance coalitions and institutions could increase trust and social learning in the area that could lead to more resilient management practice. However, as argued above, co-adaptive management does not deal with the fundamental democratic issue of who has the right to participate in the definition of the problem – and thus the premises for the solutions. It builds on an understanding of organised interests that can be organised and institutionalised, but it has difficulties with “non-participants” who do not have established interests, but only everyday relations, feelings, and values to the subject of the matter. The problem with the collaborative adaptive planning and management approach is in this sense that it critically questions the fundamental democratic aspect of participation.

The following paragraph will seek to address some of the general critique that has targeted the collaborative planning understanding in relation to power and consensus. Thereafter, I will try to direct a critique of this planning perspective based on a critical theoretical reflection on the democratic foundation of planning and sustainability.

Critique of the interest based consensus thinking

Collaborative and communicative planning has been widely debated and criticised since its emergence, especially from a post-structuralist perspective. I will hereafter briefly discuss two lines of critique: the post-structuralist critique inspired by Foucault and Moeffe targeting the ideas of superior rationality and consensus orientation in communicative planning; and the critical theoretical inspired critique of the interest-based governance model and the purposive planning perspective. These lines of critique are from different perspectives questioning the democratic foundation of communicative planning.

One of the main critiques of the communicative theory – and thus collaborative planning practice – has targeted the power issues of decision making and planning (Flyvbjerg 1998; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998). Planning is, as argued in the collaborative planning perspective, a process that creates and recreates meaning structures and understandings and thus is in essence political. The post-structuralist perspective, however questions how the “real” power structures influencing these meaning structures can be challenged. Flyvbjerg (1998) considers the perspective of power as a necessary ingredient to discuss the arena of dialogue (communication), because power is at play at all times, although it may be hidden and unconscious. The ideal speech situation is thus problematized as an impossibility because any communication arena is influenced by the power and position of the participating actors, and even structures outside the arena. This critique thus targets the understanding of democracy as either consensus or conflict based (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo 2010). The possibility of conflict and disputes could be understood as the very characterization of democracy, firstly because it constitutes the freedom of opinion, and secondly because conflict and dispute enable society with its dynamics and abilities to change (Hillier, 2003). When the question of power is brought into the planning arena, it does not only consider “power over” thinking, but also a “power through” perception. In a planning arena there are thus many faces of power that influence the potential of creating meaning. Actors in a planning arena could in this sense be interpreted as actors with the possibility of strategically framing the horizon of understanding the phenomena through including or excluding certain information and perspectives (Jensen 2007). Knowledge can in this sense constitute a means of power in planning (Pløger 2013)

This difference in the understanding and potential of power marks the unsettled struggle between Habermas and Foucault in the attempt to create more democratic decision-making processes (Flyvbjerg 1998). The collaborative planning literature recognizes the *problématique* of power on the planning arena and seeks to build institutional structures to overcome the power issues (Healey 2006; Innes 2004). The primary task of the planning process is therefore to establish arenas, in accordance with the Habermasian theory of communicative action, that are able to foster communicative rationality in a “power free” environment as a process of redistributing power (Healey 2006; Berkes 2007). The strength of the collaborative planning is thus considered to be the ability to create arenas where individual interests and values (powers) can be challenged collectively (Innes & Booher 2010). This attempt to redistribute power through collective argumentation, and disregard the stakeholder’s individual power play and strategic actions, is, however, considered the weakness of the collaborative planning theory from the perspective of post-structural planners (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998). Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998) point to a theoretical and practical critique of collaborative planning. Their critique, and the examples they use from planning, takes its point of departure from a human view that seeks to optimize interests. The actors in the planning system are perceived as stakeholders who work strategically (teleological, normative, and dramaturgical) to achieve certain individual or organizational benefits. This critique might be relevant within interest consensus oriented planning situations, but it does not transcend the interest oriented logic. If all actors are perceived as “rational” individuals who seek to optimize their own interests through a play of power and are not concerned with a broader common aspect, then it makes sense to criticize the idea of

a collaborative arena. But the point of the Habermasian communicative rationality is that such an arena must move beyond the interest-based thinking that generates the “out differentiated rationalities” towards a communicative rationality that can embrace a more holistic understanding of life and nature (Elling, 2008). The communicative rationality is thus not the negotiation and consensus between interests, it is the rationality developed through communication as “whole” social people with diverse and ambiguous lifeworld perspectives. If planning is reduced to the negotiation of out-differentiated interests it might just become a game of power between stakeholders to achieve the best possible end for a particular interest. However, if the founding idea of planning is to accomplish some sort of deliberation about how to manage and live with the *common* materiality in a society then the planning arena has to move beyond the interest logics, both in a collaborative “consensus” and post-structural “power” perspective. The planning arena must seek to mobilize and “responsibilize” the public as whole human and social beings with a phenomenological lifeworld-oriented meaning orientation, and not just as “interest-holders”.

A different critique of collaborative planning is the idea of the superior argument, or the communicative rationality (Flyvbjerg 1998). In a complex “fluent” reality it is difficult to imagine that there is a “superior” argument, rather than continuously created and recreated contested beliefs. The Habermasian perspective of universality of rationality and reason is, in Flyvbjerg’s perspective, not valuable in current reality where wicked situations require iterative and adaptive action. In such wicked situations there are no universal rationalities that can construct superior arguments, no matter how “good” the intention might be (Flyvbjerg 1998). However, from a collaborative planning perspective, these perspectives of wickedness and complexity are the very argument for creating new forums for planning, because the collaboration between a diversity of perspectives and interests can reach a higher level of understanding of the complexity, as well as, some degree of consensus (Innes and Booher 2010; Innes, 2004; Healey, 2006; Armitage et al. 2007). The idea of consensus thinking in collaborative planning might be considered its Achilles heel. First of all because powerful actors and dominating discourses can lay the premises or dominate the outcome of the consensus (Pløger, 2013), and secondly because a focus on consensus might in practice exclude participants who are not considered relevant to reach such consensus (Hillier, 2003). Sherry Arnstein (1967) posed one of the earliest warnings of the potential tyrannical nature of participatory planning and steering. Her critique concerned the lower steps of the “ladder of citizens’ participation” that used participation as a tool for manipulating and legitimizing certain decisions through tokenism and therapy. Truly participatory processes must not only listen to the citizens, but actually delegate the power to influence the process (Arnstein 1969). The participatory “turn” in environmental planning and nature management that builds on arguments of legitimization, efficiency, and conflict reduction could be related to this critique that was posed already in 1969. Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998) further this critique by questioning the ability of collaborative planning to challenge the given values of the system that initiates the process. In this light the participatory dimension is criticized for operating in an arena framed by a pre-given set of values and norms, which not only dictate the process, but also the possible outcome. Participation within such frames will necessarily only be able to reach a legitimizing character, because perspectives or values that challenge the system or process will be perceived as destructive. The apparent consensus in a planning

process therefor only benefits the “success” of the particular plan or strategy, it does not further perspectives held by the participants. The participatory elements in planning and management could therefore be criticized for their tyrannical potential. Cooke and Kothari (2001) criticise such seemingly participatory approaches for only involving participants who are willing contribute within the pre-given premises and system, while non-participating actors are not taken into account at all, or dismissed as uninterested or unimportant contributors. The theoretical basis of collaborative planning is thus criticized for pre-assuming a reachable consensus, and the inability to deal with conflicting and contradictory individual perspectives (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo 2010; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998).

Hillier (2003), inspired by Chantal Moeffe’s agonistic model of democracy, emphasizes the importance of involving conflicting perspectives, values, and interests within a planning arena. The main importance of the planning process is not to reach consensus, but rather to develop mutual respect between differing perspectives. If a planning arena is not open to such conflicts, fundamental political discussion will be pushed out of the arena and be subject of radicalization outside the public debate. The agonistic perspective in democracy is thus an attempt to open for a political culture with a diverse set of legitimate claims and where the co-existence of different meaning systems is tolerated (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo 2010). The process is thus not oriented at reaching consensus for its own sake, but about acknowledging that certain issues can be met through consensus, while respecting the disagreements in others. The argument of Hillier emphasises the democratic and dynamic potential in an agonistic planning approach that is able to tolerate and use the contradicting views in its process. Further, she is concerned with perceiving the planning process as an unfinished process in a fluent complex world. Planning must in this sense be open to uncertainty, it must acknowledge existing rationalities, whilst striving to create new connections and understandings (Hillier 2003).

Learning from the post-structural critique

How does this critique bring us further in an understanding of planning theory and practice, especially with reference to the participatory or democratic dimension in an environmental context? The post-structural critique is relevant to problematize issues of the power at play in the meaning creation process; the complexity and uncertainty of our modern society (and its relation to nature); and the inability to involve participants with perspectives that are non-conformant with the agenda of a planning arena. The problem of this critique is that it does not point to how society should then democratically deal with issues of common concern, i.e. the challenge of sustainability that has a “material” reality regardless of discourses (Elling 2008; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007b).

The conflict between the deliberative democratic approach, as inspired by Habermas, and the post-structural perspective is the latter’s departure in interests and perceptions as something statically determinant for the process and outcome (Elling 2008). The agonistic and post-structural perspective departs from the perspective of interests and individual claims as the main drivers in human interaction. The collective arena thus becomes a “play” of power where decision making is premised by the dominating

discourses. Such emphasis on the individual and the non-identical identity reproduces the agonistic perspective and rejects the existence of the common or social as part of our identity (Hansen 2007). If human-action and a search for the common perspectives in planning should be unfolded, then it is important to be critical towards dominating discourses and powers at play in seemingly participatory processes. However, the post-structural critique does not point to any potential for how collective human actions, as planning for the common, can develop arenas that can work with dissonances and ambiguities towards emancipatory horizons of the society (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007b). The planning arena must open an arena that weighs the *social* and *common* in time and space, as a way of overcoming the economic or power-related interests we might pursue individually. The point of departure for developing new planning arenas must thus be based on an interest in the citizens' contributions (as whole human beings) in a social space and the insistence on a common concern of our society, as well as our nature (Hansen, 2007; Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006a, Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007b). A broad understanding of "the public" as the democratic forum creates the possibility of an emerging understanding of the common (Arendt 1958), while not enforcing the perspective of consensus.

A critical theoretical perspective of the critique

To unfold this theoretical discussion further, I will attempt to target the critique of collaborative planning from a critical theoretical and critical utopian action research orientation. The ambition of this critique is to open new potential horizons and practices within participatory environmental planning that can also embrace everyday life perspectives. The current attempt to create participatory processes within nature and environmental planning is, as discussed above, often framed within a purposive rationality (Elling 2008). In such processes the sustainability agenda, or in this case nature protection, is introduced through the "system" (policy and planning institutions) perspective. The planning arena is in this sense arranged within a purposive rationality of reaching a pre-set objective, but is not open to the broader lifeworld oriented perspectives of the subject matter (when it does not answer to the purpose of the plan) (Elling 2010). The participation processes are in this sense framed by a bureaucratic expert understanding of the purpose of nature planning based on the national policies and natural scientific knowledge. The participatory approaches in planning thereby become an instrumental measure to improve planning efficiency in relation to the purpose of nature conservation, and its legitimacy regarding the decision making process. The participatory aspect then becomes a means to reach an efficient and legitimate final planning outcome that is entirely defined by planners and managers. This restricts the planning arena, as criticized by both the critical theory and post-structuralist perspective, by laying the premises for whom are considered relevant participants to define the purpose, and what type of knowledge and perspectives are considered legitimate in the argumentation. As Hansen (2007, p. 102) writes; "*this [condition] compromises – in a deliberative participatory democratic understanding – the participation on very central terms*" [my translation].

The discussions about participation in planning therefore require a fundamental discussion of who is considered the “public” in planning, or who is considered relevant in a planning arena. Although the collaborative planning perspective problematizes the rational planning tradition for its inability to involve “local knowledge” and perspectives that do not answer to the planning purpose, they do not consider the “locals” as constitutional democratic participants. Innes and Booher (2010) in this sense argue that: *“it is the inclusion of their [local] knowledge that is critical to a genuinely resilient system”* (p. 194). However, local people are not thereby seen as democratic participants in the decision making arena: *“While it is possible that representatives like the Native American could participate in such a dialogue, it can make more sense to have them simply come and tell their stories and go back to their world and their practice. Their world is about farming, living on the streets, or managing the wilderness. It is not about negotiations and learning professional discourses”* (p. 192-193). This understanding of participation reduces the participants to “knowledge contributors” within the framework of the purpose of the planning system, without an active (democratic) role in the definition of the planning purpose. The role of the “public” thus becomes a matter of learning to participate in the already defined planning arena. The planning institutions ability to develop democratic arenas in the public is thus dismissed. This divides the “public in planning” into participants with relevant stakes (interests), and observers who don’t have a stake, but are “just” citizens in the society. There is, in other words, an emerging duality or discrepancy between the system and its public (Elling 2008). If the planning arena only involves a “public” of stakeholders it reduces the purpose of planning to deal with a negotiation of established interests that are individualized, sectorized, and reduced, and therefore not able to work within a communicative rationality that requires a citizens’ “public” to introduce the broader lifeworld rationalities (Elling 2008; Elling 2010). Participation within such interest-based logic might be aimed at increasing the legitimacy of national policies, or even ensuring efficiency through increased knowledge access, but it is not aimed at deliberating the subject matter beyond the planning purpose rationality. One of the main challenges in environmental planning might therefore be to *move beyond an understanding of participation as the collaboration and negotiation of interests and towards an understanding of participation as a deliberation of environment as a matter of commons for a broader public*. It is through discussing the constitution of the public that planning can move beyond the interest logic and purposive rationality (Elling 2008; Hansen 2007).

If the purpose of environmental planning is an endeavour to reach more sustainable nature society trajectories, then it can not only rely on a pre-set instrumental rationality of nature protection, or the collaborative endeavour of negotiation of existing interests (Elling, 2008). The environmental planning arena should in this sense allow the broader public to deliberate perspectives about nature and society, or sustainability, not only as stakeholders, but as citizens. The involvement of citizens in planning can thus facilitate the introduction of a broader rationality, or a lifeworld perspective on the subject matter. The phenomenological lifeworld perspective of nature and society relations embraces an entanglement of different rationalities, experiences, and reflections. Lifeworld perspectives in this sense constitute a different outlook or perception of sustainability challenges that might not be perceived by a natural scientific or instrumental planning rationality. The lifeworld perspective can in this sense contribute on the

planning arena to understand and articulate aspects of current and potential sustainability trajectories that the planning institutions cannot “see” or pre-define within a purposive rationality (Elling, 2008). The participation of a broader public in planning is thus not only a question of foundational democratic legitimacy, but also a question of generating knowledge and perspectives about sustainability from a lifeworld rationality (Elling, 2010).

The analysis of this thesis – and the involvement in a particular environmental planning process - is thus a search for openings (and closures) in the planning horizon that can embrace such more deliberative democratic and everyday life oriented meaning perspective and move beyond a system rationality, and an interest-logic. The next section attempts to explore the critical utopian perspective of planning as a “reversed” participation that recognizes citizens as constituents for deliberating a different – or everyday life related - perspective of nature and society relations.

3.2. Everyday life perspectives in the planning of nature and society

The problematization of the rational-instrumental and collaborative planning horizons might be particularly relevant in an environmental perspective of nature protection, or on broader scale, sustainability challenges. Sustainability is, as previously argued, not an “objective” measure for redirecting societal trajectories. It is a question of iterative reflection and deliberation about the ethical and moral foundation of societal actions (Cowell and Owens 2011; Nielsen, Elling & Jelsøe 2010). Nature protection is, following a similar argument, neither an “objective” measure nor a unified concept. The understanding of nature protection mobilizes many different values and understandings of what nature is and what actions should be taken to protect it (Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006). If the question of nature protection is reduced to the negotiation of interests it becomes a matter of setting boundaries and regulations to the general unsustainable trajectory of society (Cowell and Owens 2011). Such planning approaches reduce the understanding of nature to a game of resources where some interests are “ranked higher” than others, and certain knowledge is considered more true than other. However, it does not recognize the human dimension of nature in society as part of a common life-coherence (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a).

(Natural) Scientific knowledge is essentially important in order to learn from the past, but aspects of ecological risk assessment cannot be presented as an omnipotent perspective of the “the right” direction for sustainable societal development (Clausen, Hansen, & Tind 2010; Harste 2000). The development of sustainable trajectories, or nature protection, can therefore not only rely on scientific “truths” or expert opinions, not simply because that would erode the democratic foundation of societal steering and disempower the human democratic potential, but also because it is - in a qualitative sense - doubtful that such scientific answers can generate perspectives for alternative development horizons (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a; Elling 2008). This sustainability paradox thus problematizes the ability to meet current sustainability challenges with the same scientific logic that has, in many ways, paved the road for the current challenges of “modernity” (Szerszynski, Lash, & Wynne 1996; Woodhill & Röling 1998). The “search”

for sustainability, as environmental planning, can therefore not rely on negotiations of existing interests or knowledge or the legitimization of pre-defined institutional objectives. There is, in other words, a necessity to think along new lines to approach the sustainability challenge in planning.

A planning movement beyond these interest logics or expert orientations must facilitate deliberations about nature as a social concern of the common in a life context that recognizes citizens as a democratic and empowered public (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a; 2007a). The foundation for citizens' participation in planning should therefore be developed through an appreciation of nature and society as an inherent part of citizens' individual and collective everyday life. The planning arena would in this sense also be challenged with the creation of "space" that could encourage deliberations about nature and society – based on the citizens' everyday life connections – although these might bring about different perspectives from expert knowledge and institutional planning categories. Citizens' participation, in this sense, represents a potential *democratization* of the planning arena, than can contribute with *qualitatively* different nature and society perspectives (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a; 2007a).

The argument is that if the environmental planning arena should facilitate a participatory realm that goes beyond interest-negotiations, or institutionalized expert purposes, then it must consider the empowerment of citizens as legitimate democratic contributors of (everyday) life perspective planning (Elling 2010). Democratic empowerment can only be generated through the ability to co-participate in aspects that are experienced as genuinely important for the individual and social everyday life (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a; 2007a). The participation of citizens can therefore not be based on the planning institutional logics and purposes, or the negotiation of interests, it must be directed to concern what they as citizens – in their life connections – find relevant to deliberate. Such deliberations generate perspectives about nature and society relations that neither scientists nor planners can bring into the planning arena. It is therefore the opening of the planning arena to citizens' deliberations and social learning about the different (cultural, social, political, economic, ecological) perspectives that can foster citizens' empowerment and thus improved responsibility for the subject matter (the natural area in the community), and thus generate new understandings about how to develop more sustainable nature society relations in the local community. Such qualitative different contributions to the environmental planning arena could then be furthered through discussions with expert knowledge and planning institutions (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007a).

"Citizens' participation oriented towards social learning thus opens a third dimension in the nature management (in addition to the natural scientific knowledge and political judgments) by contributing to nature protection and nature management with concrete knowledge about how nature is part of the life relations" (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007a, p.23)

The everyday life perspective refers to the (individual and social) human relations and connections to the natural and social reality as a whole, i.e. how nature and society is experienced through life. This everyday life should not be romanticized to an apoliticized sphere. The everyday life perspective is also part of a

political, economic, and cultural world, with dominating discourses, individual interests, and institutional structures. The life relation to nature and (local) society is, however, not separated into categorized economic, ecological, or cultural interests, or different static “roles” as a parent, a worker, a hunter, cultural bearer, out-door sports(wo)man, farmer, politician, etc. Such interests and roles are entangled, often on contradicting terms, into ambiguous and fragmented values and aspects of life that in different and changing ways relates to surrounding nature and society (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a; 2007a). Different everyday life perspectives, within a community – and even within the individual, might represent conflicting interests and values. The everyday life understandings are thus also restricted by dominating social discourses, community structures and individual routines (or habits). The everyday life perspective can in this sense be restricted by the very routines and habits of life that reduce ability and engagement in meaning development and change to resentment (Nielsen 1992). The everyday life perspective, with its ambiguous cognitive and experiential perspectives of nature is thus not understood as the representation of a hegemonic and “rightful” perspective in planning. The involvement of an everyday life perspective in environmental planning is therefore not a ready recipe for “solutions” to complex problems (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007a). However, humans embody the potential of developing new meaning orientations through social dialogues and experiential learning in a “reflective space”. An exploration of the local everyday life perspective should therefore be concerned with generating an arena and encourage “free” deliberations between established, oppositional, and dialectic understandings of nature and society. Such an arena could serve as a measure to form new meaning horizons of the subject matter that are *different* from the planning institutional horizon.

The everyday life perspective of nature and society involves perceptions and understandings about how the individual and social life has related to nature in the past, present and future. These perceptions are formed by cognitive thinking that relates to socio-cultural and economic structures and changes. But it is also formed by values and experiences in the local community and in the “natural” area. The human (social) relation to an area contains both physical and psychological aspects, or cognitive and experiential knowledge. The (individual and collective) everyday life perspective thus also embraces a gestic knowledge dimension, i.e. that the relation to the area and the knowledge of the area is embodied in the understanding of the area (Clausen 2011; Nielsen 2010). The understanding of nature is therefore not divided into categorizations of “culture” or “ecology”, “tourism” or “protection”; rather such categories are entangled in perspectives of (social) life, recreational activities and work. These entanglements are not only made in the complexity of a present life, but also related to the cultural history of the area, and not least to the future perspective of their children in the community. The everyday life perspective in this sense relates differently to the area than planning categorizations, lines on a map, or scientific analytical knowledge. Although the everyday life relation to nature might be eroded or neglected it represents a *potential* of understanding nature (and sustainability) as something *different* from economic or ecological interests, institutional purposes, or natural scientific knowledge. As previously said, the argument is not that the everyday life perspective represents an answer, but that exploration and encouragement of deliberations

based on everyday life perspectives with citizens might generate a different (and more democratic) outlook to the nature protection endeavour.

Citizens' everyday life perspectives, or life relations to nature (and society), are not static. They cannot be "gathered" or recorded as fixed meanings and discourses. They are not "objects" that can be fed into a planning process through surveys or public hearing meetings. Such a gathering would only serve to answer to the pre-defined institutional purpose rationality of the plan. Citizens' meaning perspectives are continuously changing and developing often through social or inter-subjective meaning deliberations (Nielsen and Nielsen 2002). (I imagine that most people would be offended if they were not recognized as reflecting and responsible individuals.) Citizens' participation and contributions to a planning arena cannot therefore be based on traditional qualitative inquiries that "collect" opinions as "data". Citizens' contributions must be developed by encouraging deliberations (or meaning generation) on a social arena in a meaningful reality. The engagement of citizens in a planning arena is therefore, not only a matter of qualitative contributions of new meaning, but it is a matter of facilitating a social learning arena where critical and utopian perspectives of the life relation to nature (and society) can be generated (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a). Such participatory rationales go beyond the legitimization of pre-defined planning purposes, beyond the mere negotiation of established interests, and towards a participatory concept that recognizes citizens as democratic empowered individuals in a social sphere with a potential of generating new meaning orientations about their embedded life relations to nature through social learning.

Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a; 2007a) have worked with social learning as a deliberative democratic constituent of citizens' participation in nature protection planning contexts. Social learning is, in their perspective, not only a matter of facilitating knowledge development and the creation of mutual discourses between citizens and institutions that can modernize (and legitimize) nature management and understanding, which otherwise seems to be a general understanding in parts of the social science that work with nature management (Blackmore 2007; Ison, Steyaert, Roggero, Hubert, & Jiggins 2004). The conventional understanding of social learning focuses on the dialogue between citizens, stakeholders, planners, and experts as a process of reorienting discourses and creating new understandings of nature management, but does not involve the everyday life relation to nature as a starting point for generating new meaning or citizens' empowerment. Such social learning perspective relies on a governance or collaborative planning logic, where new understandings are created through the negotiation between established interests. The critique furthered by Nielsen and Nielsen (2007a) is that such social learning perspective is only oriented towards possible matters of consensus within the existing frames of the current management system, and thus inevitably based on the purpose rationality of the planning institutions or established interests. This governance oriented participation and social learning is thus more a question of disseminating expert knowledge to create legitimacy for certain interests and values in, e.g. a nature planning process, and not about the deliberative involvement of citizens as democratic beings with qualitative contributions based on *their* everyday life and community relation to nature. Nielsen and Nielsen (2007a, p. 25) argue that such participatory approaches conceal an instrumental and coerced

legitimization process of predefined outcomes that in the long run undermine the potential of democracy: *“We believe that such an approach to social learning in praxis becomes a deceptive democratic legitimization of the prevalent nature management policy.”* (my translation)

Social learning is in a democratic sense a critical utopian concept (and related to the critical utopian action research concept described in chapter 2 and the methodology of the future scenario workshop described in chapter 4). This perspective of social learning seeks to strengthen the relation between (social) everyday life orientations of nature with citizen empowerment and responsibility to this nature. Also as described in chapter 2, Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a;2007a) found their social learning concept based on theories of Sociological Fantasy developed by C Wright Mills that target the human capability to change perspectives from micro to macro and generate connections between different societal spheres and discourses without reducing them to one another. This capability holds an inherent critical dimension that inspires the reflections and re-orientations of problematic individual and societal problems. The critical theoretical thinker Oscar Negt furthered this perspective on sociological fantasy as exemplary learning. The exemplary learning is thus a question of connecting contradicting and conflictual aspects of the everyday life by generating space for the human capacity to re-orient meaning and practice. Nielsen and Nielsen connect this exemplary learning with the social learning perspective of Regina Becker-Schmidt and Gudrun-Axeli Knapp. They further an understanding of learning as a social process, i.e. in relation to and with others, and oriented towards mutual life-matters and individual formation. The process of learning in a social setting about life-matters is thus based on an emancipatory concern in both a societal and individual context (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007, pp28-29). The concept of social learning is in this sense tied to the idea of developing sociological fantasy and exemplary learning as a way of reflecting and reorienting contradicting and irreducible societal spheres and everyday life situations through collective deliberations. The core concern is to develop emancipatory learning that can not only critically relate to the current problematic situation and the individual meaning perspectives, but also from a distance, encourage dialectic reflections for alternative situations and understandings. Social learning is in this sense a process of formation and recognition of the individual as a meaning creator, and also tied to the social sphere of the broader community and the common life-matter concerns. Social learning is thus a (long) process of learning, in a social arena, about the individual and collective community relations to nature/society. It is thus an endeavour to set the life-matter oriented knowledge of the particular arena in motion towards new understandings and perspectives of the individual and collective responsibility of this matter and the empowerment to generate changes. This creates a potential to gain awareness and re-evaluate the abilities of responsibility and empowerment (for the everyday life and nature relations) among citizens in a social setting. Enablement of such processes in planning would require that the planning arena facilitates a “reflective space” that recognizes citizens as a “responsible public” of democratic participants with *different*, but legitimate, perspectives on the environment.

However, such learning, reorientation, and responsibility generation is a process that requires not only time, but also emancipatory space. This is not a simple endeavour in an everyday life that is often occupied

with restrictive routines, contradictions, and time consuming practicalities. The idea of social learning from the (often chaotic and bounded) everyday life perspective also necessitates “distance” from current life-routines, i.e. a “free-space” where other reflections about the restrictions and hopes for the life-matter are allowed to surface in a social dialogue. The encouragement of social learning is thus driven by the potential of developing new hopes or utopian perspectives of the current life-matter (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a). The utopian perspective in social learning constitutes the revolving point of departure for new dialectic orientations. The creation of a social learning process concerned with citizens life-matter orientations must therefore also encourage a dialectic perspective – or insist on deliberations of the current in relation to a utopian horizon. It is thus the encouragement of utopian perspectives – in relation to the current life matter – that can facilitate the reorientation of meaning in a social learning process.

The involvement of the public as citizens, with their lifeworld rationality, and their ambiguous everyday life perspectives, is a prerequisite to ensuring not only a more democratic process, but also a potential valuable contribution to developing new perspectives and practices for more sustainable human-nature relations (Elling 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). The participation of citizens in planning is thus not to be “reduced” to a matter of democratic *legitimacy*, or knowledge generation that can serve a “better” or more *efficient* nature management. Citizens’ participation must be acknowledged by the “planning arena” as a both an essential democratic contribution to the process *and* with qualitative perspectives on the subject matter, although they might be different from the planning institutional logic. Citizens’ participation on the planning arena is not a matter of “feeding” the planning system, but about allowing citizens’ perspectives to be deliberated and recognized on their own account. The participation of citizens in planning must therefore be aimed at fostering and critically reflecting aspects that can bring out mutual community concerns and utopian ideas for nature and society. Such a “reversed” participatory perspective would require a planning arena with “space” for citizens to deliberate and contribute with their concerns about nature and society, grounded in their individual and collective everyday life understanding of the subject matter. In other words, it would require a planning horizon that recognizes a different orientation towards the subject matter than the institutional or expert oriented perspective.

The argument is not that “citizen perspectives” as such are either hegemonic or generate solutions to the sustainability *problématique*. The argument is that if societal development should be redirected towards more sustainable ends, then the deliberations of citizens’ perspectives are important to encourage alternative development horizons and citizens’ responsibility in relation to the mutual concern of nature in the community. The challenge is how to create participatory planning approaches that involve the broader everyday life perspectives of the people living in and with the nature in question, and thereby open to a broader deliberative process of discussing how local life and development could unfold in a more sustainable fashion. The planning arena that has primarily been dominated by the expert bureaucracy must therefore be challenged and must learn to participate in the deliberations of the common matter of concern through the definitions and premises developed by local citizens/communities through their everyday life perspective. This requires a planning arena that can open for deliberations about the subject

matter that are not only founded on the institutional rationalities and expert knowledge orientations, but also recognizes perspectives and meanings that are founded on the citizens' life relations to and concerns for nature. Such a planning arena would not dismiss the institutional foundation of societal planning, but it would open the institutional rationality of the planning arena to other equally important, though different, aspects of nature and society. Such understandings and horizons can thereby, in combination with expert perspectives and planning institutions, point to better development trajectories. The importance of approaching environmental problematic situations through the local and everyday life perspective, is thus not to neglect the political perspective of power, or the institutional perspective of planning and regulations, but to contrast and develop these understandings with a local and everyday life perspective.

In this thesis, such perspectives of participatory approaches in environmental planning are important to challenge critically the established understandings of participation, knowledge and nature within the particular planning purpose and process. The problematization of the public and the legitimate knowledge contributions on the planning arena, and the understanding of nature as part of an everyday life relation to the area, serve to challenge the particular planning practice with critical utopian aspects. This perspective thus contrasts the sectorized and purpose oriented planning agendas and the natural scientific knowledge premise with a *different* perspective on the subject matter. The action research approach was thus an attempt, not only to challenge the planning praxis through theoretical considerations, but to engage in exploring the potential of and barriers to the process *with* the planning actors and local communities. The action research approach sought to question critically the planning actors' own understanding of the planning practice during the process, and through the initiation of a local community workshops, engage the local "public" to generate critical and utopian perspectives of the nature-society relations in question. The action research approach was - in other words - an attempt to initiate a social learning process.

3.3. Commons as life and nature in planning

The critique of the democratic deficiency of the current (environmental) planning system (Hansen 2007; Elling 2008) in combination with the critical-utopian perspective of "reversed" citizens' participation from Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a, 2007a) opens for a potential democratic horizon within environmental planning. Based on these perspectives, I argue that the concept of *the commons* can contribute to an improved theoretical, as well as practical, understanding and orientation to the planning and management of nature-society relationships towards more sustainable and democratic processes and ends. Commons is thus understood as a concept that can potentially connect the everyday life perspective with the institutional planning perspective through relating to nature-society relations as a concern of the *common* with different legitimate perspectives. The argument is not that local people are right or know better. The argument is that participatory planning must not only recognize the everyday life relation to the commons as a legitimate perspective on the planning arena, but strive to encourage local engagement in planning through addressing and fostering the local "public" life relation to nature as a commons.

The theoretical perspectives of commons are many sided and range from institutional management of commons as a resource to perspectives that consider commons as an inherent part of the human cultural life relation to nature. Further, the conception of commons is changing in phase with the transition of production patterns in the landscape and larger societal sustainability. Still, historical understandings and cultural attachments influence our relation to the commons as societal relation to nature. In this sense, commons can be interpreted as a symbol of our society-nature relationship, that like landscapes, emphasizes the implicitness of human and nature (Olwig 2003). The understanding of commons can thus embrace both historical understandings, traditional systems of production, as well as the evolving ideas of multi-use landscapes (Short 2008). The new commons are subject to multifarious interests and values (production, protection and consumption) with different stakeholder advocacies for nature conservation, heritage and recreation, or agriculture (Short 2008). However, if commons are reduced to individual interest categories of economic or ecological aspects they also become enclosed. The essence of the commons must in this sense be based on an understanding of the physical ecological materiality with the human (subsistence) life economy, and the (collective) knowledge and culture that manages the nature use balance. The commons are thus not only a matter of understanding socio-ecological systems, but about understanding the common life-matter relation to nature as a whole (Shiva 2006). At a broader, democratic scale, commons can be interpreted as the substance that relates and separates humans around a public sphere (Arendt 1958). There is thus a democratic potential in the perspective of commons, because it emphasizes our human and societal relation to the commons in a universal and particular sense. Commons as material nature-society relations could in this sense be combined with the democratic perspective of the public sphere. In light of the broadly agreed ethos of sustainability, commons management must therefore involve deliberative democratic processes in order to decide how societal development should be formed in relation to its impact on nature (Elling 2010). In other words, it could be furthered that sustainability of the commons relies on a democratic foundation (Clausen, Hansen, & Tind 2010; Elling 2008; Harste 2000; Nielsen, Elling, & Jelsoe 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a; Shiva 2006).

Elinor Ostrom's commons theory from 1990 has, as previously described, inspired a wide range of natural resource governance literature that has challenged the metaphors of the tragedy of the commons. From this perspective commons are, in essence, open access resources, while common pool resources are limited resources where it is infeasible to exclude users. The governance of the commons is thus a matter of generating local institutional strength capable of managing the natural resources in a longer time perspective. A bearing assumption in this theoretical perspective is the acknowledgment that individuals can organize institutions capable of dealing with resource dilemmas in a constructive and creative way. In this sense, Ostrom criticizes the assumption that resilient natural resource management must rely on an "omnipotent government". Rather, such government and national regulations have in many cases served to undermine local resource management systems by creating institutional systems that neither fit the social nor the ecological system. New institutional arrangements cannot be "applied" as a blue print, but should be iteratively modified to the context through collaborative participation. The point of departure for improved natural resource management must therefore be to strengthen local institutions' capability

(Ostrom describes eight main principles) to deal with resource dilemmas and natural resource management. Yet, Ostrom (Ostrom 1990;Ostrom et al. 2007;Ostrom 2008) argues that there is no one panacea to the commons management; the challenge lies in the development of institutions, both in a theoretical-abstract sense (the agreed principles), and through empirical-concrete action (adjustable operationalization), that can handle different sources of knowledge and interest claims Ostrom's theories have inspired local governance theory and practice for decades and furthered the argument of building local institutions (and participation) for resource management. However, the theories could be criticized for "reducing" the commons to a matter of resource interests, and thereby the question of participation and steering to a matter of interest negotiation. These common theories could thus be criticized for falling into the same nature domination perspective as criticized in the introduction, where nature and society are considered separate and the management is about minimizing ecological risk. Commons are thus not considered an inherent part of the life-matter of the citizens, i.e. the public nature relation in a broader meaning than particular interests. The participation and management of the commons is therefore also "reduced" to concerning actors with a relevant stake, i.e. either ecological or economic claims. The objective of the local participation in this sense becomes a matter of reaching consensus through stakeholder collaboration that can "learn" to balance established or existing interests. The management or planning horizon becomes a matter of balancing the existing interests through collaboration, but not of deliberating contrasting perspectives or exploring alternative meaning horizons in planning. This could, similarly to the critique of the collaborative planning approach, be criticized for dismissing the fundamental discussion of the public participation on the planning and management arena. The public becomes reduced to stakeholders or experts with relevant claims, while ignoring citizens' potential engagement and different perspectives on the subject matter. Further, as criticized by Clausen (2011), this perspective of the commons does not consider the "non-participants" and their perspective or relation to the commons. Such reduction of the planning or management arena compromises the potential for developing different perspectives on the subject matter, from what is already claimed by (powerful) interests or expert bureaucrats. This generates a situation where collaboration is directed towards answering a pre-defined purpose, and not to deliberating the subject beyond the existing perspectives. The planning horizon does not, in other words, open towards the engagement of a broader public that could contribute with different understandings of how to manage the commons in a utopian horizon. If the commons should be "re-discovered" as a mutual life-matter concern then it also requires that (local) citizens, on a broad scale and beyond particular stakes, are recognized as democratic participants (Shiva 2006).

Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a;2007a), similar to Ostrom, build on the grounding assumption that (local) actors are capable of taking responsibility for management of our commons and should be involved in developing the premises for this management. But, in contrast to the governance of interests and the consensus oriented stakeholder dialogues, they focus on the democratic processes and the acknowledgement of *citizens* as democratic individuals, who through processes of social learning can foster empowerment and critical emancipation related to their everyday life concern. Instead of taking the point of departure in building institutions that can balance diverse interests, the focus is rather placed on the *common*

contextual engagement, and our life relation to this context. This is in line with the perspectives of Vandana Shiva (2005) who emphasizes the importance of reviving the human relation to the nature foundation – or the commons – that is being eroded by macro-and micro economic interests. From this perspective, the most important core of a commons management process is to develop deliberative democratic process around deeper values and beliefs between the human life-matter and nature as an inherent common in economic, social and cultural aspects. Local citizen participation is thus considered a necessary ingredient to “rediscover” the everyday life relation of local citizens and society with nature that is being slowly eroded (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). The social learning process is thus not only aimed at creating understanding and knowledge development across interests to reach more “efficient” nature management, but rather as a continuous social process that develops concern and responsibility through a better understanding of the nature-society relations and implications through their own life perspective. Social learning is thus important not only for the sake of knowledge development, but as a way of building a “common third” across expert system, local knowledge and everyday life perspectives.

The subject matter, i.e. nature-society relations or sustainability, could in this sense be approached as a “common third” by the “public” and planning institutions. The common third thus represents the subject matter as a concern that is equally and legitimately (though differently) shared by both planning institutions and the “public” (as citizens and local communities). This perspective thus assumes that people in their everyday life perspective also carry aspects of sustainability, although these may be different from “expert” aspects (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). Approaching nature protection and use (or sustainability) as a matter of shared concern of the commons thus relates the procedural and substantial challenges of the planning arena. The common third in a procedural “abstract” sense constitutes a shared arena, or democratic space, where different perspectives are equally legitimate to define the matter of concern. The procedural aspect of the commons accentuates the potential learning process between actors in a social situation. Such an arena for dialogue can promote the deliberation of different perspectives of the commons and generate improved mutual understandings for each other’s perspectives, as well as new horizons for its management. From a substantial or material perspective, the common third reflects the deeper mutual relation that is involved and affected actors have to the subject matter, i.e. nature and society. The common third thus represents the different socio-ecological relations that are tied between nature and society and can be addressed from both a scientific and everyday life understanding. The procedural aspects of planning are in this sense concerned with maintaining the nature-society substance at its core. In this way, the main issue for the process is turned from the relational conflict between actors, towards the substance that is our common concern in both everyday life perspectives and in a nature management and scientific expert perspective.

The concept of commons as a human life matter constitutes a potentially different perspective to approaching nature society relations in environmental planning. Commons embrace understandings of nature and society that go beyond planning categorizations, interest orientations, and natural scientific concepts. It is a concept that seeks to withhold an orientation towards nature and landscapes as a social

collective good that requires the (re-)development of a broad public concern. Such public concern, however, also necessitates that the public becomes recognized as relevant contributors in the planning and development of the commons. Within the concept of commons thus resides an inherent dual edge: commons has the potential of opening a broader everyday life oriented angle to nature as a common concern of society – and yet the same pitfalls of falling into an instrumental governance role of effectively implement certain institutional structures of local management to “relieve” the state level. The latter would then be an answer to the premises criticized in the first place – the state-defined institutional planning rationality and sectorized interests – and not explicitly developing the local engagement for nature and sustainable management.

The conceptualization of the commons was in this thesis used to address a potential (re-)orientation of the particular planning process of Heiplanen from the conflictual process and categorizations of use and protection towards a broader understanding of the arena as a material (and experiential) common matter of concern for both institutional planning actors and the local communities. The exploration of this potential was addressed through the action research engagement with the formal planning actors on the one side and the local communities on the other. The perception of commons was thus used to approach the process of Heiplanen by searching for understandings of the arena as something different from ecological or economic interests that could transcend the existing planning and expert categorizations of use and protection. The arena, as the subject matter, was in this sense explored as common life-matter for the people living in the area, while not excluding the validity and legitimacy of the established expert and planning perspectives. Conversely, the researcher was interested to explore if the perspective of the area as a broader common developed by local communities, could improve the institutional planning actors understanding and inclusion of everyday life perspectives in the planning process. The action researcher was thus, through engagement with the local communities, concerned with exploring if and how the nature-society relations were deliberated as a common matter of concern in relation to the communities’ life connection to the area. More fundamentally, how the people living in Setesdal perceived and deliberated understandings about their surrounding nature as a historic, present, and future commons of their community, and how they formed critical utopian perspectives for the future of the area. The researcher thus aimed to disturb the planning process by contributing a different approach to understanding the conflictual situation and opening for new understandings with the planning actors.

This chapter has attempted to criticize the current participatory rationale in institutional planning theory and practice as a theoretical background for analysing an ongoing regional planning process. This critique has been contrasted with a critical utopian perspective that accentuates the dialectic search for alternative planning horizons that can embrace participation through deliberation of everyday life perspectives. The theoretical argument is then that the prevailing participatory rationale in environmental planning must also allow for citizens’ participation taking its point of departure as their life connection to nature, not as a legitimacy or efficiency argument, but because citizens can contribute with perspectives that the rational planning horizon cannot “see”, and because their involvement can encourage and develop citizen

responsibility towards nature-society relations that cannot be defined through rational instrumental planning perspectives. The idea of addressing nature-society relation as commons is thus an attempt to open the planning horizon towards understanding the purpose of nature protection planning as something more than regulations and boundaries. In this sense this theoretical chapter has been an attempt to point what that “other” is by addressing the potential of involving citizens through their everyday life perspective of the common matter of concern. The analytical ambition of this thesis is thus two-fold: on the one hand it aims to explore the perceptions of participation, knowledge, and nature from both the institutional perspective and the local community perspective; on the other hand, the analysis, with its critical utopian action research foundation, seeks to explore the openings and closures for new horizons of local participation in this particular planning process. The following chapter describes the research design, methods and roles for exploring and engaging in the two-year planning process of Heiplanen, while the last chapter of this theoretical part of the thesis outlines the analytical framework.

4. Research process and methods

This chapter will describe the thinking and development behind the overall research approach in relation to the development of the particular case of Heiplanen and Setesdal. This chapter thus bridges the previous theoretical chapters with the empirical case. The empirical research process of this thesis stretched over more than two years, it involved many actors and stakeholders at different vertical “levels” and horizontal spheres. It is challenging, not to say impossible, to communicate the “whole” breadth and depth of the process, with its myriad of interactions and relations, developments, and conflicts on different levels in the case. This chapter is an attempt to reflectively reconstruct how I planned and adapted my methodology and single research steps related to the case development. The objective is to provide transparency to the research process, methodology, and role of researcher in relation to the choice of case and methods, and the validity of the empirical documentation.

4.1. Selection of empirical case

My research interest was to approach the current perception of participation in Norwegian planning policies and practice through a critical and interactive lens, and to challenge these with the local communities` understandings of the planning process and their everyday relation to nature. Through this dual perspective on a particular nature planning process the researcher attempted to explore *openings and closures to develop new understandings and practices* across the institutional and everyday life perspectives.

The empirical case¹⁴ was, as presented in the introduction, the three Setesdal municipalities and their participation in one of nine nationally commissioned regional planning processes: Heiplanen. The selection of the case of Setesdal and Heiplanen was based on two main considerations: a critical theoretical perspective and a participatory change dimension. Further, the case could be considered representative (Yin 2003) of a two-fold dichotomised conflict of nature protection / use and local / central planning that is common in rural areas in the Nordic and European context (Sandström, Hovik, & Falleth 2008), and comparable to similar conflicts in a global perspective (Benjaminsen and Svarstad 2010). The case thus represents the complexity of having several levels of vertical government involved, as well as a wide range of horizontal actors representing different interests and worldviews in an ongoing conflictual process.

From the critical perspective, the case was selected because nature planning and local participation is widely debated in Norway, as well as larger parts of the world today (Carlsson 2008; Sandström, Hovik, & Falleth 2008; Skjeggedal 2008), and that Setesdal has a long history of contested nature protection plans

¹⁴Defining the research project as a case does not implicitly define the methodological stance of the project, but defines some sort of boundary to the field of research. It is thus a holistic study of the historical background, the physical setting, the socio-cultural structures, economic and political context, with the intention of extracting either common or particular traits (Stake 2005).

(Falleth & Hovik 2006;Falleth & Hovik 2008b;Hovik & Falleth 2003). There is thus a “dissonance” in nature planning in general and in Setesdal in particular, that could be explored and understood through a critically-inspired research approach (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). The case constituted an *opportunity to learn* (Stake 2005) or to *reveal hidden structures* (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009) of the current nature planning policy rationale and the local resistance in current “participatory” planning practices.

In a participatory change dimension this case represented a current process with an opportunity to explore how the “institutional” planning logic was perceived, interpreted and challenged by the local authorities and everyday life perspective of citizens, as well as to explore the supportive (openings) and hindering (closures) aspects of participation that influence a participatory planning process. As such it created an opportunity to interpret an ongoing process *with* the involved actors at both institutional and local community level. Further, it gave the possibility to explore alternative perspectives on nature planning developed with local communities and to understand the resonance of such alternatives among the planning authorities in the present planning process. The case thus created the possibility to critically explore how a regional nature planning process approaches participation, how the “local level” of citizens and authorities perceive and challenge this approach, and if and how the development of common understandings can improve the planning policies and practices.

The case of Heiplanen was one of nine regional wild reindeer planning efforts. Two similar planning processes were active in the time period of this study: Rondane and Hardanger. In this study I have not chosen to compare different regional planning cases – and how they have implemented the policy recommendation through different processes and with different outcomes. The core of this research has on the contrary been to transcend this institutional logic by approaching it from a local everyday life perspective. However, I have kept myself oriented about these processes as a “contextual backdrop” and comparable reflection of the Heiplanen process and because the actors in Heiplanen have discussed the development of these cases.

4.2. Methodological considerations

The methodology of a research project operationalizes the more abstract perspective of theory of knowledge to the applied research situation and considers how to enter the empirical reality. As argued in the previous chapter, my overall research approach is based on a critical utopian action research orientation. This implies an emancipatory and dialectic perspective – not only on a theoretical or discourse level, but also on a contextual participatory level. Yet, the methodological question of how the researcher “enters the case” remains unanswered. This section attempts to describe the researcher’s guiding pre-understandings of methodology and theory, while the following section describes the single research methods steps.

In a critical perspective, research methodology requires reflection on a meta-theoretical level (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). This is perhaps especially relevant in a contested research context such as the nature

protection and use conflicts in the case of Heiplanen. During this research process I have iteratively questioned my understanding and approach in relation to the development of the case, and related to the broader societal discourse about nature protection and use. My understanding of the case has also been challenged by theoretical and empirical academic literature on similar subjects, and not least through discussions at conferences, PhD courses, and with colleagues at Copenhagen University, Roskilde University, The Royal Swedish Agricultural University in Uppsala, and Agder Research in Norway. Through these iterative (self-critical) reflections and discussions the breadth and width of my theoretical perspective, methodological approach, and possible interpretative range have increased.

The process of reflection between empirical context, societal perspectives, and theoretical research perspectives opened my critical awareness of different theoretical “schools” of environmental research with different normative approaches, empirical entry points, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks. Some research schools “enter the case” from the macro level of policies dealing with the distribution of power through new governance structures in relation to nature as a resource, i.e. political ecology (Benjaminsen & Svarstad 2010; Forsyth 2003), policy discourse analysis (Hajer 2003). Other research traditions understand the case from the institutional level of nature management and planning, and the perspective between policies and the “local level” (Carlsson & Berkes 2005; Ostrom 1990; Ostrom 2005; Sandström, Hovik, & Falleth 2008). Yet, other traditions take their point of departure in the landscape and the relation between people and function (Daugstad 2011; Pahl-Wostl 2009). These examples are not meant as giving a review of different approaches. They are mentioned to illustrate that my meta-theoretical reflections on *the role of research in environmental research* made me realize that there are many different perspectives on the role of research, the interpretative repertoire, and the production of knowledge. The critical challenge is thus to weigh these perspectives of research approach with the empirical case and the espoused research interest.

The meta-theoretical reflections inspired a *pluralist methodological* research approach (Midgley 2000) as developed in section 2.2. A pluralist methodology opens the opportunity to combine various methods that can explore a situation from various “theoretical logics”. The intention is to be able to understand a case from a broader perspective than a single methodology is able to. The researcher can for instance use archival document methods to establish an overview of a situation, or to gain insight to certain institutional understandings. These methods can be complemented with interviews, or participatory workshops to explore the case from the perspective of other actors, or to challenge/validate previous findings. A pluralist methodology is thus a critical selection of methods (and paradigms) that are adapted to the context, and able to develop new understandings across established perceptions (Midgley 2000).

Methodological pluralism requires reflections at a meta-theoretical level to be able to work analytically with such diverse findings (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009). Single theoretical disciplines are in this sense not able to analyze the breadth of empirical material from an action research oriented methodological pluralism (Midgley 2000). Preliminary theoretical considerations might be beneficial to create a boundary

to the research process (Midgley 2000). However, when the idea of the field work is to reveal new empirical perspectives, the theoretical understandings must be iteratively developed and revised (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009;Stake 2005). The theoretical interest of this thesis is therefore a “bricolage” of theoretical perspectives created through iterative processes of understanding the context through theory and vice versa, with the purpose of critically challenging established disciplinary understandings (ref. Chapter 3). The role of theory thus perceived as a reflective and inspirational “sphere” that gives the researcher a theoretical backdrop to the role as reflection partner in the case “sphere”¹⁵.

The theory thus serves a dual purpose: on the one hand theory provides a framework for analyzing generic (common) perspectives in the particular case. On the other hand the theory provides a an opportunity to develop reflections with the case participants on a more generic level, not only in relation to the particular case, but to perspectives of general societal interest (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a). The theoretical perspectives in this research process enabled reflections about how the conceptual ideas of nature protection, participation in planning, and knowledge-based management in relation to their particular situation. Vice versa, the particular findings and developments from the case process reflected perspectives that complemented my theoretical understanding. These perspectives of theory and understanding will be further elaborated in the analytical framework in the end of this chapter. For now I attempt to describe the research approach step by step in relation to the empirical context.

The combination of different research approaches made it possible to work with the same case from different perspectives and understandings; from different institutional “levels” (municipalities and regional institutions), from different nature relation perspectives (authorities-stakeholder-citizen), and at different times in the process (from 2008-2012). The case process is in this thesis divided into five phases: I) a pre-planning phase; II) a formal planning phase; III) an informal planning phase; IV) a semi-formal planning phase, and V) a post-planning phase (i.e. table 4.1). Such division does not exist in “reality”, but serves to illustrate the development of the planning and research process, and to develop empirical “sub-categories” for analytical and communicative purposes. Table 4.1 is meant to introduce these phases briefly to be able to relate the description of the research approach to the development of the case. This is perhaps especially important in an action research approach, were the choice of methods continuously adapts to the development of the case.

¹⁵ A sphere is understood as a loosely defined environment or network of actors. Nielsen and colleagues have in their work used *praksiskreds* or sphere of praxis to describe different networks and circles of information and understanding that flow and develop in different arenas during an action research process (Nielsen et al. 1999).

Table 4.1 Description of the different planning phases of Heiplanen

TIME	CASE PROCESS	PHASE DESCRIPTION
2004 - 2007	PRE-PLANNING PROCESS	The pre-planning phase denominates the phase before the actual planning process of Heiplanen. It is understood as the <i>research and policy process</i> that led to the commissioning letter of regional wild reindeer planning, and the particular plan programme of Heiplanen.
2008 - 2011	FORMAL REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS	The regional planning process of Heiplanen is in this thesis defined as the formal planning process . This sub-category embraces the formal institutional system and process that operationalized Heiplanen at both regional and municipal level. The formal planning process underlies the entire Heiplanen process, but was supplemented by a researcher initiated <i>informal planning process</i> with the local municipalities and citizens.
2009 - 2010	INFORMAL PLANNING PROCESS	The informal planning process represents a parallel process with the municipalities and citizens in Setesdal that was initiated by the researcher and developed in collaboration with the administration and politicians (authorities) in the municipalities. The purpose of naming it as “informal” is that it was a process that did not have any formal authority in the Heiplan process, but was accepted as an additional process by the formal system. This process explored the perspective of the local authorities and the citizens (the local communities) from an everyday life oriented understanding of nature and societal development.
2010 - 2011	SEMI-FORMAL PLANNING PROCESS	The communication between the formal and in-formal planning provided ground for an emerging semi-formal process . This developed from an increasing understanding among the actors of the need for direct dialogue. The categorization as “semi-formal” is chosen because it represented an arena that did not in itself have formal authority in the “planning system”, but the individual actors (municipal mayors, county governor, county government and planning process leader) had authority in the formal planning system.
2011 - 2012	POST-PLANNING PROCESS	The post-planning phase is here understood as the phase of <i>hearing and final approval of the plan</i> . This phase thus treats the political phase after the creation of the plan document.

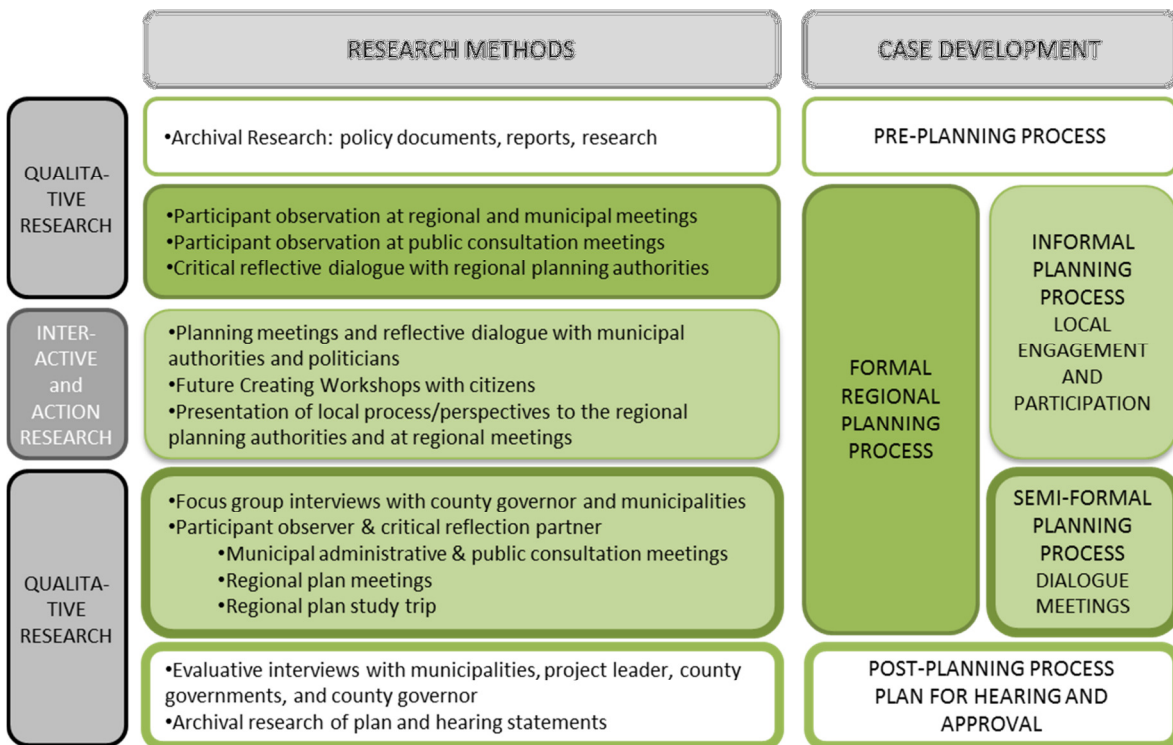
The following section will describe the empirical process with a focus on the research process. It will describe the particular research methods and roles, and relate it to the phases of the case. The process description and empirical findings are described in detail in chapter 7.

4.3. Research methods, roles, and process

The research approach of this case study moves from qualitative research over interactive research to action research. Common for my entry to all “modes” of research is a critical theoretical angle. As Yin (2003) emphasizes the particularity of a case study is that it seeks to understand whole and complex phenomena in its real life context, acknowledging that there are no clear boundaries between selected phenomena and the surrounding context. Further, an inquiry process must consider that there are infinite variables that require multiple sources of evidence, through which the research can acquire a holistic representation of the case for analysis and interpretation. From an action research perspective, the

research approach must further be adaptive to the development of the empirical context, and explore the openings or potentials for changes. The research methods of this thesis were partly developed in relation to the case development, and partly based on theoretical/methodological reflections. This section will provide an overview of the research process in relation to the case development, with particular attention to the concrete methods and the role of the researcher.

Table 4.2 Overview of the research design and methods in relation to the different phases of the planning process



The pre-planning phase

In this research phase the methods aimed to establish an overview of the contextual situation of nature protection in Norway, and particularly in relation to the perspective of wild reindeer and the case area of Setesdal. This was done primarily through document research on national policy documents and white papers regarding strategies for rural development, nature protection and wild reindeer management (Ministry of Environment 2005; Ministry of Environment 2007b; Ministry of Finance 2003; Ministry of food and agriculture 2005). In addition research reports and academic papers were reviewed treating wild reindeer and society issues, and participation and nature protection plans, and especially in relation to previous nature protection plans and wild reindeer management in Setesdal (Andersen & Hustad 2004; Falleth & Hovik 2006; Falleth and Hovik 2008a; Falleth & Hovik 2009; Hovik & Falleth 2003). The case of Setesdal was also studied through research reports on socio-economic aspects (Cruickshank & Sørheim 2009; Leknes, Ermland, & Laudal 2002; Svalheim and Jansen 2002), as well as the history of the wild reindeer in the area. This document research was grounding for writing chapter 6, and illustrates my preliminary analysis of the case area and the Norwegian nature protection context.

The formal planning phase

The research approach in this phase includes different qualitative methods aimed at understanding the planning process from the planning institutional perspective. However, operating within a critical perspective, the methods also embraced a critical approach of challenging or questioning the apparent understandings expressed by the actors from this process during meetings and interviews (i.e. the project leader, county governments, county governor, municipal authorities, wild reindeer centre). This more engaged critical role aimed at creating a legitimate reflective “space” within the formal planning process where the particular case could be discussed in relation to more general dimensions of environmental planning, local participation, and knowledge.

Document research methods were used in this phase to gain information about the written formal perspective about Heiplanen (Ministry of Environment 2007a; Rogaland Fylkeskommune 2010). The plan programme was reviewed at the initiation of the process. The plan homepage (www.heiplanen.no) was monitored during the entire period to keep track of the planning process development from a formal institutional perspective, the initial plan proposals, wild reindeer map and statements, municipal proposals, plan meeting notifications, agendas and minutes, related research reports, etc. Participant observation was used during the formal planning meetings at county and regional level (approx. 60 hours), the Heiplanen study trip to England (five days), as well as municipal meetings and public consultation meetings in Setesdal (approx. 60 hours). Participant observation made it possible to follow the perspectives and discussions of different actors during the formal planning process of Heiplanen. This made it possible to gain understanding of the variety of challenges expressed from different actors. The role of the researcher, as a (critical) participatory observer, generated a possibility to openly question, challenge, and reflect upon the actors’ understandings in the different meeting arenas. These questions and reflections were both inspired by theoretical perspectives and related to understandings expressed by other actors in the case. Such reflections were for instance mounted on understandings of legitimacy and purpose of participation, or the type and role of knowledge in the planning process, etc. The researcher’s observations were documented as detailed meeting minutes and followed by a reflective comment by the researcher. The observations, discussions and evolving perspectives from the study trip were also documented in a report that was sent to all the participants and actors in Heiplanen, and can be found on www.heiplanen.no.

Unstructured or dialogue-based interviews were used continuously during different formal meetings as a supplement to participatory observation, in addition a semi-structured interview was conducted with the county governor. The objective was to question and understand specific aspects and actor perspectives of Heiplanen. A focus group interview (Halkier 2002) was conducted to explore in particular the county governor’s perception of the purpose of Heiplanen. The focus group interview invited three of the five involved county governor wild life managers to discuss and reflect on the role of local participation, their own role, and the role of different types of knowledge in Heiplanen. The interviews and focus group also opened an arena where the researcher could reflect theoretical perspectives and experiences from the local meetings in the municipalities with the county governor representatives. In this way, the different

interviews also served to discuss aspects of planning with the formal institutional actors. The interviews and focus groups were documented by detailed handwritten notes, and shortly after transcribed in word supplemented by a researcher reflection note.

During the entire formal planning process the researcher and project leader of Heiplanen had a continuous (i.e. several times a month) reflective dialogue by phone, e-mail and personal meetings. These dialogues mainly concerned the continuous development of the plan, the relation to the informal local planning process initiated by the researcher, and perspectives for alternative approaches to the formal planning process. This gave the researcher an insight to the perceived challenges of the project leader, in relation to the development of the formal planning process, and the requirements set by the ministry and the commissioning letter. The dialogues further generated an understanding of the institutional perspective directly from the project leader who was, literally, the stakeholder of the planning process as he was the responsible for the plan document completion. It also opened opportunity to discuss and reflect on the challenges of local participation from the municipal perspective and their perspective to the formal planning process. This iterative and collective reflection between researcher and project leader created a collaborative research arena that also influenced the formal planning process development, and in particular the emergence of the semi-formal planning process that will be described below. These dialogues are partly documented in e-mails and short reflection notes, but not all are directly accounted for due to their frequency and coincidence with formal meetings.

The informal planning phase

This phase of the research was partly overlapping the formal process as illustrated in the previous figure. The purpose was to understand and discuss the pre-planning and formal planning process as perceived and experienced by the local authorities and citizens of the case municipalities. This phase was initiated by the researcher at the first formal public Heiplan meeting. The researcher presented a project description to the three Setesdal's municipalities to explore the local community perspective of nature and its relation to their life and development. The project was presented as independent in relation to Heiplanen (i.e. with no formal authority), but as a means to develop local perspectives and communicate with the formal planning process through meetings, workshops, presentations, and reports (Vasstrøm, 2009). The research concern was to develop a deeper understanding of the local community (citizens and authorities) perspective of the formal nature protection planning process and their concerns for the everyday life relation to the area in question. This part of the research was developed as a critical utopian action research process, where the situation was understood, interpreted and developed in collaboration with the local communities, with the purpose of exploring possible perspectives for the local nature management and engagement. In addition, the local process was also aimed at generating local perspectives that could communicate with, or even influence, the formal process of Heiplanen. Reciprocally, the local actors were also challenged to reflect on their perceptions and alternative perspectives, and critically investigate their assumptions and practice.

The planning of the local community participation (i.e. the workshops) was carried out by the researcher in collaboration with the local authorities (administrative staff and politicians) from the three municipalities. The local authorities are in these small municipalities also citizens. The meetings therefore also gave perspectives of the challenges and values of the everyday life as citizens in this region. The researcher had four meetings with each municipality and two inter-municipal meetings to plan and develop the local community participation workshops and reflect on the individual and collective municipal understandings and challenges in relation to Heiplanen, nature protection history, and rural development. This process can in this sense be seen as a participatory analysis of the situation, or co-generative learning process (Greenwood & Levin 1998) with the local authorities, and an attempt to understand the problematic of the current situation and develop alternative approaches to local participation in the process. The researcher was in this sense interactively engaged in understanding, critically discussing and developing a local participation process in Heiplanen in collaboration with the local authorities. The researcher took minutes from each meeting. The minutes and the researcher reflection notes were sent to the meeting participants after each meeting.

The local community participation was conducted as a future scenario workshop in each municipality during the spring of 2010. The Future Creating Workshop approach was chosen because it integrates the democratic participative aspect by engaging a local community of citizens in a meaning creating process related to a critique of the current situation, and develop a utopian horizon for the everyday life of the community (Nielsen & Nielsen 2010; Paaby et al. 1988). The future creating workshop was initially developed by the future researcher Robert Jungk and Nobert Müllert (1984). This approach has, in Scandinavia, been further developed by Kurt Aagaard Nielsen and Birger Steen Nielsen, initially in collaboration with Kirsten Paabye (Paaby, Nielsen, & Nielsen 1988), and later with Peter Olsén (Nielsen, Nielsen, & Olsén 1999). Kurt Aagaard Nielsen and Birger Steen Nielsen have used the future scenario workshop as a critical utopian action research approach in their extensive work with the human nature relation in a democratic space (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a).

The Future Creating Workshop (FCW) approach was developed to create a democratic space for citizens. It is in this sense an attempt to develop democratic dialogues between citizens with the purpose of improving their life situation, but within a common societal frame (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). The workshop thus encourages a self-critical relationship between the participants, and in relation to the more common aspects of society, in this case a sustainable nature relationship. An important characteristic for the workshop is that all participants participate as citizens, not as stakeholders. It is in this sense not an arena for negotiation of particular interest groups. Rather, it is an arena or “free space” for social learning between democratic citizens about their perspectives of life in relation to a broader societal context.

The workshop thematic must reflect this common grounded everyday life aspect. In this case it was named: “The good life for humans and wild reindeer in Setesdal - now and in the future”. The relation between everyday life and the more common dimension is important to create an atmosphere beyond individual or

group interest, and beyond formal obligations. The dynamic between the particularity of the everyday life and concern for the common human dimension lays the ground for developing alternative and utopian horizons. The participants in the Setesdal workshops were therefore asked to enter the workshop as citizens of the community, and leave their formal authority or interests “outside” so to speak.

The FCW served several purposes in this case. From an action research perspective it was a way of engaging the local community in a collective meaning creation and change process. In a critical theoretical sense the workshop sought to create development perspectives through emancipatory and dialectic processes of understanding the current situation and desired alternative situations. The workshop in this sense served to develop the local community understanding of their development path. In this case, the workshop also served the purpose of generating local perspectives that could be communicated to the institutional “sphere” of the formal Heiplanen process. It was thus also an attempt to improve the mutual understanding of dissonances between the institutional and local understanding of “nature and the good life”, and to influence the process of the formal planning arena.

The Future Creating Workshop consists of three main phases: the critical, the utopian, and the reality-making. The critical phase is concerned with engaging the participants to critically reflect on their everyday life situation in relation to the contextual challenges (in this case the good life in relation to the nature and wild reindeer) by asking the participants in plenum “the most critical aspect is...”. In the following utopian phase the emerging critical understanding is used as a nerve to open reflection on utopian perspectives by asking: “if we could decide, then...”. In the third phase the tension between the critical and utopian dimensions of the situation seek to encourage the creation of practical development perspectives related to the everyday life of the participants and the context in question (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Paaby, Nielsen, & Nielsen 1988).

The workshop operates in a plenum setting during the critical and utopian phases where the facilitators document all statements on a (very) large wall of paper. All participants are encouraged to speak their mind in short sentences during these two phases. The wall paper enables the statements to remain present in plenum during the process. One of the few rules of the workshop is that all are free to state their mind and come with counter-statements, but not to criticize the particular statement of others. The critical and utopian plenum sessions ends when the participants are “emptied”, i.e. when there are no more statements from the participants. Hereafter the facilitators systematize the statements in collaboration with the participants. The participants are given three votes to prioritize for the most important statement. Based on these votes the facilitators group the statements with the participants in plenum, by asking if one statement relates to the other. This creates groups of respectively critical and utopian dimensions. During the reality-making phase the participants select which utopian dimension they would like to work with. Each group works with their utopian-reality sketches. These sketches are then presented in plenum and the other participants are encouraged to give critical (constructive) feedback to help the group broaden and reflect on their work, and facilitate its further development. At the end of the workshop the participants

are encouraged to define “who-does-what-with-whom-when”. The workshop processes will be described in further detail in the case process description in chapter 7.

The facilitation of the workshops was in this case carried out by Kirsten Paaby and Ola Vaagan Slåttn from Idèbanken (www.idebanken.no). The engagement of these facilitators was economically financed by the Setesdal municipalities, the regional council of Setesdal, and the Heiplanen project. The external facilitation model was chosen for two main reasons: firstly, to ensure a professional and high quality workshop facilitation, and secondly, to give the researcher time and space to observe the workshop process, actors, and development with scrutiny. Idèbanken was chosen because their senior consultant Kirsten Paaby has worked with this workshop approach, the perspective of sustainable development, and the context of municipalities for more than thirty years. In addition she was working with Kurt Aagaard Nielsen and Birger Steen Nielsen in the initial development of the Scandinavian approach (Paaby, Nielsen, & Nielsen 1988).

The content of the workshop was documented through workshop protocols. The protocols consist of all the statements that were raised in plenum by transcription of the wall papers, including the more systematized critical and utopian dimensions. The group work is documented through their written presentations. In addition, the workshops were documented by photographs. The process was further documented by the researcher through field notes with reflections on group structure, communication atmosphere (frustrations, tensions, turning points), and developments of (new mutual) understandings. The workshop protocols were shortly after sent to all participants with an invitation to give feedback on the content.

After the three workshops the researcher synthesized the experiences and perspectives from the informal process in a report (Vasstrøm 2010). The report was sent to the local authorities and citizens involved in Setesdal, the county government, the county governor, the project leader of Heiplanen, and to people involved with the regional wild reindeer planning in the Ministry of Environment. The report was also presented at two official Heiplanen meetings: a board meeting, and a work meeting for the administrative municipal staff. This will be further described in the empirical case process description.

A deviation or turning point in the “espoused” action research process

The very nature of an action research approach is that it can never be completely planned, but must adapt to the development of the situation. This was also the case in this project. The research strategy was originally to follow up the three municipal workshops with a larger “research workshop” (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Vasstrøm 2010). This research workshop was planned as an arena where the local communities (working groups from the FCW) could present their perspectives and plans to a larger public, especially the regional institutional level (county governor and government) involved in Heiplanen. The Research Workshop had been developed by Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a, 2007a, 2010) in their work with nature-human relations. The purpose is to create a “free space” where nature researchers and experts are invited to listen to the local community perspective. The role of the expert is to comment on the local plans based on their expert knowledge competence, but also maintain their perspective as ordinary citizens. The

experts should thus bring their own everyday life experiences into the workshop. The purpose is in this sense a “reversed participation” practice where it is the citizen’s perspectives and plans that are reflected in the expert and professional bureaucrat plan system (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007a).

The planned research process was however deviated shortly after the presentation of the report on the Heiplanen board meeting. The researcher arranged a meeting with the three municipalities to plan the next activities with the local citizens and the regional plan stakeholders. The municipalities were for various reasons not willing to continue the local workshops. Since our previous meeting the time frame of the Heiplanen had been reduced and the municipalities had to deliver formal planning input within a shorter time than they had expected. Their main concern was therefore to develop a formal planning response that could generate resonance (i.e. influence) in the formal planning arena and they did not have time and resources to engage further in local citizens’ participation. In addition, one of the municipalities argued that the local workshops had already produced the necessary local perspectives and that further local involvement was not necessary for the planning process. I will return to this process in the empirical description of the process.

This turning point in the process affected the researcher role and approach. The point here is not to describe the development of the case process, but to explain why and how the role of the researcher changed during this phase. It was a critical moment for me as an action researcher, where my ambitions of developing an alternative practice in the planning process were undermined, and I doubted the legitimacy of my role in the planning process. This change generated many reflections about “where to go now”. I had numerous conversations with colleagues and supervisors to discuss the continuation of the research process. One alternative was to continue with the citizens’ involvement independent of the municipality support. However, that alternative would also compromise the very legitimacy of my role not only by counteracting the agenda and proposal of the municipalities, but also because I would initiate a process with citizens that did not have any institutional support. Would it be ethical to pursue a process that had been “closed” by the municipalities, and engage citizens without the least perspective of its consequences? Another alternative was to reduce my ambitions, and “simply” follow the formal planning process as a participant observer. In this alternative my legitimacy towards the institutional level was intact; I was still considered a relevant discussion partner from regional and municipal authorities, and I was still invited to participate in formal meetings, the study trip, and the emerging municipal process of formulating a “Setesdal” response to Heiplanen.

The research role in this sense changed from being an action researcher engaged in the planning and creation of an informal citizen involvement process, to become a participant observer of the emerging municipal response and the relation to the formal planning process. My methodological research approach was in this sense still critical and utopian, but not directly responsible for activities. The role as participant observer at these municipal meetings gave the possibility to critically explore the development of the case with the formal planning actors at municipal level, and discuss the current and possible communication

with the county government and governor level. Further, this continuation of my engagement in the formal part of the planning process generated an opportunity to explore how and if the local community perspectives (and everyday life relations to the area) were furthered in the continuation of the formal planning process. The research role during this period was engaged as a critical reflection partner between the municipal level, the county government, the county governor, and not least the project leader of Heiplanen. As described in the formal planning phase the researcher was involved at Heiplanen board and working meetings as an observer and critical commenter. The role as critical reflection partner was also visible at the study tour to England with all the stakeholders of Heiplanen. Partly because the particular case of Heiplanen could be directly reflected with the participants related to the experienced we gained in England, and partly because I became engaged by the project leader to write a study tour report where I could reflect on these experiences for the particular challenges of Heiplanen. The meetings were documented in field notes and transcribed by the researcher.

The semi-formal planning phase

During the fall and winter in 2010-2011 the municipalities and county governments and county governors started what I have named the semi-formal planning process. This initiative was developed as a consequence to the Setesdal report in tension with the county governor perspective. The municipalities and the county governor had opened the possibility of meeting during a regional plan forum, and were further encouraged by the project leader and the researcher. They finally agreed to create a dialogue arena in the formal planning process. Five dialogue meetings were held between the parties during winter 2011. The researcher was present as a participatory observer at all the dialogue meetings. The researcher's role was to listen to the discussions and negotiations to understand the different perspectives, but also to reflect and comment on the development of the conversation with general theoretical perspectives on planning and representing different understandings of the planning matter that had been expressed in other arenas (i.e. the workshops, etc.). The main task of the researcher was in this sense to create room for reflection about the development of the process during these meetings and to explore how the communication evolved, what the main controversies were, and where the main turning points in understanding arose. The researcher documented the dialogue meetings through handwritten field notes and minutes, that were later transcribed and complemented by reflection notes.

The post-planning phase

The research concern in this phase was to explore the final formal plan outcome and the perceptions and reflections among the involved actors in relation to the outcome of the plan itself and the process as an indirect outcome (of learning). After the finalizing of the plan document the researcher carried out evaluative group interviews with two of the local municipalities (administration and politicians) to explore how they perceived the Heiplanen process and outcome, the most important events, the role of local involvement in the "informal phase", and the role of the researcher. Single evaluative interviews were also conducted with the project leader of Heiplanen, the county government official, and the County Governor

representative. These single interviews were also concerned with documenting how they perceived the development of the Heiplanen process, the most important events, the importance of the local involvement, and the role of the researcher in the process. The interviews were documented by notes, and transcribed by the researcher immediately after the interview.

The final board meetings of the formal planning process were observed to explore how the municipalities reacted and discussed the final plan document with the project leader before it was sent on public hearing. The meeting was documented in detailed meeting minutes by the researcher and the official minutes are available from www.heiplanen.no. The final planning document and the hearing statements were reviewed in order to explore the changes from the plan programme and the initial plan documents, and in this way document by “hard facts” how the semi-formal process had influenced the final planning document, and through comparing the hearing statements with the initial municipal statements, it was possible to some extent to document the change of perception of the municipalities. The plan documents and hearing statements are available from www.heiplanen.no.

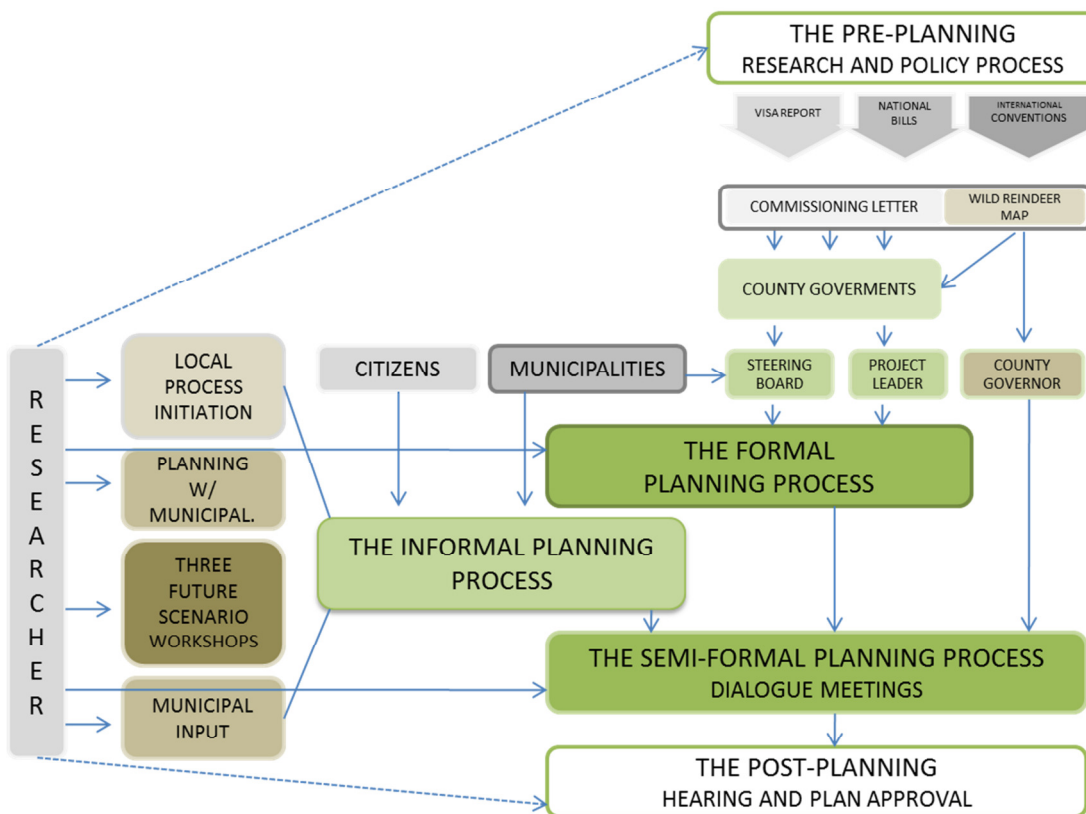


Figure 4.8. Overview of the research involvement in relation to the organization and phases of the formal, informal, and semi-formal planning process. The relation to the pre- and post-planning process are punctuated to illustrate that the researcher was not interactively engaged in these processes, but only as an observer.

4.4. Research quality and validity – and ethics

Valid research, generally speaking, means “sound” research. The research approach and knowledge generation should in this sense be able to withstand critical scrutiny based on logical argumentation for methodological choices and interpretative findings. There are different validity criteria within different research orientations and paradigms for generating reliable, credible, or trustworthy knowledge. Research validity, as such, is therefore an essential aspect of research reflexivity independent of the chosen research position, but the argumentation for validity may be based on entirely different criteria. Validity, in other words, is a normative, prescriptive and argumentative concept of what is a just, legitimate or competent interpretation of “reality” or a particular phenomenon (Eikeland 2006). Validity is thus a question of the authenticity and trustworthiness of the inquiry upon which the findings or research outcome are based. Validity is an overarching concept that considers not only the methods used and the quality of the collected “data”, but also the interpretative and analytical approach to creating new “valid” knowledge (Guba and Lincoln 2008).

The previous chapters have argued for the foundational research orientation of this thesis as critical utopian action research. The arguments have thus accentuated my understanding of sound and valid research in both a general perspective and in relation to the particular research methods and empirical reality of this research process. The aim of this section is to extract some of these arguments in relation to the validity of the interpretations and findings of this thesis.

From a critical perspective, the validation of knowledge can not only be based on its deliverance of relevant or applicable knowledge in society, it must also question how and on what basis the knowledge is constructed and what agendas “match”. The validity criteria of transparency and workability of action research based knowledge (Greenwood & Levin 1998) may be relevant to accentuate the necessity of openly describing a research process for public scrutiny and the value of developing useful knowledge for the local situation, but they do not deal with the theoretical research ambition of understanding local phenomena in a more general perspective and in relation to broader societal discourses and structures. The understanding and interpretation of what “reality is” have different constructions dependent on the “object’s” point of view, pre-understandings, and experience. Valid (as just and legitimate) understanding of reality is thus also a question of interpreting different constructs of reality in participation with the “constructors” of this reality – to challenge the researcher’s own “constructions” about the phenomenon (Eikeland 2006). An important aspect about knowledge creation about a (social) phenomena or empirical reality is thus the consideration of pluralism and democracy (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009). The creation of knowledge about social phenomena must therefore be receptive to a diversity of perceptions to unfold a pluralistic perspective of how current reality should be interpreted. In this sense, valid research must critically consider and contrast different understandings of current and potential realities to question how different knowledge claims might serve the societal agenda (Svensson and Nielsen 2006). The pluralistic validity criterion is thus not only important to enrich the empirical material for research interpretation and

the generation of instrumental knowledge, it also serves a democratic endeavour or emancipatory end. The question of validity thus also involves a democratic or participatory dimension of interpretation of the “reality”. Alvesson and Skjöldberg (2009) points to the interpretative position of Deetz (1992) as a critical participatory interpretative process. This perspective is not only attentive to the descriptive perspective of the subjective or participatory meaning developments during a research process, but also to the query of potential discourses in the empirical reality that are suppressed or only weakly expressed. The research interest of Deetz (1992) thus combines the participatory interpretations of pluralistic meaning perspectives about the phenomena, with a critical search for barriers and potentials in these participatory interpretations and potential meaning horizons. The validity of research is thus in this understanding, not only the descriptive interpretations of rich empirical material, but a critical search for openings for new meaning orientations that can influence a broader societal reality (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009). From an action research perspective this critical dialogical validity criterion is important. The validity of action research should thus not only be pluralistic or democratic, but search for the immanent critique of the situation through inquiries into patterns and inconsistencies in the practices and discourses of the situation (Eikeland, 2006). The immanent critique perspective in action research accentuates the critical utopian perspective of research validity. The research endeavour is in this sense to unfold the immanent critique of a situation and its potential transformations by exposing (abstract and concrete) tensions and contradictions in the discourses and practices between the actors of the situation (Eikeland, 2006). The query for immanent critique in an action research process is, in this sense, a founding perspective of knowledge validity.

The criteria for valid research are thus dependent on pluralistic perspectives of the phenomena as a way of generating an empirical richness for understanding and interpreting the phenomena. The validity of interpretations of this empirical richness should further be grounded on the involvement and participation of the “subjects” in the very interpretation process. The action research and descriptive analytical validity should search for the tensions and dissonances - the immanent critique - of the different perspectives involved in the empirical materiality. However, the descriptive analytical approaches and the unfolding of the immanent critique must be supplemented by a theoretical reflective perspective that links the particular case to a common or generic understanding (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2010).

The validity of the research of this thesis is founded on the methodological approach and the interpretative process of relating empirical findings to theoretical conceptualizations. The methodological approach presented in the previous sections thus enabled an empirical richness for understanding the “phenomenon” of environmental planning or nature protection. The research methods combined and contrasted different “representations” of the reality based on official documents and written material, participant observations, explorative meetings and workshops, and interviews. Heiplanen as an empirical case was thus understood through a variety of perspectives. The findings are in this sense not only based on “language” or “statements”, but also experiences of how different actors performed in a planning arena and how they expressed perspectives in a collective community arena.

This empirical richness of different sources of understanding was complemented by a research interest to unfold pluralistic perspectives of the empirical reality. The methodological approach, in this sense, searched to understand the case, not only from different sources of information, but also from different actor perspectives. The research approach attempted to understand Heiplanen as a phenomenon from different actors involved or affected by this planning process. The findings or interpretations are therefore informed by a variety of understandings about the phenomenon. The methodological approach thus sought to combine “institutional” understandings of the formal planning actors, with understandings of the municipal authorities, and the local citizens in the area in question. The pluralism of understandings of the same phenomena thus enabled a deeper understanding of the immanent tensions and dissonances of the Heiplanen as a particular phenomenon.

The research validity of the interpretative findings of Heiplanen is thus based on the empirical richness and pluralistic perspectives that were generated during the two-year research process. The validity of these findings is however also based on a democratic or participatory argument. The critical utopian action research approach thus searched to generate interpretations of the process *with* participants during the process. This participatory interpretation was not only aimed at generating more robust or trustworthy knowledge for the sake of the research outcome. Rather, it was aimed to generate new understandings of the phenomena among the involved participants that could influence understandings and practices in future planning processes. Such democratic knowledge development also contains an important ethical dimension research; research is not only conducted for the “good” of the academic community, but also for the “good” of the people involved in the research process (Guillemin and Gillam 2004).

These validity arguments are also influential on the construction of the analytical framework of this thesis that is presented in the following chapter. The validity of analytical findings is thus based on a criterion of empirical and theoretical reflexivity, and a critical utopian action research endeavour of searching for the common aspects and potential horizons in the particular empirical description. The descriptive analytical level attempts to describe the empirical material related to the chronological development of the planning process that allows the empirical richness to unfold in order to detect the immanent critique, tensions, and changes that developed during the process. Further, it allows the diversity of perceptions and interpretations of the different actors to come forward. The descriptive chapter in this sense, not only serves to communicate the empirical material and process to the critical scrutiny of others, but also creates a reflective “space” in the understanding of this complex phenomena where different understandings can be contrasted and challenged with each other. The descriptive analysis is in this sense the process where the research can point to immanent perspectives in the empirical reality that calls for further theoretical exploration and interpretation.

The validity of the second analytical layer is thus based on the findings in the first. This analytical layer operationalizes the critical utopian action research interest by playing out the participatory pluralistic interpretations of the development of the empirical process to find the potentiality and barriers of new

meaning and practice horizons. This analytical level is thus dialectically, or critical utopian, in the sense that it aims to use theoretical reflections to understand different aspects of the particular situation in a more general perspective.

Research ethics

Action research, as well as research in general, raises fundamental ethical questions about the “good” of research, or considerations about the potential positive and negative consequences of research. Procedural research ethics is concerned with formalized ethical perspectives on the procedure and outcome (and use) of research. However, research ethics is also a question about the ethical considerations during the research process, or the ethics in practice (Guillemin & Gillam 2004). This is perhaps especially important in action research where the researcher not only observes the “reality”, but also works with the participants to change it. The ethical research concerns are in this sense not only involved with formal consent of voluntarily, confidentiality, or anonymization, but also with the more inter-human aspects of openness, honesty and trust between “researcher and the researched”. The researcher is in other words confronted with ethical choices and considerations continually, and even suddenly or unexpectedly, during a research process. Research with people can generate, what Guillemin and Gillam (2004) defines “ethically important moments” where conflicts between micro and macro ethics may occur. Such ethical perspectives draw attention to the role of the researcher and the relational choices during the research process. Research ethics in practice, or “micro-ethics”, can in this sense be understood as part of a reflexive research process. Reflexivity is often understood as the researcher’s critical and analytical reflections between different empirical aspects and (meta-)theoretical perspectives. Reflexivity is in other words, as previously argued, a “research endeavour” to generate new knowledge based on empirical and theoretical insights that further involves considerations of validity and credibility. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) recognize these reflexive aspects of research processes, but also accentuate the ethical dimension of such reflexivity in relation to the research role and actions in the “empirical reality”. They therefore argue that reflexivity is also a matter of the ethical research reflections where the researcher creates room to critically consider the research objectives, methodological approach and research role during the process. Ethics in practice is in this sense is the reflections and recognition of the researcher’s involvement and affect in the empirical reality.

«the researcher should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their «data»» (Guillemin and Gilliam, 2004, citing Mason p.274)

The question of ethics in the research practice is relevant in this research process where the empirical situation was conflictual, and the methodology was pluralist and interactive. The research approach thus involved several “research roles” in several arenas, and was concerned with communication between different arenas. The reflexive considerations were therefore concerned with the balance between anonymity of individual actors and the importance of communicating different perspectives across these different local and regional planning arenas to generate new understandings. The reflexive considerations

were thus also concerned with the researcher's legitimacy in the different arenas. Legitimacy is in this sense understood as the researcher's social acceptance in the local and regional arena. In a critical utopian action research perspective the legitimacy and role of the action researcher must therefore involve reflections about the role of research as an advocate for common concerns (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006b). The ethical reflections about role and influence were thus combined with questions about researcher legitimacy as an advocate for neither local or regional perspectives, but the common aspects of democratic dialogues, deliberation of nature and knowledge perspectives on a planning arena. The role of the researcher was thus openly communicated within both the local and regional planning arena, and in the local community workshops. The ethical concerns (of role and legitimacy) were more crucial during the informal planning process and the initiation of the local future creating workshops. The formal planning arena was in this sense a public process where the actors were involved of their own will. The local community workshops were, however, openings of public arenas initiated and facilitated by the researcher. This involved ethical considerations (also with the local authorities) about what consequences and effects such research intervention might have for the local communities in a longer term perspective. These ethical considerations were therefore also presented in the introduction of the local workshops. Firstly, it was accentuated that the presentation of the workshop results would be anonymized. Secondly, it was clarified that the local workshops did not have any formal legitimacy or authority in the formal planning process, but that they were an attempt to explore and develop the local perspectives of nature protection and local community tensions. The workshops and the local perspectives would be presented to the Heiplanen steering board, through a research report, and could in this sense potentially influence and improve regional understandings of local perspectives. These presentations were an attempt to openly discuss some of the ethical considerations of the role of research of this process, and to generate transparency about the research intentions and ambitions.

5. Analytical framework

The aim of this chapter is to conclude the theoretical part of this thesis with the conceptual foundation of the thesis analysis. The theoretical perspectives of the previous chapters are synthesized into guiding questions and an analytical framework for interpreting the empirical case. The chapter first describes my understanding of “doing analysis”, after which the two analytical “levels” are presented: the descriptive-interpretative analysis; and the critical utopian analysis.

5.1. Analytical objective

The analytical objective of this thesis is two-folded: I) to describe and interpret the process and development of an on-going environmental planning process in relation to the understandings of the (regional) institutional and local community respectively; and II) to explore the openings and closures of the planning horizon in relation to new understandings and new participatory practices. The first analytical part “reconstructs” the empirical process chronologically and describes how different actors, activities and events intervened and affected each other. This description is thus also an analytical perspective of the institutional and local community perceptions of planning, participation, knowledge, and the relation to nature that developed during the process. In this way, this first analytical part aims to extract the emergent issues and immanent critique of the situation and relate these to my theoretical understanding of planning.

The descriptive analysis is complemented by a second analytical section that seeks to interpret the potential alternative realities of the process or unfold its unfinished aspects (Nielsen & Nielsen 2005; Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). Based on the critical utopian action research foundation, the analysis seeks to explore how the different formal and informal planning events and the movements of actor understandings created discursive and experiential openings and closures to new planning practices and horizons. The analysis thus seeks to unfold the emergent issues, critique, and perspectives that developed during the process and analyse how they created developments and barriers for changes in understanding and praxis. This level of analysis is thus also concerned with the role of the action researcher and its influence during the process. The following section first describes my understanding of “doing analysis” before it introduces the first and second level analytical frameworks.

5.2. The analytical process

The process of turning broad, diverse (and even contradictory) empirical experiences into communicable text is selective and “reductionist”. To communicate the broad experiences from empirical fieldwork in and with the reality of a range of people, as well as interviews and document searches, requires an analytical effort to reduce the descriptions and findings to text. The selection and reduction is an analytical process of linking the parts (certain events) and the whole (the process from a distance) of the empirical mess, with theoretical perspectives and categories. This section attempts to describe the process of undertaking such analysis.

The interpretative reflexive model of Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) was used to understand *what* the role of analysis is in a research project¹⁶ (also described in chapter 2). The analytical process is understood as a reflexive interpretative process of understanding the empirical material/process through theoretical considerations and *vice versa*. Reflexivity is the analytical process of interpreting and reflecting different aspects of the empirical material *and* different theoretical perspectives in each other, as a way of challenging single empirical or theoretical perspectives. Such reflexivity generates the possibility for meta-theoretical perspectives that can serve to question the quality and flexibility of the “interpretative repertoire” applied in the particular analysis (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). This meta-theoretical challenge is an important aspect of undertaking analysis to avoid that certain “established” theories direct the analytical outcome. The theoretical perspectives you “know” give a *certain angle* to the interpretation of the empirical material, while other theories could contribute with other answers (metaphorically spoken, “if you only have a hammer you will only see a nail”).

From an action research perspective the meta-theoretical consideration is important, but it should not overrule the importance of the immanent critique that emerges during the research process. A phenomena can, in this sense, be interpreted differently from “the outside” than from “the inside” (Greenwood & Levin 1998), because different values, cultures and experiences create different horizons of understanding (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). An action researcher analyses and reflects *during* the process and with the participants to understand the situation and the emerging issues (immanent critique) from the participants’ perspective (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). An action research analysis is, in this sense, not only concerned with the development of generic findings from the particular case, but also with the development of space for generating general reflection with the participants in the particular case. Action research is in other words about analyzing the common perspectives in the particular case and opens the particular case for more common considerations (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Nielsen & Nielsen 2010).

The analytical process of this thesis was a reflexive process of exploring the case process, and reflecting these in relation to the theoretical perspectives of planning and participation, and the larger societal perspectives of nature protection and use. The analytical process was in this sense ongoing throughout the research process and developed with the participants. The participatory analysis was created as reflective dialogues with both the local communities (especially the authorities in the three municipalities) and the formal regional planning actors (especially the project leader). These reflective dialogues served to construct, affirm, and re-construct perspectives of the planning process, the role of participation and knowledge, and the relation to nature. The planning and research process created various arenas where these diverse understandings were challenged by one another, i.e. the formal regional planning meetings, the future workshops, the study tour, and the dialogue meetings. In these settings it was also possible for

¹⁶ In my perspective, the reflexive methodological framework presented by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) could be criticized for elements of systemic thinking that might reduce the complexity of interpretation and the elements of intuition. However, I find the “model” appealing as a way of systematizing the elements in an interpretative process in relation to each other, and especially of linking the interpretative process of the empirical “mess” with the “ordered” theoretical perspectives.

me, as researcher, to complement and question the actors' understandings with theoretical perspectives. The linkage of the participatory and theoretical interpretation is thus not only challenging the particular understandings in the case, but also aimed at generating overarching generic knowledge from the particular case.

These analytical reflections were made systematically during the research process and documented in field notes. The transcription of field notes, minutes, and interviews, were supplemented by "tags" or colour codes that related certain aspects or comments in the meetings with theoretical questions of the understanding of participation, knowledge and nature protection. In addition, the transcriptions were complemented by reflection notes that related a particular field work experience to the process as a whole. These reflections served as pre-analytical perspectives or developing interpretive observations. They also influenced the adaption of the research approach during the field work. The analytical process was in this sense a reflexive process of understanding the process *during the process* from different empirical material and sources, and *reflecting on the process* in relation to my theoretical understandings.

From this follows that the analytical process of this thesis was twofold: on one level it was to create "particular" context-dependent findings that could be used in the case to improve it; on another level the ambition was to develop more general theoretical perspectives from the particular planning and research process related to understandings of nature protection and use, democratic participation in planning, and the perspective of commons.

5.3. Analysing understandings in a complex planning process

The chronological descriptive part of this analysis relates the events of the actual planning process, with an interpretation of emerging issues and understandings. The description is structured by the chronological development of the process. This enabled the analysis to take into account how the planning process events and the understandings of the actors developed and influenced each other. The interpretation is concerned with the developing perceptions of different actors at the institutional "system" level and the local community level (authorities and citizens). Each phase of the process emphasises how the understandings of the planning purpose, the participation rationale, knowledge and nature was expressed in documents, during planning meetings, and from interviews and workshops.

The "first analytical level" was thus concerned with understanding the situation through different empirical perspectives, and the contradictions and development between them (as a sort of triangulation). Such interactive or participatory interpretation not only "validates" the research findings, but also generates communication between the actors that challenges the different meaning orientations in the context and the existing "reality" of the situation. The interactive interpretation is thus in itself part of an emancipatory interest because it makes the people involved "responsible" or at least able to communicate their own interpretations and reflections to a larger public.

The role of the researcher was in this perspective to create room (and legitimacy) for different interpretations in a reflexive process. This implies that I as a researcher contributed with theoretical perspectives and interpretations in interaction with the actors in the planning process. During this research process these interactive interpretative rooms were facilitated through my participation in meetings with municipalities, county meetings, workshops with citizens, the study trip, dialogue meetings, etc. The analytical process can in this sense be understood as a way of “discovering” the immanent issues and critique of the situation and relate these to a theoretical understanding. The analysis thus questions: what are the understandings of the planning purpose; what understandings and arguments for participation are at play in the planning process; what perspectives of knowledge and science influence the understanding of the planning purpose and process; and what nature relation perspectives are considered during the process? These questions (or findings) create the basis for the second level analysis that seeks to explore how these understandings influence the openings (potentials) and closures (barriers) of new understandings and practices during the planning process.

5.4. Analysing openings and closures – a critical utopian approach

The purpose of the second analytical part was to explore and unfold how the particular planning process of Heiplanen created discursive and experiential openings and closures for a new planning horizon. The analysis in this sense questioned how the understandings of planning, participation, knowledge and nature shaped the understanding of the planning horizon, or the planning trajectory. Further, different courses of events generated openings and closures of participation and mutual understandings across the institutional and local community perspective. The analysis of the openings and closures is closely linked to an analysis of the role of the action researcher in the planning process. The analysis is therefore also concerned with how such a research role affected the openings and closures, and on a more general level how such a role contributes to a new understanding of planning system challenges.

The analytical choice of *openings* and *closures* is linked to the essence of the case study as being an ongoing planning process, and to the ontology of the research approach of critical utopian action research (see also chapter 2.4). The planning process is thus understood as an unfinished process with many possible development trajectories or outcomes (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007b). Planning is, in other words, not understood as a linear process of policy implementation, but as the sum of chaotic events, planned activities and reflective considerations (as argued in chapter 3). The analysis of openings and closures in such planning processes is grounded in an ontological understanding of reality as a continuously changing entity. The “reality” thus embraces not only a potential of change or alternative realities, but also barriers or reified realities (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006b;2007b).

The analysis of openings and closures aims to explore how certain understandings and practices created “turning points” or changes in the planning process. The turning points are understood as changes in the planning process or in the understandings among the planning actors that created a new room for

communication, understanding, or a new direction of the planning process. The analysis seeks to unfold the understandings and factors that influenced these turning points in order to explore *how* they contributed to open or close new directions in the planning process and new understandings among the actors. The “how” builds on a conceptual understanding of openings and closures that is presented below.

The conceptual understanding of openings and closures builds on two theoretical inspirations: critical theory and critical utopian action research. In a critical theoretical sense the concepts of openings and closures are concerned with the communication and understanding about our reality and how potential alternative realities are considered (or not taken into account) in these processes (Deetz 1992)¹⁷. The other inspiration is based on the critical utopian action research approach of Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a; 2007a) and their work with the “reversed participation” of local communities in nature protection planning. The concept of discursive closure, as introduced by Deetz (1992), is complemented by a perspective of social experiential learning and change (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006a; 2007a).

Discursive and experiential openings and closures

The analysis of opening and closures for new deliberative participatory horizons in environmental planning involves a discursive and an experiential-material dimension. The discursive aspects of the analysis are concerned with possibilities and barriers of the communicative praxis and social dimension of the discourse, namely how institutional and organizational circumstances influenced and (potentially) developed the discursive praxis during the process. It aims to analyse the *discursive openings and closures* that occur during the process of planning based on the (turning points) of the involved actor’s perceptions and understandings of the planning process, the role of participation and knowledge, and nature relations.

The second dimension is concerned with the experiential or material elements in the process that contribute to create openings and closures for deliberative participation, and the development of new understandings¹⁸. The experiential and material dimension is especially relevant in a context that concerns the environment, because it concerns the societal and human relation to nature which is more than just

¹⁷ Stanley Deetz (1992) has addressed the concept of discursive closures in his book *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization: Developments in communication and the politics of everyday life*. Although the contextual field of corporate management and work-life might seem far from environmental planning, I consider the concept of discursive closures as highly relevant for my contextual analysis. Deetz explores communication and decision making in a corporate management perspective related to the everyday work life perspective and problematizes how corporate management practice can create distorted communication and discursive closures in the management and development of work-life environment and organizational development. My material case area is different, but it is also concerned with how the institutional decision-making level of environmental planning relates to local communities and their everyday life perspectives. The conceptual perspective of Deetz (1992) regarding the communicative processes and discursive closures are therefore relevant for my analytical perspective of openings and closures for democratic participation in environmental planning.

¹⁸ Discourse analysis is also concerned with experiences and practice that affect the discourse. The point of creating two analytical dimensions is to emphasize the experiential dimension in our relation to the material and social world because the analysis is concerned with how new collective (social) experiences (in the area/nature) influenced the possibility for new understandings and practices in the planning process as a whole.

language and maps. Collective experiences (of nature) across institutional and everyday life understandings can therefore stimulate social learning and lay the ground for new mutual understandings of nature in planning. The following sections describe these two analytical dimensions: the discursive and experiential openings and closures.

Discursive openings and closures

The concept of discursive closures in communication is developed by Stanley Deetz (1992). The concept builds on a Habermasian-founded communicative theory and problematizes how seemingly broad democratic communication and participation can be restricted (closed) by distortion or false premises. His concern is that “powerful” actors with formal decision-making authority can use different strategies to hinder “free speech” and the development of communicative rationality in a decision-making or development process. Communicative distortion is, according to Deetz, a characteristic for decisions that are presented as a broad consensus, although some participants have been deprived a meaning creation in the process. The rationale for participatory decision making (or planning) is thus enacted on a false premise because the goal of the process is predefined by some actors. Such participatory processes are reduced to a strategic action which purpose is to legitimize the communication and decision making process (Deetz 1992). In such processes the communication arena and the argument of participation becomes absurd.

Deetz (1992) defines discursive closures as the suppression of potential conflicts in order to protect the “system” or the institution/organization. He categorizes eight strategies or processes that contribute to create discursive closures in a development or decision-making (or planning) process. In an environmental planning perspective these categories are relevant, because planning also involve different actors with different legitimate “power” and meaning influence in a decision-making process, i.e. a local citizen vs. a county governor. The following summarizes Deetz (1992) definition of the eight discursive closure concepts:

1. *Disqualification* refers to how a decision-making process marginalizes some discourses or participants, while other are privileged. The “right” knowledge or expertise is predefined, while other knowledge perspectives are consequently disqualified. The marginalization of discourses in the decision-making process disables the potential development of mutual understandings. **This strategy reproduces its own capacity to determine who is qualified, and who is able to question the very definition of qualification.**
2. *Naturalization of discourse* describes how a communication process can operate with reification of “truth” and matter. The fixation and externalization of certain understandings privileges some actors and marginalizes the participation of others in the process. **Such strategies create discursive closures by communicating subjective (scientific) claims as objective truths or as frozen realities.** The subject of the matter is in other words predefined in the process as something natural or unquestionable. *“Naturalization frequently stops discussions at the determination of what is – at precisely the place where it should be started – how is it that”* (Deetz, 1992, p. 191, my emphasis).

3. *Neutralization* is concerned with values in the communication process. Neutralization is a process of hiding value foundations and treating the process as “value free”. **It neglects the underlying values that co-construct our social perception of the world, and treats the dominating values as the only possible – as a “truth”**. This strategy presents the “reality” based on “facts” and “data” without answering for the underlying criteria, assumptions, and values behind the production of the knowledge. The act of neutralization suppresses the potential of conflict, and the emergence of different understandings, and thereby undermines the possibility of democracy.
4. *Topical avoidance* is based on the **power of some actors to prohibit the discussion of some events** or issues and restricts the scope of the discussion to “safe issues”.
5. *Subjectification of experience* is a strategy based on ending discussions and conflicts by reducing it to a “matter of opinion”. Deetz argue that the “matter of opinion” is exactly where the discussion should begin in a deliberative democratic participatory perspective.
6. *Meaning denial* considers communication process where “*a message is present and disclaimed, said and not said*” (Deetz, 1992, p.194). In this sense possible interpretations of a statement is enacted and denied as meant. It is thus a strategy that **conceals the actual meaning of the communication and doings**.
7. *Legitimization* problematizes how decisions and practices are rationalized through the invocation of higher order explanatory devices. In this sense **it legitimizes some values over others**. Deetz exemplifies this by referring to how “values” of effectiveness, expertise, and efficiency have become key in decision-making processes in corporate decision making. In a similar sense, environmental planning policies frequently operate with “master values” such as biodiversity, habitat protection, ecosystem services, or scientific knowledge-based planning.
8. *Pacification* regards how the significance of an issue is discounted; that the ability to do anything about it exceeds the limits of capacity. This strategy thus diverts the matter of conflict, through an apparent engagement, from what can be changed to what cannot be changed. **Systemic pacification is a defensive institutionalized routine that protect the examination, discussion or change of an institution**. The aim of pacification is to disable possible mutual decision making (and undermining the individual strength) – which can be seen as the loss of democracy and individual freedom.

“Democracy in the participative sense requires the capacity to mutually solve problems through exploration of different points of view and alternative actions.” (Deetz, 1992, p.196).

This quote accentuates that the contrast to discursive closures is the discursive openings for deliberative democratic participation. Discursive openings are, in this thesis, understood as the possibility of conflicting or alternative values, understandings, or representations to enter the communication and decision-making arena. The participation of competing or contradicting discourses requires that the constituting rules of the “communicative arena” accept the *equal right* of different values, perceptions, and knowledge claims to be presented and heard (Healey 2006, 2009; Elling 2008). The “system” must thus acknowledge that the very

premises of the plan or decision making process are a matter for broad discussions; it is in the definition of the subject matter that the discussions should begin (Deetz 1992). The claims of master values or “objective” knowledge in a planning process must therefore be transferred to understand values and knowledge as a plurality of different claims with different validity grounds. The openings for deliberative participation occur when the communication process is initiated by expressing the presumptions and world views underlying different knowledge and value claims. Such *transparency* creates openings for discussions on equal terms across a variety of perceptions of the subject. In an open and deliberative participatory process, the subject of the matter is thus constituted in relation to the different participants through transparent and equal communication processes (Deetz, 1992). It is, in other words, the free discussions of the common matter between us that lays the ground for the very essence of democratic participation (Arendt 1958).

The openings for the development of new mutual discourses and thus the deliberative participation, is thus influenced by the very ability to discuss the values and opinions of the subject of the matter. Openings of dialogue and deliberative participation involve processes of *formation of the self* and thereby constitute the possibility for developing mutual understandings (Deetz, 1992). In the sustainability perspective it is this human ability of formation and change that can develop broader responsibility for the societal relations to nature, across the everyday life perspective and the institutional “system” management (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). The discursive openings are in this sense a matter of bridging the everyday life nature relation with the common societal nature challenges through processes of social learning that motivate and develop citizen’s authoritativeness and responsibility. The argument is not that the expert and natural scientific knowledge is not relevant, but that a deliberative participatory arena must allow for meaning refraction and learning that involves other claims and perspectives than just the expert perspective.

The consciousness of everyday life is, however, also influenced by restrictions of change and reflection. Thomas Leithäuser has developed a concept of everyday life consciousness which problematizes how our everyday life is filled with restrictions and routines that hinder the development of new meaning orientations, and reduce critique and dialectics to resentment and unrealistic dreams (Nielsen 1992). Yet, the critique developed from everyday life perspectives can foster new experiences and meaning perspectives if allowed to develop through a reflective “free-space” where meaningful themes and perspectives of everyday life reality can be developed in a social process (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a, 2007a).

Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a; 2007a) argue that openings for a more deliberative *democratic* nature management must be based on a social learning process that takes its point of departure in the citizen’s everyday life connection to nature (see chapter 3). It is through re-embedding the everyday life and nature relation that citizens can (re)develop responsibility to this relation, which again enables the possibility of a more sustainable society to emerge. The development of citizens’ *empowerment* is thus a founding aspect of democratic participation. The openings for deliberative democratic participation (in nature planning) are

thus also a matter of creating arenas where citizens can be influential in the formation of their everyday life, and in this context, their relation to nature. The citizens must in this sense be allowed to unfold and develop their critique and future perspectives that concern the thematic that they consider meaningful. Such processes will involve contradictions, ambiguities, and conflicts, and in such sense closures to the creation of new meaning orientations, but they can also create potential for new understandings and practice that is rooted in the everyday life perspective, and are thus different from an institutional planning perspective. The discursive openings for deliberative democratic participation in planning, or what Nielsen and Nielsen (2007a) calls “re-versed” participation, is thus *the ability to include the everyday life perspectives of the citizens as the point of departure for social learning process and empowerment towards more sustainable nature relations in the everyday life situation* (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a;2007a).

The openings for citizen’s participations and social learning can however, not only rely on the sharing of existing meaning structures and perceptions, or the negotiation of established interests. New understandings and practices must also include an experiential, and particularly a collective experiential dimension (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006a, 2007a). The experiential learning dimension is related to the action research perspective, but is also found in the philosophy of John Dewey as a foundation for knowledge development of a democratic society (see chapter 2 and 3). This pragmatic philosophical perspective emphasizes that the democratic potential is constituted through our lived experiences and reflections, and the development of knowledge for societal development. New understandings and the re-orientation of meaning and practice is thus also based on our (social) experiences and our lived experiences with the physical-material nature dimensions. Openings for new democratic aspects must therefore be based on learning from (collective) experiences. The next section attempts to unfold this dimension of experiential openings and closures.

Experiential opening and closures

The experience of nature and the human relation to its material and physical being cannot be reduced to an understanding through language or maps. The human nature relation is more than words. The human relation to nature is also constituted through our everyday life practices and experiences with nature. The experiential openings and closures for new orientations in planning and a more deliberative democratic participation must be concerned with possibility/barriers of common experiences of nature as a physical material entity, and with the everyday life relations or practices with nature. It is though the collective experiences across institutional planning perspectives and everyday life perspectives that a “common third” can develop in the planning process (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007a). Nielsen and Nielsen argue that democratic participation requires arenas or “*free spaces*” for unfolding the dimensions of nature protection in an everyday life context. Collective experiences of nature (and everyday life practice) are thus understood as a potential for individual and social learning that can develop new common horizons of understanding. Experiences – or experiential learning - in relation to the social and material world influences meaning creation and the potential for new understandings of the existing reality. The *analysis*

of experiential openings is thus concerned with how the different phases of the planning process facilitated *collective arenas* for experiencing and reflecting on the *relation to nature*, and in this way opened new understandings of who were considered relevant participants or “contributors” on the planning arena. Conversely, experiential closures are understood as the disqualification of collective arenas for co-experiencing the physical material subject matter of nature and local everyday life practice. The experiential closures are thus both concerned with barriers of communicative arenas or meeting space, and with barriers of collective experiences of the subject matter.

The analytical framework

Based on these theoretical descriptions of openings and closures, I have created the following framework for my analysis. The framework tries to conceptualize the meta-theoretical inspiration from critical theory and action research in relation to the more abstract notion of discursive and experiential openings and closures. The four emerging categories constitute key aspects for analysing openings and closures for new deliberative planning horizons in the particular process. The concepts are used to analyse how the understanding of planning purpose, knowledge, participation, and relation to nature created different types of openings and closures for new planning horizons. The analytical ambition is to provide some general and contextual insights of how environmental planning processes can be premised and organized towards a more deliberative democratic process between different expert and community rationalities. When this is said, I acknowledge that it is impossible to categorize the width and depth of a planning process into single conceptual openings and closures. The analysis does not attempt to reduce the broad complex planning endeavours to singular concepts or categories. Rather, the concepts of the framework are meant as *guiding* and inspiring the analytical process of unfolding how different factors and events fostered openings or closures for new horizons in the planning process towards more democratic participation.

Table 5.1 A framework for considering discursive and experiential openings and closures

Inspiration	Perspective	Openings (Potentials)	Closures (Barriers)
Critical theory	Discursive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal rights to participate • Open premises for constituting the subject of the matter • Transparency of values • Inclusion of knowledge diversity • Social learning • Empowerment • Bridging everyday life with environmental planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disqualification • Neutralization • Naturalization • Topical avoidance • Subjectification of experience • Meaning denial • Legitimization • Pacification
Action research	Experiential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arenas/Space for communication/participation • Social/collective experiences of the physical-material dimension of nature and life • Collective actions in planning • Experimentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted arenas/spaces for communication and social learning • Time restrictions • Limited collective experience of nature

This chapter concludes the theoretical part of this thesis. The following empirical part is divided into three main chapters: a description of the contextual setting of Heiplanen; a chronological description of the Heiplanen process; and an analytical perspective on the openings and closures of the planning process. Chapter 6 “sets the stage” of the Heiplanen process in relation to the wild reindeer problématique and the current and historical situation of the three municipalities of Setesdal. Chapter 7 is attempts to “tell the whole story” through a descriptive chronological reconstruction of the planning process and the researcher involvement. This story cannot include the entire process as experienced by each involved actor, rather, the story is an attempt to reconstruct the story systematically from the researcher’s perspective as experienced with a variety of actors. The story in this sense seeks to include all the different actor perspectives and planning activities during the process, without taking point of departure in one particular perspective. It is through this story that the researcher tries to unfold the process experience from both the local community perspective *and* the institutional planning perspective of the regional and state authorities. The description in this sense focuses on how the different actors in the process understood and developed their perception of planning, participation, knowledge and nature-society relations, and to bring out the contradictions experienced during the process by the different actors involved and in relation to the theoretical perspectives of the researcher. Chapter 7 is aimed at answering the two first research questions through descriptions and partial analysis:

- Why was nature protection planning so conflictual in municipalities and communities affected by Heiplanen?
- What were the different understandings of knowledge, nature protection, and participation at play among the local communities in Setesdal and the regional institutional perspectives, and how did they develop during the planning process?

Chapter 8 aims to reflect this descriptive interpretation in the analytical framework of the openings and closures in the planning process of more deliberative democratic participation and the contribution of everyday life perspective. The openings and closures are analysed in relation to discursive perspectives of knowledge and values in the planning process, and experiential perspectives of participatory arenas and common spaces for reflection. In addition, the role of the researcher is interpreted in relation to these openings and closures. Chapter 8 thus seeks to answer the latter part of the four research questions:

- What constituted the openings and closures for improved mutual understandings and new participatory practices in Heiplanen among local communities in Setesdal and regional institutions, and how did it influence the Heiplanen process and outcome?
- What were the contributions of a critical utopian action research approach to the openings and closures of understanding and participation in Heiplanen?

Finally, chapter 9 seeks to synthesize the learning of the findings from the two analytical “levels” to answer the overall research question and contribute with some conclusive perspectives.

- What were the discursive and experiential openings and closures in the planning horizon of Heiplanen for deliberative democratic participation?

Part II

Empirical Description and Analysis



6. Wild reindeer protection and the Setesdal valley

The scope of this chapter is to give a contextual background and introduction to the empirical case of the thesis: Setesdal and wild reindeer. Firstly, the challenge between (modern) human nature use and wild reindeer habitat is introduced. Secondly, Setesdal is described through a geographical and historical brief and outlines some Setesdal perspectives of development in relation to nature.

6.1. Wild reindeer and human nature use

The perception of nature and nature relations are contested (Macnagthen & Urry 1998). There are, in other words, many different meanings and values about how we as humans and our society relate to and use nature. Perspectives of nature protection or use therefore also involve values and meanings related to perceptions of nature and culture, as well as local and central government (Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006). The definition of legitimate nature use in relation to ecological concerns thus involves understandings of nature and participation (democracy), and not least related to our perception of knowledge validity.

Daugstad et al. (2006) conceptualizes the diverging nature perspectives into a sliding scale in a three dimensional complexity. The first dimension concerns the protection or use, the second the nature or culture, and the third the central or local management. The protection vs. use dimension is the “classical” division between an eco-centric or anthropocentric view of nature. The understanding of nature is at the one end of the scale based on conserving nature for its own sake, while the other end of the scale is based on a utility rationale of using nature as a resource. The nature vs. culture dimension creates a scale between the “untouched nature” and the cultural landscape. The values are then at one extreme based on a valuation of nature as “pure” and “pristine”, while the other end of the scale values the cultural traces in the landscape. The third dimension is concerned with how the perspectives of the other two dimensions are operationalized through management convictions. The central vs. local scale thus illustrates the conflicting perspectives regarding who decides what and how nature should be protected or used. These dimensions illustrate that nature planning and management institutions do not “have one legitimate answer” and not one legitimate source of knowledge. Planning is about developing many answers through the deliberation of various perspectives and creation of contextual knowledge. These perspectives are relevant in the consideration of human nature use in outlying mountain areas, as in environmental planning, or more specifically the protection and use of wild reindeer areas.

It is difficult to say if the current use of (outlying) mountain areas has increased or decreased during the last century, but it has definitely changed (Andersen and Hustad 2004). These changes are not only influenced by a modern recreational perspective of outdoor life, where for example the increased establishment of second-home villages with alpine and ski facilities and their related infrastructure and traffic affecting the mountain areas (Strand et al. 2010a). But conversely, they have been influenced by modern resource exploitation related to hydropower construction and its related infrastructure and traffic. The outlying

mountains are thus influenced by new human area claims with different cultural, economic and ecological interests and perspectives. Both of these activities impose irreversible changes and occupy still larger shares of wild reindeer habitat (Andersen & Hustad 2004).

The recreational area use concerns both the “traditional” and the “modern” use of with nature. In an everyday life perspective this relates to the cultural use of nature for hunting, fishing, agriculture, etc., but also in modernized forms, such as snowmobile and social recreation at the traditional agricultural “støyl cabins”. In a tourist or “second home” perspective the activities are mainly related to recreational uses of nature such as hiking trailing, cycling, and skiing (also hunting and fishing), or more modern uses such as paragliding, kiting, snowmobile, etc. The economic area use is related to the perspective of using nature as a resource for development. In the municipal sphere this is connected to perspectives of the second-home “industry” and tourism business, while in “large society” it is connected to perspectives of hydropower development.

The challenge of nature planning in this thesis is concerned with the balance between these increasing human claims on outlying mountain areas, and the necessity of desolate mountain areas for wild reindeer herds. To further explore this challenge of area management between society and wild reindeer, it is necessary first to understand more about wild reindeer as animals in a particular environment and as cultural bearers.

The wild reindeer – animal, habitat, and environment

The wild reindeer in Norway are the last part of the European wild reindeer herd. Wild reindeer symbolizes the survival of early European cultures and the repopulation of Norway after the last ice age, when nomads followed the animal migration from Southern to Northern Europe (Andersen & Hustad, 2004). The original wild reindeer areas were divided into four main regions in southern Norway: Østerdalsfjellene in the north-eastern mountains bordering Sweden; Dovre-Rondane in the central northern part; Ottadalen-Joutunheimen in the central-western mountains; and Hardangervidda-Setesdalen in the central-southern area. Wild reindeer are today managed in 23 smaller and larger units across southern Norway. The mountain ranges of Setesdal and Ryfylke constitute the most southern wild reindeer area in Europe (Andersen & Hustad 2004;Punsvik and Jaren 2006).

The management of area and herd is divided into different management systems. The area management is partly managed by the municipalities through the Planning and Building Act, and in the conservation areas by either national environmental authorities or local-regional management collaborations through the Nature Conservation Act (Andersen & Hustad, 2004). Herd management is handled by regional wild reindeer boards who are elected by the Directorate of Nature. The wild reindeer board coordinates wild reindeer management through instructions from the Directorate, county governors, and the local wild reindeer commissions (landowners). The wild reindeer board issues hunting quotas for the areas and hunting licenses to the local wild reindeer commissions. The highest national authority in wild reindeer

management is the Ministry of Environment. The increasing focus on habitat management, instead of herd management, creates a need for better communication between the different management systems (Punsvik and Jaren, 2006; Andersen and Husted, 2004).

The wild reindeer is a gregarious animal that lives in open arctic types of landscapes. The large herds constitute a collective protection against predators and other dangers in open landscapes. The gregarious population structure, however, also imposes consequences for the feeding of each individual. The herd thus requires a large range to support the grazing of each individual throughout the year (Andersen & Hustad 2004). The wild reindeer is a nomadic animal that uses different areas according to different functions (calving, summer/winter migration, mating), seasons of grazing area (summer/winter), and risk assessment (interference, predation). The herd follows a yearly seasonal cycle to optimally utilize the available grazing area within a large region and thereby avoids over exploitation of the grazing resources (Mossing & Heggenes 2010; Punsvik & Jaren 2006). The summer, spring, autumn, and winter grazing are often separate areas far apart and with different climate gradients and vegetation types. In addition, the wild reindeer follows larger area use cycles over several decades to allow for example lichens and other feeding resources to restore. The nomadic life style and gregarious population structure of the wild reindeer consequently requires large grazing areas to support a resilient population (Andersen & Hustad 2004). The habitat quality differs substantially in the different reindeer regions. This is partly influenced by topography and geology, but mostly by climate and vegetation types. Regions with scarce feeding conditions and possibilities of winter grazing-icing therefore requires even larger areas to provide the herds with feeding buffer zones (Punsvik & Jaren 2006).

30 000 years of common history between humans and wild reindeer is a relation of hunting and escape. The wild reindeer has developed an anti-predator behaviour, and learning from millennia, it is especially shy to human presence. Human interference can therefore influence the choice of grazing areas, the size of the herd, and the escape mechanisms of the animal (Andersen & Hustad 2004; Strand, Gunnarsen, Panzacchi, Andersen, Falldorf, Andersen, Van Morter, Jordhøy, & Fangel 2010b). Human interference is defined as activities that force the wild reindeer away from otherwise available resources or that trigger an escape mechanism. Human interference can thereby create stress reactions that again influence the seasonal area use for feeding and calving (Punsvik & Jaren 2006). Human interference can be either direct interference (from human traffic) or as indirect interferences (such as technical physical barriers) (Strand, Gunnarsen, Panzacchi, Andersen, Falldorf, Andersen, Van Morter, Jordhøy, & Fangel 2010b).

The increasing establishment of second homes in the mountain areas in Norway (Ericsson, Arnesen, & Vorkinn 2010) constitutes both types of interference; the infrastructural establishment directly occupies mountain areas, and the increased number of people in these areas potentially increases the traffic (roaming), and thus the human interference in the wild reindeer habitat (Strand, Gunnarsen, Panzacchi, Andersen, Falldorf, Andersen, Van Morter, Jordhøy, & Fangel 2010b). The building of power plants and power infrastructure constitute large interferences in the construction period, and maintenance creates

direct interference due to human traffic in the area. The power constructions (the dams, the power lines, etc.) create barriers to wild reindeer movement and are thus seen as indirect interferences (Strand et al. 2010b).

Wild reindeer is, to sum up, a species with considerable area needs. Not only for securing food accessibility during the entire year, and during extreme winters, but also due to its low threshold to human interference. Wild reindeer experts, therefore, argue that the wild reindeer populations in Norway need larger connected areas deprived of human construction and with low (controlled) human traffic level to secure their population in a long term perspective (Punsvik and Jaren 2006; Andersen and Hustad 2004).

In the following section the generally described challenges between human nature use and wild reindeer are anchored in the empirical case of Setesdal.

6.2. Setesdal: People, reindeer and nature protection history

Setesdal is a 200 km narrow valley in the inland of Agder County, southern Norway, surrounded by a western and eastern mountain range. The southern part of the valley is broad and has low slopes (Lower Setesdal), while the northern part of the valley narrows and has mountains rising to 1507 m (Upper Setesdal). The area of Setesdal is divided into four municipalities with a total of 6890 (in 2009) inhabitants and is part of Aust-Agder county. The nearest regional centre is Kristiansand (80 000 inhabitants in 2009) within a distance of 1 to 3 hours' drive (70-225 km) respectively.

Current socio-economic situation

Setesdal faces similar rural challenges to other districts in Norway and Europe: declining economic activity in primary industries, poor business development, decreasing inhabitants and workforce. Rural development is high on the political agenda in the municipalities, and business development and population increase are among the core aims of the regional council of Setesdal (Cruickshank & Sørheim 2009; Leknes, Ermland, & Laudal 2002).

There is a general understanding among Setesdal citizens and municipalities that rural development is a broad scoped, long term process, with complex and interdependent goals. They describe it as a holistic process of integrating economic, social and cultural aspects in local society building. On an operational level they point out two main areas of concern: population increase and work place development (Normann & Vasstrøm 2012). The question of population increase has a dual challenge: one to attract new citizens to the region, and the other to create incitement to stay. Job opportunities and life style values connected to "nature" and "the rural" are considered the main themes for attracting new citizens. General welfare, such as municipal services and social integration in the local society, is considered important to create incitement to stay (Karlsen and Vasstrøm 2011; Normann & Vasstrøm 2012).

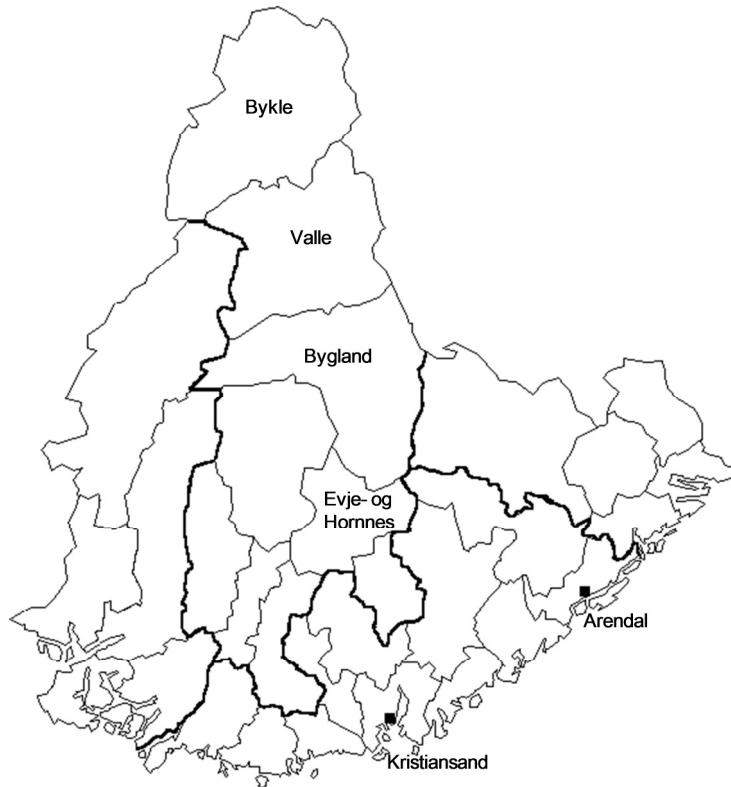


Figure 6.9 The municipalities of Setesdal and the counties of Vest-Agder and Aust-Agder

Geographical and historical situation

Evje-Hornnes is the municipality situated closest to the coastal growth area. It has the largest population in the valley (3500 in 2009), and functions as a regional centre for the inland of Agder in regards to industry and workplace development, as well as for commercial activities (Cruickshank & Sørheim 2009; Leknes, Ermland, & Laudal 2002). The municipality of Bygland (1312 km²) is situated immediately north of Evje-Hornnes in the foothills of the mountain range of West and East Setesdal. The population of the municipality (1225 in 2009) is centred in three small main settlements around the 40 km long fjord of Bygland. The fjord was historically an important traffic artery for the region where timber and trade could connect via the railroad station in Byglandsfjord to the coast. Nowadays the fjord is still important for recreational purposes, while the regional traffic has moved to the fjord road (Rv. 9) that still represents the only connection to the coast.

The municipality of Valle (indeed a valley) (1264 km²) is sparsely populated with 1295 inhabitants (2009). The eastern and western mountain ranges are divided by a narrow valley with sparse agricultural land and the river of Otra. The population is concentrated in two main settlements: Valle and Rystad. In addition, there are two “second home” establishments on the western and eastern side valleys, one of which has a small alpine centre. North of Valle the mountain rises to a “highland” valley, and to the municipality of Bykle (1467 km²). The 970 (in 2009) inhabitants are concentrated around two main settlements: the old church settlement and current administrative centre of Bykle, and the second-home dominated alpine

village of Hovden. The number of second homes has increased during the last decades. According to national statistics (SSB, 2012) the number of second homes has increased from 1604 (in 1998) to 2232 (in 2012) in Bykle, and in Valle from 764 (1998) to 1128 (2012). Bygland has not experienced the same increase during the last 15 years (713 in 1998 and 880 in 2012).

The main source of income in Setesdal was traditionally based on nature resources: subsistence farming combined with forestry and hunting (Bjåen 2009; Leknes, Ersland, & Laudal 2002). The “Seter” agriculture was one of the most important nature resource uses in mountainous areas (thereof the name Setesdal: the Seter Valley). Seter agriculture implies moving the husbandry between different altitudes in the mountains and distances from the main valley farm to increase the potential grazing area. The seters had “støyls”, cabins/sheds or outlying farm houses connected to the most important grazing areas (Puschmann et al. 1999).

In the lower parts of Setesdal a typical farm had its main settlement in the valley (winter pastures), and the seter in the higher slopes for herding sheep and cattle in the summer, while forestry was an important additional income source. In Valle the farms would have several seasonal seters and støyl cabins for spring/autumn and winter herding with pastures and cabins located at different altitudes in the mountains and distances from the main valley. The seter areas and their open landscapes could stretch tens of kilometres into the mountain areas from the valley (Svalheim & Jansen 2002). In Bykle the farms were located in the centre of the “highland” valley plateau. These did not have traditional seters connected to each farm (as the farms were already located in the highlands), but rather had several hunting or fishing sheds scattered in the outlying mountain areas. The farm economy in Upper Setesdal was scarce and was supported by hunting, fishing and berry gathering. In these days wild reindeer were considered an important additional source of income, either as food for the family or fur for sale (Bjåen 2009).

Since the 1850s the number of seters has been reduced from 50 000 to fewer than 2500; Setesdal is one of the areas with most remaining seters (Puschmann et al. 1999). The seter use has formed the open landscapes and micro ecosystems through decades (centuries) of active grazing and harvesting. The gradual abandonment of seter use will eventually cause natural succession in the landscapes, where bushes and trees will outcompete shrubs and grasses (Puschmann, Hofsten, & Elgersma 1999; Svalheim & Jansen 2002). Many seters or støyls cabins are still scattered in large parts of the eastern and western mountain ranges of Setesdal, and are today used for recreational purposes (Bjåen 2009; Homme and Bjåen 2010).

During the 1900s, the Ryfylke and Setesdal mountains became a main area for hydropower development in Norway, and the wild reindeer areas with most extensive hydropower building. During the period between 1965 and 1997, six large hydropower dams were established in the high mountain areas in the Ryfylke-Setesdal mountains, from Roskreppfjorden (1967) in the south to Blåsjø (1997) in the north (Leknes, Ersland, & Laudal 2002). The hydropower construction had tremendous consequences for wild reindeer habitat and for the citizens of the municipalities. On the one hand it provided the affected municipalities

with large long-term economic benefits. The municipalities in (especially Upper) Setesdal have secured an extra annual income up to 35% higher than the general average for municipalities in Norway. But, nonetheless, the dams irreversibly occupy large outlying areas and additionally affect larger areas of the mountainous region through the building of roads and power lines (Punsvik and Jaren, 2006).

Nature perspectives in Setesdal

“Nature” is considered one of their most important assets for rural development and everyday life. It is not only perceived as a possibility for workplace development e.g. within tourism, but also, perhaps more importantly, it is considered an identity source and “inhabitant benefit” that provides opportunity for the good life (Homme & Bjåen 2010). Nature is thus considered an asset that can attract new inhabitants by giving them possibilities to use nature in their everyday life (Karlsen & Vasstrøm 2011).

Traditional and modern nature uses have different aspects and values. One century ago the areas were used for subsistence economy related to husbandry in outlying areas (seters), hunting, fishing, berries, etc. imposing substantial activity in the mountains areas and forming the landscape and micro-ecosystems through decades (Bjåen 2009;Homme & Bjåen 2010;Puschmann, Hofsten, & Elgersma 1999). The traditional nature use was utilizing nature as a primary raw material for survival and economy, while the modern nature use is more related to recreation. However, among the citizens of Setesdal the “modern” recreational perspective is often linked with the traditional use. The old cabins and “seters” in the mountains are currently used both for social/recreational purposes, and also for hunting and fishing (and to a lesser extent herding) (Bjåen 2009;Homme & Bjåen 2010).

The recent development of second homes and alpine sport facilities (especially in Valle and Bykle) has contributed to economic development in the municipalities, and some landowners have earned a considerable fortune. The selling of land for construction of second homes is, in other words, “big business”. Local authorities and business actors consider this development important for rural development issues where different work niches can emerge related to tourism and experience, cultural enterprises, construction and maintenance, etc. (e.g. Setesdal Regionråd, 2011). This perspective is also in line with several national policies that point to outlying mountain areas as a source for economic development in district municipalities (Ministry of Finance 2003). There are, however, also other community perspectives that consider the second home development a threat to ecological and traditional nature values. The local authorities have to balance these nature use perspectives, the economic interests, and the ecological aspects in their area and municipal planning.

Setesdal: the southernmost wild reindeer area in Europe

Setesdal and Ryfylke are populated by the original wild reindeer, and especially in the eastern mountain range of Setesdal, mixed with descendants of tame reindeer brought from the Sami areas in Northern Norway in 1886 (Andersen & Hustad 2004;Homme & Bjåen 2010). During the 18th and 19th Centuries, when rifles started to be used in hunting, wild reindeer herds were severely reduced. During the 19th Century the

hunting season was shortened first to eight months in 1845, then to 14 days in 1889, and in 1900-1907 reindeer hunting became forbidden (Homme & Bjåen 2010). During the 20th Century, reindeer herds were slowly re-established, and today there are approx. 3000-4000 animals in the Setesdal-Ryfylke mountain area (Mossing & Heggenes 2010). Tame and wild reindeer differ in appearance and behaviour. The tame reindeer are lower and more compact, and also live in areas with birch and spruce forests. They are less shy to human disturbance than wild reindeer, and are known to frequent areas where there are human installations such as second homes and cabins (Homme & Bjåen 2010).

The wild reindeer is cultural in Setesdal, and was simply named “*dyra*” (the animal) in the local dialect (Bjåen 2009; Punsvik & Jaren 2006). As mentioned earlier the animal has for centuries been an important provider of food and fur, survival and economy. Wild reindeer hunting is considered “privileged” and there are many stories associated with these “grand” hunting experiences. The hunting period is from late August to September. The commercial value of selling hunting rights is substantial: a hunting license and cabin can easily cost 30 000 – 50 000 kr. (approx. 8000 euro) depending on the quota, etc. In Setesdal it is not common to sell these rights - it is a privilege of being a landowner/inhabitant of Setesdal (Homme & Bjåen, 2010).

The wild reindeer habitat of Setesdal Ryfylke is the most marginal in Norway due to climate and soil conditions (Punsvik & Jaren, 2006). The areas are poor in productive grazing areas (43% of the area is unproductive for grazing in the western mountain range), and especially the winter grazing is marginal. This wild reindeer area is the most affected by “coastal climate” in Norway. High levels of precipitation in the winter lead to substantial snow masses. Unstable temperatures (melting and freezing) creates ice that makes winter grazing difficult and even impossible. During such conditions, the wild reindeer tend to migrate to lower grazing areas, but these are also marginal in the Setesdal Ryfylke mountains (Mossing & Heggenes 2010).

The structural development and human activities in the Setesdal-Ryfylke mountains affect the potential habitat of the wild reindeer (Punsvik & Jaren 2006). The issue of balancing an area for wild reindeer with interests of societal development has been on the agenda for decades and resulted in the establishment of a landscape protection area in the year 2000. The next paragraph will give a short description of that process as a historical introduction to the ongoing regional planning process.

The story of nature conservation planning in Setesdal – SVR

The intention of landscape protection of SVR has been present since 1974, and was continuously pursued by the county governors in the 1980s (Falleth and Hovik, 2006). The main concern of the protection perspective was to secure the habitat of wild reindeer. Local resistance to conservation plans led to the initiation of a multi-use plan process with participation from local and regional management, landowners, commercial, and wildlife interests. The plan ended in a broadly agreed compromise of protecting 2500 km² and the plan was passed in the county governments. Nevertheless, the directorate of nature management

(DN) intervened in the process and commissioned the county governors (state regional actors) to complete a conservation plan work that included additional areas. The county governments were then asked to divide the protection area in an inner and outer zone. The inner zone became the 3500 km² Setesdal-Vesthei-Ryfylke (SVR) landscape protection area. The outer fringe was established as a buffer zone to the protection area through the building and planning act (Falleth & Hovik 2006).

The intervention of the DN in the broad participation process provoked local and regional actors. The case was brought to the Stortinget (the Norwegian parliament), where the government was asked to make the area the subject for a pilot project of local management. The proposal was granted in the Stortinget (Falleth & Hovik 2006). Setesdal became the first large protection area in Norway with a local management model. Three other large protection areas shortly after became part of local management pilots in Norway (Falleth & Hovik 2008b).

The management model initially gave the municipalities planning authority rights, but with the County Governor as the authority for complaints. This model was resisted especially among the southern municipalities in SVR, who demanded full rights to manage complaints. This resulted in a “two-step” management model where the municipalities were given full authority to both manage and treat complaints in the protection area (Falleth & Hovik 2006). In the buffer zone around the protection area, the municipalities had the planning authority, but the County Governor was the hearing authority and could object to plans and requests. From 2000 to 2010 this model has created extensive conflicts between municipalities and county governors. The conflicts have ranged from large issues related to general municipal planning, to smaller issues related to the reconstruction of old herd cabins. Out of the four similar management pilots in Norway, Setesdal had the most conflictual relations with the County Governor (Falleth & Hovik 2008b).

In the evaluation of the pilot, Falleth and Hovik (2006,2008) found that the local management actors perceived the pilot as an opportunity to manage the area in line with local nature use and management considerations. The national environmental institutions however, considered it a matter of implementing national policies through local authorities (Falleth & Hovik 2006;Hovik & Falleth 2003). The evaluation that was based on premises given by the national environmental authorities, not surprisingly, found that the local management pilots tended to favour local (economic) development perspectives and nature use more than the central environmental authorities. However, the overall conclusion was that the municipalities had managed the area in concordance with the initially set premises by the state (Falleth & Hovik, 2008).

The establishment of the landscape protection area was, in other words, subject of a conflict-filled process between local authorities and landowners on the one side and the national environmental institutions and county governors on the other. During the 10 year management period of SVR the local and national authorities still represent different understandings of what the local management purpose is and how the area should be managed (Falleth and Hovik, 2006).

This description of the SVR process does not intend to cover the whole complexity of this process. Falleth and Hovik have in their work (2003, 2006, 2008, 2009) documented, evaluated, and analysed the process of SVR. The reason that I have chosen to present this process, is that it gives a short background of nature protection planning preceding the regional planning process and the relation between the local authorities and the County Governor/national environmental authorities.

7. The chronology of Heiplanen and the process in Setesdal

This chapter describes the case of the regional planning process of Heiplanen with particular attention to the local participation in Setesdal. The chapter begins with the description of the national policies that influenced the premises of the regional planning process. Thereafter the formal planning process is described chronologically and related to the creation of the informal planning process and the semi-formal planning process. Lastly the post-planning phase is described including the approval of the plan and the evaluative process perspectives of the local and regional authorities. Each sub-chapter is concluded through a partial analysis that attempts to synthesize and analyse the empirical events in relation to different actor understandings of knowledge, nature and participation in the planning process.

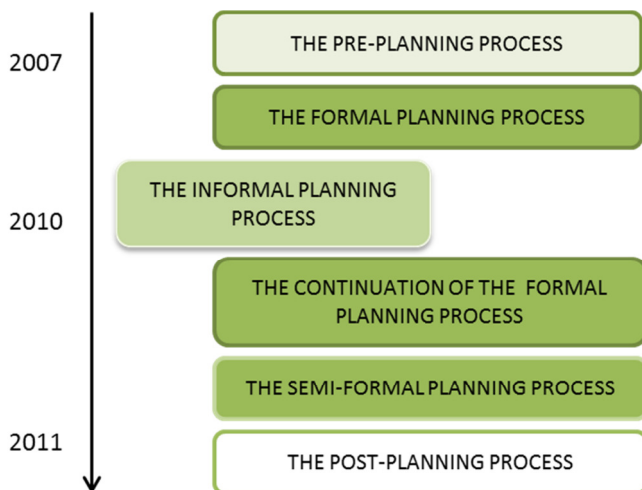


Figure 7.1: The chronology of the Heiplanen process and the structure of this chapter.

7.1. The pre-planning process

This section describes how national policies and research proposals influenced the formation and premises of the regional plan process of Heiplanen with special attention to the perspectives of participation, knowledge, and nature relations.

The importance of wild reindeer in Norwegian nature was reaffirmed through the ratification of the Bern Convention in Norway in 1986 (Andersen & Hustad 2004). The Bern Convention imposes on Norway a special responsibility for securing the last European wild reindeer herds. Wild reindeer responsibility and the state and future of the wild reindeer habitats have become an increasing concern on the national political agenda (Ministry of Environment 2005). The concern is related to the increasing human activities in

the mountainous regions in Norway and the consequent fragmentation of wild reindeer habitats. The challenges of balancing societal development with wild reindeer habitats led to the establishment of a research group that described and analysed the challenges related to this balance, and pointed to perspectives for future management models (Andersen & Hustad 2004).

The wild reindeer and society (Villrein og Samfunn) research group gathered natural and social scientists, with management practitioners at both local and national bureaucratic levels. In 2004 the work was summarized in a report that described the current and future challenges of human use of the mountainous regions in relation to the habitat requirements and population ecology of wild reindeer (Andersen & Hustad 2004). The main concerns of the report were the increasing fragmentation of wild reindeer areas, and that increased human activity in the areas could, bit by bit, compromise wild reindeer habitats. The concern was not only related to potential areas of grazing and calving, but also to the exchange corridors of the herds between the different wild reindeer regions. In addition the current management system was problematized for its incapability to combine area and herd management into habitat management. The main conclusions of the report were related to modernization of the current management system, the planning of larger regional wild reindeer areas through regional planning, the channelling of human traffic, integration of wild reindeer management and societal development, and the creation of a southern mountain council.

The conclusions of the report influenced the national environmental discourse on wild reindeer planning. In 2004 the Parliament (Stortinget), in their bill on the national environmental policy, emphasised that, in concordance with the recommendations of the wild reindeer and society report (ViSa report), national wild reindeer regions require larger planning regions to secure the wild reindeer habitat across current administrative management boundaries (Ministry of Environment 2005). The bill emphasised that increased county and municipal responsibilities in this matter would require clear signals about national priorities in the area policies. This perspective was further elaborated in the environmental policy bill from the Parliament in 2006 (Ministry of Environment 2007b). The bill emphasised that management of the mountain regions of Norway should not only secure the habitat of wild reindeer herds, but also stimulate collaboration between municipal and regional institutional levels in a process of clarifying long term regional planning perspectives.

Operationalization of a policy

The environmental policy became directly operationalized through a commissioning letter from the Minister of Environment to those county governments, county governors, and municipalities with areas of wild reindeer (Ministry of Environment 2007a). This included 11 counties. The county governments were commissioned to establish national wild reindeer areas, in collaboration with municipalities and county governors through regional planning processes that should clarify future protection and use perspectives of the designated area. In the letter, the national wild reindeer areas were defined as areas of particular importance to the wild reindeer herds with a quality and size that secures the longevity of a wild reindeer

herd. The assessment of quality concerned summer and winter grazing areas, calving areas, and necessary exchange corridors. Further, it should consider the presence and absence of human activity that influence the quality of the wild reindeer area.

The mountain ranges of Setesdal-Ryfylke and Setesdal Austhei were two of the nine elected national wild reindeer areas. These areas were given additional funding for the planning process due to their history of nature conservation conflicts (Ministry of Environment 2007a). The elected areas were based on the advice from the wild reindeer and society report, and ratified in the 21st national bill (2004-2005) on national environmental policy. The commissioning letter had in addition included the area of Setesdal Austhei because they considered the western and eastern mountain range as one functional habitat for the wild reindeer.

The regional plan was enacted through the Plan and Building Act of 2008, and was considered a supplement to the existing wild reindeer protection areas (as the landscape protection area of SVR) that were entitled by the Nature Conservation Act (Ministry of Environment 2009). It was emphasized that the plan should also consider national policies related to rural development and particularly in relation to the rural development perspectives in mountain regions. The protection of nature, and particularly wild reindeer, were thus considered an asset for rural development, which should be further explored in the planning process (Ministry of Environment 2007a). The commissioning letter delegated planning responsibility to the county governments, but presupposed that the political level of the municipalities was part of the decision-making process and that the County Governor and wild reindeer boards were involved in the process. The letter emphasised that improved dialogue and collaboration between the management levels was a requirement for the establishment of a holistic management plan.

The planning process was to consider a broad range of thematic and sectorial interests: nature conservation and biological diversity; cultural heritage and cultural environments, nature and cultural landscapes; rural development, outdoor life and human traffic (skiing, hiking, motorized vehicles); agriculture and forestry (incl. outlying mountain use); second home construction; tourism and business development; road construction and maintenance; railroad development; power plant development; power lines and IKT-installations; and management of minerals and gravel. These different interests should be balanced through the political decision-making process. The commission was however clear on the main knowledge premise:

“Limitations and guidelines for area use in the designated areas should be clarified through regional plan processes with their basis in updated natural scientific knowledge about wild reindeer use of the mountain areas.” (Commissioning letter, p. 3, Ministry of Environment, 2007, my translation)

And further;

“A central premise for the area designation and the elaboration of the plan content should be updated knowledge about wild reindeer use of mountain areas. With its base on a natural scientific argued limitation of the wild reindeer area, other societal interests should be considered before a clear boundary of the

national wild reindeer areas can be established, that will constitute the long term limit for construction in the regional plan” (Commissioning letter, p.6, Ministry of Environment, 2007, my translation).

The commissioning letter of the regional plan was, in other words, an effort to combine human cultural use and development of the mountain regions, whilst securing wild reindeer habitats, by establishing regional secretariats and steering boards between county governments and municipalities and securing a dialogue with the County Governor and wild reindeer boards. The decision-making authority was formally delegated to the county government and the municipal political level was considered an important factor in the process, but the national environmental institutions (incl. the County Governors) were designated as coordinators of the natural scientific knowledge that was the stated premise for decision making (Ministry of Environment 2007a;Sørensen 2010). The purpose of the regional planning processes could in this sense be understood as an effort to bridge the contrasting perspectives inherent in the national development and conservation policies, and the diverging perspectives of local governance and strong national government. In the communication between the Ministry of Environment and the county governments it was emphasized that one of the main challenges would be to create broad consensus about the factual knowledge grounds for the plan process among the local municipalities/communities (Sørensen 2010). The local “anchorage” of the plans was considered not only an important, but also one of the most challenging, aspects (Jastrej 2010;Rogaland Fylkeskommune 2009;Sørensen 2010). The commissioning letter did not specify the local participation, other than at the central political level in the municipalities.

Operationalization of the knowledge premise: The wild reindeer map.

The natural scientific basis for the limitation of the wild reindeer area was handled through the commission of a thematic area map. The Ministry of Environment commissioned the Directorate of Nature Management (DN) to develop a biological knowledge-based wild reindeer map as the foundation for regional plan processes. DN engaged the wild reindeer centre of Skinnarbu to create a map of the *potential* and *historical* habitat of wild reindeer in the designated areas (Mossing & Heggenes 2010). The maps were created based on biological facts, not subject to political judgment (Mossing & Heggenes 2010). The map was created through quantitative (GPS, counts) and qualitative (interviews, collections of old maps) methods (Mossing & Heggenes 2010). The purpose of the map was to define the outer boundary of the planning area, and facilitate an improved understanding of the wild reindeer habitat. It was therefore a foundation for the political process of defining the boundaries for the final national wild reindeer areas. The scientific foundation of the map was, however, not available until the report was published in autumn 2011. This map was perceived as one of several knowledge cornerstones in the knowledge-based regional planning process (Rogaland Fylkeskommune 2009).

The following figure (7.2) is an attempt to present these different events in relation to each other and as the starting point for the operationalization of the formal Heiplanen process.

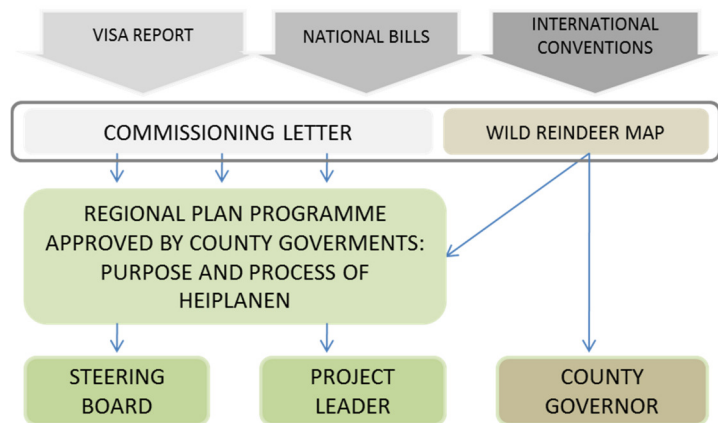


Figure 7.2 The pre-planning process that influenced the operationalization of the Heiplanen regional plan.

The definition of the regional plan: Heiplanen

The regional wild reindeer planning area of Heiplanen involved five county governments (and county governors), 18 municipalities, and an area of app. 12800 km². The process was initiated in 2008 with the establishment of a common county secretariat that developed a so called plan programme¹⁹ for the planning process (Rogaland Fylkeskommune 2009). The plan programme defined the purpose and premises of the plan, and described the relevant themes of the plan and the necessary knowledge foundation for decision making. Further, it described the organization and process of the plan. The plan programme was approved by the political steering board consisting of the 18 municipal mayors and four county government mayors²⁰ (Rogaland Fylkeskommune, 2009).

The plan programme described the Heiplanen purpose along the perspectives presented in the commissioning letter, as well as the national bills on environmental policy (Ministry of Environment 2005; Ministry of Environment 2007b), regional and rural policies (Ministry of Regional Development 2006; Ministry of Regional Development 2009), the emerging mountain policies (the so-called Fjellteksten) (Ministry of Finance 2003). Aspects of national policies on agriculture, cultural heritage, and tourism were also included in the plan programme.

The purpose of the plan was defined as securing the area of wild reindeer and clarifying the premises and possibilities for value creation and business development. The plan should consider the themes of wild reindeer, tourism, outdoor life, agriculture, cultural heritage and environment, and energy (power). The plan process should weigh these different interests and perspectives in relation to the area in question and on that basis develop: 1. A long term holistic and sustainable strategy for area management of the

¹⁹ The new Norwegian Planning and Building Act from 2008 instructs regional and municipal planning authorities to develop a plan programme prior to the actual planning process that defines the purpose, process and organization of the work.

²⁰ The fifth county government of Hordaland had resigned its participation in Heiplanen, because the county area affected was minimal, and because they were involved in the regional wild reindeer planning process of Hardangervidda (Rogaland Fylkeskommune, 2009)

designated area; 2. A definition and limitation of the national wild reindeer area; 3. Different area use categories; and 4. A plan of action for local value creation, business and rural development. The overall goal of the final plan was, according to the plan programme, to develop a common holistic plan that could function as a steering, management, and development tool for the local (municipal) and regional decision makers and development actors (Rogaland Fylkeskommune 2009).

“To fulfil the objective of securing permanent habitats for wild reindeer in combination with rural development, it is necessary to rest on knowledge-based planning to balance interests.”

(Plan programme for Heiplanen, p. 21, Rogaland Fylkeskommune, 2009, my translation)

The wild reindeer map was particularly emphasized as an important natural scientific premise for defining the planning area and developing the boundaries for the national wild reindeer area. However, the plan programme also defined 13 other themes that were considered relevant for further knowledge exploration and thematic mapping, i.e. cultural heritage sites, geology, biological diversity, hiking, skiing and tourist tracks, established and planned second home areas, tourist areas, agricultural constructions in the mountains, grazing areas, infrastructure, existing and planned energy (power) plants, outdoor recreation, and landscape (Rogaland Fylkeskommune 2009). The thematic maps would serve as a knowledge base for the balancing and weighing of interests in the Heiplanen process.

The organization of the process emphasized the collaborative perspective across municipal and regional institutions, and the involvement of County Governor and wild reindeer board. The municipalities were given a particular responsibility for involving landowners and local user organizations.

“The proposal for organization and participation in the plan process is based on a consideration that the plan should have a broad involvement, anchorage, and process.” [...] “These directions are also fundamental for the functioning of the approved regional plan as a regional and local decision making tool for area use and management in the plan area.” (Plan Programme, p. 26, Rogaland Fylkeskommune, 2009, my translation)

The organization of the plan process was divided into steering and advisory groups, coordinated by the project leader. The county governments were the formal planning and decision-making authority. The operational decision-making authority during the process was delegated to a steering group of the 18 municipal and four county politicians. A planning advisory network consisting of the administrative planners in the municipalities and counties was created as a professional plan forum during the process. A reference group was suggested as a counselling organ in relation to particular themes. The County Governor and the wild reindeer board were included in this group. The common secretariat consisted of a project leader who was responsible for implementing the plan programme in a practical planning process, and for coordinating perspectives and activities between the different groups.

The plan programme was subject to an initial hearing round autumn 2009. 41 hearing statements were made by national authorities (i.e. Ministry of Environment, Directorate of Nature Management, four County Governors, the wild reindeer board), municipalities, national organizations (e.g. the Norwegian tourist association - DNT) local user organizations, regional associations (e.g. SVR, Norwegian hunting and fishing association, agricultural associations, etc.), etc. The national authorities (MD, DN, county governors) were positive to the emphasis on the knowledge-based planning perspective and the area limitation based on the wild reindeer map. However, they criticized the plan programme for emphasizing the use and development perspective, and suggested specifically to clarify that the wild reindeer were the main premise for the planning outcome. In addition, it was argued that the county governors and wild reindeer board ought to be included in the professional advisory network. The hearing perspectives from the municipalities requested that the local anchorage should be the responsibility of the county governments, and that the landowner associations should be included in the reference group (Steering Group minutes, Jastrey, 2010)

This section has attempted to give an overview of policies, institutions, and knowledge system contributions to the formation of the actual process of Heiplanen that will be the subject of the next section. First, the pre-planning process is summarized in a partial analysis.

Partial Analysis I: Understanding the pre-planning process

The policy and national planning institutional level communicated the planning purpose as an endeavour to bridge ecological and local society concerns through collaboration across institutional boundaries and the formation of holistic regional plans. The recognition of the complexity inherent socio-ecological governance of regional habitat management was highly influenced by the recommendations in the wild reindeer and society report. These recommendations emphasized the need to develop new management institutions across regional areas that could handle the habitat perspective of wild reindeer ecology, and bridge the management of herd and area. The policy intentions could thus be understood within a collaborative planning tradition, where different interests should be balanced and negotiated to reach improved understanding and a better outcome (Innes & Booher 2010). However, the character of the policy intentions was modified during the operationalization and implementation during the regular battle between conflicting interests in the planning arena; i.e. the “dirty materiality” of planning (Cowell and Owens, 2011).

The main purpose of the plan was the development of a regional map and planning guidelines that could secure the wild reindeer habitat in the selected regional areas. The use of nature was in this sense perceived as an “activity” that could be separated from the local communities, or in some cases used for economic development. The purpose of the process was to balance the fundamental protection and use perspectives in a regional perspective, whereas it did not consider the broader local community perspectives of nature relations. The societal relation to nature was thus considered either exploitative or conservative, but to a lesser extent “lived” (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006a). The plan should thus divide the

area into protection and use categories to protect some areas from human interference. Such divisions and purpose orientation undermine the potential for deliberating the subject matter from a different rationality or lifeworld oriented perspective, because such rationalities become insupportable of the staked out planning objective or purpose rationality (Elling 2008). In this sense nature protection becomes reduced to a matter of boundaries that should protect certain areas from the general unsustainability of society (Cowell & Owens 2011). The commissioning letter and the hearing answers from the national environmental institutions emphasized securing the wild reindeer areas as the primary concern. In this sense, the rural development perspectives became ranked under securing wild reindeer habitats, and could be understood as a measure to legitimize the planning process among local and county municipalities.

This perception of the planning purpose was also reflected in the understanding of the role of local participation. The commissioning letter, and the ViSa report directly argued that local participation was a prerequisite to developing local anchorage for the national policies, and in this manner to avoid (the repetition of) continuous conflicts between local and national governance levels. The participatory effort could in this sense be interpreted as a remedy for implementing national policies, rather than to develop local perspectives and knowledge as a contributing factor on its own account; i.e. as a different, but legitimate perspective on nature protection. Participation was thus mainly recognized as a process of legitimization of existing policies and reducing conflicts. Such participatory approaches, which are also found in similar nature protection processes, can be criticized for undermining the democratic potential of the citizens of the particular area (Hansen 2007), and disregarding the social learning potential of the community to engage in responsible nature-society management (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006a, 2007a). There are many examples of how such coerced legitimization attempts rather serve to erode the community nature engagement and potential of democratic engagement in future planning processes (Björkell 2008; Clausen 2011; Grönholm 2009; Hansen 2007).

This interpretation of the participation rationale was further reflected in the natural scientific knowledge premise in the decision-making process. On the one hand the commissioning letter delegated the responsibility of decision making to county municipal level, on the other hand the local decision-making process was constrained by a knowledge premise. Political and non-expert decisions were thus subjected to validation by natural scientific knowledge experts. The applied natural scientific knowledge and expertise is in essence managed by the regional delegates of the Ministry of Environment and Directorate of Nature Management, i.e. the county governors and wild reindeer board.

The expert orientation of the planning process was operationalized through the commission of a wild reindeer map before the initiation of the planning process itself. The planning process was thus from the beginning founded on a rational instrumental planning perspective, where scientific knowledge was considered the provider of objective truth (Amdam & Veggeland 2011; Elling 2008; Innes & Booher 2010). The wild reindeer map classified the entire planning area with pre-defined boundaries and zones. These were partly based on ecological and biological facts, but also included categorization of “potential” areas

for the wild reindeer habitat. Such future predictions necessarily involve predictions and modelling that are not based on “objective” scientific deductions. The materialization and instrumentalization of biological facts and boundary judgments on a map, in combination with the knowledge premise, reduced the potential space of planning and became a courier of a pre-defined “truth” commissioned by the national environmental authorities. Knowledge was in this sense used as a tool of power to direct and define the planning process and outcome (Pløger 2013). This use of knowledge as a power to define was further accentuated by the fact that natural scientific knowledge was ranked “over” other knowledge perspectives. Natural scientific knowledge was thus used as a mean to legitimize the policy and planning purpose (Brunner & Steelman 2005; in 't Veld 2009).

The argument made is that although the monitoring and knowledge generation presented in a map can serve an important purpose as a management tool in an agreed planning reality, it is still *not* an objective truth. This reflection becomes particularly relevant in a seemingly participatory planning process where the decision making is bound to natural scientific knowledge. When such instrumentalized knowledge enters a political planning arena (with previous conflictual history) it also becomes value-oriented and supportive of an expert bureaucratic discourse of the fundamental planning purpose and end (Elling 2008). The knowledge, as a map, can in this sense be used as a tool for marginalizing other types of knowledge, values, and discourses about the area (Pløger 2013). Based on this analysis the regional planning purpose could therefore be interpreted as a centrally-defined and expert-directed nature protection process under a shadow of legitimizing participatory rhetoric and standardized rural development perspectives.

7.2. The formal Heiplanen process

The regional plan area was defined as the potential biological habitat of the wild reindeer following the boundaries of the wild reindeer map (see figure 7.3). The total planning area was 12800 km². The Setesdal municipalities constituted the core of the plan area. App. 99% of the entire area of the Setesdal municipalities was included in the plan area (Bykle: 1467.3 km²/plan area: 1466.1 km²; Valle: 1264.7 km²/plan area: 1263.9 km²; Bygland: 1312.2 km²/plan area: 1311.5 km²) (Rogaland Fylkeskommune, 2009).

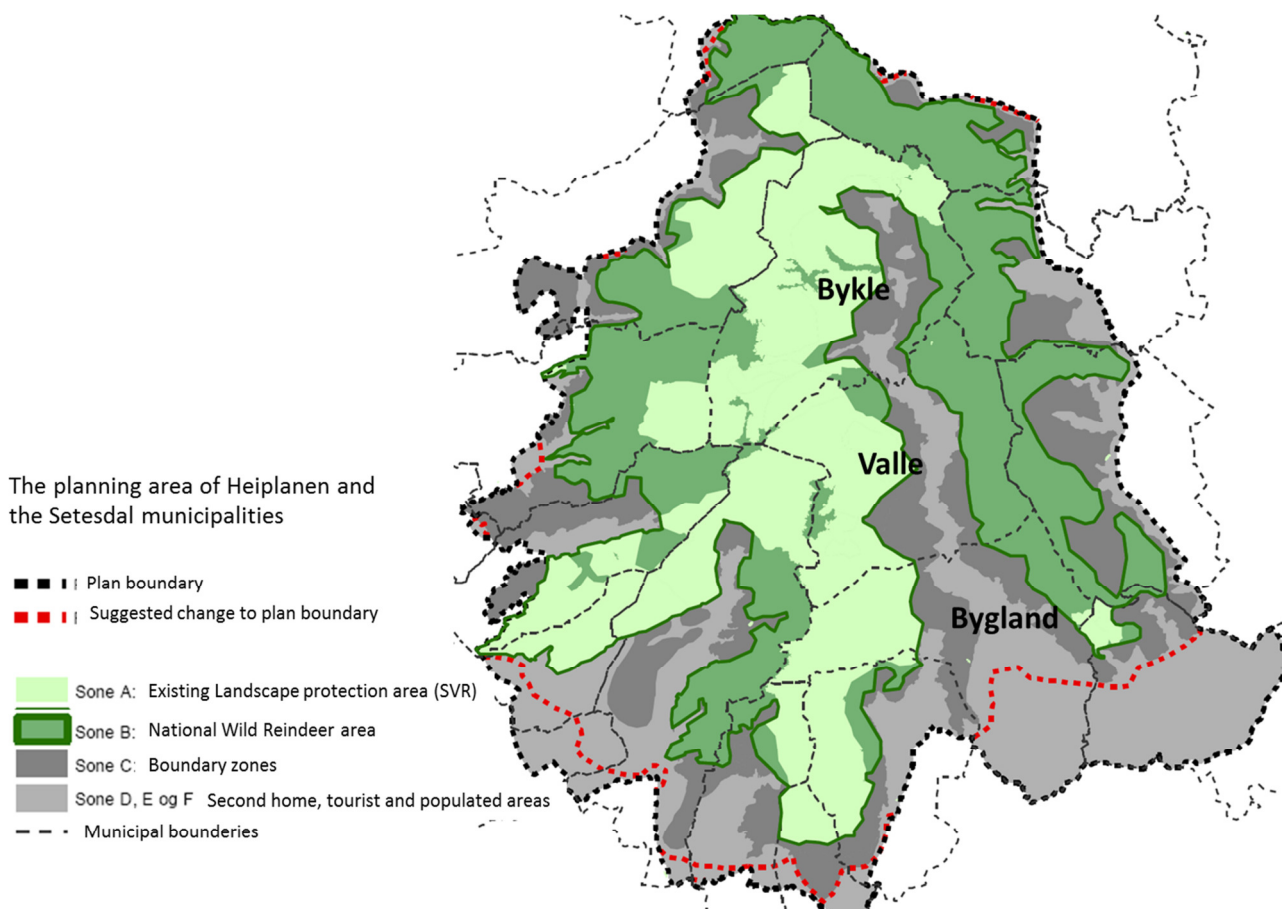


Figure 7.3 The planning area of Heiplanen, the landscape protection area, and the suggestions to wild reindeer and boundary zones.

The following process descriptions are based on my field notes, meeting minutes, interviews, and mail correspondence with the actors in the plan process, as well as on official minutes and other Heiplanen documents. Some events are described in detail because I considered them important milestones or turning points in the overall process. Other meetings have been grouped into larger units because they treat similar perspectives. Such descriptions synthesize the development of understanding at the meetings, and the main differences between them. The descriptions in this section are based on participatory interpretation, or understanding the situation *with* the actors, however, in the process of writing, the

interpretation is of course influenced by the researcher’s understanding of the entire process as a “whole” and the analytical framework. The following figure attempts to give an overview of the process.

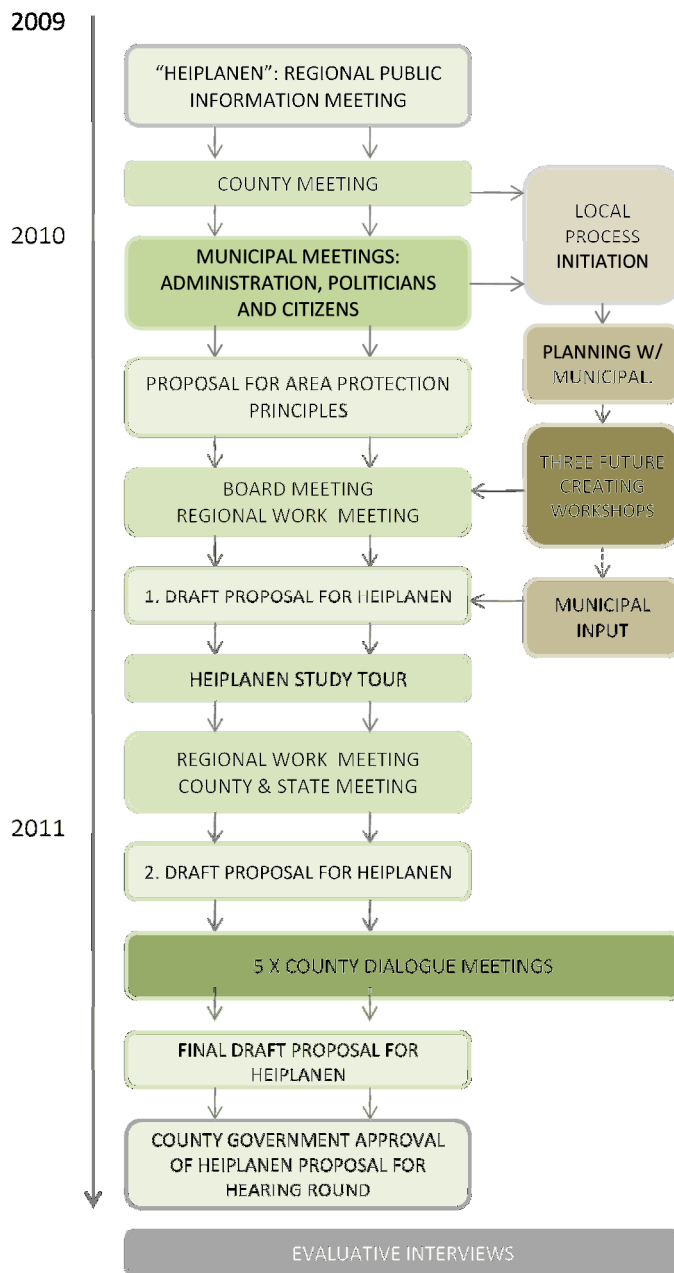


Figure 7.410 Overview of key-events during the formal, informal and semi-formal Heiplanen process

The plan premise and a local perspective

In November 2009 the first public Heiplanen meeting was held in Bygland. The meeting gathered app. 90 participants from the county governments, municipalities (administration and politicians), regional interest organizations, the wild reindeer board, and a few landowners. The agenda of the meeting was to present

the purpose of Heiplanen, the wild reindeer map, and the project leader of the process. Lastly, the participants were invited to comment and pose questions.

The county government mayors and planners emphasized that Heiplanen was *not* a conservation process, but a potential value creation in the rural municipalities. The local participation and anchorage was considered important for the legitimacy of the plan process and for the development potential of the rural areas. It was accentuated that the decision-making authority was the regional and local political steering group, and *not* professional national policies regardless of local and regional political processes. Thirdly, the local participation was reflected. Several mayors argued that local processes were necessary to hear the local perspectives and desires as part of the planning process. The meeting was concluded by bureaucrats in Oslo. However, the county government planners also accentuated the knowledge-based planning perspective, and argued that a broad knowledge base could lay the ground for broad processes of participation. The map of the biological habitat of the wild reindeer in Setesdal-Rylke and Setesdal-Austhei was presented as a biological knowledge base in a politically-steered process of balancing other interests with wild reindeer interests. It was accentuated that it was a natural scientific map that could not be judged by political valuations (Mossing & Heggenes 2010).

The atmosphere was tense when the 18 municipal mayors commented on the Heiplanen process and purpose. The comments expressed three main perspectives: firstly, the historical perspective of nature conservation was raised. Several mayors explained that most of the present municipalities had been involved in similar processes during the definition of the SVR landscape protection area, and that their communication experiences with the County Governor were conflictual, and the basic trust of the national environmental institutions was undermined. The process of Heiplanen was considered a show trial where the results were already decided by national environmental institutions. They were concerned with being reduced to a political alibi for creating local legitimacy of a pre-defined process. Secondly, and related, the balance between political influence and the natural scientific knowledge as a planning premise was questioned. It was argued that the use of scientific and professional knowledge as an indisputable “truth” could be abused to carry through by the project leader John Jastrey. He presented a process model that emphasized the direct communication with the municipalities. The process would therefore begin with visits to each county, and each of the 18 municipalities to explore the municipal perspective of the particular conflicts and potentials in their area. The municipalities were encouraged to arrange public meetings in connection to his visit. This initiative was welcomed by the mayors (Vasstrøm, 2009:1105a).

The opening of the research process

The meeting represented a turning point for the action research process by establishing the first contact with the Setesdal municipalities, Aust-Agder county, and the project leader John Jastrey. I presented my project proposal of an informal local participation process in the three Setesdal municipalities that could not only supplement the local perspectives in Heiplanen, but also generate broader local understandings and projects related to the rural life in the areas. The project description was given to the municipal

mayors, the project leader, the regional council of Setesdal, and the county government planner from Aust-Agder county (Vasstrøm, 20091105a, Vasstrøm, 20091105b).

A few days after the meeting, John Jastrey mailed his reflections on the proposed local processes in Setesdal. He was positive of the local participation perspective as a supplement to Heiplanen, and found the perspective of involving citizens and local authorities interesting in order to explore their perspectives of protection and use. He considered the project particularly relevant in Setesdal because of the preceding nature conservation history of SVR. However, he also pointed out that the project could produce many expectations locally and that the completion of such project could be difficult. He particularly emphasized that the expectations to the project should be clarified with the municipal authorities and with the citizens to avoid a false premise for the process. His point was that although the idea of a “bottom-up” process was considered appealing as a way of influencing the perspectives “higher” in the system, the local process would have to acknowledge the legal and national political framework of Heiplanen. Based on these reflections he invited me to the first Aust Agder county meeting to observe the formal meeting of Heiplanen, and to present my project to the municipalities and county government (Jastrey, 20091106).

The first Aust Agder county meeting was arranged by the county government and the project leader and invitations were extended to the mayors, municipal directors, and administrative planners of the four Aust-Agder municipalities along with the regional council of Setesdal and secretary of SVR landscape protection area. I was invited to observe the meeting, and present my project proposal of the local participation process (Vasstrøm, 20091105a). The purpose of the meeting was to clarify specific challenges and potentials related to Heiplanen in Aust-Agder county. The county government once again emphasized the potentials of the plan related to rural development and the collaboration between municipalities and the county government. They attempted to turn this plan from being a threat to an opportunity²¹. John Jastrey argued that to accomplish the planning endeavour, the ambitions of broad development perspectives had to be reduced. He clarified that the wild reindeer map was not meant to be a result, but a starting point for the political process. He wanted to verify and negotiate the map with each municipality. The municipal mayors were positive to the approach of direct meetings. The discussions of Heiplanen brought up many of the same themes as the previous public meeting, i.e. the historical perspective, the potential of local influence, the knowledge premise and wild reindeer map, the local perspective of the area resources, and the local legitimacy of the plan (Vasstrøm, 20091119a). These perspectives were elaborated at the particular municipal meetings with the project leader, county government, and will be accounted for more specifically in the next section.

This meeting constituted the point of departure for the action research process where I presented my project of local participation (Vasstrøm, 20091119b). The municipalities, as well as the county government

²¹ It should perhaps be mentioned that the county governments also carry the role as regional development actors, including rural development work. From their perspective, Heiplanen had a clear potential for planning and operationalizing rural development perspectives of value creation, etc. This notion will be further discussed in the analytical chapter.

and project leader considered it a relevant project that could raise challenges and opportunities. The municipalities and the project leader agreed to explore the possibilities of financing²² with the steering group of Heiplanen and the regional council of Setesdal. I was invited to present the project in the regional council and to participate in the steering group meetings of Heiplanen, as well as the formal Heiplanen meetings with the Setesdal municipalities.

During the following months, I met with the daily leader of the regional council to discuss the project (Vasstrøm, 20091217). In January 2010, I presented the project to the regional council steering board (Vasstrøm, 20100129), and they decided to support the project with 108.000 kr. In February the steering board of Heiplanen decided to support the project with additional 108.000 kr. In relation to this meeting I met with the project leader to clarify the expectations and operationalization of the local participation project (Vasstrøm, 20100201).

My meeting with the project leader reflected perspectives on the formal Heiplanen process with the opportunities and threats of the local participation project. One of the main challenges (as also put forward by the municipal mayors in the public meeting) was that although Heiplanen was formally steered by the municipalities and county governments, his impression from the communication with the Ministry of Environment and the county governors, was that the plan would not be accepted if it did not fulfil the national expectations of securing the wild reindeer habitat. Through the commissioning letter the Ministry of Environment had clarified that in such case they would take over the formal decision-making authority (Ministry of Environment 2007a). In order to fulfil the planning expectations, he considered it necessary to reduce the ambitions of clarifying “all interest sectors of value creation” in relation to the area, and rather focus on establishing broadly agreed limitations for the wild reindeer area. In his opinion such an agreement was unproblematic in 90% of the area. He argued that the process should take its point of departure in the areas commonly agreed as wild reindeer areas, and to negotiate the last 10%. The main conflict, he argued, was not the area in question, but the conflicting history and relation between national environmental institutions (incl. county governors) and the municipalities.

My proposal of local participation processes was to engage with the local community to deliberate their perspectives of the “material” area from a perspective of the “good life”, and relate these perspectives to the communication with the county institutions. In this sense, the project was not aimed at reconstructing the conflict perspective between the municipal and national planning and steering actors, but rather to explore the local perspectives of nature and life in the communities. The project leader agreed that such processes could develop local perspectives as a supplement to the formal process, but could not be presented as a directly influencing authority (Vasstrøm, 20100201).

²² The requirement of financing was related to the travel and workshop expenses, particularly the engagement of Idèbanken as process facilitators, as also accounted for in the methodological description.

Based on my understanding of the municipal perspectives from the meetings, the formal planning premise from the policy documents, and discussion with the project leader, I developed a presentation of the local participation project to the municipal meetings. This presentation tried to balance the development of local perspectives on nature and life for its own sake, with the relation to and potential influence on Heiplanen (Vasstrøm, 20100208a).

The political, administrative, and public meetings in each of the municipalities were arranged by the project leader, county government and municipalities in the beginning of February 2010²³. I was invited to observe and participate in the meetings, and to present my project to a broader municipal forum. In the following I synthesize the essence of these meetings, by describing the general aspects and the main differences. First, I present the meetings with the local authorities (political and administrative level), and thereafter the public meetings. Lastly, I describe the discussions emerging in relation to the proposal of the local participation process.

Heiplanen from Setesdal perspectives

The objective of the meetings was to present the process and purpose of Heiplanen and explore the municipal and citizens' understandings and perspectives of the plan, as well as their concern for its influence on community interests and life. The perspectives of the local authorities are divided into challenges and possibilities of the Heiplanen process. This division was partly made because the purpose of the meetings was to clarify these aspects, and partly because my action research perspective was not only aimed at understanding the current challenges, but also at exploring the possible openings for change.

Perceived challenges

The history of nature protection processes and the conflict with the County Governor was brought up in all the meetings. The process behind the SVR landscape protection area was criticized - and the process and purpose was compared to Heiplanen.

"We have experienced that lines on a map can mean a lot more than what one thinks at the starting point"
(Municipal director, 20100208b)

The related and ongoing area planning conflict in the boundary zone of the SVR was vastly criticized. The municipalities experienced that communication with the County Governor was mainly made through letters of objection to municipal plans, while meetings and discussions were seldom held. The county governor's objections were, from the municipal point of view, sometimes unprofessional, disproportional, mistrusting and without local knowledge (or understanding) of the local case. One of the municipalities had for example planned the construction of a wildlife watching tower in the northern part of the Setesdal valley. The request was objected by the County Governor because such a tower could be turned into a cabin. The

²³ I did not participate on the last public meeting in Bygland, but have read the official minutes, and discussed the meeting with the municipality and project leader.

arguments were that a wildlife tower, used as a cabin, could generate more traffic into areas with wild reindeer interests and thereby compromise the wild reindeer habitat further. Other similar “objection logics” were mentioned in regard to building for example a new outdoor toilet in relation to a mountain “støyl” (cabin), or a boatshed, or a toolshed in the mountain area (not in the SVR conservation area). In contrast to the objection to local plans, the municipalities experienced that permission to construct (hydro) power installations and buildings, road building, and other “societal” interests were granted without further arguments, and without consulting the local authority. The local authorities, in this sense, felt that local interests were neglected or mistrusted, while “societal” interests were permitted. However, the second home building and development of tourist aspects were also mentioned as a conflicting perspective. In this relation the municipalities, some more than others, were aware of the problem this construction could generate for the wild reindeer habitat. Some of the municipalities had clear boundaries of construction extension towards the mountain range and the wild reindeer areas. Others had plans of second home development in areas close to the mountain range, specified as calving areas for the wild reindeer. There were in other words, also areas where the conflict between human activities and wild reindeer interests were experienced as legitimate by the municipalities.

These experiences and understandings generated scepticism among the local authorities to the consequences of Heiplanen. In addition, regional planning being a new planning remedy in Norway, made it difficult for the municipalities to predict its final consequences for their planning authority. They questioned if such plan would entitle the County Governor to object to municipal plans and activities in their entire area (they had 99% of their area included in the plan), and that they would consequently lose their local authority of planning and developing the local community. With such a perspective they feared that their legitimacy in the local communities could be compromised if they participated in a planning process that would end with stronger national steering. The conflict was, from the perspective of the municipalities, not the securing of the wild reindeer herds, but the knowledge, methods and process used for this protection.

The introduction of the wild reindeer map, as a natural scientific and indisputable knowledge premise for the planning process, was one of the main concerns for municipalities. The map raised several discussions in relation to the definition of the planning area and the actual possibility of local influence. First of all, they questioned the political legitimacy in such process, in the sense of their actual potential of political influence of the boundaries that were already drawn by the wild reindeer centre. They suspected that the local political involvement in the planning process was being used as an alibi for reducing conflict and creating local legitimacy. It was mentioned that the County Governor had started to use the map as a ground for objection in the municipal planning, although supposedly the map was still not a formal planning remedy²⁴. Secondly, the map was considered an illegitimate claim of areas where the local

²⁴ The municipality of Bygland was instructed to delay its municipal planning process until Heiplanen was passed, due to wild reindeer interests. Six months later, this claim, and the use of the map as ground for objection, was renounced by the county governor in a meeting with the Setesdal municipalities (see section 7.4).

community lived and worked. The boundaries of the biological wild reindeer habitat were on drawn “all the way down to the yellow line on the main road 9²⁵”. It thus included rural settlements and agricultural lands as wild reindeer habitat. Another point of critique of the map was that it had not included the local knowledge provided to the wild reindeer centre. All the municipalities explained had been in contact with the wild reindeer centre, and had provided information about the wild reindeer habitat based on local maps and knowledge (also from the national ranger service (SNO) located in Bykle), but that none of this information had been taken into account in the current wild reindeer map. They therefore questioned not only the scientific basis for the map, but also what kind of knowledge was considered relevant in a process of “knowledge-based planning”. They had experienced that their professional and local knowledge was undermined, neglected, and even ridiculed by national authorities.

The use of the map as a primary knowledge premise in Heiplanen was not only wrong on a political or technical level, but it also nourished a local understanding that the national authorities considered the wild reindeer herds more important than the human settlements.

“The wild reindeer are important in our area – but they should not shove out the local inhabitants”
(Municipal mayor, 20091119)

“We live in untouched nature – that is why we live here! But when we are now regulated all the way down to the yellow stripe – then we feel a mismatch – then it is not possible to live or to create a living”
(Municipal politician, 20100208b)

The mayors emphasized that the general perception in the local communities in Setesdal was that the wild reindeers were important and should be managed in a sustainable way. The conflicting point was who and how this should be done. In their perspective they had managed the areas of wild reindeer through generations, and deliberately not planned for construction in what they considered to be wild reindeer areas. However, the mountains have always been part of the local life and work and there are many “støyls” in both the west and east mountain ranges that the local communities consider part of their cultural identity and as elements in a modern recreational life style. Based on the experience with the County Governor’s objections of the current management of the SVR buffer zones, the municipalities were afraid that a new plan would suppress all types of local initiatives, based on general arguments that would not take the local aspects into account. The municipalities were willing to “pacify some areas” as a habitat for the wild reindeer, but in return, they wanted predictability in the planning of other areas.

“We do not want to build up in the mountains – that is where the wild reindeer live” (Municipal mayor, 20100208b)

²⁵ Main road 9 (Riksvei 9) is the national road (and only road) that connects Setesdal with Kristiansand and the northern mountain regions of Norway. The metaphor “the yellow line on Rv. 9” became widely used, also in the media, during the planning process to illustrate that Heiplanen (or the wild reindeer map) affected their entire municipal area, except the yellow line on the national road (see for example Fædrelandsvennen 7 May, 2010).

“We also want to take care of the herds, it is the methods that we disagree with. It is important to set some limitations, but we insist that we must be able to live here afterwards. It is important to create a tool [Heiplanen] that is not used to suffocate us with bureaucracy – but can also be used to manage and develop our area.” (Municipal politician, 20100208b)

The area in the municipalities is an important resource and landscape for the citizens living in the area, and for making a living. For the people living in the area, the regulation of traffic (skiing, hiking, and snow mobile) in the area was a major concern. Snow mobile problems were brought up in all the municipal meetings. Snow mobile practice differs from one municipality to the other, where the more southern municipalities have the most liberal snow mobile perspective. Snow mobiles are considered a necessary “vehicle” by many inhabitants in order to be able to use their old mountain “støyl” cabins in winter. For the Norwegian state authorities, snow mobile traffic for recreational purposes is considered illegal. To use a snow mobile you have to obtain a permit – and the traffic must be related to business or freight. These snow mobile problems will not be explicitly explored or problematized in this thesis, but they should be mentioned as one of the local use perspectives of the mountain areas that is in conflict with the national policies.

Another discussion that will not be followed further, but that should be mentioned as an important perspective, is the question of wild or tame reindeer in the eastern Setesdal mountain range (Aust-Heia). This mountain area was used to herd tame reindeer from the north during a 100-year period (1893-1978). In 1978 tame reindeer production was dissolved, and the reindeer allowed to spread in the mountains. In 1979 the tame reindeer were “declared” wild (Strand et al. 2011). The parliament decision of regional wild reindeer plans in 2005 did not include Aust Heia (Ministry of Environment 2005), but it was included in the commissioning letter in 2007 because it was considered part of the functional wild reindeer regional area (Ministry of Environment 2007a). During the entire planning process there were discussions about wild vs. tame reindeer, the genetic differences, the differences in behaviour, related to the inclusion of Aust-heia in the process. Although these discussions are relevant in a management perspective, I will not follow these discussions particularly, because they are not specifically relevant for the core of my analysis: the planning horizon and local participation.

The main challenge for the local authorities was to develop a plan that could generate local legitimacy for the balance of wild reindeer habitats against construction and development interests, without losing their local authority to the County Governor. The opportunity of the plan was, in this sense, to create boundaries for the areas of wild reindeer interests, which saved some areas with potential for predictable local planning and development authority, and room for the local everyday life relation to nature use.

Room for opportunities

The opportunities of Heiplanen were especially emphasized by the county government representatives by referring to the use perspectives in the plan programme and the decision-making authority as a politically

steered process. The project leader was more reluctant to focus on the broad development issues. From his perspective the plan would not be able to handle such large perspectives in three years. He argued that the plan should settle broadly agreed boundaries for the wild reindeer areas, and then afterwards start processes of development.

The opportunities perceived by the three municipalities were related to both concrete “material” aspects and more abstract “planning system” aspects. In a planning system perspective, the local authorities wished for a plan that could create predictability for development plans. They were concerned with reducing bureaucratic “battles” with the County Governor. The plan could be an opportunity to clarify some areas as “pacified” and other areas as zones for development. Such balance and predictability could create local legitimacy to the plan, in contrast to the current management regime. The municipalities were therefore also concerned with the possibilities of using local knowledge in the planning process. The participation of local actors and knowledge was important, not just to have such knowledge recognized, but also because they were concerned with qualitative flaws in the scientific perspectives²⁶. The use and influence of local knowledge was also seen as a way of creating a better foundation for future management, in combination with an increased understanding of the local perspective, and thereby increasing the legitimacy of the plan at both local and central levels.

The concrete opportunities were related to the development of “løype-planer” (cross country track plans). The purpose of such plans was both to develop a network of tracks and trails attractive to mountain tourists, and to be able to channel human traffic away from the most vulnerable wild reindeer areas²⁷. The municipalities regarded this possibility one of their most important management tools for channelling human traffic. A study of traffic and wild reindeer show that a well-defined network of skiing tracks reduces traffic into the wild reindeer areas by 90% (Strand, Gunnarsen, Panzacchi, Andersen, Falldorf, Andersen, Van Morter, Jordhøy, & Fangel 2010b).

Another opportunity was the possibility to create a plan that was balanced with an understanding of local life. Local life was partly seen in relation to economic development, and partly with the socio-cultural aspects of living in these rural mountain areas.

“One thing is tourists and second home owners. It is different for the people who live here. It is about the pleasure of living here. The “seter” cabins are very special for the people here. Life in the mountains is very

²⁶ In all three municipalities (and during the FCW) there were discussions about herd management. Herd management is handled by central authorities: the wild reindeer board and the county governor. Local authorities and citizens came up with various new and old examples to show that this management was not good practice.

²⁷ One of the municipalities had developed such a plan in collaboration with the county governor and the SNO (Bykle municipality, 2008). This plan worked with three zones that graded the wild reindeer’s vulnerability, and thus the possibility of developing skiing and hiking tracks and trails. In the central valley zone the tracks were not in conflict with wild reindeer, the second zone should be used carefully, and the third zone should not have human traffic during some parts of the year (winter feeding and calving). The broad planning collaboration was used as a best practice example of good “governance planning” (Rogaland Fylkeskommune, 2009).

important. It's traditions and possibilities. We must be able to live here – use the pleasures of living here - not just function as a weekend destination for second home owners.” (Municipal planner, 20100210a)

The possibility of constructing second homes in some areas and developing tourist businesses was considered an important aspect for economic and workplace development. The two northern municipalities were particularly concerned that such development should be localized close to the valley – and not in the higher lying mountain areas. The most southern municipality was concerned with areas for the construction of second homes for their citizens. One of the main concerns for the municipalities was the possibility for their local citizens to use the nature around them for recreation (fishing, hunting, berry gathering, etc.) and to use and restore their traditional “seter” cabins, sheds, etc. in the higher mountain slopes. Such recreational “life” perspectives were considered an important resource for the “good life” in the valley and an asset to attract new inhabitants to Setesdal. Nature could in this sense be understood as an important socio-cultural part of the everyday life in the valley.

The municipal meetings, in other words, created some reflections on how this plan could be used as an opportunity for local influence in the current planning system and to create more predictable planning praxis for all. It also clarified that the municipalities were willing to delineate some areas for wild reindeer interests, as long as other areas were defined with room for local use and development that would not involve conflict with the County Governor. However, the scepticism related to the power play of the national environmental authorities still dominated their understanding of the planning process as such. The municipal meetings also provided the project leader with a better understanding of the complexity of the process.

“I agree that this is a complex process – but I have to believe in it” (Project leader, 20100802b)

The presentation and discussion about the local participation process

These meetings became an opportunity to present my proposal of local participation process. The presentation was carried out in relation to discussions about the local participation in the formal Heiplanen process. I had made a PowerPoint presentation (Vasstrøm, 20100208a) that outlined the purpose and process in the municipalities, and its relation to the formal Heiplanen process. The municipalities were positive to the project at a general level. They saw it as an opportunity to be able to communicate local perspectives to the formal planning actors in Heiplanen, and to create more anchorage for Heiplanen in the local area. There was also scepticism among some actors, who argued that this process would just be a waste of time that would not influence the Heiplanen process whatsoever.

All the municipalities were concerned that such a process firstly had to clarify the objective and related expectations with scrutiny. The objective had to be realistic in relation to the actual influence it could have on Heiplanen, in order not to create false expectations among the citizens. Another concern was that the workshops with the citizens should not allow for private (economic) interests. In addition, this local process

had to take into account that there were other local development projects and processes, and define itself in relation or distinct from these. Two of the communities were very interested in involving youth and children in the project. Partly to get their perspectives of how they imagined their “society” in the long run, and partly, to enforce their relation to nature and the wild reindeer²⁸. Some of these perspectives and concerns are further treated in the description of the informal process.

The public meetings

The public meetings gathered 20-50 people from each municipality, most of whom were (male) landowners, hunters, politicians, and mountain rangers. The meetings were introduced by the mayor, and followed by an introduction to Heiplanen by the project leader John Jastrey. John Jastrey emphasized that the plan process was just initiated, that nothing was decided, and that local dialogue was important to develop the best possible plan. He particularly mentioned that the wild reindeer map was not an area plan, but a biological expert perspective. He acknowledged that Setesdal had a special situation with wild reindeer boundaries on both sides of the valley, but also tried to emphasize that the plan had the potential to define development perspectives in the valley. The atmosphere was tense.

“One should not spend much time on this [plan]. The use of the wild reindeer map creates a situation where the beginning of the process has limited the entire process” (Former mayor, 20100209)

“The wild reindeer centre has not taken any of our information into account, so why should we contribute now?” (Mountain Ranger, 20100208b)

The process and role of the wild reindeer map was a continual discussion at all three public meetings in the municipalities. The municipal mayor, project leader and the mayor of the county government expressed their agreement with this point: they acknowledged that the process around the wild reindeer map had been “confusing” and even “bad practice” from the state authorities. They tried to reassure attendees that the map was only a thematic map that should now be used as only one perspective in a local political process and that there was an opportunity to influence the plan through local participation. The local citizens were reluctant to think about opportunities when there was a basic disagreement about the knowledge validity and the use of the wild reindeer map in the process. They criticized the centralized decision making of the process, and did not trust their ability to influence the outcome.

“The plan purpose is to secure the wild reindeer area – but “secure” is not defined. Who defines that in the end? Although we participate in the process – then somebody at the top will decide the outcome anyway.” (Landowner, 20100209)

The purpose and values behind the plan were problematized. It was continuously emphasized during all three meetings that the local citizens and landowners were interested in managing the wild reindeer

²⁸ These ideas were taken into account by the researcher, but for various practical reasons (time and resources) these workshops were not realized.

sustainably. The problem was that perceptions of protection differed between the state expert and the local perspective. Local people were interested in making a management plan for the wild reindeer, but taking its point of departure from their knowledge and perspectives about the wild reindeer and local life. It was also argued at all three meetings that the most important aspect for improved wild reindeer management would be to merge the two different systems of area and herd management. This discussion was rejected by the project leader, because the mandate and premise of the planning process was only concerned with the area management.

“But a point that makes people experience this as so wrong, is this about the County Governor who sweeps aside all democracy. If we don’t get rid of that part, then the process becomes a matter of “theatre”. Then the County Governor can object to all decisions. And then we are back again – to the environmental protection regime of the County Governor. And that has been so filled with conflict that “county governor” was a swear word.” (Mountain manager, 20100209)

The participants at the public meetings were thus concerned with the actual potential of influencing a process that was predefined. In their perspective the process should be able to handle local participation in order to create plans. Such perspective would require that the local perspectives of wild reindeer knowledge and the use of nature in the valley were taken seriously by the planning system. The most important aspect was, in other words, to change the planning and management system itself. The municipal authorities emphasized that local anchorage was important and that they would try to influence the regional process.

The role of the municipalities changed character during the political/administrative meetings. In the “planning institutional meetings” they could criticize the process and purpose openly, while in the public meetings they had responsibility as a public authority also concerned with local participation, but also having to emphasize the opportunities of the plan process. However, they acknowledged that it would be a long and tough process with the state authorities. The mobilization of local citizens and stakeholders and the formulation of local perspective of development in relation to wild reindeer protection could be important in that process. My project proposal of local participation was brought up by the mayors in two of the three meetings as an example of how the local municipalities would handle the local participation dimension.

Based on the municipal and public meetings I wrote a synthesis paper on the challenges and opportunities discussed during the meetings that was sent to the municipalities, the county government, and the project leader (Vasstrøm, 20100210b). The purpose of the paper was to establish a shared understanding about the further process and my involvement. These understandings influenced the further organization of the research with the Setesdal communities and the arrangement of the future creating workshops.

Partial analysis II: Understanding the formal planning process

The initiation of the planning process illustrated that the municipalities and local communities perceived the planning purpose and process differently from the county governments and project leader. There was in other words a tension between the understandings of the plan purpose and the role of participation. This tension was fuelled by an underlying comprehension of the potential power of national authorities to define the outcome despite local participation. Such “hierarchical shadow” undermines the potential for developing a legitimate participatory arena (Björkell 2008;Grönholm 2009). The scientific knowledge and expert bureaucracy thus served to restrict the deliberation of different perspectives and values by expressing a pre-defined premises of what could be considered the “right” outcome (Elling 2008;Pløger 2013).

The county governments argued that the planning purpose was not only a matter of securing the wild reindeer habitat, but also an opportunity to explore the mountain region potential for rural development and value creation. The wild reindeer map should therefore not be interpreted as an outcome, but as one of several knowledge aspects at the beginning of a political process. The local participation was thus understood as a matter of political involvement to ensure planning legitimacy in the municipalities. This understanding was contrasted by the project leader who considered that such planning purpose was too elaborate to meet the expectations of the national authorities. From his perspective the planning process should be focused on the primary objective of the national authorities, namely the securing of a wild reindeer area and the establishment of area boundaries. The exploration use aspects were in this sense perceived as a task for each municipality, and preferably after the boundaries of the national wild reindeer areas were drawn. The project leader was in this sense uneasy with initiating a complex process within the given timeframe and the risk of a potential planning outcome that would not be accepted by the national authorities. The purpose of the plan was in this sense restricted to fulfil the national authority expectations of wild reindeer boundaries. This purposive rationality thus dismissed the potential for deliberating other perspectives of what nature protection could be, and thus stayed within the pre-set premises of the system rationality for nature protection (Elling 2008). However, the project leader considered the participation of the local municipalities as a crucial prerequisite to understand the local area conflicts and through which be able to reach a negotiated consensus for the final area boundaries. The wild reindeer map was in this process counted as a knowledge cornerstone for the municipal negotiations about the area boundaries. The participation of the municipalities was thus reduced to a strategic act that could serve to facilitate the collaboration between interests in order to reduce conflict and ensure efficiency in the planning process. The participatory and democratic potential was thereby limited to an act of legitimization of national policies, rather than a procedural and qualitative contributor (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a;2007a; Hansen 2007). This participatory approach exemplifies similar discrepancies between the local community and the planning system in other environmental planning cases (Grönholm, 2009; Clausen, 2011; Björkell, 2008).

The local communities (the municipal mayors, administration and public) were concerned that the planning purpose was a disguised conservation process were the wild reindeer map served as a knowledge remedy

to justify a pre-defined outcome. This perception was influenced by previous experiences with national environmental authorities and the conflictual relationship with the County Governor. Predictability of the planning consequences was therefore also a primary concern. The local communities in this sense questioned how the outcome of this planning process would affect their role as planners and politicians and life as citizens. The politicians and planners not only perceived Heiplanen as a local authority, but also as citizens living in the particular area. Their concern was in this sense not limited to a system rationality, but also to their broader lifeworld horizon in the community.

This interpretation of the situation can be illustrated through the “classification” discussions of the “grey areas” as either wild reindeer or “human”. The local communities generally considered the higher mountain areas as wild reindeer territory, or as untouched nature that should not be structurally developed. The areas close to the valley, however, were considered “human” areas for living and development. The core conflicts between national and local authorities were thus not concerned with “the key wild reindeer areas”. The major conflicts arose in the “grey” areas that could either be understood as potential wild reindeer or development areas. These understandings are again influenced by different perceptions of knowledge and relations to nature²⁹. In other words, while the classification of the high mountain areas as “wild reindeer territory” was fairly consensual, the discussions about the “grey” areas revealed a complexity and ambiguity that mobilized different knowledge and value claims between the local communities and state/regional planning institutions. It was in these discussions that dominating societal discourses about nature protection and natural scientific argumentation through the wild reindeer map sought to dismiss the local perspectives of the area as irrelevant matters of opinion. The natural scientific knowledge premise and wild reindeer map were conversely experienced as illegitimate in the municipalities: firstly, the local perspectives had not been taken into account in its formation; and secondly, because it could directly restrict the local influence on the planning outcome. The combination of not being able to influence a knowledge premise that could affect the local area created a sense of resentment among local authorities and citizens. It generated an understanding that their knowledge and perspective were not recognized in the process. Scientific knowledge and dominating discourses in this sense serves to dismiss other (local) perspectives in the dialogue as invaluable opinions (in 't Veld 2009; Pellizzoni 2010). Such processes are illustrative for the role of knowledge on the planning arena as a remedy of power to define the legitimacy of the discourses on the planning arena, and the acceptable outcomes of the planning process (Pløger 2013).

The local community perspective did not perceive the materiality of the area as a two-dimensional map. The planned boundaries and categorizations of either human use or wild reindeer habitat were considered an artificial and bureaucratic perception. Their perception of the area embraced a four dimensional reality

²⁹ The hydropower development that has had detrimental effects in these high mountainous areas and on the wild reindeer’s use of the area generates ambiguous discussions in the local communities. On the one hand they are criticized for being the “large societal” abuser of their nature, on the other these national hydropower installations generate considerable extra income for the municipalities.

where both space and time influenced the understanding of the historic, present and future nature relations. The experiential understanding of nature is, in this sense, not only “cognitive knowledge” about the area, but also an inherent part of the previous, present, and potential livelihood in the communities. The local municipalities were not only concerned with the importance of ensuring a viable wild reindeer herd with a long term perspective, but conversely they also argued that such process had to consider the local societal challenges and acknowledge their historical cultural relation to nature. The materiality of an area can therefore not be reduced to lines on a map, it also bears an experiential dimension of being in an area. The planning of an area is therefore closely intertwined with broader societal development aspects, and the understanding of the life qualities of the area; which in a sense address a concern for the common (Clausen, 2011). This was further reflected in their critique of the planning purpose as artificial or narrow. From their perspective the focus on area boundaries did not problematize the “real” problems; the current division of herd and area management and the inherent connection between area management and the local societal development and lived life. Participation within the system rationality was, in this sense, not experienced as a meaningful activity unless it allowed qualitative contributions to the planning purpose based on their understandings of the nature and society issues. The local participation in the planning process was in this sense perceived as a procedural alibi to fulfil a pre-defined outcome. This participatory approach exemplifies the critics posed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, and reposed by a range of planning, governance, and management literature as described in the introduction and in chapter 3. Participation in this sense becomes reduced to involve the public as a token of legitimization (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a). This exemplifies the argumentation furthered by Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a; 2007a) and Elling (2010), that citizen participation must be founded on a (common) lifeworld or everyday life orientation to contribute with meaningful and qualitatively different perspectives from the institutional or scientific rationality, and to move the planning arena beyond the mere negotiation of interests.

The conflicting perspectives between the institutional actors and local communities reveal the linkage between the socio-ecological materiality and the procedural knowledge-steering dimension of planning (Cowell & Owens 2011; Daniels & Walker 2001; Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006). The planning process of a regional area that influences major parts of local communities, thus mobilizes substantial and procedural challenges. The substantial *problématique* was concerned with the very relation between ecological and socio-cultural understandings and practices (experiences) in the area, in this case the conflicts between human and wild reindeer area use. The procedural *problématique* was concerned with whose knowledge and values were recognized as influential and important in the process of defining the planning outcome. This integral connection between the ecological-natural area and the socio-cultural and economic societal development is influential for understanding local participation as a necessary pre-requisite for planning. Local participation should not only to be applied to achieve procedural legitimacy. Rather, it must be recognized as a complement of the very understanding of use and protection in the planning system; i.e. by addressing the area as a concern of the common (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a).

The process and objective Heiplanen thus raises essential theoretical questions about the understanding of knowledge and participation on a planning arena. Within a rational-instrumental planning tradition natural scientific knowledge served as an instrumental tool for defining the boundaries with the participation of a professional bureaucracy (Amdam & Veggeland 2011; Innes & Booher 2010). From a collaborative planning perspective natural scientific knowledge could be considered one of several contributors that should be balanced in a communicative arena between stakeholders to find new mutual understandings (Healey 2006; Innes and Booher 2010). In a post-structuralist perspective the use of natural scientific knowledge could be understood as an expression of power that framed the possible participation of different discourses and thereby pre-defined the planning outcome (Pløger 2013; Jensen 2007). From a critical theoretical perspective these initial phases of the planning process reveal that the purposive rationality of planning institutions restrict the potential deliberation of different rationalities on the planning arena, and especially the potential of involving citizens on the planning arena with their particular lifeworld rationality (Elling 2010) or everyday life understandings (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007a). However, building on a critical utopian action research approach, the researcher perceived the planning process as an “unfinished” process with potential new directions (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007b). The researcher therefore aimed to explore the tensions of the planning process and the potential for generating a space for the deliberation of everyday life perspectives that could contribute to the planning arena with *different* understandings and rationalities on the subject matter. The action researcher thus “disturbed” the planning logic by working with the three Setesdal municipalities to develop local community perspectives of the “good life for people and reindeer in Setesdal – now and in the future” through a future creating workshop. This researcher initiated process approach is the subject of the following section.

7.3. The informal planning process

The informal local participation process was initiated through meetings with the local authorities (municipal planners, politicians, etc.). The purpose of the three first meetings was to clarify the challenges in each municipality in relation to nature use and protection, discuss relevant actors for the local community process, balance expectations of roles and outcome between researcher and local authorities, and plan the practical process (Vasstrøm, 20100309; 20100310a; 20100310b). Parallel to these meetings the researcher met with Idèbanken in Oslo to learn from their experiences with municipal Future Creating Workshops (FCW) and discuss the planning of the FCW in Setesdal (Vasstrøm, 20100212). An inter-municipal meeting was arranged to share experiences between the municipalities, present the FCW approach to the municipalities, and discuss practical planning for the FCW. Thereafter new meetings were arranged in each municipality, with Kirsten Paaby from Idèbanken, to make the final preparations for the FCW and develop the “invitation strategy” for each community (Vasstrøm, 20100414; 20100415a; 20100415b). The planning and development was also discussed with the project leader of Heiplanen in relation to the formal process development (Vasstrøm, 20100326; Vasstrøm 20100429).

Planning with the municipality

The first round of municipal meetings and the inter-municipal meeting concerned what and how local workshops could and should answer to the challenges of local participation, previously described, in relation to the formal planning process. The meetings accentuated the perspectives from the previous meetings: that there was a general mistrust between local communities and state actors (County Governor); that the Heiplanen process was considered a “make believe” democratic process where expert knowledge predefined the outcome; that local knowledge had been disregarded; and that the consequences of the process were unpredictable in relation to the municipal planning and development authority. However, they agreed that Heiplanen and the local processes had a potential to improve the recognition of local nature perspectives and thus improve communication with the County Governor and the planning collaboration. The local processes were therefore considered relevant, but also a new dimension of complexity that the municipalities would have to relate to in the formal planning process.

One of the main discussions in the municipal political/administrative planning meetings was the role and contributions of the local citizens in a regional planning process, and conversely, the role of the municipality in relation to the citizens’ participation. The municipal authorities felt “squeezed” between the expectations of the local community and the national state. On the one hand they had a state-delegated planning authority that should manage the “public values” in the best interest of the people, and conversely they were a democratic entity that should manage the long term development of the municipalities (for the common interest of the community) through balancing diverse values and interests. A third “role perspective” that should be emphasized was that the municipal authority employees were also citizens in their respective communities. Their perceptions of “nature and society” were thus not only related to their role as planners or politicians but as citizens. Their understanding of the balance between nature protection and use was in this sense also related to their life in the communities.

The definition of the municipal role in the local workshops was an important point of discussion. I explained that participants in a future creating workshop would participate as *citizens*. The participants would of course also represent a variety of other (professional) roles with particular interests and competences, but the point of departure was that all the participants are citizens. This was an awkward perspective for the municipal administration and their understanding of their role, and they discussed if the citizens would understand such perspective. However, they also acknowledged that such role definition would create a more equal space for their own and the citizens’ participation in the workshop. It would make the “authorities” able to participate as citizens and in this sense liberate them from expectations of a formal responsibility that they could not fulfil. The challenge was to balance the informality of the workshop and still maintain an arena that was experienced as legitimate and “worthwhile” by the citizens. Due to the nature protection history of the area, it was difficult to mobilize citizens to participate in a process, because they had experiences with not being heard. This aspect was linked to another main concern of the workshop: how the “room for manoeuvre” and potential outcome was defined. What did this local

workshop invite to? And what expectations would it generate among the citizens? The municipalities were preoccupied with clarifying that the local process was *not* a public planning process with formal authority, but a civil society process that could give input to the formal planning authorities.

The Future Creating Workshops constitutes a radically different approach to participation in a planning process. It was therefore discussed how the process in itself could generate new understandings of the nature protection and use perspective among the citizens, and from there, create new local project ideas related to nature use/protection in an everyday life perspective. My argument was that these “outcomes” would not only constitute potential local projects or actions, but also generate and develop local understandings of nature management and planning that could be communicated, through regional workshops, to the formal planning process. The purpose of the workshops was in this sense also to facilitate new shared understandings of nature protection and use across citizens (everyday life) and institutional (planning) perspectives. The local FCW was in this sense planned as the first of several workshops that could, over time, influence the formal planning process³⁰.

Given the above discussions my role as an action researcher became to challenge the municipalities understanding of the planning process and the roles of the different actors, and to stimulate reflection on how collaboration (formal and informal) between institutional levels could be improved through developing and documenting the local community perspectives of nature and society. These discussions were synthesized in a paper (Vasstrøm, 20100318) that was sent to the municipality planning groups, the mayors and the project leader of Heiplanen.

The second round of municipal meetings was directly concerned with clarifications of the practical dimension of the workshops: the date and timing, the location, the invitation strategy, the food/drinks, and especially the municipal role as participants in the workshop. The municipalities were concerned that the workshop would be dominated by landowner interests or professional “tourist economy” actors and they wanted to mobilize many different “citizen perspectives”. The invitations were developed during these meetings (Vasstrøm, 20100428). They were publicised in the local Setesdal newspaper, on the municipal homepage and physically displayed at different places (town hall, library, shops, etc.) in the municipalities. In addition, invitations were sent by mail to politicians and actors that the municipality considered important resource persons in nature management, culture, tourism, agriculture, forestry, etc. One of the municipalities did not send the invitation directly to the politicians, which possibly explains the absence of politicians at that workshop.

The municipal planning process illustrated that there were two dimensions at play in the relation between the formal planning process of Heiplanen and the local authority/citizens perspective. The first concerned

³⁰ In the description of the research methods (chapter 4) I explained that this plan of several workshops was not fulfilled. Three months after the local workshops the municipalities decided not to follow up on the process with regional workshops, but rather send on a formal (strategic) planning proposal from Setesdal to the Heiplanen secretary. I will return to this part of the process in section 7.4

the planning system and the communicative and social practice in this system, the other was related to the consequences for the everyday life and the potential (economic) development space. The FCW approach aimed to enter these conflicts by taking its point of departure through the local citizen's perspective and develop these through processes of social learning. The FCW was in this sense planned to create a local "knowledge" outcome that could open the institutional understanding of the planning process and its relation to the local everyday life. The concern among the local authorities (municipalities) was if such process would manage to break the iterative "old" conflict discussions and generate new understandings at a regional institutional level.

During this planning phase I had one meeting and mail correspondence with the project leader of Heiplanen. This dialogue was established to inform the "formal planning actor" about the local process, and vice versa, to get information about the formal process that could influence the local process. The project leader meant that the local Setesdal process was particularly relevant because it was the area with the most conflict-filled aspects. I was invited to present the findings of the process at the formal steering meeting and at the regional planning forum in June. These meetings therefore also served as a way of entering the formal communication arena in the planning process, and increase the legitimacy of the informal process in relation to the formal processes.

During these months of planning and workshops I published a chronicle in a national newspaper "Nationen" called "A democratic nature management?" (Nationen, 29 April 2010) that problematized the current planning system with democratic challenges of local participation. The argument was that an invitation to locals to participate in nature protection processes becomes absurd for these citizens when the decision making of the process is defined as "scientific knowledge" based. On May 7, the regional newspaper, Fædrelandsvennen, had a two-paged thematic article about the wild reindeer planning in Setesdal. The main article outlined that the planning area occupied 99% of the municipal area, which left little or no room for development. The article also referred to my chronicle in Nationen about the democratic deficit in this planning process (Fædrelandsvennen 7 May 2010). The regional attention led to two newspaper interviews about the local participation project. The first was called "Wish to reclaim the mountains" (Fædrelandsvennen, 20 May 2010) and described one of the Future Creating Workshops and some of the local perspectives to nature management. The second was called "Wants to create dialogue" (Fædrelandsvennen, 27 May, 2010) that described how my research project aimed to develop dialogue between the local perspectives and the County Governor (national authorities) during the planning and research process. This attention was used not only to create legitimacy for the project in the local communities, but also to open communication with the formal planning actors, and not least the County Governor directly. After several mails and a persuasive telephone call, I managed to get a meeting with the County Governor representative in the planning process that I will describe in section 7.4.

The Future Creating Workshops

The theme for the FCW was *“The good life for people and wild reindeer in Setesdal – now and in the future”*. The idea of the future scenario workshop is, as described in the methodological chapter (section 4.3), to create a democratic arena for citizens’ learning and empowerment in relation to their life situation and within a common societal frame. It is thus not an arena for stakeholders to represent and negotiate particular interests, but a “free-space” where citizens can collectively express and develop perspectives on the subject of the matter in relation to their everyday life perspectives and a broader societal context.

The theme of the workshop was carefully chosen to approach the (historical and conflict-filled) theme of nature and area management from an everyday life perspective. The combination of the life perspective with the wild reindeer concern created a broad thematic frame that did not sectorize the life or nature relations beforehand, but still emphasized the nature-life relation. The workshop was planned as a “free-space” for a social learning process that used critical and utopian perspectives on the current situation to develop approaches to create alternative future perspectives. The content of the workshop was entirely based on the contribution of the participants. The purpose of the workshop was therefore to create a reflective sphere where the local communities could consider and develop their individual and collective everyday life perspectives of nature and the wild reindeer. However, although the free space is an important constituent for developing utopian reflections, it is also has to take into account that it is situated in a particular situation; in this case with a certain nature conservation history and within a given regional planning process. The workshop therefore also aimed at developing understanding in relation to this nature conservation and planning practice, and how this “institutional management” praxis could be improved based on the everyday life perspectives. The purpose was, in other words, to develop local community life and nature perspective as a participatory answer to the institutional planning purpose and process.

The three future creating workshops were held in Bygland (19-20 May), in Valle (3 June) and in Bykle (31 May-1 June)³¹. The workshops in Bygland and Bykle were arranged over two evenings, while it was arranged as one full day in Valle³². The citizens’ participation in each workshop varied in number and “representation”. The average was 20 participants (15-25 persons over the entire workshop period), which was not as high as expected or hoped for. One workshop was dominated by “stakeholder” or professional interests (hunters, landowners, culture-business), public servants (planners, business development, cultural advisors) and politicians. Another workshop was entirely dominated by (male) landowners, and lacked representation from the public servants and politicians. The third workshop had more varied participation: the politicians and public servants had been directly encouraged to come by the mayor, in addition

³¹ In the following workshop description I have «anonymized» the workshops by numbering them instead of relating them to each municipality to reduce the risk of person recognition.

³² The timing of the workshops was made with the municipalities. In two municipalities the concern was that people were not willing to use a weekend for the workshop, but neither to use a workday, it was therefore planned over two evenings. In one community they reckoned that most of the interested people would be able to attend on a work day.

landowners, and other citizens (including women and young people) participated. There are many “explanations” for the relatively low number of participants. First, time can be an influencing factor: general time pressure in “modern” life and especially in the spring/summer time made it difficult (and perhaps undesirable) to use two nights at a workshop. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it can be a sign of participation fatigue in the communities. Participation fatigue is understood as the reluctance to participate in a new process of nature/area management that they did not consider possible to influence anyway. In this sense, I do not think that people were not interested in the subject matter of local life and nature, but that their previous experiences with nature planning processes and the environmental authorities created a general mistrust of this planning process and their ability to influence its outcome. Such participation fatigue has been described and analyzed in several other research projects (Clausen 2011; Hansen 2007; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). This also partly explains why there were more participants at the workshops where the municipality had invested much time and effort on the invitations. A point the workshop participants were also aware of: the workshops where political and administrative municipal level participated (although as citizens) bestowed more legitimacy on the process as an important local contribution to the nature management perspective and the Heiplanen process. In the workshop where they were not represented, participants were frustrated with the lack of municipal engagement and municipal anchorage and responsibility. The participation of politicians and administration was in this sense regarded as an important factor for the recognition of the importance of the citizens’ participation and the long term perspective of the participation.

The workshop was, as previously described, facilitated by Kirsten Paaby and Ola Vaagan Slåttn from Idèbanken: I, as the action researcher, was also co-facilitating the workshop, but my main role was to observe the process and atmosphere of the workshop. The workshops were opened by an introduction of the mayors in two of the municipalities, who accentuated the unfortunate initiation of the Heiplanen process and in particular the introduction of the wild reindeer map. The workshop was introduced as an important way of developing perspectives and collaboration in Setesdal to influence the Heiplanen process. Thereafter, I introduced the purpose of the workshop and its connection to Heiplanen. This introduction clarified that although we were aware of the previous historic conflicts in the area, and the critical local perspectives of the Heiplanen process, we believed that this workshop could bring about local perspectives and ideas on the nature-everyday life dimension that could bring new perspectives into the conflicting relation between local and state authorities. The outcome of the workshop would not only be able to generate local projects and understandings about changes in their everyday life and nature relations, but it could also be formulated as proposals to the formal actors of the Heiplanen process. The workshop was in this sense an attempt to open a dialogue with the planning authorities that could embrace the local everyday life perspectives of nature, and enhance the ability and acknowledgement of the formal planning system to include local participation in the Heiplanen process (see also the workshop protocols for a more detailed description: Paaby *et al.*, 20100601 Bygland kommune; Paaby *et al.*, 20100606 Valle kommune; Paaby *et al.*, 20100606 Bykle kommune).

The workshop “space” was a plenum area with chairs in a half-moon formation around a large wall covered with wall paper. The programme of the workshop was posted on a side wall along with the rules of the workshop and a description of each phase. In addition, maps and newspaper articles about Heiplanen were posted on another side wall to illustrate the recognition of the conflictual situation in the formal planning process, but without taking point of departure in the conflict.



Figure 7.5 The workshop space

The facilitators from Idèbanken presented the Future Creating Workshop founding idea, methodology, “rules”, and programme. The future scenario workshop methodology operates with three main phases: the critical, utopian and realization phase (see also section 4.3 for a methodological description). The critical and utopian phases are plenum processes where all participants are encouraged to speak their mind. All statements are written on the wall paper. It is not allowed to criticize each other’s statements, but contrary views can be stated. The plenum phases each end with a prioritizing phase where the participants are encouraged to vote for the three most important statements of each phase (the participants are literally asked to mark different statements on the wall). Thereafter the facilitators, in collaboration with the participants, try to group the most important aspects into themes – that can again embrace several of the other statements. In the critical phase this lead to themes for critique pictures, where a group of participants tries to “enact” the critique through acting or sculpturing the critique. In the utopian phase, each theme is developed into a future “creation”. The three phases were presented by Idèbanken in the following way (my translation):

Critique phase:

-What are we unsatisfied with when it comes to the good life for people and wild reindeer in Bykle/Valle/Bygland?

-What are the most important moments of critique (three votes for each participant)

-Critique pictures

Utopian phase:

-We build on the critique – how can we turn the critique around?

-We forget “it can’t be done” for a while and ask ourselves: If we could decide and everything was possible how would it be like to live the good life for people and reindeer in Bykle/Valle/Bygland?

- Prioritizing the most important themes (three votes to each participant and collaborative creation of utopian topics)

-Presentation of Future Creations

Realization Phase:

-We stick to the good ideas and desires and ask: What is the first step to take to move in the direction we want?

-Action plans: Who does what with whom when?

The following sections describe the substance and process of each phase of the three workshops as a whole, but with attention to the details of each workshop. Thereafter, some of the main similarities and differences of the workshops are described. These findings are also described in the report *Local processes in Heiplanen* (Vasstrøm 2010) and in the workshop protocols. It is difficult to describe and reduce workshop processes to a linear format. The workshops revealed and developed nuanced and ambiguous perspectives on the nature-life relation and the Heiplanen process. The statements and themes represent discussions and meaning creation – a social learning process – and a connection to the particular situation and experience of each community and individual. Nevertheless, this description attempts to communicate the key substantial developments and movements in the process.



Figure 7.6 Opening scenes from two future creating workshops

The critical phase

This phase opened for critique of the current situation in a collective room with participants who had different experiences with previous nature planning processes. At first this unfamiliar form of critique created a sceptical “wait-and-see” atmosphere, perhaps also because the critique was documented in writing and thereby made concrete and serious. However, once the first ten critique statements were made, it created a noticeable ventilation effect. The process “accelerated” and the participants were inspired by each other’s statements and nuanced them with new statements. Critique of personal or detailed aspects could in this sense be responded to with more general critique aspects by others or linked to new perspectives. The critique phase in this sense became autonomous and self-feeding, and developed energy and motivation among the participants. But it was also a demanding process that involved reflections of feelings and values, and mobilization of individual and collective experiences. In the following synthesis of the main critique perspectives I have grouped the statements into aspects of “the planning system”, “knowledge”, and “nature use and everyday life”. These categorizations are partly based on my theoretical perspectives (that are of course also related with empirical reflections), but are mainly influenced by the nature of the statements. The heading of each section is directly translated from the statements on the wall paper.

“National authorities have broken the idea of partnership and governance”

The critique of the planning system was directed towards their communication, collaboration, and management. The authorities were criticized for “*speaking with at least two tongues*”: communicating the Heiplanen process as a development plan, but with conservation plans behind. The centralization of nature management was criticized and the role of participation and democracy questioned. The disempowerment of the local communities was criticized for creating a democratic deficiency where citizens and stakeholders did not have the energy to engage in nature planning. The national authorities (and County Governor in particular) were criticized for ridiculing local management efforts, lacking willingness to collaborate directly, and not communicating transparently. Such praxis was perceived as undermining the legitimacy of the national authorities (and particularly the County Governor) in the local communities. The flexibility of the planning system was also criticized for not being able to experiment with new management practices, or differentiate between small and large initiatives. With the long history of conservation efforts, it was criticized that there was still not a more equal dialogue with the planning system. The critique was also targeted at the local municipalities and county governments for not using their authority to challenge the national authorities (and County Governor). However, and self-critically, it was also stated that a local management system would require the ability to take unpopular decisions, and that such local system should have broad representation and not just landowners or economic interests. Further, it was argued that such local system would require the collaboration between scientific and local knowledge perspectives.

“Strong scientific-bureaucratic arrogance” & “Flawed and insufficient scientific arguments”

The critique of the policy and planning system practice was supplemented by a critique of the academic arrogance that influenced the general (societal) understanding of what was “right” and “wrong” in nature management. A main point of critique was that local knowledge was not acknowledged, but mistrusted and even ridiculed in the policy, planning and management system. The expert knowledge was criticized for neglecting a local knowledge dimension, and for not paying attention to historic features of herd movements and consequences of population increases/decreases. However, this perspective also involved self-critique. It was argued that the local knowledge also needed to be challenged and developed and that the professional bureaucratic networks in the municipalities were too small on their own to develop new knowledge *and* mobilize “contra-competence” in relation to the national authorities. The lack of dialogue between the local and expert knowledge was therefore vastly criticized.

“Very difficult to realize the good life”

Nature conservation practice was criticized for restricting the local recreational use of nature and the social-cultural life related to the “støyl cabins” in the mountain areas. The general perspective was that if the valley and mountain areas could not be used for recreation and workplace development then it would not be possible to live or worth living in the valley. It was argued that the use of the mountains was much more active a century ago with the seter agriculture. The støyl- cabins were considered part of their cultural connection to the mountains and they were afraid of losing the rights of (socio-cultural) use of the mountain areas. The nature relation was considered important to attract new inhabitants, and not least to facilitate young Setesdal citizens to return to the valley. *“How shall we get the youth back if they cannot roam the mountains?”*. In connection to this critique it was argued that the “large societal” interests are prioritized, while small local initiatives are denied. The local citizens meant that the current planning and management system was not flexible and knowledgeable enough to estimate the actual consequences of small initiatives over large. A third point of critique at all three workshops was that the centralization of nature management undermined the local nature relation and thereby the local pride of and responsibility for the wild reindeer and nature. In their perspective, national authorities are unable to develop a locally anchored nature management, because they do not accept the local mountain identity and values.

All three workshops demonstrated a high level of critique, frustration and scepticism to the national environmental authorities in general, as well as to the story of nature conservation, and to the Heiplanen in particular. The critique was linked to a frustration at the inability to develop local initiatives, but also towards the long term consequences for local relation to nature. The conflict and non-collaborative relation with the national authorities were in this sense perceived as contributing to the erosion of the local community responsibility for nature. However, in the workshops where the municipal authorities (politicians and planners) were present, so the critique was more directed towards the *praxis* of the state authorities, not against the system as such.

Table 7.1 Main critique points from the wallpaper of the three workshops divided into thematic areas.

Critique		
“The planning system”	Knowledge	Local life and nature use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The communication with the state is unclear and ambiguous between different sectors and between policies and bureaucratic practice. • The state has a hidden agenda. • The state has broken the meaning of partnership and collaboration. • The local management competence is unrecognized. • Misuse of national authority in nature management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local knowledge is not recognized and unused. • Improved local knowledge and competence required. • Misuse and lack of professional knowledge in the bureaucracy. • Deficient will to innovation in the planning and management system. • Deficient gradation of large and small initiatives in the mountains. • Defective herd management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature protection threatens livelihood, economic development and outdoor life. • Deficient facilitation of outdoor life for children and youth. • Deficient local engagement in nature issues.

The workshop with landowners directed the critique more directly at the system itself, and claimed their rights to private ownership of the land. This was however, also a point that the landowners were conscious about. They expressed a concern that the workshop became limited by their views, and that it would have been better if their understanding had been challenged by other views in the community. In the workshop that was dominated by “professional” and stakeholder perspectives, with a broad experience of nature management and planning processes, the critique was aimed at the failure of the system to experiment with nature management and to differentiate between large and small initiatives. In the workshop with most diverse participation, the perspectives of nature relations of the children and youth were the most outspoken. The differences in the critique demonstrate the importance of broad and varied participation in such workshops, and the importance of the support of the local authorities to create legitimacy for the citizens’ engagement. This is perhaps especially relevant in small municipalities where there is a historic conflict with the national authorities.

The workshops also demonstrated movements of self-critique. The local engagement in the nature issues was criticized for not being dedicated enough. It was also acknowledged that local management of the nature and areas in question would also require unpopular decisions in the local community, and a stronger local knowledge milieu to ensure good management practice. But, also as expressed by a landowner “*we are so backward (sidrompa) that it would do us good to be challenged*”. There is an awareness in the local communities that local management and nature relations is challenging, and requires learning, but it is also considered necessary to secure their identity and pride – and thus responsibility to nature.

The critique words were weighed by the participants by voting on the three most important aspects for them. The future scenario workshop breaks the critique phase by encouraging the participants (in groups)

to supplement the verbal critique with “critique pictures”. The critique pictures are meant to “gestalt” the critique in a bodily and creative manner and thereby move it beyond the limits of language. Further, these critique pictures function as a way to “live out” the critique into the level of absurdity that corresponds to the experience, and open the mind for the utopian phase (Paaby, Nielsen, & Nielsen 1988). The critique pictures were only carried through in one workshop. In another workshop the “breaks” was made by using the critique to formulate what should be brought into the future. In the third workshop, the critique phase was very long and tense, and the atmosphere was not “open” for creative play, and the utopian phase was initiated after a break.



Figure 7.711 Giving votes to main critique and utopian statements respectively

The utopian phase

The utopian phase was in one way a direct counter expression of the critique but also open to other dimensions. Characteristic of all three workshops was that it was difficult to initiate the utopian thinking – or the social fantasy. This is not uncommon in the future scenario workshop (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a) or in other types of visioning processes. It is difficult to express desires and dreams in an open room, because it often involves strong personal values, and an anxiety of being ridiculed. In these workshops the barriers for utopian perspectives was also influenced by the historical and current situation of local nature management. Many participants had (personal) experiences with initiatives and dreams that had been rejected by objections of national authorities (County Governor). They perceived the idea of dreaming as irrelevant and meaningless – when the “real” problem was the realization of the dreams and suppressing the planning system authority. The participants with experience from local nature management and planning were especially focused on using the time for developing realistic plans instead of unrealistic dreams.

“Why should we dream when we cannot realize it?” (landowner, at a future scenario workshop)

All workshops carried through to the utopian phase – but with different engagement and focus. In the workshop dominated by landowners the utopian process required (iterative) encouragement from the facilitators. In the workshop dominated by “professionals” there was a change of some participants

between the critical and utopian phase which also turned the focus from the “planning system” towards “nature use and development” perspectives. The utopian statements are here first divided into the same “theoretical categories” as previously (see also the workshop protocols or Vasstrøm, 2010). However, the quality of the utopian phase cannot be divided into one category or another. They are rather characterized by broad cross sectoring perspectives. The titles of each section are directly translated from the wall paper statements.

“We have achieved stronger local governance” & “We have a balanced use and protection”

One of the main dimensions in the utopian phase was improved local governance and dialogue with national/regional environmental authorities towards a more collaborate nature management praxis. The perspective was that the balance of use and protection and a viable wild reindeer population is achieved *through* local governance and knowledge. Young people should be involved in nature management aspects in order to develop their nature engagement, and to fire their desire to return to live in the valley. Local nature management should involve many different interests and citizens. The management praxis should be experimental, flexible and adaptive. The management system should include knowledge from hunters and cultural history related to the “støyl” culture and praxis. Yet, the “self-critical utopia” was concerned if the local management system would be able to develop prioritized areas, and dare to say “no” to economic development in wild reindeer areas. There was thus a division in understanding between development of initiatives that were mounted on economic development (second homes), and initiatives that were related to recreation, hunting and the restoration and use of traditional “støyl” cabins.

“People look to Setesdal to learn how to manage human-wild reindeer relations”

A utopian perspective was concerned that locally-developed area maps could create increased recognition for local knowledge, and thereby serves to initiate a more equal dialogue with the national environmental authorities (County Governor). Local knowledge of the terrain, changes in wild reindeer population and movements, and the historic aspects of the wild reindeer populations were considered important input to the development of a more adaptive management praxis. It was suggested at several workshops that inter-municipal knowledge milieus should be developed through co-location of different competences related to nature management, hydro-power, culture, business, etc. These utopias were connected to a desire to increase the recognition of local knowledge a national level, and thereby also to support the local pride in and responsibility for the area. In this perspective, knowledge would not be used as an argument to suppress local initiatives, but as a collaborative process that could inform the local community, and the second home owners and tourists to learn how to use and be in the mountains.

“We are a community that people wish to move back to – the youth and others”

The everyday life utopias were related to the development of an active community and outdoor life aspects. Nature was considered an important ingredient in the recreational social life and identity, but also

to generate experiences (and economy) for visitors and tourists. Nature was in this sense considered a resource that could generate employment related to tourism and agriculture and secure the livelihood of the community with an increasing number of participants. In addition, nature was perceived as an important aspect of the cultural identity and life in the community and the foundation for getting the youth back and attracting new inhabitants.

The utopian phase was summarized with a formation of utopian themes. The themes were constructed by taking the point of departure as the statements that had received most votes, and then the participants were asked to connect any other statements that they felt belonged to this theme. In this sense one statement could be used in several themes. This process of grouping demonstrated how interconnected the community statements of nature protection and use are, as well as the perspectives of local governance with livelihood and identity.

Table 7.2 Main utopian points from the wallpaper of the three workshops divided into thematic areas

Utopias		
«The Planning system»	Knowledge and management	Local life and nature use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop arenas for dialogue between authorities, researchers, citizens, and stakeholders. • Dialogue with national authorities. • Gain recognition for local knowledge and management: create local pride and responsibility. • Involve the youth in nature management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and develop local competence in broad-sectored mountain management. • Facilitate broad involvement of interest groups and citizens. • Inter-municipal and regional management collaboration. • Experimental, adaptive and flexible management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional outdoor life in the mountains is possible – also with regulated mobile use. • Nature is a resource for citizens and visitors – socially and economically. • Facilitate workplace development. • Increase information about the wild reindeer to citizens, second home owners, and tourists – to create responsibility.

The utopian phase and the process of grouping the statements into categories revealed that the nature relation is deeply rooted in the self-understanding of the individual citizens and the community as a whole. Further, there is a desire to be recognized (by national authorities *and* the general societal discourse) for this commitment to nature. This recognition is seen as a prerequisite for the development of an equal dialogue with the planning system. The utopian phase demonstrated that the good life of the communities and citizens is connected to nature in both an economic, ecological and cultural perspective. Further, the development of local knowledge is seen as a way of improving local area management competence. The understanding of local steering and knowledge is considered closely related to the idea of the good life. It constitutes an important foundation for the legitimacy of local culture and identity of the mountains and nature. This cultural identity and the ability to use the nature for recreational purposes is in this sense perceived as a foundation for creating viable communities where people wish to come and live. This

cultural connection to nature was therefore also perceived as especially important in the formation of children and youth: to foster pride and responsibility, and instil desire to move back to the communities after their education elsewhere. The desire to strengthen local governance of the mountain areas is thus related to a desire of creating improved recognition of local knowledge and management and in this way foster local pride and responsibility to the area

There were also elements of self-critical reflection in the utopian phase. The communities were concerned with the ability to develop individual and collective interests, but with respect for the nature that they should manage. The development of second homes and the tourist industry was perceived as an economic benefit, but certain areas should be “pacified” from construction and exploitation. Snow mobiles (especially in one workshop) were considered an important element in recreational life in the mountains, but they should not be “free-use” everywhere. Local governance and knowledge was important, but it should be developed further, and able to take responsible and unpopular decisions. The grouped utopian themes were used to initiate group work in order to unfold further utopian visions for the community.

Table 7.3 Main utopian themes grouped by the participants

Utopian themes		
Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Workshop 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local governance • Light in all windows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active rural life in 2025 • Dialogue and recognition • Local governance and snow mobile culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The youth is back • Stronger local governance • Continued viable wild reindeer herd • The centre of the community

Local governance and management of the mountains was considered a starting point for generating stronger knowledge institutions in the communities that could gather not only natural scientific and ecological management knowledge, but also traditional nature knowledge, culture, and history. Such knowledge institution and local management would not only create pride and support the local “mountain and wild reindeer identity”, but also develop more responsibility towards nature use. It was argued that the knowledge and relation to nature should also be more outspoken in the education of the children and youth. It was suggested to develop courses for hunting culture and nature stewardship that could engage the youth and develop their affiliation with the area. It was also suggested to make more direct information or courses available to second home owners in relation to prudent behaviour in recreational activities in the mountains. The local management and knowledge institution was further considered an important aspect of developing employment for the returning youth after their education.

Several of the “individual” interests were in this sense expressed through a collective concern. Workplace development and employment was an issue, but as a necessity for the local community as a whole to survive. The use of the støy cabins and snow mobile driving were discussed, that was on the one side

considered a socio-cultural foundation for “winter life” in the valleys, but there was also a collective self-critique of the snow mobile driving that was getting out of hand in some areas. Second home development was a theme that was considered necessary to create work in the communities, and develop the tourism industry, however it was considered important to limit the construction areas and preserve the “unspoiled nature”.



Figure 7.8 Group work sessions with utopian themes in two workshops

The realization phase

The realization phase started with a “caring critique” of the utopian group work. The groups presented their utopian ideas in plenum, and the rest of the participants were encouraged to reflect and give constructive feedback to the group’s suggestions and plans. This phase created an atmospheric “lift” in the workshops. The participants were inspired by each other’s ideas and eager to contribute. This phase could be interpreted as an important social learning turn, where the *social* (the essence of collective contributions) became the basis for *learning* (the development of new perspectives of the current situation) and created a collective feeling of being able to change the situation.

All three workshops worked with themes with particular attention to the “good life” and “local governance” respectively. The “good life” was perceived as the founding aspect for ensuring (economic, social and cultural) sustainable rural societies. The groups worked with different aspects of how local citizens used and could use nature for recreation in their daily life, and how nature was the basis of the collective sphere in the local community. The focus was on the possibility to use and restore the traditional “støyl cabins” and the related (un/motorized) traffic in the mountains. Nature was also considered a resource for creating local employment or activities that could broaden the economic base of traditional agriculture and forestry. The possibility to use nature was thereby seen as a pre-requisite for sustaining the local community and for attracting new/returning citizens to the area. The “local governance” theme was perceived as the way to maintain and enforce the local nature responsibility and knowledge base, and thus ensure legitimacy for wild reindeer management and national policies. Local engagement and the establishment of local networks were considered a pre-requisite for maintaining and restoring local

responsibility for and pride in the mountains and wild reindeer. The establishment of an inter-municipal knowledge centre was considered an important step towards better local management that would create greater national legitimacy to the local governance. A common trait for the themes was thus the focus on revitalizing local and inter-municipal networks and improving dialogue with regional and national authorities, as a way to ensure more sustainable local communities and to create new optimism in the communities.

Table 7.4 Main projects for realization developed by the participants divided into each municipality

Municipality 1	Municipality 2	Municipality 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More local participation in the development of areas and outdoor life activities for citizens, second home owners, local organizations, businesses, and the municipality. • Develop outdoor life activities for youth through collaboration between business actors, organizations, etc. • Develop plan for a “competence park” – an interdisciplinary and inter-municipal knowledge park for developing nature and cultural competence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural development project is integrated in Heiplanen: nature and area use is central to rural development. • Increased business collaboration between stakeholders, local authorities and politicians. • Inter-municipal collaboration on nature management. • Revitalize landowner organizations. • Develop collaboration between local authorities, landowners, organizations and tourism in relation to area use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local citizen participation project in town planning • Volunteer citizen work in town development • Competence centre with interdisciplinary profile on mountain management. • Communication about wild reindeer and the municipality to a local regional and national audience • Increase local involvement in mountain management (and Heiplanen)

The end of the future scenario workshops focused on who could do when with whom. This phase brings the broad political and ideological ideas down to concrete actions. In two of the workshops, where the municipal authorities were present, initiatives were started to carry through with some of the ideas. One municipality created a local action group with citizens to plan the development of the community centre. This community centre activity was later described as one of the most fruitful of the community (see evaluative interviews section 7.6). Another step was to create a stronger inter-municipal Setesdal group that could collaborate in the Heiplanen questions (this will be described in the next section). Another municipality wanted to develop the perspectives further for the establishment of an inter-municipal local competence centre in Setesdal. In the municipality that was dominated by landowners, it was suggested that the landowners should revitalize a landowner group. There was in this sense not any “concrete” outcome from the workshops, but rather a chain of different developing understandings. Initially (at the beginning of the research process) the workshops were planned as the first step of a local participation process. The outcomes were planned to be used as a point of departure for a regional workshop in Setesdal, and a dialogue workshop with the formal planning actors and invited “experts”. However, as

described in the methodological section, this local participation process ended after these first future scenario workshops.



Figure 7.9 Plenum presentations of group work in two workshops

The entire informal planning process was synthesized in a project report in the ‘Forest and Landscape’ series, Copenhagen University (Vasstrøm 2010). The report described the process of Heiplanen with a focus on the local process and understanding of Heiplanen and its perspective for future nature management and everyday life concerns. The report was sent to the Setesdal municipalities (and posted on their home page), and to the formal planning actors of Heiplanen, the County Governor, the Ministry of Environment, and the Directorate of Nature Management.

Partial Analysis III: Understanding the informal process

The point in this analytical description is not to evaluate the (ecological) viability of the suggestions made in the FCW. The analytical point is to explore the citizens’ perspectives of nature protection *in relation to* the good life of the community. Nature protection was in this sense explored through the local community’s (or citizens’) understanding of nature as part of their everyday life. Such perspectives can constitute a different point of entry to nature protection – or sustainability – from an institutional planning approach (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007a). In this sense, this partial analysis also attempts to draw attention to how local participation in such free spaces can contribute to a *broader* (in a substantial sense) and more *legitimate* (in a procedural or democratic sense) *planning horizon*. The FCW was thus an attempt to create a different outlook for local participation in planning that was not based on interest negotiation between “qualified stakeholders”, but deliberations of citizens’ everyday life perspectives in relation to their common concern of nature and society.

The future creating workshop demonstrated that there was a *potential* for developing collective community perspectives in Setesdal and that local participation was not reduced to individual interest claims. The workshops exemplified that although the area could be understood as conflicts of nature

protection and use, culture and nature, local and central government (Daugstad et al., 2006), the nature-society relations were understood as more intrinsically connected than these divisions. The values of living in the area were thus related to the experience of nature through recreation and hunting, the potential of economic development, and also the uncategorizable sense and joy of living in an area with outstanding beauty. The municipal area use was thus on the one side understood as a space to construct houses to attract more citizens, and to develop tourism-related activities to create employment. On the other side, the area was not only important for economic interests, but also for the citizens' daily recreational use. The development perspectives were thus modified during the workshops by emphasizing that construction and development should not be "everywhere", and that "we want to have our un-touched nature". The statements made during the workshops expressed that, although economic development perspectives were important for creating employment and ensuring inhabitant stability (and growth), the area was also understood as part of a cultural identity, or as something in common. The area, in this sense, represented present life and livelihood, also involving understandings of historic nature relations, and not least the future potential livelihood for the younger generation. These perspectives were expressed in different themes that wanted to increase the local engagement in nature management and to ensure the potential for local citizens to use their area as part of a traditional recreational lifestyle. The management of nature was thus reflected as one part of a broader consideration of nature as a part of the social, cultural and economic life in the community. This perspective is, as previously described, emphasized by Nielsen and Nielsen (2007a), who argue that nature protection planning must be able to consider nature as related to the broader community life in order to encourage citizens' participation and the long-term generation of responsible nature society relations.

The workshops revealed that the local communities were concerned that their nature perspectives were recognized as legitimate by the national authorities in nature management. The workshops in this sense revealed that there was strong mistrust towards the current planning and management praxis of the national authorities and the use of scientific knowledge as an "objective truth". However, the utopian statements and themes also pointed to the importance of improving the dialogue arena between local and national/regional authorities where the local perspectives would be recognized as a valuable contribution in nature planning and management. This was particularly expressed as an endeavour for developing local knowledge centres that could gather different knowledge perspectives for a more holistic management of community nature and culture relations. The local historic and cultural knowledge was thus considered an important aspect to improve nature protection. All three workshops argued that the ecological complexity and dynamics of the wild reindeer behaviour and area use required that the management system could not only be based on scientific knowledge, but also had to recognize local (historic and experiential) knowledge. Local mountain users were perceived as a source of important information to evaluate new initiatives or experiments in nature management. The collaboration between such experiential knowledge and "scientific" knowledge was considered important to generate adaptive and flexible management of the wild reindeer areas. The workshop participants argued that such knowledge centres would not only improve the current competence in the nature management system and create new important workplaces, but also

serve to re-vitalize the mountain identity and responsibility for the surrounding nature. Local participation in nature protection planning was in this sense connected with concerns of crafting and strengthening local nature management competence as an essential part of balancing the broader community development issues. This was also reflected in the theme directed towards the potential of educating the youth as nature rangers or managers. The involvement of youth was seen as a way to strengthen the youth place identity and nature responsibility, and thus lay the ground for their return to live in the area after their tertiary education. However, the self-critique generated in the workshops also pointed out that processes of re-embedding the nature responsibilities would require long term processes. The previous conflictual experiences with nature protection processes were considered a contributing factor for eroding local nature engagement. A re-vitalization of community nature engagement was considered a long term endeavour that would require increased appreciation, involvement, and responsibility of the local community and improved dialogue with national/regional authorities.

The participatory space in the FCW thus revealed that there was a potential for addressing collective understandings about values and meaning about the commons, namely nature and its relation with the local community. The participants in FCW were of course also “stakeholders”, in the sense that they represented many different interests of the area. Many of the participants were landowners, some were mountain rangers, many were hunters, others were outdoor enthusiast, some were in the tourist business, some were teachers, some were representative politicians or planners in the municipality, etc. There were in other words many different interests that could have been targeted if the goal was to negotiate between “qualified stakeholders”. The workshops were, however, designed to deliberate such individual perspectives in a social process focused on the “common” or collective perspectives of the community as a place of living with the wild reindeer. Even the landowner- dominated workshop accomplished to turn opinions of individual rights or stakes into broader collective perspectives of the local community relation to the surrounding nature areas. In this particular workshop issues of innovative agriculture and the ability to live off the land were considered important concerns for the future common livelihood of the community. The FCW process did not, in this sense, “solve” interest conflicts or quarrels, nor answer the categories staked out in the plan programme. The individual interests were in this sense related to the collective (future) horizon in a social space, and not to specific individual economic claims to the areas, although the collective concerns also expressed ambiguities and heterogeneity.

The workshops in this sense illustrated that there was a willingness or a democratic potential (Hajer 2003), in these communities to engage in matters of nature protection in relation to an everyday life reality. The complex and interrelated understandings of nature protection and community life were not comprehensible or feasible through a “planning system rationality”. The citizens were in this sense, through the free-space and the critical-utopian perspective, allowed to challenge the existing planning system logic that otherwise dominated the formal planning process and develop other themes of relevance. This again, might accentuate, as also argued by e.g. Nielsen and Nielsen (2007a), that when nature protection is categorized as something different from community life the planning logic will become

reduced to the negotiation of interests. The involvement of the local “public” or citizens must therefore recognize and encourage the development of perspectives related to the local common concerns for both nature and community. Such “reversed participation” perspective is thus not only important to ensure procedural legitimacy, but also to open a space for the local participation as a different substantial contribution to nature protection (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a; 2007a). The utopian workshop themes showed nature and community were experienced as inherently interconnected and related to collective concerns about everyday life, cultural identity, and future perspectives. The workshops indicated that local participation was experienced as meaningless if it is only concerned with answering to pre-defined planning categories of use and protection, because such categories do not make sense in a life-matter perspective. Categorization of nature, as argued by Nielsen and Nielsen (2007a), only makes sense when developed in relation to the particular and collective everyday life perspectives, with its historical experiences and future potential aspects.

The broad thematic perspectives of nature and society developed during the collective deliberations during the workshops illustrate that there is potential for developing local participation processes that can contribute with different substantial perspectives to a planning process. The process and outcome of the FCW illustrate that there was a potential to address the life-related nature issues as a common concern of the community. The action research engagement to facilitate arenas for local community participation thus did generate new perspectives that could be presented to the formal planning process. The workshops contributed to realizing how nature protection can be connected to the life of the community in different ways, e.g. engagement of youth, agricultural innovation, recreational cultural-ecological relations, knowledge centres, etc. This accentuates the potential for local participatory processes to foster perspectives *other* than a traditional planning participation of public meetings and hearing rounds (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007a). Such alternative perspectives can serve to broaden the planning horizon to embrace other perspectives than interest negotiations between economic and ecological claims or the purposive rationality of planning institutions (Elling 2008; 2010). It is thus *not* argued that local knowledge of nature protection and community development is more “true” than expert knowledge of the ecological materiality, but it is *different*. On a procedural level, the workshops revealed that there was the potential for developing local participation on a planning arena, even in an area with previous nature protection conflicts. The workshops further served to develop ideas of how future collaboration between local and regional/national actors could be improved. The idea of the knowledge-centres and dialogue arenas were thus discussed as an improvement of the procedural aspects of nature management that could encourage local responsibility for the nature in question.

When this is said, it is, however, also necessary to consider the inherent “regional nature” of wild reindeer habitat. Local participation and development of community perspectives, is not (necessarily) able to take the regional perspective into account. The development of local perspectives in a wild reindeer context thus also requires regional or “multi-local” collaboration. Local arenas must be coordinated with regional process that can discuss local perspectives and ideas in a regional wild reindeer habitat context, i.e. in

relation to “other local” perspectives. In this sense, the planning arena could on one level recognize and encourage the deliberation, learning and development of life-related nature-society perspectives at the local community level, while on the other level invite and consider these “multi-local” perspectives in a larger regional context. That might deviate the (economic or ecological) interest-oriented negotiations towards deliberating a broader common matter of concern.

7.4. The continuation of the formal planning process

The project leader of the formal Heiplanen process had, during the informal Setesdal process, finalized the visit round to all 18 municipalities to learn from local perspectives. The next step was the steering board meeting for the municipal and county government mayors, and a plan forum where the municipal and county government planners could discuss the work with the County Governor representative of environmental management and the wild reindeer board. I was invited to present the findings from the local participation process in Setesdal at both these meetings.

Prior to these meetings I invited myself to meet with the Heiplanen representative (wildlife manager) of the County Governor in Aust-Agder³³. The purpose of the meeting was to inform him about the local process in Setesdal, because I considered it important to initiate an open dialogue with the regional representative of the national authorities. I had beforehand sent the local participation project description (Vasstrøm, 20091105a), and an invitation to initiate dialogue about the perspectives for local participation in Heiplanen. Further, I wanted to discuss their perspective of challenges and opportunities in Heiplanen and their role in this process.

The County Governor perceived his role in the process as an advocate for wild reindeer. The main challenge from his point of view was to establish large connected areas, secure key areas, and avoid fragmentation of the wild reindeer habitat. The County Governor mandate was to judge the consequences of the total pressure on the area, not just the single projects or development initiatives in the area. In their perspective, the area is under pressure from both construction (especially second homes and hydropower) and traffic (skiing, hiking, snow mobiles). The main challenge was thus to avoid levels of disturbance that could compromise the wild reindeer use of the area on a long term basis. They perceived that the Heiplanen process was mainly challenged by the planning of the border areas, between the definition of what can be used and what must be protected. He considered that “*there is more agreement than disagreement about nature protection*”. However, he also understood that the Setesdal municipalities experienced that they

³³ I had tried to arrange a meeting with the county governor’s environmental department several times by email. The meeting was denied because the county governor did not perceive themselves as formally engaged in the process, and therefore reluctant to make any formal statements. I therefore telephoned the wildlife manager to inform him about the purpose of the meeting, and I was finally invited to come for an informal talk. The county governor institution in Aust-Agder had during the past year changed county governor, leader of the environmental department, and wildlife manager. The persons involved in the SVR process and the long lasting conflict between Setesdal and County governor had, in other words, been replaced by new faces. The Setesdal communities would later refer to this as “regime change”.

were losing governance and management authority in the area (also considering the SVR process), and that this led to frustration in the communities. He was aware that the initiation of Heiplanen and the wild reindeer map had led to many conflicts and frustration. From the County Governor's perspective it was important to initiate dialogue, but also challenging in a process with so many municipalities. They considered the wild reindeer map as a first suggestion to a potential area of the wild reindeer, whereas the political process should decide where the wild reindeer should live. However, they had started to use the wild reindeer map in the management until the political process defined a new map. From a wildlife management perspective, the most important was that a new map could define the future area use as detailed as possible, in order to create predictability. He saw it as a possibility to have a more thorough dialogue with the municipalities and county governments to improve the process, but also considered the time pressure of the planning process a constraint to the development of such dialogue.

The steering meeting and plan forum

The steering meeting in June 2010 discussed the status and progress of Heiplanen, and the local participation process in Setesdal (Jastrey, 20100609a and b). The project leader presented his perspectives of challenges and possibilities after his visits to 16 of the 18 Heiplanen municipalities and 11 public meetings, as well as with other regional and state authorities and organizations. He emphasized that the process and knowledge ground of the wild reindeer map was considered conflicting in all of the municipalities, and that it was unfortunate that the County Governor had begun to use the map in the current management praxis. He argued that the planning process should be limited to concern boundary setting for "the national area for wild reindeer" and the necessary boundary zones. The municipal meetings had revealed that there was broad agreement about the most important wild reindeer zones. A prerequisite for the planning progress would, in his perspective, be that the national wild reindeer boundaries were drawn outside the most conflicting areas where there was considerable current human activity (i.e. second home villages in Setesdal and Sirdal) and where there was well-argued disagreement about the wild reindeer habitat. He argued that his meetings with the municipalities had created a better platform for dialogue and progress, and that this new understanding would be the point of departure at the plan forum meeting the following day. The planning process would thus use different *consideration-zone* categories to define different levels of protection and use. The national wild reindeer zone would not allow for any development, the boundary zone A would weigh development aspects against wild reindeer interests, and boundary zone B would be a "rural development" zone where the wild reindeer interests were clarified. These categorizations should create predictability for both municipal and wild reindeer interests (Jastrey 20100609b).

The following discussion from the steering board revealed that the project leader had gained broad support from the municipal mayors. They expressed respect for the effort he had done to understand the local perspectives, and considered it a good point of departure for the area negotiations in the plan forum. However, several mayors also expressed a concern for the "consideration zones" and boundary zone

definitions. Such “zone definitions” could in their perspective be open to interpretations from the County Governor that would create even more unpredictability than the current regime. It would also require that different use aspects were defined and differentiated, e.g. second homes or “støyl cabins”, business or recreation, agriculture or tourism, etc. Another critique was that if the plan process were reduced to the definition of boundaries, then the whole perspective of use and development would disappear. The project leader argued that if the plan categories for the area were agreed, then it would be easier to discuss use and development perspectives within each category. This discussion was continued in the plan forum.

The steering meeting decided that the plan process should work with these area categorizations in order to develop a plan suggestion before January 2011. This implied a reduction of the time frame for the planning process. The argument was that the plan had to be finished and passed in the county governments before the county/municipal elections in 2012 that would probably change many of the key political actors in the process. By focusing explicitly on the area plan (settle the boundaries and define the zones) the planning process would be more efficient. The broad development perspectives and action plan would be considered after the area map was agreed (Jastrey, 20100609b).

I presented the local process in Setesdal and the findings from the future creating workshops (Vasstrøm, 20100609). The presentation created a discussion about the necessity and importance of local processes in broad regional planning. It was appreciated that this process challenged the current societal discourse about inadequacy of local management, and lifted new perspectives of the “good life” into the planning process. It was discussed that although landowners might have economic interests, then it is the politicians that have to raise the discussions about what the community as a whole wants with the nature areas in a long perspective. Several mayors argued that although local participation is a difficult and complex process, it is necessary to create a ground for a better mutual understanding across the community and in the relation to the national authorities. In this sense, national authorities were criticized for not only encouraging local processes, but moreover to discourage them through conservation measures. It was argued that such practice created mistrust, frustration and participation fatigue in the local communities. The local processes were in this sense considered a prerequisite for creating legitimate plans for nature protection *and* to create local development perspectives for the “good life”.

The discussion about the local participation ended in a discussion about the different roles in the planning process, and the necessity of improving the dialogue with the County Governor. It was decided that the County Governor should be invited to the next steering meeting, and the planned study tour to England. I was also invited to participate in the study tour (Jastrey, 20100609b). The steering meeting ended in a positive atmosphere where several mayors emphasized that they now had more trust in the process, and that a common dialogue with the county governors would be a prerequisite for improved mutual understanding for the planning outcome.

The plan forum on 10 June was initiated by the project leader. He gave a similar presentation of the status and progress of the plan work, and summarized the decisions from the steering board meeting: that the plan progress should focus on establishing wild reindeer boundaries and define consideration zones for wild reindeer interests and rural development, and have a planning proposal ready for January 2011. The purpose of the plan forum was to develop collaboration across municipalities, county governments, and county governors. The municipal planners asked for more concrete guidelines to define the different zones in order to consider these at the local level. The general plan definitions were at a theoretical and technical level seemingly applicable to any map, but, when they were applied to the “real” municipal areas they collided with local (everyday life) socio-cultural and economic considerations. The discussions about planning categories mobilized perspectives about what should be allowed or not within the different zones. It was clear that although there were zones with some degree of mutual understanding, there were also “grey” zones where different knowledge and value claims created strong disagreements. These broad plenum discussions were brought down to county level, through a group work session for each of the four counties with representatives from each municipality, the county government, and County Governor.

The purpose of the group work was to begin the work of drawing boundaries and defining areas and zones “directly” on the map. During these discussions I was an interactive researcher who contributed to the discussions and challenged the perspective of dialogue. This meeting was the first between the municipalities and the County Governor. The initial discussions were concerned with a critique of the wild reindeer map and its use in current planning. The Setesdal municipalities explained that the map had created the highest levels of local rage and frustrations that they had ever experienced. They argued that from a local perspective the potential wild reindeer area was absurd. Based on their experience from the current management praxis, they perceived the wild reindeer map, and the suggested consideration zones, as a prohibition for all activities and development plans.

“Even though a marginal boundary is said to be flexible, then it becomes very concrete in the actual management of a particular case.” (Municipal planner, Setesdal)

The County Governor for his part explained that his role was to secure the most important zones and that he perceived the wild reindeer map as the point of departure for the negotiations. From his perspective it was necessary that the wild reindeer map was used in current management, because it was the latest updated scientific knowledge ground. He therefore found it difficult to accept any new construction in the areas included in the map before the Heiplanen process was concluded. The municipalities for their part argued that such practice would imply that the municipalities would be governed by a map that they had not been able to influence. I argued that improved dialogue in this phase could facilitate an improved understanding between the local and institutional planning perspectives and thereby improve the overall plan progress. Improved understandings could thus serve to improve, not only the process, but also the content of the plan by generating perspectives that could combine local and institutional area claims. Such dialogue could thus also foster increased local anchorage that would eventually improve the long term

perspective of the plan as a tool for nature management. However, the level of frustration around the table was high. Although the group recognized the conceptual idea of dialogue they agreed that they would not be able to agree on anything.

The group work was intervened by two external expert presentations about “The wild reindeer as a value creator” (Bråtå et al. 2010) and the “GPS project of wild reindeer in Setesdal” (Strand, Panzacchi, Jordhøy, Moorter, Andersen, & Bay 2011).

In the continuation of the group work, the county government planner argued that the wild reindeer map discussions had to be set aside to try to reach some kind of agreement. The municipalities argued that they wanted to develop a local “white paper” area suggestion based on the current municipal plans and local political perspectives. The County Governor argued that it would be difficult for him to relate to such an area plan without the basis of the wild reindeer map. It was finally agreed that the municipalities would make a suggestion that would be the point of departure for negotiations with the County Governor. The group developed a mutual agreement, that the wild reindeer interests should not be excluded from the municipal plan suggestion. Rather, the municipal planners argued that such a local process could force the municipalities to define specific areas for development and other areas that could be “pacified” for wild reindeer and nature aspects in general. The finalization of the group work created a positive atmosphere and a new understanding of the necessity of working with the local perspective as the point of departure for negotiating wild reindeer interests. The County Governor suggested that they would invite the Setesdal municipalities to a meeting where the use of the wild reindeer map could be discussed and clarified. I volunteered to summarize the discussions in a paper that was sent to the participants in the group meeting, and the mayors in the municipalities (Vasstrøm, 20100610).

The regional meeting accentuated that there are great disagreements and different understandings. The conflict is *not* about the existence of the wild reindeer habitat, but rather how the wild reindeer habitat requirements should be interpreted and managed in the “grey areas” close to the “human habitat” in the valley and in the higher mountains in relation to the støy culture. The main turning point of this meeting was that the County Governor and the municipalities came to an agreement about some of their disagreements, recognizing that further dialogue would be necessary to create an acceptable plan outcome for all.

New directions in planning and research

In August 2010 the County Governor and the director and wildlife manager of the environmental department of the County Governor of Aust-Agder were invited on a mountain tour with the mayor of Valle municipality. The purpose of the trip was to discuss Heiplanen and the consequences for Setesdal “*in situ*”. The County Governor and environmental representatives could in this way experience the mountains and the traditional recreational activities that were considered important cultural and social aspects of the relation with nature (NRK, 20100812).

On 25 August I met with the planners of the three municipalities to discuss the continuation of the local participatory processes on a regional scale, and how to present this to and collaborate with experts and regional planners. Before the meeting I had sent out a suggestion for the follow up process of the future creating workshops in the local communities (Vasstrøm, 20100624) and a suggested agenda for the meeting (Vasstrøm, 20100825a). The project leader of Heiplanen and county government planner of Aust-Agder were invited to give feedback and input to the discussion in relation to the formal Heiplanen progress (Vasstrøm, 20100825a &b).

The first part of the meeting focused on feedback from municipal planners about the local processes. They thought that the workshops had filled the local participation gap that the respective mayors had promised their citizens. Further, they considered the work report filled a gap of communicating the complex local understanding of nature and society issues to a larger audience. *“Finally, someone actually understands our perspective.”* (Municipal planner, 20100825). However, they were also worried about how to cope with the very broad development perspectives of the workshops in a regional planning process. The workshop had in this sense not contributed to defining planning categories or area boundaries, but had developed more general considerations about local society and nature management.

The outcome of the FCW was difficult to “fit into” a formal municipal proposal to Heiplanen. The local process was in this sense considered a relevant knowledge ground, and a ventilation effect, but not implementable in formal municipal planning proposals. With the new tightened Heiplanen timeframe (as decided at the steering meeting (Jastrey, 20100609)), the municipalities had to develop a formal proposal within two months. The planners principally meant that such a proposal should be defined by political processes, and should represent a common Setesdal perspective in order to have a stronger base of argumentation for the area pressure of Heiplanen (and national environmental authorities). There was a concern that the suggested “consideration zones” could be used to categorize the entire Setesdal area as a “consideration zone” for wild reindeer, and in that way open to the judgment of the County Governor for all future planning and development initiatives. The municipal planners therefore argued that such consideration zones could on the one hand create expectations for development among local citizens and business stakeholders, and the other hand produce anxiety and unpredictability in the process of each particular planning case in the future. Rather than mixing use and protection in new opaque categories, they argued for a strong protection zone in the high mountains, and a clear valley development zone with the municipal planning authority.

This perspective initiated a discussion between project leader, county government and the municipalities in relation to the planning progress: should the area boundaries be defined before the development of content perspectives for the area, or vice versa? The municipal planners argued that if their entire area were plastered with plan categories in a regional plan, then the content of these categories and the perspective of future development perspectives would have to be considered. Otherwise they would allow for national steering of their entire area. The discussion concluded with an understanding of their mutual

disagreement. More importantly the discussion also revealed an emerging understanding that the planning complexity would require improved dialogue (& knowledge development) between local and national authorities that could advance mutual understandings of these disagreements and lay the ground for a more commonly agreed plan outcome.

The meeting ended with discussing the furthering of a local process. Such a process would, from the municipal authorities' perspective, have to be more focused on area use and definitions in relation to the wild reindeer. The challenge would be to balance local participation with the expectations of the Ministry of Environment, and not cultivate false expectations in the local community to a process outcome that would not be fulfilled. Further, it was also discussed if local participation in the categorization of areas would bring in economic incentives to participate, and not the broader community development perspectives that had been present in the first round. One of the planners found it unnecessary to initiate further local participation now that the local citizens had expressed their perspectives. The conclusion was that the planners would discuss a potential local participation with their political leaders.

The outcome was that the local participation processes would not be furthered. The political level in the three municipalities decided to establish a 'Setesdal Secretariat' to develop a common formal proposal to Heiplanen with area claims, definitions, and boundary settings, as an answer to the first regional Heiplanen proposal created by the project leader. The local processes were in this sense considered important information, but not apt to feed into formal planning categories in the strategic political planning process.

In September 2010 I was invited to present the findings of the local participation process at a public meeting in Bykle which was arranged to present the formal municipal involvement in Heiplanen and the Setesdal Secretariat (Bjørgum, 20100914; Vasstrøm, 20100914). This public meeting accentuated the Heiplanen critique previously described. A main point of critique was that the planning process was framed by a wild reindeer map that had not considered the local knowledge contribution. The meeting participants (citizens) experienced the planning process as absurdly reversed. They argued that the process had provided the outcome first, in form of area boundaries, while the local process was reduced to discuss the content of the few remaining non-protected areas. It was experienced as humiliating that the wild reindeer map disregarded the fact that people actually lived in some of the areas defined as potential wild reindeer habitat. The national authorities and planning process were criticized for an arrogant attitude towards the local communities and their knowledge contribution in the (pre-)creation of the wild reindeer map.

This understanding was further emphasized when the municipal planners presented their "løypeplan" (plan for skiing tracks)³⁴. The knowledge base of this map had been provided to the wild reindeer centre in the

³⁴ In 2008, this plan had been developed in collaboration with the county governor and the State Nature Monitoring rangers (SNO is part of the Directorate of Nature Management) located in Bykle. This map had been developed based on local and scientific knowledge about wild reindeer and community area use, to channel human traffic away from the most vulnerable wild reindeer areas. The plan had resulted in the relocation of some tracks in the higher mountain areas and the development of some new tracks in the areas close to the valley floor.

process of creating the wild reindeer map, but the local planners could not detect that it had been used. It was questioned how the national authorities expected that the planning process could be “locally anchored” if it did not even consider the local knowledge input or acknowledge the people living in the area. It was experienced as paradoxical that the plan (and policies) restrained the people living in the area by categorizing their homes as wild reindeer territory, while, in the same breath, allowing development of tourist activities in the landscape protection area (SVR) proposed by national tourist stakeholders (DNT, State Forest). People were worried that the plan would restrain the local citizens from using their “cultural” støy cabins in the mountains, whilst allowing for increased tourist activities in some of the marginal wild reindeer areas (Bjørgum, 20100914). The essence of local understanding of the planning and knowledge premise was that the national authorities mistrusted the local communities, and assumed that they could manage the area better than the people living in the area.

“...there is nobody who wants to get rid of the wild reindeer. We just utterly disagree about what is actually harmful for the wild reindeer” (Bjørgum, 20100914 [my translation])

The Setesdal Secretariat was introduced at the meeting as a collaborative municipal effort to communicate the (suppressed) local perspectives of the area, and propose a clear area boundary between use and protection. The proposal would emphasize that there were not just economic interests at stake in the local communities but broader nature relations of the cultural, social and historic sort. The secretariat would create a report that could gather local knowledge in relation to historic use of mountains, relations to the wild reindeer, and the current recreational use of the outlying mountain areas for hunting, fishing and social activities (Homme & Bjåen, 2010). People were encouraged to contribute with opinions and suggestions. The secretariat initiative was welcomed by the participants of the meeting, and it was emphasized that they supported the local authorities’ collaborative endorsement of the local community perspective in the regional plan.

On 24 September the three Setesdal municipalities, the wild reindeer centre, and the environmental representatives of the County Governor met. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the use of the wild reindeer map in current management practice. The County Governor acknowledged their misuse of the map in current planning. The meeting led to a decision not to use the wild reindeer map in formal planning considerations before the political process had reached a planning outcome³⁵ (Vasstrøm, 20100927).

The Setesdal Secretariat

The Setesdal Secretariat (the mayors and municipal directors of the three Setesdal municipalities and a professional local planning company) met in October 2010 and developed a plan proposal (Homme & Bjåen 2010). I was invited to observe the meetings and participated with questions and comments. The initiative

³⁵ I was not invited to this meeting. I approached the environmental representatives of the county governor to invite myself, but my proposal was rejected. The day after the meeting I was informed about the meeting content from one of the municipal planners that had attended the meeting.

to create a common secretariat for Setesdal represented a “turning point” in the process. The municipalities mobilized political power to turn their “defensive” situation into an offensive position to influence a plan that would have a long term effect on the entire municipal area. *“Setesdal is a special area in this plan, we find ourselves defending our area now and again, we have to work in new ways – propose our own suggestions to area zone boundaries”* (municipal director, 20101006) (Vasstrøm, 20101006).

The purpose was to develop a proposal for area boundaries that would reduce the “grey” unpredictable areas. The proposal developed a core “valley” zone where the municipal planning level would have the authority to plan. This area was to define wild reindeer consideration through local municipal planning processes. The protective zone in the high mountains was to be restrictive and ensure the wild reindeer habitat. A main consideration was that the new area plan could create predictability in planning initiatives to avoid continuous controversies and conflicts that had been experienced with the SVR buffer zone. It was therefore argued that it would be better with two well-defined zones on the regional level, while the municipal level could work in detail with specific rural zones.

The other part of the formal Setesdal proposal would be a report that gave a background description of the Setesdal perspectives based on traditional, historic, and cultural knowledge of wild reindeer and human use of the area. The researcher initiated local participation processes and the published research report was seen as a knowledge contribution to this work. The Setesdal Secretary report was meant to generate attentiveness to the local perspectives and supplement formal knowledge on both a regional and national level. One concrete example from the report was to move some of the national tourist tracks out of certain wild reindeer areas; it was considered paradoxical that tourist tracks were allowed in some of the most restricted protection zones, while citizens were not allowed to use old “støyl” cabins. Another example was that local knowledge about the “støyl” landscape and management could contribute with perspectives of how this historic landscape contributed with ecological feeding niches for wild reindeer. The Heiplanen process was in this sense considered an opportunity to create a new planning regime of the area that could also revitalize the local engagement to their area. But it was also an expression of mistrust to the formal planning process’ ability to formulate a plan with local considerations.

“We must avoid previous “weariness politics” – people are exhausted – they have lost their engagement for politics and mountain management. We will define a core area – and then we say: take enough now and give us peace. We don’t want to go through this again” (Municipal director, 20101006)

“We must use this process to create engagement about the mountains and wild reindeer – how we manage the mountains best - and give the mountains and the life here status again” (Municipal director, 20101006)

It was decided that the planners from each municipality would form a working group to develop concrete suggestions for area boundaries that could then be used as a political tool in the regional negotiations. These area suggestions would operate with a regional protection zone, and a local plan zone that would be further differentiated in relation to wild reindeer interests through future municipal planning processes.

From a planning system perspective the challenge would then be how to further these local processes, on local premises to create more sustainable nature society relations in the long run.

During the meeting I suggested at various times that this locally-developed proposal could be the point of departure for an informal dialogue with the County Governor before the formal proposal was submitted. I exemplified my suggestion with their own experiences with the “løype plan” process, which illustrated that new understandings could be developed about the subject matter through dialogue. I argued that it was important not to foster conflicts by closing the planning arena with a formal proposal, but rather consider the national authorities as co-players in a dialogue of disagreements. This suggestion was considered a possible opening for bridging local and regional perspectives; nonetheless they feared that it could develop into an even more conflictual planning environment. It was finally decided that one of the mayors would further this dialogue perspective in the formal Heiplanen steering board meeting.

In a formal Heiplanen meeting on October 7, it was discussed and decided that certain municipalities would need new local rounds to formulate concrete area boundaries. *“It is more important with a good plan than to keep the deadlines”* (Jastrey, 20101007). The project leader also discussed the possibility of opening the plan process for a “regional park” perspective after definition of the area boundaries. This was welcomed as interesting, but not currently possible with the potential conflicts (and expectations) it could produce (Jastrey, 20101007). The project leader and county government planners were thus increasingly recognizing that the plan process could not be reduced to “boundary” setting, but required the development of more dialogue between local, regional, and national authorities. The study tour was perceived as one such opportunity to initiate dialogue.

These developments of ending the local community process and creating a formal Setesdal proposal as the point of departure for dialogue, not only created a shift in the planning process, but also in the research perspective. The initial focus of exploring everyday life oriented perspectives of protection through local community engagement was changed to exploring the collaboration between levels of authorities and the definition of boundaries and categories. The research engagement was, in this sense, changed from opening the planning system arena for broader local life perspectives, to exploring the process *within* the formal planning arena and the potential for collaboration between the local and regional formal plan actors. Still, the research interest was oriented towards inquiring how the local everyday life oriented perspectives could be furthered within the formal planning arena. In this sense, the researcher attempted to explore how the engagement and understandings developed with the local communities and authorities were expressed on the formal planning arena and how they were reflected in the understandings of the formal regional planning actors.

The study tour and budding collaboration

The Heiplanen steering board arranged a study tour to England in October 2010 for the municipal and county government mayors and planners, as well as the County Governor and wild reindeer board. I was

invited as an observer and was engaged to formulate a report from the tour (Vasstrøm, 2010:1024). The purpose of the trip was to visit two different protection areas in England that had experience with local participation. It also included a steering meeting where the county governors were invited to present their perspectives on Heiplanen alongside a presentation of the new Setesdal plan proposal. The study tour in this sense represents an important emergent arena for dialogue and collective experiences in the formal planning process.

The study tour created a possibility for all parties to reflect on the long experiences with nature protection and local participation that the English cases (Forest of Bowland and Peak District National Park) represented. Alongside the collective experiential arena, the study tour also provided informal arenas for dialogue and reflection between the parties. The main learning experiences from the English cases were their involvement and collaboration with the local communities. This collaboration was not only aimed at involving the community during a planning process, but also at working with tools to *understand* the local perspectives of nature and life (sense of place, landscape character assessment) as a constitutional part of nature management. The park rangers in the Peak District National Park (who have the same mandate and educational background as the environmental counsellors of the county governors, and were therefore considered “reliable”), explained that they were increasingly working with a plural knowledge understanding of the landscape. While natural sciences (geology, biology, eco-system theory) served to understand the first “layers” of the landscape, and further, history and culture were an important additional layer to consider in landscape assessment. However, it was the presentation of the final “layer” that created reflections among the Norwegian participants: this “societal layer” was concerned with comprehending citizens’ understanding and sense of the landscape. Further, both national parks had worked to involve the communities actively in the *management* of the nature area through the education of local rangers for guiding and wildlife observations, or employment of farmers to maintain hedgerows, etc. One of the County Governor’s representatives expressed that the “societal layer” of landscape assessment had not been distinctively operationalized in Norwegian environmental management practice. These experiences generated evening discussions between county governors, municipal representatives and me as an “outside” reflection partner about the (current and potential) role of local participation and knowledge in a planning process. The study tour in this sense created reflections about the potential of nature protection in living landscapes, and the potential of human interaction in protected landscapes, and not least, how such combinations could generate new perspectives of knowledge and participation that could support sustainable nature management – and community development.

The study tour steering meeting was the first meeting that would gather the municipal mayors and the county governors in a collective arena to discuss the planning process and purpose. The steering meeting was opened by Morten Clemmetsen (Naturverkstedet/University of Life Sciences, Norway) with a presentation of the regional park concept. It was emphasized that the concept of regional parks was founded on an idea of uniting different area use interests within a sustainability framework through

regional partnerships between authorities, stakeholders and citizens. This perspective was welcomed as relevant – but too broad to be considered within the time frame of Heiplanen.

The Setesdal Secretarial proposal was presented by one of the Setesdal mayors. He explained that the Heiplanen process is so significant for Setesdal that a collaborative proposal was considered necessary. This proposal could not only anchor the plan locally but also clarify the boundary zones that had previously been so conflictual. It was emphasized that the process was not locked from their perspective, and that they considered it important to find common ground. This presentation created discussions. The Setesdal initiative was appreciated by the other municipalities. The local participation and legitimacy was accentuated as part of creating long term concern for the wild reindeer. The simplification of zone and area categories was also welcomed; it was argued that a plan with too many different zone categories would create confusion and more bureaucracy and less local understanding. The establishment of improved collaboration between municipalities and regional authorities was discussed as a prerequisite for succeeding with a plan that could answer to *and* withstand the pressure from national authorities. The development perspective was brought up as an aspect that should not be forgotten in the current work that focused on area boundaries and securement. It was important to use the plan to attract resources that could improve local sustainable development (similar to the English cases).

Lastly three county governor representatives presented their perspectives. They emphasized the importance of creating a regional solution and thereby avoiding a national dictate. The County Governor recognized that previous state government of environmental matters has not always proved “correct”:

“the state made many mistakes in its “environmental protection childhood” and that is a long story we should learn from” (County Governor, 20101024).

They expressed an understanding of the local frustration, and an appreciation of local engagement for wild reindeer. But they also emphasized the complexity of the ecological concerns and the challenge of the increasing human area claims in the wild reindeer habitat.

“We have to focus on collaboration instead of burying ourselves in conflict. We are foremost agreed. We are all genuinely concerned with the wild reindeer. And the County Governor must also be aware of that” (County Governor, 20101024)

The study tour in this sense represented an arena for experience and reflection of the nature protection subject matter in relation to the English cases, and an arena for informal and formal dialogue through evening discussions and the formal steering meeting (Vasstrøm, 20101024). This collective experience was perhaps also influential during the regional plan forum in November 2010, where the municipalities and County Governor decided to develop dialogue meetings for the final planning proposal.

The second regional plan forum

The regional plan forum summoned municipal planners from all the municipalities, along with county government planners and county governors from the four counties to discuss the current Heiplanen proposal and in particular the “grey” areas, or the boundary areas and categorizations. John Jastrey, the project leader, introduced the meeting by summing up his perspective of the agreement and disagreement of the current plan, and the challenges for the expected outcome (Jastrey, 2010:115). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the local proposals that he had received during the fall, in relation to the perspectives of the county governors and the principal categories developed in his Heiplanen proposal. The project leader recognized that although his dialogue with the local municipalities had increased the understanding of the potential agreements of the plan, it had also shown that there were many layers of local concern that a regional plan was not able to consider. The complexity and conflicts of the planning area was in this sense still a challenge. From his point of view this meeting was an attempt to define “enough” area for the wild reindeer, while avoiding the most conflictual areas of the plan. In addition, the meeting was an attempt to negotiate categorizations of the “grey” zones where human and wild reindeer interests were disputed.

The Setesdal Secretarial proposal was presented, by the project leader, as the most challenging because of its reluctance to accept a boundary zone in the valley area. On the positive side it was emphasized that there now was an acceptance in Setesdal for a national wild reindeer area on both the western and eastern mountain range. Setesdal was one of the only municipalities that had had a political process in connection to these first area proposals, the other municipal proposals had been worked out by the planners.

The categorization of the zones for national wild reindeer area (NWA), boundary zones, or consideration zones, would impact the size of each zone. In this sense the County Governor argued that a large NWA zone with strong restrictions of construction and traffic, could generate acceptance for a smaller boundary zone. Vice versa, a small NWA zone would generate claims of a larger boundary zone. The problem with this argumentation is that size is relative. The only “absolute measure” in the process is the natural scientific knowledge-based wild reindeer map. However, this was not accepted as an absolute measure by the municipalities.

There were different and contested perceptions of what the boundary zone represented. The different perceptions were not only influenced by institutional and personal values, beliefs, and knowledge, but also by the experience that each person or institution has had in relation to previous nature protection processes. The county government planners understood it as a potential space for development where wild reindeer interests had to be considered to some extent. The County Governors, however, understood it as a buffer-zone for the wild reindeer habitat, i.e. a precautionary zone. The previous experience between municipalities and county governors also contributed to increasing the dispute about zone understandings. Similar problems arose in the discussion of the consideration zones. On the one hand they were presented as an opportunity to create differentiated management in disparate areas of the plan, which both

municipalities and the County Governor found feasible. However, different categories and zone definitions would also generate a complexity of layers in the planning system. Such layered complexity could both generate confusion for local citizens and stakeholders, and possible conflicts of interpretation between the municipalities and the County Governor. A planning document with opaque and differentiated zones and layers could, in this sense, create juridical complexity that local citizens would not be able to – or animate themselves to – understand or deal with. Differentiated zones could thus undermine the local legitimacy to the plan. The municipalities therefore argued that the different zones had to be described in detail to avoid future conflicts of interpretation. Further, one of the Setesdal municipalities argued that such regional planning, with different zones, ought to be related to the planning categories of other regional plans (e.g. water protection plans) and then estimate how much area the municipalities would end up with. It was thus argued that the human – local community – perspective had to be considered in the development of these large plans.

“It is historically unjust, but it has to be the wild reindeer considerations that govern the plan” (County Governor, 20101115)

The plenum discussion was brought into the group work for each county in an attempt to concretize the area boundaries and categorizations in relation to the Heiplanen suggestions and the municipal proposals. The group work discussed the guidelines of each zone. The group came to some agreement about creating stronger protection categorization in the national wild reindeer area, while creating more municipal room for development in the areas close to the valley floor. These discussions were summarized by the County Governor (Omholt, 2010111). The group work in this sense, concluded with an agreement that they were improving their understanding of the boundaries and their categorization, and that these county meetings served to improve their mutual understandings. However, it was also discussed that it was difficult for the group to negotiate on concrete areas without the decision authority of the municipalities (mayors) and the County Governor (head of environmental department). A furthering of such dialogue meeting would thus require the presence of both local and regional decision makers. The regional plan forum in this sense served to accentuate the different understandings and perspectives of the planning purpose and area, but also developed awareness of the importance of these dialogue arenas for furthering mutual understandings of the subject matter.

The discrepancies that continue to produce barriers for further mutual understanding are bound to different worldviews or values of nature, different paradigms of knowledge, different experiences with the planning system and local life, and institutional norms and discourses. Even though the dialogue meetings supported the generation of differentiated knowledge and value understanding, and developed a common experiential arena, it was clear that the differences were so profound that it would take more than one encounter to reach improved mutual understanding.

Regional planning actor work meeting

The regional plan forum was succeeded by a regional work meeting between the county governments, the County Governor and the wild reindeer board (Vasstrøm, 20101116a). The wild reindeer researcher, Olav Strand, from the Norwegian Institute of Nature Research (NINA) was invited to present his natural scientific knowledge perspective of the key wild reindeer areas in the plan. The purpose of the meeting was for the project leader to verify and clarify how the regional planning actors perceived the progress and challenges ahead. Further, it was an invitation to the county governors to participate more actively in the planning process and in the steering board meeting. The meeting was in other words an assessment of the potential conflicts between the municipal proposals and the county governors' mandate as representatives of the national authorities' environmental policy, but also an official invitation to more collaborative local-national planning dialogue.

The meeting revealed that there were strong disagreements in the interpretation of the plan purpose and consequences of the planning categories between the regional county governments and the County Governors. The county government perceived the plan (as also previously described) as a potential tool for rural development in a balance with wild reindeer area. The County Governor, however, perceived the plan as a tool for securing wild reindeer habitats against human development. It was, in other words, the very premises of the plan that were questioned.

"The boundary zone must be a larger area than the national wild reindeer area, where there are genuine considerations, where everything must be weighed according to the wild reindeer interests" (County Governor, 20101116a)

"The boundary zone is an area where the wild reindeer interests can be affected" ... "the national wild reindeer area is not a conservation area!" (County government planner, 20101116a)

These disagreements also laid the foundation for the discussion between, on the one side, differentiated and flexible planning zones and categorizations, and on the other, few, clear, and predictable zones. Whereas differentiated zones could grade the level of protection and generate flexible management, it could also produce unpredictable consequences for the local planning authorities. The County Governors were in this sense aware that the local municipalities would interpret the consideration zones as factual protection zones. It was therefore discussed if the County Governor could define the principal wild reindeer interest areas that could serve as an agreed minimum protection area. The project leader suggested that an agreed minimum could serve as a new platform for negotiation of potential boundary zones with each municipality.

The discussion of zones and necessary protection area was further developed in the discussion with Olav Strand, who presented a scientific knowledge perspective of wild reindeer habitats in the regional planning area based on the GPS project (which for a large part is financed by the municipalities and hydro-power

finances) (Strand et al., 2011). He emphasized that the natural scientific knowledge is only one perspective of the reality. Neither the scientific nor the experiential local knowledge is enough to determine wild reindeer behaviour, area use, population movements, etc. Scientific knowledge and models can generalize on the basis of many different data sources, and build hypothesis and theoretical perspectives of how wild reindeer move and behave, and what factors and levels of interference that affect the habitat *on a general level*. However, scientific knowledge and models were not enough to judge whether certain initiatives in a certain area would affect the wild reindeer habitat and behaviour. From his point of view one of the main challenges in wild reindeer management was to develop more collaboration between the local and scientific knowledge generation. However, he also emphasized that the wild reindeer area was vulnerable to human interference and that there were certain areas that were critical for the survival of the wild reindeer herd. In this sense, he would not be able to judge single events in a large habitat, but the sum of many events could of course affect the habitat. He therefore argued for a regional “holistic” planning area, but also furthered the idea of collaboration with the local communities and authorities as a different way of wild reindeer protection.

The perspective of collaborative knowledge generation and management lead to a discussion of the potential arenas for dialogue in Heiplanen. It accentuated the necessity of dialogue with the municipalities. The county governors expressed that they had experienced increased trust and understanding through the regional plan forums and the study tour. They had become more aware that the local authorities felt squeezed between national expectation and local perspectives. However, they also underlined that they represented the national environmental policies, and that they had a particular mandate in the planning process: securing the wild reindeer habitat.

“The process has been a roller-coaster, but now we have developed a good dialogue”... “The process has been bombastic in written communication, but through dialogue it has shown that we more often agree than disagree” ...” as previously, we are more optimistic now, after the plan forum, than before the meeting” (County Governor, 20101116a)

After the regional meeting I had invited the county governors of the three main counties to a focus group interview. The purpose was not only to discuss their understanding of local participation and the role of knowledge, but also to challenge it. In my emerging understanding of the planning process I considered this event an important space for reflection of roles in the process. My objective was especially to understand if local participation was understood as an ingredient in a ready recipe on the planning arena, or as the exploration and development of the local nature perspectives.

The county governors considered different sources of knowledge important in a planning process, and recognized that many local actors held important knowledge perspectives on the wild reindeer behaviour and population. However, they also emphasized that local knowledge sometimes “changed” with the different settings and in this way could be used to serve certain (economic) development interests. They

criticized local knowledge for being based on single events that did not give the basis for long term validity, and that sometimes local knowledge was the sum of opinions from certain strong stakeholders. The collaboration of local and scientific knowledge was therefore necessary, because the local perspective was incapable of “seeing the whole”.

Local participation was therefore considered important and they recognized the great engagement in the local communities for the area planning. The time pressure in Heiplanen had demonstrated how important time was to develop local participation. They reckoned that it was important that the local communities were “heard” and “feel that they are heard” and that dialogue is a necessity despite disagreements. However, they also considered the very dialogue a problematic process that could generate statements in one arena that were countered in the next arena.

“There is a consensus problem in “the dialogue” – when the final decision is made there then appears a blast of objections and silent opinions” (County Governor, 20101116b)

From their perspective their role was to secure national policies. It was therefore difficult to bridge their formal role of control with a role of collaboration. However, they all agreed that each process was different, and their experience showed that the individual actors, their personal chemistry were very important to be able to develop collaboration in the process.

Partial analysis IV: Understanding the continuation of the formal planning process

The continuation of the formal process accentuated several perspectives of the substantial socio-ecological conflict, and the procedural knowledge-steering dispute that are echoed in nature protection planning and management literature (Arnesen & Riseth 2008; Carlsson 2008; Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006; Grönholm 2009; Skjeggedal 2008). However, it also revealed that the development of collective meeting arenas generated improved acceptance of different legitimate perspectives to the subject matter, budding mutual understandings and of the complexity, and growing trust between local and regional level. These developments in the planning process are emphasized by the collaborative nature planning and management literature as an important pre-requisite for improved management praxis and legitimate planning outcome (Berkes 2007; Daniels & Walker 2001; Innes & Booher 2010; Schusler, Decker, & Pfeffer 2003).

The formal regional planning actors (county government and County Governor) understood the planning process and outcome as an obligation from the national authorities. The regional plan process was thus a goal in itself, as an answer to national expectations, and to avoid state authorities to intervening in the regional arena to govern the process. There was, in other words, a pressure on the regional arena to either find an acceptable planning outcome, or conversely anticipate intervention from the national authorities to define an acceptable outcome. The threat of the national authority enforcement increased the focus on reaching the commissioned purpose of the plan efficiently: defining the national wild reindeer areas. Besides answering to a national commission, the regional planning actors also believed that the planning

process was a necessary answer to the wild reindeer habitat challenges. The regionally-defined planning boundaries were considered a necessary means to avoid jeopardizing the wild reindeer habitat by the “tyranny of small decisions” or “bit-by-bit construction” in each municipality. The area boundaries and guidelines (the planning document) thus became the primary objective of the process, to satisfy the national expectations, and to facilitate (predictable) future management. The imposed focus on efficiency and purpose rationality on the planning arena could be understood as reducing the possibility for broader deliberations between different values and rationalities (Hansen 2007). The planning process in this sense became “reduced” to a means to reach a goal, and therefore oriented towards efficiently fulfilling its initial purpose. This reduces the “idea” of planning as broader deliberations between different rationalities to a matter of fulfilling the pre-defined purpose rationality of the planning institutions; and thus compromises the democratic foundation of the process (Elling 2008). The planning arena thus becomes self-referential and other perspectives of the subject matter can be reduced to illegitimate opinions (Hansen 2007; Deetz, 1992). This purpose and efficiency orientation was produced through the tightened planning timeframe, the reduction of the initial broad protection and use perspectives, and the focus on area boundaries for the securing of the wild reindeer habitat. However, the regional planning actors also recognized that the regional character of the planning scale would require elements of differentiation and flexibility to cope with local variance. This challenge of flexibility was answered through the introduction of “consideration zones” in the grey areas. The different zone categorizations were, by the regional planning actors, considered a new planning remedy that could ensure flexibility in nature management, and serve as a tool for negotiation with the local municipalities. The introduction of the considerations zones could be interpreted as a “stage” for interest negotiations between municipal and regional environmental authorities (the County Governor). Nevertheless, these aspects of adaptability were not oriented at deliberating perspectives or arguments on the subject matter *beyond* the purpose of setting boundaries. Rather, they were planning technical measures to bargain established interest negotiations *as* boundary settings on a map. In this sense, they were used as a remedy to reduce conflict between local and regional stakeholders and as a means to complete the final plan document (or answering to the instructions of the commissioning letter).

The municipalities understood the planning process and purpose as an (unnecessary and repetitive) national dictate for wild reindeer protection. The municipalities did not disagree with the wild reindeer habitat in the higher mountain areas (which is why they found the whole planning process redundant). However, they disagreed with how to define *what* habitat protection means, and *where* the boundaries should be drawn. The area conflict was thus concerned with the understandings of the “grey areas” as either wild reindeer or human “habitats”. The municipalities argued that a regional plan scale might be able to classify national wild reindeer areas, but was not an appropriate scale to discuss the areas close to the valley floor where human and wild reindeer interests are mixed. The plan should from their point of view only operate with two zones (and thus avoid the grey areas): a protection zone with a regional perspective and a community zone where the wild reindeer interests should be clarified through further local processes of deliberating aspects of protection and use. The municipal planners criticized the idea of introducing

consideration zones in the grey areas, because they would generate a multi-layered complexity in the area. Such planning complexity, that might appear rational and balanced from the institutional perspective, would be experienced as opaque or incomprehensible from a local (citizen's) perspective. The municipal planners argued that differentiated zones would be perceived as protection zones by local citizens (also given the historic context and conflict) which would be difficult to communicate to citizens. Further, from a local planning perspective it would be difficult to predict what the actual consequences of such zones would be. Large consideration zones would thus reduce the local legitimacy of the plan as being anything else than a nationally-enforced conservation process. Further, such zones would generate unpredictability in the municipal area planning praxis, because it would be open for interpretation by both local stakeholders and the county governors.

The municipal politicians and planners argued that the ability of balancing protection and use in a plan would inherently require an involvement of local perspectives. The municipalities thus reasoned that this planning process that affected such large areas of municipalities would require increased local involvement and recognition of community perspectives in order to appraise the very balance of protection and use. These municipal arguments and critique of the regional scale of nature protection can thus be understood as an argument for involving more everyday life oriented aspects in the nature protection planning. Not only as a means to generate improved understanding of the subject matter on the planning arena, but as a way of generating genuine legitimacy – as social acceptance and responsibility – of the plan in the municipalities. The “grey areas” were thus not *only* understood as areas for potential economic development, but *also* as areas that constituted part of the everyday life activities in the community. The act of balancing of nature protection and use must therefore also be informed by local community perspectives to generate other perspectives of what that balance is about. In this sense, the municipal arguments can be related to the arguments of Elling (2010) that new perspectives of environmental planning must be introduced through a lifeworld rationality to develop substantially different perspectives to sustainability. Further, as argued by Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a; 2007a), citizens' participation must take its point of departure in the citizens' collective understandings of the daily life relation to nature, otherwise it becomes a meaningless answer to a reified planning logic (or reduced to interest negotiations). It thus loses the potential for generating or reviving local nature and area responsibility as a *common* concern in the community.

The different regional and municipal understandings of the planning process and purpose were highly influenced by the different actors' perception of nature and “use”. The regional level perceived “nature” as a wild reindeer habitat that could be protected from human interference by drawing boundaries on a map and categorizing zones. Nature protection was in this sense a natural scientific-based tool for the expert bureaucracy that could prevent human activities in an area as also discussed by Reitan (2004) in the analysis of professional expertise in nature conservation in Norway. Such perspective of nature protection is, as pointed out by e.g. Daugstad and colleagues (2006), influenced by the dichotomous understanding of protection and use as opposite features of a nature relation. The “use” of nature, was from the regional

planning institutions, perceived as a potential for value creation and economic activities (e.g. power, tourism, construction). This institutional understanding reduced the balance of protection and use to a matter of a balancing of ecological and economic interests. The interests of use and protection were thus reduced to separate oppositional perspectives of nature in the planning process, and not as a common matter of concern connected to life in the communities. However, the process, through the establishment of the collective meetings arenas, generated opportunities to deliberate contrasting perspectives of nature protection and use. The municipal planners and politicians (who are also relating to the area as citizens) revealed an understanding of nature (e.g. the area) that related historical and future perspectives with the present daily relation to nature, and with both recreational and economic perspectives. Nature and “use” could thus not be marginalized to boundaries on a map or either ecological or economic interests. The municipal planners therefore argued that such area understandings required understanding of the life lived in the area. These irreducible and life-related understandings of nature and use are also explored in the work of Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a; 2007a) and Clausen (2011) in their descriptions of nature protection processes. They argue that the foundation for nature protection must involve such daily life perspectives to generate substantially different understandings of sustainable nature and community perspectives beyond the planning institutional guidelines or boundaries on a map.

These differences of understanding were further affected by the different perceptions of knowledge. The regional level considered the natural scientific, or ecological, knowledge a prerequisite for defining the area boundaries. It was thus the biological and ecological definition of the wild reindeer area use that was considered to be the foundation for the formation of the boundaries. This natural scientific or ecological understanding was, during this part of the plan process, challenged by the park rangers on the study tour to England, and by wild reindeer researchers, who both emphasized the necessity of local knowledge for long term sustainable management. This challenged the instrumentalization of knowledge that had previously been used to legitimize certain boundaries, and generated understanding for the necessity of dialogue between different knowledge perspectives. Although the municipalities and local communities acknowledged natural scientific knowledge as a necessary and important ingredient to understand the ecological aspects of the wild reindeer area, they argued that such knowledge had to be understood in relation to the local (historical, cultural) knowledge of hunting, “støyl” culture, and recreational use. The natural scientific knowledge was, according to local perspective, not considered “sufficient” to set boundaries in a plan that affected the local areas, or to create omnipotent management guidelines for the wild reindeer. The use of the natural scientific knowledge was in this sense perceived as a means of power to legitimize a predefined “truth” of the wild reindeer habitat boundaries. The role of knowledge as a means of power to define the planning outcome has been widely debated in planning literature (Pløger 2011) and nature management theory (Brunner & Steelman 2005). This is problematic from a deliberative democratic understanding of planning, because scientific knowledge can be used as an authoritative structure or objective truth that verifies a pre-defined planning outcome, instead of being presented as one (expert) perspective in a broader deliberation process of the subject matter (Elling 2008).

This part of the planning process constituted a turn in my research role and perspective: from the action research oriented engagement with the local community to facilitate citizens' participation in the formal planning process, to participating and observing the potential collaboration between local authorities and regional state authorities in the formal planning arena. This alteration was influenced by many different co-occurring events and movements of understanding. In one way, the ending of the local community process can be interpreted as an answer to the increased formal planning focus – or instrumentalization - on defining the boundaries within a reduced time frame. The municipal authorities were thus increasingly concerned to mobilize political power and planning institutional arguments to confront the regional planning institutions and the national planning commission. The local community processes were in that perspective concluded, because such informal citizens' perspectives would not have the necessary legitimacy or power to "speak" to a formal planning arena. Although the process and perspectives developed through the future creating workshops were recognized by the municipal authorities and the regional planning actors, as relevant to understand and explore potential local engagement and participation in nature management and societal development, they were also considered unplannable. The planning system, within an efficiency and purpose-oriented rationality, could thus not manage the diversity of local life-oriented perspectives of nature and society. This is as argued by Hansen (2007), Elling (2008) and Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a) compromising the whole democratic potential of the planning system because it neglects not only the relevance of citizens as democratic individuals, but also dismisses the deliberative potential to develop new understandings. The diversity and complexity of the FCW perspectives could, in this sense, not be operationalized within the defined regional planning purpose that the municipalities had to answer to. The municipalities could in this sense not "afford" to put effort into the local community processes, because there was a formal planning process with severe municipal consequences that awaited their response. Their response had to be focused on argumentation related to area boundaries, not lived life. In such a process of defining area boundaries, the local municipalities were reluctant to involve citizens, because such a process could mobilize strong individual (economic) interest quarrels. Ironically, it could therefore be claimed that when the planning purpose is reduced to a matter of negotiating interests between protection and use, then the planning arena invites conflict between the individual economic interests and claims. The question is therefore: if the planning arena, by inviting a broader and life related understanding of nature protection and use, could have created the ground for deliberating the subject matter as a concern of the *commons*?

My further research engagement became focused on participating and observing the local authority participation on the regional planning arena. On the one hand, this re-orientation of my research approach was undertaken because it was interesting to explore if and how the local and regional actors would further this initially highly conflictual plan, and how the development of a local-regional dialogue would affect this. Further, as also argued in the partial analysis II, the local planners and politicians also represent a lifeworld perspective, or daily life relation, to the area in question. Heiplanen was therefore not only perceived as a matter of municipal planning or politics related to their professional role to the area, but also considered an important planning process because it would affect their daily life relation to the area. My participation and

observation on the formal planning arena, therefore, also constituted a possibility to explore how the local everyday life perspectives that had been generated during the workshops and expressed by the local authorities during my meetings with them, would be furthered on the regional planning arena. In other words, it was an interest to explore if the regional planning arena would be able to deliberate local life-matter perspectives of the area.

Given the above analysis of the conclusion of the local community processes, the establishment of the Setesdal secretariat can be understood as a strategic response to the regional planning arena. The three municipalities in this sense joined and mobilized political power and planning competence to answer the formal planning purpose and by this means create room for negotiation. The formal Setesdal plan proposal, with its controversial claim of excluding a boundary zone, was thus an attempt to create space for negotiation on the municipal premises. The proposal of one regional wild reindeer area with strong protection was a demonstration of their will to “pacify” some areas, if they could gain planning authority in others. The strong political involvement revealed how important the planning process was to the Setesdal municipalities. The proposal confirmed that it was important for the municipalities to communicate the diversity of local nature relations (e.g. that it was not just a matter of economics, but a complex socio-cultural dimension). In this sense, some of the perspectives were similar to the themes of the FCWs, but they were communicated in a form that could enter the formal planning arena. The proposal and report were mounted to “speak” to the planning system logic, and accentuate the power of the political level in the municipalities as a (strategic) act to influence the final Heiplanen document.

Despite these differences of understandings and conflicts, it is important to emphasize how this part of the Heiplanen process developed new understandings across the local and regional planning, nature, knowledge, and participatory perspectives. The movements of understanding between local and regional state authorities during this part of the process went from conflict and “non-dialogue” to an understanding of the necessity of dialogue. The regional plan forum meetings created arenas for face-to-face discussion that enabled potential mutual understandings. From a collaborative planning perspective it is the establishment of such arenas that generates the opportunity to develop new understandings across different perspectives of the subject matter (Innes and Booher 2010; Healey 2006). This budding mutual understanding (along with pressure from the county governments and project leader) was influential on the County Governor’s decision to set aside the wild reindeer map in the current planning process. Vice versa, that very decision constituted an important turning point for the potential of generating trust between the local authorities and County Governor which again invigorated the potential for improved dialogue. The development of trust, as argued by Berkes (2007), is a prerequisite for crafting long term collaboration between stakeholders with different interests. The study trip to England was also an influential event in the movement of understanding. It produced a space for collective experiential reflection on Heiplanen in relation to the experiences of other nature protection areas. The English approaches to local participation and sustainable development thus demonstrated alternative perspectives of nature protection that generated resonance among the planning actors. These “discursive and

experiential” spaces of reflection forced both local and regional actors to (re)consider their own engagement and role in the process. These movements of understanding and the developing dialogue through the collective meeting arenas thus generated an improved recognition of the diverse perceptions of nature protection and use held by the different actors in the process, including the municipal authorities’ perspectives as *citizens* in the area.

This part of the planning process, on one side, revealed that local community participation and the FCW development of broad protection and use perspectives were too complex to “enter” a planning arena with pre-defined categorizations and purpose. The purposive planning rationality was thus not able to embrace the broader lifeworld perspectives (Elling 2008), or the diversity and irreducible daily life relations to nature (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a). The local community perspectives were not conformative with the generation of a planning document as a management tool. Conversely, this part of the process generated an increased understanding and recognition for the lived life in the local communities among the County Governor’s representatives. The complexity and magnitude of the regional plan area was thus gradually recognized as being dependent on local participation and knowledge collaboration to be able to categorize and draw the boundaries in the areas close to the valley floor. This recognition of complexity and the recognition and legitimization of different knowledge and value perspectives on the planning arena, reflects the founding argument for developing dialogue arenas within the collaborative planning and management tradition (Armitage et al. 2007; Innes & Booher 2010). The goal of the dialogue was not to impose a consensus, but to create deliberations about the purpose of the plan, the local nature perspectives, and the use of the knowledge. These meaning exchanges created an *improved understanding of the disagreements*. It was this recognition of disagreements that created *legitimacy for different perspectives in the plan process*, and thus created foundation for a more trusting dialogue between the local authorities and County Governor. The dialogue arenas were thus not entirely mounted on a search for consensus, as otherwise criticized as a limitation of the democratic potential by the post structural planning perspective (Flyvbjerg 1998; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998). The dialogue was also an inter-subjective process of learning from different perspectives about the common matter of concern, and thereby constituted a democratic potential (Arendt 1958; Hansen 2007). The continuation of this dialogue, in what I have called the semiformal planning process, will be the subject of the following section.

7.5. The semiformal planning process

The continuation of the formal planning process was staked out at two steering meetings in December 2010 and January 2011 (Jastrey, 20101210; Jastrey, 20110131). These steering meetings discussed and decided that it was necessary to initiate a new round of county meetings with municipalities, county governments, and County Governors to generate improved understanding of the regional plan complexity and purpose. Improved understandings were considered the way forward to produce a planning document that could be accepted at both municipal and regional state level (County Governor). The steering meetings showed that the study tour was perceived as an activity that had improved the “tone” in the process and it

was increasingly recognized that the County Governor was willing to “solve” the plan with the municipalities (Jastrey, 20101210).³⁶ However, the dilemma of “what comes first” was still enduring: should the boundaries be drawn before the definition of the area content, or vice versa? The problem was that the process had to work efficiently to develop a plan according to the commissioning letter, despite such efficiency requiring a reduction of the ambition of developing broad use aspects in the area. This dilemma was not solved, but a continuous discussion. The steering meeting decided that to reach a plan document within the time frame, the plan categories (of differentiated consideration zones) should be simplified. This was necessary to reduce the room for interpretation in the different zones, because interpretation represented a risk of unpredictability and conflict. This perception was related to the municipal experiences with the current/previous boundary zone, and the conflictual relations to the County Governor in these matters, exactly because of room for interpretation. The project leader developed the second formal planning proposal of Heiplanen (Jastrey, 20110202) based on these guidelines of simplifications and the idea of proposing a minimum common agreement on the wild reindeer area (Jastrey, 20110131). This second Heiplanen proposal (that was accepted by the steering meeting in January) was the point of departure for the countywide dialogue meetings between municipalities, county governors, and county governments. In addition, the County Governor and municipalities communicated their minimum claims to the area in December 2010 and February 2011 respectively.

The first dialogue meeting was arranged by the project leader in Heiplanen and gathered the political and administrative actors from the municipalities and county governments, and the environmental representatives from the County Governor (Thorsen, 20110209; Vasstrøm, 20110209). The purpose of the meeting was introduced by the project leader, who emphasized the importance of open and direct communication: “to say what we mean”. The meeting aimed to generate improved understandings of the local-regional complexity and find a way to “translate” this complexity into an area plan. The first part of the meeting discussed the general challenges of Heiplanen, and especially the boundary zones (the “grey” areas). Thereafter, each municipality presented their local perspective of the concrete area proposal and guidelines for the second Heiplanen proposal.

The wild reindeer map was brought up (again) by the municipalities to illustrate their understanding of the absurdness of initiating a plan process with a predefined map. They criticized that the map, with its substantial influence on the process, had not yet published its scientific knowledge basis in a report (*“Perhaps we should have a professional assessment of the wild reindeer map – since we still do not have*

³⁶ The necessity of negotiating directly with county governors was further accentuated by the fact that the two other regional wild reindeer processes (Hardanger and Rondane) had become entrenched in vast conflicts between the municipalities on the one side and the County Governor and Ministry of Environment on the other. The conflicts were based on different perspectives of the “use” aspect, and the (insufficient) implementation of the wild reindeer map in the planning process (Jastrey, personal communication 20101217). It was argued that to avoid such conflicts, dialogue with the county governor was necessary. This argument had also been supported by the county governors themselves during the study trip (Vasstrøm, 20101024), where they argued for a regional solution to avoid national interference. There was in other words pragmatic desire on both sides to establish dialogue and generate the understanding necessary for crafting a plan document on regional premises.

the criteria for its boundaries?” (Municipal mayor, 20110209)). The municipalities in this way wanted to illustrate that they felt the “knowledge basis” of the map had served to legitimize a protection agenda of areas that they did not agree with, and that it was still underlying the entire argumentation of the area boundaries and the guidelines for the second proposal. The County Governor referred to their common meeting in September where they had agreed to minimize the role of the wild reindeer map in the current planning process, and in their December proposal which had minimized the County Governor claims to a boundary zone. However, the wild reindeer map was still considered a legitimization of nature protection, without the claimed scientific reliability.

The boundary zones were problematized by all the municipalities in relation to previous historic experiences and the understanding of “use”. First of all it was argued that a boundary zone should have a specific purpose in order to gain local legitimacy. In this sense the municipalities argued against a broad boundary around all the national wild reindeer territory. Secondly, the municipalities were afraid that a large boundary zone with broad categorization would generate expectations for construction or development initiatives that would anyhow have to be weighed against wild reindeer interests by the County Governor. The room for interpretation of the categorizations could therefore, based on their previous experience, lead to endless quarrels between stakeholders, municipalities and County Governor. The municipalities therefore argued for a smaller, but stricter boundary zone, where construction of new cabins was forbidden, but roaming/recreation and restoration of old “støyl cabins” were allowed. The point of the argument was that the boundary zone would differentiate between “use” as construction and economic development, and “use” as a life context (incl. agriculture) and recreational activities (skiing, hiking, hunting, etc.), which in the local perspective also included the right to use and restore old “støyl cabins”. They proposed to plan skiing tracks that could channel the traffic away from the most vulnerable wild reindeer areas, and time restrictions to skiing tracks according to the wild reindeer yearly cycles³⁷. The bottom line of the municipal argumentation was for the National Wild Reindeer Area to be accepted, while the boundary zone had to be justified case by case (as smaller lump areas, rather than a broad general line); the boundary zone should however be more restrictive than the proposed guidelines. The boundary zone would in this sense limit the development of new construction, but still be open to agriculture, recreational activities and “støyl cabin” restoration. The discussions rounded off with a unanimous agreement that although there were unsolved challenges, they were moving in the right direction. It was therefore proposed that the administrative planners of the municipalities and County Governor should meet directly to “model the area map”. This was welcomed by all parties: politicians, planners, and the County Governor. These meetings would be based on the new municipal area and guideline proposals, and serve to negotiate a mutually-agreed planning proposal by the end of March 2011 (Thorsen, 20110209).

³⁷ Research has shown that 95% of all ski “tourists” use the marked skiing tracks. Skiing tracks are thus considered an effective way to channel traffic into zones that are less vulnerable (Strand et al. 2010). The municipalities wanted to combine these restrictions with time constraints, e.g. that skiing tracks could be closed during certain periods of the year.

“We would like to meet. This process has been like a roller coaster. But always when it has been darkest, there has appeared a plan forum and a dialogue – and that has been important – the dialogue – that is very fortunate” ... “I would be happy to come [to the next meeting], this time is well spent. I was very anxious before this meeting, but now I am content. These meetings are important. The problem in Hardanger and Rondane is that they have not taken the time to really discuss these difficult matters. The municipal administrations have done a great job - we cannot afford to lose this process to the Ministry” (County Governor, 20110209)

“It is a victory that we have come so far. This has been a very constructive meeting” (Project leader, 20110209)

At the end of the meeting I questioned how this new dialogue could serve to follow up on the broader citizens’ perspectives of developing local knowledge aspects, youth education, sustainable mountain use initiatives, etc. All three mayors and the county government agreed that these perspectives were important, and discussed how such perspectives could be furthered on a national level. It was discussed that such development perspectives should not be established as new “councils” but rather be integrated in existing administrative responsibilities, like the county government and SVR. But fundamentally, the actors agreed that such initiatives would have to wait until the formal plan document was formally approved.

The second dialogue meeting was arranged in Bykle by the county government planner and summoned the administrative level from the Setesdal municipalities and three representatives from the County Governor’s office (including the head of the environmental department, i.e. the decision making authority). Between the meetings, the municipalities had sent area and guideline proposals to the County Governor and county government.

“We all agree that this has been a long process and we are now approaching something good. It is important we that we can now proceed together. Everyone now agrees that Setesdal must be able to live with this plan - now and in the future” (Municipal director, 20110221)

“We are interested in finding long term solutions for both municipalities and the County Governor. We have to look out for the most important key areas for the wild reindeer: calving areas, winter and summer feeding areas, and transfer corridors. That will of course involve consequences for the municipalities – but I believe we can work to come to a solution we can share.” (Head of environmental department, County Governor, 20110221)

The atmosphere at the meeting could be described as positive regarding the ability and desire to reach a solution for the plan area. However, one of the municipalities withdrew from the “negotiation table”. The planner argued that he did not have a mandate to negotiate because there was a political decree of accepting only two zones. He could participate in the dialogue, but not negotiate beyond the current

political decision. He suggested that the County Governor should call for a political dialogue meeting with the municipality. The rest of the meeting participants were very surprised and even stunned; everybody had understood that the mayor in the previous meeting had given the planner a mandate of negotiation. However, since this had not been put in writing, the planner did not want to do anything he could be accused of later. (The planner was, incidentally, listed as mayoral candidate at the next election). It was agreed that the County Governor would contact the mayor for a new meeting.

The meeting discussed the other municipal proposals in detail and the municipalities explained their “logic” of the planning boundaries and categorization of boundary zones. The maps of Setesdal with the municipal proposals were displayed on the projector to discuss them section by section. The atmosphere was positive and engaged and there was even room to make witticisms about the situation that gathered old enemies around a common table to negotiate an unpopular plan (e.g. Planner: *“How honest can I be?!”* – County Governor: *“Well, you are among friends!”*).

“What we have agreed is that we want wild reindeer on the high mountain plateau, people in the valley, and where they have always been” (Planner, 20110221)

The national wild reindeer areas (as the most restrictive zones in the plan) were not even a point of discussion in these dialogue meetings. These zones had been increasingly recognized and accepted since the common Setesdal proposal in October. The main points of discussion accentuated the previous meeting arguments. Setesdal wanted a plan that could create predictability in the areas close to the valley floor to avoid repetitions of the previous conflicts with the County Governor. They were afraid that this new regional planning system with its consideration zones would create opaque planning guidelines that would create false expectations for stakeholders or citizens and endless conflicts between the municipality and the County Governor when “balancing” different interests in each case. They therefore wanted stricter guidelines for their boundary zones than suggested in the formal 2. Heiplanen proposal, but also a reduction in the boundary zone expansion. The project leader was (still) surprised that they wanted firmer restrictions than what had been suggested in his proposal. The County Governor, however, having the previous history of conflicts in mind was more perceptive to the situation.

“We do not want “maybe zones” – it’s expensive and requires many resources to start a plan – and it is frustrating to get a “no” – for everybody – also the ones who govern the “no” – the municipality and the County Governor! We want clear and predictable guidelines and boundaries that people understand. There are areas with challenges, but we are ready to negotiate” (Municipal planner, 20110221)

The categorization of the boundary zones were therefore (again) a key subject of discussion. It was crucial for the municipalities to explain that the boundary zones were meant to “secure” areas for recreation (skiing tracks, hunting, etc.) and cultural “støyl life” (agriculture and recreational use). The boundary zones were in this sense not considered areas for second home development. The reason to classify them as boundary zones and not national wild reindeer territory was that the municipalities feared that the national

wild reindeer areas would be encompassed in the existing conservation (SVR) area which would generate stronger protection guidelines that could compromise recreational activities and støy use.

“The boundary zone is not for second home development. But it must be possible for landowners to restore their “støy cabin”. That is part of the life quality of living here. It must be possible to put the shotgun on your back – go to the mountains – and shoot yourself a grouse. We don’t want to open the boundary zone for second home development – we want to avoid too many quarrels. And we don’t want second homes in this area – it is a recreational area!” (Municipal planner, 20110221)

The municipalities thus argued that they would concentrate second home development in the existing areas. It was therefore important for the municipalities that these existing “second home” villages were not included in a boundary zone. These areas were some of the largest challenges in the negotiations, because some of them were located in key wild reindeer areas. It was agreed that the municipalities (except the one that withdrew) should work with reassessments of the maps and guidelines, before meeting with the County Governor the following week. The last municipality would have a political meeting with the County Governor two weeks later to negotiate the plan.

In a conversation with the project leader and county government planner immediately after the meeting, they noted that they had never previously experienced such open and direct dialogue between municipalities and County Governor. They recognized that I had suggested this type of meeting before, but also emphasized that there had been a process of maturation that had improved the communication environment little by little, including the change of employees in the County Governor’s environmental department, and the experiences during the study trip.

“We all heard what you [the researcher] said a year ago – but we had never thought that it would be possible to meet in this way. I have never seen this type of negotiation before” ... “but there has also been maturation with many small processes that have opened the way for this type of meetings” (Project leader, 20110221)

The third and fourth dialogue meetings were arranged by the county government in the county house in Arendal. These meetings gradually negotiated the exact boundaries of the plan proposal. The atmosphere was influenced by a will to negotiate, and a trust in each other. The municipalities presented their revised drafts, which created an increasing understanding of the special Setesdal situation and their perspective of predictability and legitimacy in relation to use and protection. The boundary within the valley and associated issues were discussed in minute detail. The discussions were made standing over the map and discussing the nature/conditions of each specific area: was it spruce or birch forest; was the area a plateau, valley or a slope; was it a place for local activities (recreation and agriculture) or not; was it of key interest to the wild reindeer or not; were there further local development plans or not; how would the local citizens relate to a boundary; were there power lines or not, etc. The discussions and negotiations in this sense

developed a “collaborative” environment where all the actors were willing to give and take, and willing to listen and understand the different knowledge and value perspectives.

“It must be straightforward to differentiate between the National Wild Reindeer Area (NWA) and the boundary zones; it is preferable with a stricter NWA zone. It is important for us that there is a clear differentiation. It has never been the idea to build in the boundary zone in Setesdal. Until now it has not been possible with scattered construction [of houses] – and we still don’t want that - that is not the purpose of our planning and infrastructure development.” ...“This form will give us more room for action in the municipal planning. The invisible wild reindeer boundary will now be visible” (Municipal Planner, 20110225)

“We probably treat this more as a municipal plan because the SVR and the NWA compromises 77% of our area” (Municipal planner, 20110225)

“So this will be a Setesdal model?!” (County Governor, 20110225)

Another outcome of the meeting was the idea of “transferring” the juridical influence of the wild reindeer map from a “formal planning premise” to a “thematic map” in line with other knowledge maps. The map would therefore not be bound to the formal planning guidelines, but figure as a thematic knowledge map of one specific aspect of the area. In effect the Setesdal municipalities gained the (work and) responsibility of writing their own guidelines for the entire plan. The Setesdal model was in this sense stricter, but more fine-tuned to the local valley area. The municipal planners would write the actual guidelines for each zone and have them verified by the County Governor *before* the plan was sent to public hearing. These guidelines became directly imported into the formal plan document as a special Setesdal model.

The last dialogue meeting gathered the municipal mayor and planner from the last municipality to the County Governor (Vasstrøm, 20100310). This meeting was more challenging than the previous, because the municipality had existing plans for second home developments in areas that were specified as wild reindeer calving areas. The meeting however, proceeded with the desire from the County Governor to understand the actual conflicts of each area, and the mayor explained the underlying tensions in the local community. The main conflict was still concerned with the understanding of local use of the area in relation to traditional “støyl life” and modern snow mobile use. The meeting ended with a settlement of the boundaries, and an acceptance of the guidelines developed by the other two municipalities. At the end of these dialogue meetings I asked what had been the main outcome of such dialogue meetings

“To establish a long term dialogue and getting the local challenges communicated directly” (Municipal mayor, 20100310)

“To formulate our priorities with the municipalities... and be solution-oriented – we have gained more understanding for the lived life. The development of trust also makes people take more responsibility” (County Governor, 20100310)

The County Governor formalized the outcome of the dialogue meetings through their official proposal to Heiplanen in April 2011. This proposal emphasized that the guidelines for Setesdal in Heiplanen had been developed in dialogue between municipalities and the County Governor. Although there were details of disagreement that the County Governor found it necessary to accentuate, it was clear that the overall plan was considered acceptable. Further, it was mentioned that the municipalities had chosen stronger protection zones in some areas than the rest of Heiplanen, and that their understanding of the wild reindeer habitat needs were well anchored (Omholt, 20110415).

Partial Analysis V: Understanding the semi-formal process

This part of the process generated a significant change of (collaborative) atmosphere in the planning process. While the meetings during the initiation of the formal planning process had been coated with conflict, frustration, and mistrust, this semi-formal phase formed a collaborative effort for dialogue and mutual understanding on both the municipal and County Governor parts. This was supported by an increasing certainty among the planning actors of dialogue as a goal in itself and the budding trust between the municipal and county governor actors through several meetings. In this sense, the collaborative effort succeeded to bend the purposive rationality of the formal planning process, by not only focusing on the plan document as the primary objective, but also understanding dialogue as an important process of learning on its own account. As an action researcher, who had been involved in the process for one and a half years, and worked to facilitate dialogue and deliberation of different perspectives, this phase of the planning process was rewarding.

The understanding of the planning purpose was in this phase moulded between the municipality and County Governor perspectives. The planning purpose was still targeted towards answering a national policy commission by producing a formal planning document and map, and still “reduced” to concern the securing of wild reindeer areas and not engaged with the broader development perspectives. However, there was also an increasing mutual understanding among the regional planning actors that the plan had to take into account the municipal (or local community) perspectives of lived life in the area. The purpose of the plan was in this sense increasingly understood as a process that should respect the local nature relations in the definition of the wild reindeer habitat boundary, instead of exclusively reckoning from the wild reindeer map standpoint.

This extended (or pragmatic) understanding of the planning purpose also widened the understanding of participation from both the local and regional perspectives. The communication between municipalities and the County Governor was in this sense not only perceived as a necessary means to reach a goal, but a goal in itself to generate better understandings of the area challenges from both local and regional/national perspectives. The participation *between* the local and regional level *within* the planning arena was thus a collaborative attempt to generate new understandings for “use” and explore local knowledge perspectives.

The process revealed that the core national wild reindeer area in the high mountains was not the primary area of conflict. The high mountain areas were in other words considered legitimate claims of wild reindeer habitat from both local and regional perspectives. This was especially true in the two northern municipalities, who had the largest part of the national wild reindeer territory comprising their municipal area. The municipal planners argued that the high mountain areas had always been managed with attention to wild reindeer and that landowners were aware that “construction” in these areas had always been out of the question. However, they were concerned with how Heiplanen would affect the recreational potential the areas for both citizens and tourists/second home owners. These concerns were, nevertheless, minor compared to the worries in relation to the potential consequences for the areas close to the valley floor. It was in other words, the understandings around the “grey” areas that were most important to debate in order to be able to “draw the line”. The dialogue process illustrated that the municipalities were willing to protect large high mountain areas, if it could generate more independence (local plan authority) for the inhabitants’ life and potential economic development in the areas close to the valley floor.

The establishment of the dialogue forum in this sense created opportunity for inter-personal communication between the *people* in the “systems”. It was through this continuous inter-subjective dialogue that understandings emerged about the knowledge of the “grey” areas, and the relation to nature as something more diverse than protection and use. The perspective of use (or relation to nature/area) was in this sense deliberated not only as economic interests, but as lived life and socio-cultural relations to the very materiality of the area. It was thus increasingly accepted that the area was a common concern on “both sides” of the table. The local-regional dialogue meetings can thus be analysed as arenas that facilitated reflections and deliberations about daily life relations to nature in the discussions of the formal planning boundaries. Municipal planners and politicians were, in this sense, able to explain about the local life through stories and experiences about the community life relations to the area (e.g. hunting, recreation, skiing, etc.). The deliberations of these community life relations created a new understanding of nature “use” among the regional planning actors, where the economic interests were supplemented by “life” perspectives. The semi-formal meeting arena recognized these perspectives as interesting and legitimate in a different way from the formal planning arena. These dialogue arenas between the formal local and regional planning actors must therefore also be understood as a social arena between *people*, and not just institutional actors, who can share different life-oriented perspectives. It could be argued that it was the deliberation of local life-perspectives between “people in the system” that was influential for the crafting of a “Setesdal model” in Heiplanen, because it generated new (life oriented) understanding about the local frustration towards nature protection in the areas close to the valley floor. This model thus on the one side drafted a *larger* wild reindeer zone in the high mountains with *stronger* protection guidelines than the rest of Heiplanen (new constructions were forbidden, only restoration of old “støyl” cabins was allowed). On the other side the “grey areas” or the boundary zones were reduced to a minimum to allow municipal planning authority.

The initial knowledge premise of the plan was also challenged through these dialogue meetings. The wild reindeer map was in this sense not the point of departure for the negotiations, but a relevant knowledge tool. Through the collaborative boundary setting, the County Governor also realized that the map did not contain sufficient information. It was in this sense increasingly recognized that the local knowledge perspective could contribute with other outlooks. Local knowledge served to contribute with specific information about topography, vegetation types, patterns of human use, and (historic cultural) local community relations to the area. This kind of knowledge (together with the wild reindeer map) served as basis to define boundaries that would be considered legitimate from a local as well as a national viewpoint.

These findings serve as an indication of the area as a common concern, and the will and responsibility in the municipalities (local authorities) to contribute to sustainable wild reindeer and areas management, but also that such desire and responsibility must be encouraged and rewarded by acknowledgement and trust. The municipalities were in this sense not interested in participating as a “legitimizing” factor in a predefined planning process. However, they were interested to participate in a protection plan when they were genuinely able to influence the constitutional settings of the planning outcome. In this sense it could be argued that it was by addressing the subject matter of the plan through a recognition of the “common third” between the planning actors, that facilitated the legitimacy and deliberation of different nature protection and use perspectives.

The following section will describe how the final plan proposal became accepted in the steering board and approved in the five county governments. Further, it will describe the evaluative reflections from the municipalities, county government planner, County Governor, and project leader communicated through interviews about the development of the planning process.

7.6. The post-planning phase

The final planning proposal was ready in May 2011. The Setesdal guidelines were directly imported to the final planning proposal, and the wild reindeer map was “lifted out” as a primary knowledge premise and placed as an appendix along with the other thematic knowledge maps. The project leader perceived the dialogue between the municipalities and County Governor as the most important event during the planning process, because it had generated an agreement that could not be sabotaged in the hearing round. He was aware that the use perspective had been greatly marginalized compared to the initial ambition in the planning programme. However, he argued that it had been difficult to generate “use” perspectives when the conflict of “protection” was so strong. He therefore believed that the clarifications of this planning process could lead the way to new understandings of use (Vasstrøm, 2011:0522).

The final plan proposal was treated and approved with minor changes by the steering group in May 2011 (Jastrey, 2011:0523). It was considered “good enough” to send on a hearing round before the final process of approval in the five county governments.

“These areas [of the plan] have been negotiated directly across the table between municipalities and County Governor – something that I have not experienced in 20 years” (Project leader, 20110523)

The final steering meeting revealed major municipal concerns and criticism about the wild reindeer map and its claim of objective knowledge, and how this could be used in the boundary zones in the future. Another critique was mounted on the insufficient attention given to the development and use perspective in the plan. It was acknowledged that the plan had had to be reduced because of efficiency concerns, but also accentuated that future knowledge generation and area development should be mentioned in the plan as a long term perspective. It was decided that the meeting protocol should problematize the knowledge foundation of the wild reindeer map.

The Setesdal municipalities, although they supported the critique of the wild reindeer map, emphasized that the development of dialogue with the County Governor had been an important and learning-rich experience towards improved future area management. The Setesdal municipalities were for the first time the ones who seemed most contended with the plan. This perspective was further accentuated during the evaluative interviews.

The evaluative interviews were made shortly after the plan document had been approved by the steering board of Heiplanen, which indicated the completion of the formal process of planning (Vest Agder Fylkeskommune et al. 2011). However, the plan had not yet been approved by the political level of the county governments or the Ministry of Environment. The interviews were made with two of the three municipalities (Vasstrøm, 20110530, Vasstrøm, 20110531), the project leader (Vasstrøm, 20110523), the county government representative (Vasstrøm, 20110631), and the County Governor’s representative (Vasstrøm, 20110631). The interviews were conducted for two main reasons. First of all, it was a way to create a “reflective space” with the planning actors who had been involved with the area of Setesdal, to consider the process as a whole, the main hindrances and encouragements, important turning points and learning experiences, etc. In this sense, it was a participatory interpretation approach to the process as a whole. Secondly, and related to the latter, these interviews were a means to validate and verify my own perceptions and interpretations of the process as a whole, in regard to the role of participation and knowledge, and not least my involvement as an action researcher in the process. (Vasstrøm interview guide, 20110320). The following section combines the evaluative interviews (or the participatory interpretation) with the researcher partial analysis VI.

The public hearing statements created minor adjustments to the hearing proposal. The hearing statements from the municipalities and county governor emphasized the extensive collaborative work that had generated a mutual agreement about the proposal, and that they were relatively satisfied with the outcome (Bykle 20111119; Valle 20111123; County Governor Aust Agder 20111117). The Heiplanen was approved in all five counties during the autumn 2011. One county, in their political approval, rejected the consideration zones in two municipalities. Since the plan was not approved with equal protocols across the

five counties; the plan was sent to the Ministry of Environment for final approval. By the completion of this thesis the Heiplanen had still not been officially approved by the Ministry of Environment.

Partial analysis VI: Understanding Heiplanen with the formal planning actors

The overall planning outcome - as the Heiplanen document and map - was considered a good compromise by all the planning actors. The process had further generated a foundation for collaboration between the municipalities and County Governor in future planning and development.

“This has become a good planning document for Setesdal” (Municipal Mayor, 20110530).

The municipalities argued that the initiation of the planning process had been disastrous. Firstly, because the commissioning letter had communicated opaque perspectives regarding the actual anticipated outcome. Secondly, because the regional plan level was an entirely new planning scale and nobody could predict its long term consequences. And lastly, because the wild reindeer map had framed the process with a knowledge premise that was non-negotiable, and thus compromised the potential for local participation. The main hindrances in the process were thus perceived to be the wild reindeer map entwined with the previous conflictual relations with the County Governor, while the main encouragement had been the development of direct dialogue with the County Governor and the acknowledgement of the competence among the local authorities to manage the area. These considerations were also largely shared by the regional planning actors. The project leader argued that *“It was a plan nobody wanted – and nobody understood what it was”* (Project leader, 20110524). It had been presented as a plan that could clarify “everything” about protection and use, which had made it difficult to understand and work towards a plan outcome. From his perspective the reduction of the planning purpose (i.e. to boundary setting and categorization) had facilitated the ability to develop the final planning document. Further the process of direct negotiation between the municipalities and the County Governor was understood as the main foundation for the creation of a legitimate planning document. The County Governor agreed that although the wild reindeer map was an important knowledge foundation in the planning process, the process of introducing it in the planning process had generated a poor point of departure for collaboration. The County Governor also considered the development of dialogue with the municipalities as the most important aspect of the planning process. The personal dialogue between the municipalities and County Governor was considered a key factor to overcome the old historical conflicts and generate new understandings. *“It is almost a pity that it is over, now that we have entered such good collaborative atmosphere”* (County Governor, 20110631).

The evaluative interviews showed that there was a general agreement that the wild reindeer map had been a fatal initiation of the planning process. Not only because it had been introduced as a truth and served to legitimize certain boundaries before the process itself, but also because its scientific foundation was defective and had not included the local knowledge contributions previously communicated. The municipalities in this sense experienced the map as a concealed attempt to legitimize conservation zones in

their entire area regardless of local perspectives. Further, that the attempts to communicate the local perspectives to the wild reindeer centre (responsible for the map) had been arrogantly rejected as irrelevant. The introduction of the map had therefore created mistrust to the process as such, to the ability to influence the outcome, and reduced the legitimacy of “natural scientific” knowledge (and especially the wild reindeer centre) in the area. The County Governor also expressed his view that the introduction of the wild reindeer map at the beginning of the process had undermined the trust and willingness to collaboration. He further agreed with the municipalities on the poor quality of the underlying knowledge base for the wild reindeer map, which as he said made it difficult to defend. The project leader and county government particularly criticized how the introduction and use of wild reindeer map had served to undermine the entire process. They accentuated that the knowledge base had been an important foundation for the process, not as a “truth” or solution, but as one perspective in the process. All the planning actors therefore reflected that it was the decision of setting aside the wild reindeer map, and so to speak “start over” based on the dialogue between local and regional authorities, that had created the foundation for a broadly agreed planning outcome.

All the formal planning actors considered the development of the dialogue arenas as the core foundation not only for a more legitimate, but also a better planning outcome. The municipalities emphasized that the dialogue arenas had generated the possibility to express different perspectives of the area, and that this had improved the possibility to generate new understandings. The municipalities considered that the dialogue had created an improved understanding and recognition of the challenges related to the boundary zones (or the “grey areas”) in the valley. The dialogue meetings had in this sense generated recognition for local knowledge and improved understanding for the local identity and cultural relations to the area. This was an outcome that was considered important for the long term communication with the County Governor. This perspective was also expressed by the County Governor who considered that the dialogue had formed a better point of departure for understanding how it was to live in Setesdal, and the knowledge, skills and willingness of the local authorities to manage their area. The County Governor argued that the controversial process of negotiating directly with the municipality on each area had also affected municipal understanding of their own area. These meetings prevented the escalating conflict, and generated mutual understanding of balancing protection and use. In this sense, the County Governor accentuated that the dialogue had generated learning on both the regional and municipal level of authority. The formation of the dialogue meetings was considered the most significant development, and an innovative endeavour that could be used in future nature protection planning and management. The project leader and county government largely agreed on these perspectives. Further, they emphasized that from the formal planning perspective this dialogue was an important process to ensure that the planning document would not “sabotaged” during the public hearing by either the municipalities or the County Governor (which had been the case in the two other regional wild reindeer plans). The understandings of the dialogue were in this sense understood both as a learning and trust building process, as well as a pragmatic collaborative solution to a complex process.

None of the formal planning actors considered the local community involvement as directly influential in the formal planning process. However, the municipalities argued that the facilitation of a local community process by an outside researcher had created a new space for communication between the municipal administrative level and the local community. Further, it had served to document and communicate to the regional level that the local communities were genuinely concerned with the wild reindeer, and that the conflicts were broader and more complex than economic interests. However, to answer strategically to Heiplanen, these local perspectives had been too broad and it had been necessary to establish the Setesdal Secretariat to ensure their “stake”. Although the local community participation had not gained much influence in the formal planning arena, the County Governor considered them an important element for municipal self-reflection in the process. The municipal administration and politicians were in this sense perceived as the most important planning “actors” both upwards and downwards, to communicate the local community perspectives to the regional level, and the wild reindeer and planning expectations to the local community. The project leader and county government considered that the local community processes had been an important space for the municipalities and their further work, although they were not considered to have had a direct influence on the formal process.

All the formal planning actors considered that the engagement of the researcher had contributed to the development of the process. The municipalities concurred that the presence of an independent research perspective during the process had not only contributed to raising their own consciousness about their mountain relations and management, but also contributed to communicating a more diverse local perspective to the regional planning arena. In this sense, the engagement and collaboration between the researcher and the municipalities had been important to understanding their own role in the process and subsequent development towards increased dialogue with the regional actors. This point was also reflected by the County Governor who considered that my role and engagement in different planning “levels”, although difficult to understand in the initiation of the process, had contributed to reflecting and discussing aspects of the planning process on a more general level. My engagement, he argued, had in this sense contributed to facilitating the development of dialogue between the actors, because the process, practice, and different understandings had been able to be questioned, from a more distanced perspective. This consideration was also accentuated by the project leader and county government. They pointed to the engagement at both the local and regional level which facilitated the ability and legitimacy of presenting different concerns of the planning process and the questioning of conflictual issues in the regional planning arena.

The last part of the evaluative interviews asked the different planning actors to reflect on the future perspectives for the planning and management of protection and use in the area. The municipalities were on the one hand eager to express that the process, i.e. the building of trust, understanding and improved recognition of the local perspectives among the regional planning actors, had laid a new foundation for future management of the area. It was thus expected that future planning would be possible without the previous “eternal” conflict that had affected the area for so long. However, the municipalities were also

concerned that the use aspect had been reduced so dramatically in the planning process. In their perspective the planning process had not explored what “use” was in a local perspective. They criticized the planning process for reducing “use” to an aspect of economic interests or tourism, but not elaborating use as agriculture, identity and cultural relations, “støyl life”, etc. The exploration of use was thus concerned with neither consumption nor untouched nature, but about living in the area.

“The outside [regional and national] perspective ascribes us values we don’t have. They think they are “open” for a use perspective. But that is for things we don’t want. They think we want to build on everything and that we cannot manage the nature values. It is unjust that we become reduced to exploitation actors. I remember this perspective from my [planning] studies. Planners and managers are educated with this perspective. I remember that I sat there – naïve – and thought “poor municipalities who don’t know anything for their own good”. But now I understand that it is another reality here. It is much more complex – and entirely other perspectives that are important – we are not interested in building on everything – but in living here” (Municipal planner, 20110530)

All the actors however accentuated that the creation of dialogue and trust was related to the persons that had been involved in the process. The continuation of such dialogue and collaboration would be difficult to institutionalize and in the worst case could contribute to bureaucratizing the attempt to improve communication. The County Governor argued that the continuation of the collaboration would require a change of norm, i.e. that both local and regional planning authorities would be willing to communicate directly. In this sense, he argued that the previous “tradition” of communicating through letters and objections should be supplemented by direct meetings and telephone conversations. Such direct communication would, in his perspective, strengthen trust and mutual understanding, and thereby improve the management of the area.

“We can learn much from collaborating from the beginning. It would perhaps have been better if there had been a pre-process to clarify what the regional plan was and where we wanted to go?” (Municipal director, 20110530)

However, given that the plan outcome has not necessarily changed the local relation and use of the area, it could be viewed as a municipal planner put it:

“One can ask oneself if this plan has actually had any affect for the wild reindeer or if it has just been another bureaucratic exercise” (Municipal planner, 20110530)

The evaluative interviews showed that there was general agreement that the wild reindeer map had been fatal beginning to the planning process. This was not only because it had been introduced as a truth which served to legitimize certain boundaries before the process itself, but also because its scientific foundation was defective and had not included the contributions of local knowledge. The municipalities in this sense experienced the map as an arrogant means to categorize their entire area unresponsive to the local

perspectives. Although this process was initially coated with old conflicts and mistrust, the planning process generated new understandings about different legitimate perspectives to the area. The understanding of the role of natural scientific knowledge in the planning process had in other words developed through the planning process and particularly the dialogue.

There was also a general understanding that the “way forward” from the conflictual initiation had been the development of a dialogue arena. This development had required maturation and gradual building of trust between actors in the institutions that had a long conflictual history. The decision to set aside the wild reindeer map was particularly emphasized as a turning point and the first token of mutual trust by all the formal planning actors and especially the municipalities. The development of trust was generated through the gradual recognition of the different perspectives and relations to the area from both local and regional perspectives. This trust and recognition was strengthened through the dialogue arenas and new understandings of the area were developed. The municipalities emphasized that it was important that the County Governor had been interested in understanding their perspective of living in the area, and not only understanding the area through the categorization of the wild reindeer map. The County Governor also expressed that they had gained an increased understanding of how it is like to live in the valley through the visits to Setesdal (i.e. in connection to the dialogue meetings). The development of dialogue between the municipalities and County Governor was thus not just a matter of developing trust to the process, but also about developing substantially different understandings of the material area. The dialogue meetings were in this sense not only a strategic binding agreement between conflicting parties, but an actual building of trust and understanding between different perspectives of nature protection and use.

These different understandings of the planning process thus reflect a dilemma in the planning process between the efficiency and purpose orientation versus the deliberation of the subject matter and the long term engagement for nature relations. The plan that was introduced as broad process of clarifying use and protection, was thus at the same time reduced by the introduction of the wild reindeer map as a natural scientific knowledge premise. The shadow of hierarchy, or the fear of not being able to answer to the national expectations and being subjected to steering by national authorities, thus generated a reduction of the broad perspectives of the plan programme to a matter of boundary setting. The planning purpose was thus focused on crafting a planning document within a given time frame that could be accepted by the national authorities. This purpose orientation reduced the potential of developing a broader arena for dialogue that could deliberate different knowledge and value perspectives of how local life and wild reindeer could co-exist in a long term perspective through increased local engagement and responsibility.

7.7 Conclusive Analysis

This section “sums up” the partial analytical perspectives of movements of understanding generated during the planning process across local and regional planning arenas in relation to the purpose of planning, the role of participation and knowledge and the relation to nature. It will not reflect all the discussions made in the partial analysis, but rather act to point towards the relevance of exploring openings and closures in the environmental planning horizon in the search for more democratic planning praxis within the sustainability – or nature protection - agenda.

Heiplanen was a regional nature protection plan that not only affected large desolate mountain areas through the protection of wild reindeer habitats, but also influenced considerable areas with living local communities. The plan was an answer to the national environmental authorities of combining protection and use, and local participation with central steering. The plan process mobilized different understandings and values among politicians and planning actors at local and regional levels, as well as among the citizens living in the area. These were further influenced by the previous (conflictual) nature conservation processes in the area and the past decades of area and planning quarrels with the County Governor. The emerging conflicts between the local and regional actors revealed deep discrepancies of understanding especially in relation to knowledge, nature and participation. In other words, the conflict related to the socio-ecological materiality and the procedural conflict of steering, was highly influenced by the fundamental different paradigmatic understandings. The gradual development of dialogue generated the potential for a better understanding of these differences and thereby increased their legitimacy on the planning arena. During that process, the dialogue became recognized as a goal in itself, not only to answer the plan, but also as a means to build trust and understanding between actors from previous conflicting planning institutions. This process thus illustrates how the development of dialogue, along with self-reflection, can move both understanding and the direction of the planning process – to some extent. However, it could be claimed that although the dialogue arenas developed trust and new understanding between the formal planning actors, and created a broadly legitimate planning outcome, it did not succeed in going beyond the pre-defined purpose of setting boundaries to an area. The perspective of developing different aspects of nature use and protection was in this sense not pursued directly. It is important to emphasize that a planning process is a dynamic process where different events and perspectives affects others. There were strictly speaking openings and closures for thinking nature protection and use differently. These openings and closures will be the subject for the next chapter. The following section will unfold some of the movements of understanding developed during the planning process and argue for the importance of searching for openings and closures for everyday life oriented deliberative participation in the (Heiplanen) environmental planning horizon.

The initial policy perspectives of the regional planning commission were founded on the ViSa report which emphasized the need to balance protection and use through collaboration between local and regional planning actors. The initial planning rhetoric could thus be understood as a collaborative planning approach that was concerned with balancing socio-ecological interests through negotiation. The collaborative idea in

planning is however, conditioned by the establishment of a planning arena that can handle different equally legitimate claims to the subject matter, i.e. the planning area (Healey 2006; Innes and Booher 2010). In the operationalization of Heiplanen this prerequisite was disturbed by the natural scientific premise and the introduction of the wild reindeer map. The natural scientific knowledge was thus not only used as a tool of power to direct the decision making process, but also instrumentalized as an objective – that is “truthful” – categorization of the area. The wild reindeer map became a “positivistic” ghost that shadowed other knowledge or value statements related to the area. The planning process as a collaborative arena was in this sense marginalized by the power of knowledge that could define and direct the deliberation of what were considered legitimate claims to the area. This in turn served to legitimize the planning purpose of habitat protection. The use of knowledge, as a means of power to define the subject matter, and, so to speak, define what claims are considered legitimate within the planning arena, reduces the democratic foundation of the planning arena substantially (Elling 2008; In’t Veld 2009). It thus reduces the planning arena to a matter of rational decision making based on “true” knowledge (Innes and Booher, 2010). The materialization of natural scientific knowledge as a map thus strategically rationalizes the perspectives of what is considered a necessary means to fulfil the planning purpose (Pløger 2013).

The challenge of natural scientific claims in planning is not related to the quality of knowledge as such. It is its relation to the institutions of power and its utilization as a mean to reach a certain purpose (Elling 2008; Pløger 2013). This is especially relevant in environmental planning where natural scientific knowledge has the status of a superior truth that can provide answers to complex challenges (Brunner & Steelman 2005; Pellizzoni 2010). Heiplanen was required by the national authorities to answer to a natural scientific knowledge premise. During the planning process, this requirement was inherently related to the awareness that the national environmental authorities could (or would) judge the plan outcome through a natural scientific knowledge perspective. In order to ensure national acceptance of the planning outcome, Heiplanen became reduced to matter of answering to the securement of wild reindeer habitats based on a natural scientific knowledge foundation. The understanding of the planning purpose was in this sense deviant from the broad development rhetoric and restricted to developing boundaries and categorizations that could be accepted by national authorities. The invitation to municipal participation and the initial perspectives of deliberating nature use could thus be understood as a token to legitimize (and reduce conflict related to) the nature protection purpose of Heiplanen at the local level. This sense of coerced participation was criticized by the municipalities for undermining local trust towards the national authorities, and more crucially for discouraging local responsibility for and authority within the area. This critique of participation in planning has been discussed in the planning literature since Arnstein (1969) developed the ladder of participation reflecting different grades of power and influence in participatory processes. The essential matter of concern is thus what “participation” actually invites, or conversely, how it is restricted. Participation can on the one hand be understood as a matter of fulfilling and legitimizing a predefined agenda, on the other it can be interpreted as a potential for deliberating different and contrasting perspectives and values, which again can develop new orientations on the planning arena (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a). Based on these considerations, the initiation of the formal process could be

interpreted as a rational-instrumental planning orientation that seeks to legitimize its nature protection purpose through participatory rhetoric.

A planning arena is however also influenced by the actors who participate; actors who are capable of generating new meaning perspectives through reflection. The planning process should in this sense be understood as “unfinished” or continuously moulded between different developing meaning horizons (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007b). The Heiplanen process also generated such spaces for learning. In this sense, the regional planning arenas could be understood as a potential deliberation and learning arena, where formal planning actors were able to express their concerns of the subject matter, including critique or consent about the wild reindeer map. These encounters revealed the significant discrepancies between the local perspective and the regional and national planning institutional perspective. It illustrated that the differences of understanding were not only related to the material matter of the planning process, but also related to the procedural aspects of steering and knowledge legitimacy. In other words, the understanding of the socio-ecological challenges, or the question of protection and use, was reflected in the perceptions of the role of knowledge, and the local or central governance of the area. These differences of understanding became particularly outspoken in the discussions of the “grey areas” or the boundary zones, i.e. where neither the wild reindeer nor human activity was predominant. The regional planning arena developed a gradual acceptance and recognition of *different* legitimate perspectives to the area, which in turn developed a new understanding of the meaning of dialogue. Dialogue, in this sense, became established not only as a measure to negotiate boundaries to answer to the purpose of the plan, but also as a goal in itself. The dialogue was thus recognized as a potential for developing improved understanding of the area from different perspectives, which in turn could improve the management of the area on a long term basis as a whole. Equally important, the dialogue gradually became understood as a process of building trust between actors from previous conflicting institutions. The generation of trust and mutual understanding between the municipalities and County Governor in turn produced new orientations to consider the area planning as a matter of common concern. The understanding of the area was thus moulded between ecological perspectives of the area as a wild reindeer habitat, and the local perspective of the area as part of a broader life matter. This dialogical development in the process illustrates the importance of recognizing the dynamic potential of knowledge in planning. Knowledge should in this sense not only be considered a means of power, but also a democratic potential for learning across different “knowledges” (In’t Veld 2009). However, that presupposes the ability of the planning arena to involve and legitimize different knowledge perspectives.

The understanding of (natural scientific) knowledge became challenged in the regional planning arena and especially in the dialogue between municipalities and the County Governor. The wild reindeer map had, as stated above, initially been introduced as a knowledge premise for the boundary setting in the area. The wild reindeer map was thus presented as an objective perspective of the most ecologically sound boundaries that the municipal actors should relate to in the political boundary setting process. This created a situation where municipal argumentations, despite their consistency, could be reduced to a matter of

(illegitimate) local opinions. Deliberations about different perspectives of the area were in this sense framed within the area categorizations – or perspective of “reality” – produced by the wild reindeer map. This expert orientation, or the natural scientific knowledge premise, reduced the possibility to deliberate different perspectives (as “knowledge”, opinions or values) on the planning arena because the wild reindeer map was used to validate any argumentation. The act of setting aside the wild reindeer map, and so to speak starting with “white paper”, generated the potential for expressing municipal perspectives on its own account. This deliberation was furthered through the dialogue meetings with the County Governor. It was through these dialogue meetings that the understanding of knowledge in the planning process became more nuanced. Not that the wild reindeer map was rejected, but that it was not used as point of departure for the dialogue. Rather, the County Governor and project leader accepted (and encouraged) that the municipalities developed their own boundary proposals for Heiplanen based on their perspective. The direct boundary negotiation between the municipalities and the County Governor thus took point of departure in the local area suggestions and argumentations, whilst also using the wild reindeer map as a supplementary knowledge ground. The negotiation, in this sense, became not only a deliberation between many different types of knowledge, but also allowed the local opinions, values and experiences to enter the arena of understandings. This dialogical planning arena could be criticized for reducing nature protection to a rational-instrumental planning logic of boundary setting that answered to the purpose rationality of the planning institutions (Hansen 2007; Elling 2008). However, the arena facilitated deliberations about the knowledge foundation of these boundaries that included local understandings, and thus challenged the initially-set knowledge premise of the national environmental authorities. The dialogue arena did in this sense not explore broader, and life oriented, aspects of protection and use. Even though the dialogue opened for understandings about the area as a life relation, it did thus not formally challenge the planning purpose.

The understanding of the planning purpose was affected by different understandings of nature, and not least the understanding of the relation between human society and nature. Although the area conflict of Heiplanen can be understood as a three dimensional conflict between use and protection, culture and nature and local or central governance, as described by, among others, Daugstad and colleagues (2006), it also embraces a broader understanding of what we, as people in society, relate to as a common (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a; Clausen 2011). Environmental planning thus has the potential for approaching questions of nature protection differently from the mere setting of boundaries. Although the initial commission letter and plan programme of Heiplanen had accentuated the exploration of nature *use* in the process, it was framed by an understanding of economic interests and primarily related to “growth”. The plan purpose was thus to develop boundaries between societal perspectives of (economic) use, and an ecological perspective of protection. Nature and society relations were in other words separated into categories of use and protection, or culture and nature. This underlying rationale has influenced nature management since the “tragedy of the commons” (Laerhoven van & Ostrom 2007) and reproduced the idea of the necessity of an expert bureaucracy that can manage and govern nature prudently to avoid over exploitation (Nelson, Howden, & Smith 2008; Reitan 2004). However, as forwarded by the municipalities

(and local communities) this perception of nature was not compatible with the local understanding of the area. The municipalities experienced the division of protection and use as absurd, and to some extent ascribing values of use that they were not interested in. The municipalities argued that their main concern was the ability to live in the area with the socio-cultural and economic activities that this living entailed. As furthered by the Setesdal Secretariat, the municipalities could thus accept the creation of boundaries on a regional planning arena in the higher mountain regions that would adhere to the regional planning purpose (i.e. in the areas they experienced as legitimate and non-contested wild reindeer habitat, because it had always been wild reindeer areas). However, the areas that were close to the valley floor, and were traditionally understood as human areas, would require further local processes to deliberate different perspectives of what protection and use might be. These perspectives became increasingly legitimized through the gradual development of dialogue with the County Governor. The dialogue arena, in this sense, developed the opportunity to understand the area as something different than the conventional or initial meaning of protection (as ecological interests) and use (as economic interests). The dialogue thus enabled the County Governor to appreciate or recognize that the area conflicts were not just about second home construction, but about the value of living in the area and related to the socio-cultural activities like hunting, “støyl-life” recreation, etc. Although this recognition did not generate changes in the formal approach to nature protection planning, they did serve to nuance the understanding of the area through a lifeworld perspective. These new understandings were thus also influential for the acceptance of the “Setesdal model”: the wild reindeer protection area had stricter guidelines than the rest of the plan, but conversely a narrower boundary zone to the valley floor. This illustrates that there was willingness among the municipalities to consider nature protection, but based on their orientations to the area.

This broader life oriented understanding of nature and society was pursued through the researcher-initiated workshops with the local communities. This work revealed that there was the potential to address the area in Setesdal – the nature and society relations – as a common concern of the community. The understanding of nature explored during the workshop through both critical and utopian perspectives, thus illustrated that nature was understood as inherently interwoven with the fundamental life matter and cultural identity in time and space. The historic nature relations, as well as current nature experiences were in this sense considered an important aspect of the cultural identity in the area and the joy of living there. Further, the perception of nature was linked to the future horizon of the existence of the community. Nature was understood as an important prerequisite for living in the area and the ability to create a livelihood. Nature was, in this sense, a common cultural and material entity that the community could relate to in both a social and individual sense, as well as historically and future oriented. The local perceptions of nature and society relations thus illustrated that there was the potential to address nature as a social common. Given these understandings of nature, the workshops also revealed that management was essentially considered the responsibility of the community. Not only based on the argumentation that they had managed it for centuries, but also because the locally based management of nature was considered an important condition for improved nature management and the development of local responsibility. In this sense the understanding of nature protection was intrinsically related to the

development of local knowledge and management institutions that could further the local cultural relation to the area now and in the future. The workshops thus revealed that there was the possibility in the planning arena to address nature protection as a broader common through the involvement of the citizens in the area.

Although the perspectives developed through the local workshops did not directly influence the formal planning process, they may have contributed to nuance and legitimize a different understanding of nature protection and use. The action researcher exploration of the local perspectives in collaboration with the local authorities and communities might have contributed to deliberate different perspectives of nature protection and use on the regional planning arena. The researcher thus contributed to problematize the regional planning ambition through the exploration of the “conflictual situation” from the understanding of the local municipalities and communities. Vice versa, the involvement of the action researcher in the local planning arena may have contributed to the deliberation of more common concerns of area management than the established local views. The action researcher thus sought to mutually challenge both local and regional views, and argue for a re-orientation in the planning process. In this sense, the role of the action researcher could be understood as a “third actor” or an advocacy of the common perspectives in both the municipal and regional planning arena (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007b, 2010). The research ambition was in this sense not to “implement” a local agenda on the regional planning arena, or “teach” the local community how to consider their area in a regional nature protection perspective. The key considerations were to explore the situation and change (conflictual) relations and understandings by exploring the contrasts and dissonances between the different perspectives. The research ambition was to question broader common concerns iteratively in the particular planning arena from a life oriented understanding of the area. The researcher thus attempted to direct the planning process towards recognizing the arena – and the nature society relations – as a “common third” between equally legitimate perspectives.

This analysis thus argues that although the challenge of the wild reindeer is inherently a regional matter, it could conversely be argued that the human relations to the area intrinsically embrace a life orientation. Further, that a reorientation of human nature use towards a more sustainable relation (i.e. increased consideration of nature) would necessarily involve the contribution of people living in the area. Such contributions would not only be relevant for the sake of changing practice, but for (re-)developing the responsibility of nature relation in everyday life. In this sense, this analysis argues that a planning arena with a regional concern must nevertheless be directed towards facilitating local planning arenas that can deliberate perspectives about the understanding of nature and society from an everyday life orientation. Without such local participation and anchorage, the regional planning purpose becomes illegitimate and distanced from the local understandings and practices.

The dialogue arena between the municipalities and the County Governor generated the possibility to negotiate local perspectives, but within the initially set regional planning purpose. The dialogue arenas did not facilitate deliberation about nature protection and use as something different from boundary setting,

like the development of nature education for youth, local knowledge centres and nature rangers, or the like. The dialogue was bound within the planning purpose of the regional planning arena to answer to the commission of the national authorities. Within that purpose, the dialogue arena served to reduce conflict and develop legitimacy of the planning outcome. However, if the conceptualization of nature protection is an endeavour to form the societal trajectory towards a more sustainable future, then the negotiation of regional boundaries may not be the right answer. In such perspectives, the local workshops illustrated that there may have been other ways to address nature protection other than through regionally defined boundaries and categorizations.

The argument of this analysis is thus that if environmental planning is a search to reach more sustainable trajectories, then the planning arena should be able to address nature as something more than ecological or economic interests or categorizations of protection and use. It requires a planning arena that can address nature as a common matter of concern between bureaucrats, scientists, politicians and citizens. This implicates the ability to address nature and society relations through a variety of knowledge and value perspectives, as well as an acceptance of their equally legitimate orientation. In this sense it requires that the public in planning are allowed to challenge and broaden the initially set purposes of the planning institutions and the expert perspectives on the subject matter -even though these might be radically different. This argument is not only furthered because such deliberations constitute a prerequisite for a democratic planning arena, but also because they generate the potential for developing new and different approaches to nature-society relations that may be more sustainable than what currently exists. Founded on these perspectives, the following chapter explores the openings and closures of the planning horizon for participatory understanding and practice.

8. Openings and closures of the environmental planning horizon

This chapter analyses the openings and closures of the planning horizon in the Heiplanen process. First, it is argued why openings and closures are a relevant and constructive approach to a plan process analysis. Thereafter, openings and closures are analysed and discussed relating the development and events of the planning process with the core concepts of this thesis: knowledge, nature, and participation. Lastly, these analytical findings of openings and closures of understandings are related to the openings and closures of the purposive foundation of planning – or the planning horizon.

8.1 Openings and closures as a critical utopian entry to planning

The ambition of this chapter is to tie the knot between my epistemological and methodological entry to the empirical context and the theoretical and analytical framework. The previous chapter described and analysed the different phases of the particular planning process Heiplanen. This descriptive analysis unfolded how the understanding of knowledge, nature, participation and purpose of planning progressed between the local and regional planning actors during the process, and how that influenced the planning outcome. Based on these findings, this chapter aims to take one step back. It applies the analytical framework developed in chapter five to analyse the openings and closures of the particular process from a more general perspective.

As argued throughout this thesis there is a general need to re-orientate the horizon of planning in environmental matters. The normative orientation and epistemological interest of this thesis argue towards a more democratic planning practice. The democratic argument is not only understood as a foundation to increase the legitimacy of environmental planning, but also as the possibility to enable the participation and contribution of a broader everyday life oriented meaning horizon to the substantial core of the planning outcome. The conceptualization of openings and closures (developed from Deetz (1992) and Nielsen and Nielsen (2006a; 2007a)) targets several of the theoretical discussions of the environmental planning challenges that were discussed in chapter 3. These general theoretical challenges in planning regarding the role of knowledge and participation, and the understandings and values of nature, are thus treated as core elements in the different meaning systems or rationalities that were involved in the particular planning process. The analytical point of this chapter is thus to explore the discursive and experiential openings for widening the planning horizon towards more democratic participation in the particular empirical context and in relation to a more general theoretical level. The analysis unfolds the dissonance and conflicts between these different meaning systems that are mobilized in an environmental planning process to search for potential participatory planning approaches. The analysis does not attempt to evaluate failures or successes of the particular planning process. The conceptualization of openings and closures is an attempt to avoid the reduction of the findings to either “good” or “bad”, “black” or “white”. This search is thus not aimed at making conclusions about right or wrong or establishing consensus. Rather, it is an attempt to unfold the complexity of planning by learning from the different barriers and

potentialities of participation during the process. The analytical ambition is thus to explore what can be learned from the different rationalities at play during the process, as well as the movements of understandings and practice in the particular process. It is thus a search for planning approaches that can handle and recognize different meanings and rationalities of the “commons” within a democratic arena. The democratic aspects and potential of participation are thus a core concern in the contextual analysis and in the considerations of new planning horizons. Learning from these processes can develop new potential understandings and approaches for dealing with the general environmental planning challenges (or horizons). The analysis in this sense aims to point to openings and closures of a planning horizon that can deal with democratic participation on a substantial (the content of planning) and procedural (the process of planning) level.

Openings and closures are not only relevant in the exploration of the particular process, but also reflect meta-theoretical, methodological and theoretical considerations. At the meta-theoretical or epistemological level, openings and closures consider the empirical context from a reflexive and dialectic perspective. Based on the critical theoretical inspiration, the research epistemological ambition was, in this sense, not only to explore the current reality, but also to dialectically inquire into the potential realities. Openings and closures are an analytical means to explore the dialectic tensions of a particular planning process, and the dominating and potential understandings and meaning systems that affect the planning horizon. These critical theoretical perspectives have, as previously argued, been influential in the methodological approach of this thesis. Openings and closures are thus an analytical conceptualization of the critical utopian ambition of the action research approach. The methodological approach was a participatory search and exploration of potential change and learning towards broader participation in the particular planning process. The researcher engagement attempted to “disturb” the existing planning logic with arguments of dialogue, broad participation and the generation of everyday life oriented nature-society perspectives. The analytical discussion is thus also a reflexive perspective on the action research role and influence on the openings and closures to new understandings and practices that emerged during the planning and research process.

This analytical chapter is structured by the core concepts in planning that are perceived as important constituents for the understanding and formation of the planning horizon: knowledge, nature, and participation. Further, as discussed in the empirical descriptive chapter, these concepts were also emergent aspects or immanent critical points in the planning process. It is by analysing the openings and closures of the particular planning horizon through each of these concepts that the thesis finally tries to point to more generic and potential horizons in planning. On the contextual empirical level, the analysis of openings and closures seeks to grasp the particular (series of) events or processes that induced or generated changes of understandings and practice among the involved actors towards an improved diversified understanding of the nature society-relationship - or the commons. The contextual description of openings and closures are thus the “hard core” of the more abstract or meta-theoretical reflections.

The analytical framework of discursive and experiential openings and closures is used to conceptualize *how* different events or understandings generated changes or barriers to new perspectives and practices in the planning process. In this sense, the concepts of knowledge, nature, and participation are elements of different meaning systems that affected the planning process through, what is conceptualized as, *courses* of discursive and experiential openings and closures. These courses of events and the developments of the different meaning systems and practices are perceived as constituents of the overall openings and closures of a more democratic planning horizon.

8.2 Knowledge between premise and potential

Knowledge was a primary element in the particular planning process of Heiplanen. Natural scientific knowledge was introduced in the commissioning letter as a fundamental premise for the decision making in the planning process. This knowledge premise was operationalized through the formation and use of the wild reindeer map in the process. Knowledge was in this sense instrumentalized and materialized as an “independent” entity of “truth” in the process of defining boundaries for protection and use in a particular area.

The knowledge premise can be interpreted as a discursive closure of the participation of broader meaning perspectives in the planning process. The knowledge premise served as a lever to qualify and disqualify certain discourses and rationalities in the planning process. Natural scientific knowledge and the proprietors of such knowledge (researchers, environmental bureaucratic institutions) were regarded the “right” kind of expertise to evaluate or validate the decision making. This strategy of disqualification, as Deetz (1992) argues, reproduces its own capacity to determine who are qualified as decision makers. In this sense, it serves to appoint the actors who have the legitimate position to question the very definition and foundation of the initial qualification.

The instrumentalization of natural scientific knowledge as a map became the tool of the “qualified” actors (the county governors, the wild reindeer board, the directorate of nature management) to define the legitimate outcome for the planning process. The boundaries and potential areas of the wild reindeer map constituted the point of departure in the planning process, and to some degree pre-defined what was considered an acceptable outcome. Local (authorities and citizens) objections to the wild reindeer map could, in this sense, be marginalized by references to the objectivity of the map. Other (local) perspectives of the wild reindeer boundaries were dismissed as irrelevant values or opinions in relation to the ecological and biological knowledge sphere. The quality of the wild reindeer knowledge, with a natural scientific basis, was thus treated as indisputable, because it was based on ecological and biological “facts” that could not politicized. The knowledge premise was able to naturalize and neutralize aspects of the planning process and decision making as pre-given and objective truths.

The combination of a map and a knowledge premise thereby served to reproduce the power of certain actors to define the planning purpose and outcome. Further, it generated a naturalization of the purpose of planning as protection of the wild reindeer habitat, which legitimized the planning process itself. This

naturalization closed the discussion about the subject matter, exactly where it should have begun: how is the subject matter defined as such? (Deetz, 1992). The knowledge premise in the Heiplanen thus served to develop a discursive closure for broad participation and the development of new mutual understandings by disqualifying non-proprietors of natural scientific knowledge, by naturalizing and neutralizing the nature protection discourse as an objective truth, and thereby legitimizing the values behind the protection agenda. The power to define the “reality” and the “right” expertise was thus able to reproduce itself continuously, by avoiding the challenge of contrasting rationalities or reality perceptions.

However, as described in the previous chapter, this discursive closure was continuously challenged on the regional planning arena. The critique of the knowledge foundation of the wild reindeer map and the questioning of its influence on the planning outcome overcame some of the “strategic” discursive closures. The political engagement, in this sense, problematized the effects of the disqualification and legitimization of the planning knowledge premise. The formation of the regional planning arena in this sense generated an experiential opening; a space and opportunity to challenge different understandings of the planning purpose.

The above illustrates that knowledge can be used as a means of power to define the purpose, process, and outcome in planning. This Foucault-inspired perspective is influential in the understanding of how knowledge can be a decisive power in planning (Jensen 2007; Pløger 2013). The understanding of knowledge can thus strategically appoint which kind of rationalities that are considered relevant to involve (Elling 2008). The theoretical chapter discussed how the conceptualization of knowledge has different meanings in different planning traditions. Knowledge is considered more or less an objective and value free truth in rational-instrumental planning, while it is perceived more or less a subjective, value-influenced, and social construction of existing and potential reality in the more collaborative and agonistic planning traditions (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo 2010; Healey 2006; Healey 2009; Innes & Booher 2010). As also problematized in the theoretical chapter, the ecological or natural scientific knowledge is, however, still considered more “objective” in planning than other types of knowledge. Natural scientific knowledge is in a sense a positivistic “ghost” in the understanding, development, and practice of planning. A knowledge premise grounded in a positivistic natural science paradigm is more difficult to broaden or challenge in a planning process because it possesses the status of epistemological objectivity and neutrality. The use of natural scientific knowledge is thus a means to ensure the “best” knowledge-based management practice (Brunner & Steelman 2005), and a way of legitimizing existing policy discourses of nature protection (Pellizzoni 2010). The professional bureaucratic experts who are considered the proprietors of such knowledge, are also influenced by this positivistic paradigmatic perception of knowledge in policy and planning practice (Reitan 2004). Such expert knowledge and its proprietors can thus operationalize and instrumentalize natural scientific knowledge in environmental planning, which limits the potential of other rationalities to influence the understanding and direction of the planning process (in 't Veld 2009). The instrumentalization of knowledge as a static truth thus limits not only the potential for participation, but also for substantial knowledge development and social learning.

The collaborative planning and management traditions emerged as an attempt to overcome this rationality barrier or discursive closure. The involvement of diverse knowledge perspectives is, within these traditions, considered a pre-requisite to understanding the complexity of the reality and in finding practical ways of handling it. Collaborative and pragmatic planning approaches attempt to develop and improve the knowledge base of planning and development through participation (or collaborative learning) of diverse knowledge perspectives. The planning process thus requires the involvement of stakeholders on the planning arena with different knowledge perspectives, including local and experiential knowledge bases (Armitage, Berkes, & Doubleday 2007; Berkes 2007; Daniels & Walker 2001; Innes & Booher 2010). In this sense, knowledge might constitute a means to govern the direction of a planning process, but in a dialectic and pragmatic sense it also carries the potential of developing collaborative learning or collective inquiry of the situation (Healey 2009). Knowledge in planning can thus, in a Foucauldian perspective, be understood as a means of power to define the planning direction and outcome, whilst in a Habermasian-inspired planning tradition it constitutes an opportunity to deliberate and develop new understandings (Elling 2008).

The process of Heiplanen brought about a mixture of discursive and experiential openings for more a more diverse knowledge deliberation and collaborative learning situations. In this sense, the continuation of the formal planning process to some degree overcame the discursive and experiential closures of the natural scientific knowledge premise. As mentioned above, this opening was influenced by the continuous critique of the wild reindeer map from all involved municipal mayors, who argued that the planning boundaries of the wild reindeer had to be debated to ensure political (and local) legitimacy in the process, and to validate the ecological and biological facts with locally based knowledge.

The discursive and experiential openings of the planning process were furthered through the establishment of broader planning arenas and dialogue between the local municipal and regional state (County Governor) perspectives. The regional planning forum arranged by the project leader was the first attempt to create space and time to develop this dialogue. Another opening was the meeting between the County Governor and Setesdal municipalities that set aside the wild reindeer map as ground for objections in current planning issues, and thereby created the potential for a more equal deliberation of knowledge perspectives in the process. The study trip to England further constituted a collective experiential opening where the issue of knowledge was reflected in the English practices of planning and management. The English case, among other issues, exemplified how the local community in the national parks was involved and educated as park rangers, and how the landscape was understood through both ecological “facts” and social constructions. Finally, the development of the dialogue meetings between municipalities, county government, and County Governor constituted an arena for direct negotiation of area claims based on both local and natural scientific knowledge. The establishment of the collective planning arenas and experiences gradually generated the possibility to challenge the knowledge premise and develop new diversified understandings of the subject matter.

The different understandings of knowledge were particularly outspoken in the “grey” areas: the boundary zones between the valley areas and the high mountains. The discussions of these areas exemplified how the different (paradigmatic) understandings of knowledge (as either objective or socially constructed) produced disputes about the categorization of an area as either wild reindeer habitat or human life and recreational areas. In these arenas, the initial impediment of the knowledge premise was challenged by local knowledge perspectives of the area. The local knowledge embraced historical and cultural understandings of the area, but also the contextual or material understanding of the area in three dimensions so to speak. The local knowledge thus furthered not only cognitive reflections about the area, but also experiential knowledge about how the areas were used in the local communities. The locally-based knowledge was thus able to challenge the validity of biological and ecological “facts” of the wild reindeer map and thereby the boundaries of the area plan. Secondly, these cognitive local knowledge perspectives were supplemented by more experiential aspects of the area “knowledge” related to the understanding of wild reindeer and human use in a historic and present perspective. The dialogue arena was thus opened for the recognition of the locally based knowledge on the regional planning arena. This recognition was not just a matter of “delivering” locally based knowledge for the sake of producing “better” planning boundaries (which would be an instrumental approach to local knowledge as criticized in chapter 3). The opening of the local knowledge perspective was also recognition of those at the local level being genuinely responsible and valid planning actors in the planning arena. In this sense the opening for the local knowledge participation is not only important at the substantial level, but also carries a democratic aspect of empowering local actors to deliberate their perspectives on the planning arena. As previously described, these deliberations did not create consensus about the subject matter: the planning purpose and wild reindeer boundaries. More importantly than consensus, was the possibility to generate recognition and understanding for different knowledge perspectives of the wild reindeer habitat in relation to the local communities. It thus created legitimacy for *different* knowledge claims to the area, rather than enforcing consensus. The collective meeting arenas in this sense created a possibility for discussing the subject of the matter from different perspectives despite the positivistic “ghost” in the planning horizon.

The initial instrumentalization of the natural scientific knowledge premise as the only legitimate area claim and the consequent qualification of the proprietors of that knowledge generated a discursive closure of the planning horizon towards broader participation. The gradual legitimization and deliberation of more diverse knowledge perspectives in the planning arena generated openings for the development of a more collaboratively constructed knowledge perspective and thus opened the planning process for a broader participatory potential. These openings of the planning process through deliberation of different knowledge perspectives are also one of the primary objective of the collaborative planning traditions (Innes & Booher 2010). Not only to develop a more legitimate planning outcome, but also to improve the knowledge foundation of the outcome through collaborative (or social) learning (Berkes 2007; Daniels & Walker 2001; Vandenabeele & Goordon 2007). Heiplanen in this sense revealed that even a situation with a severely conflict-filled background, and an impeding knowledge premise, generated possibilities to develop mutual understandings through the gradual development of a dialogue arena that furthered a more

egalitarian knowledge deliberation. The dismissal of the natural scientific knowledge premise as the only legitimate knowledge claim in this sense created a mutual willingness and trust between the local and regional state authorities to develop planning relevant knowledge in the particular area collaboratively.

The collaborative learning and knowledge development of Heiplanen was, however, only opened *within* the planning system logic and between the formal planning actors. The planning arena was thus not opened for the broader participation of the everyday life perspectives – or the locally based knowledge of the nature and society relations that had been created during the future creating workshops. The perspectives of the future creating workshops were, by both the municipalities and the County Governor, considered interesting. Further the dialogue meetings did reflect aspects about the lived life in the area as a means to understand the challenges of the planning process. The local community perspectives of planning were however perceived as too complex to contribute to a planning process purposed to develop a written legal plan document and area boundaries. The challenge of opening the planning horizon towards a more everyday life oriented participation was thus not generated directly. The purpose rationality of the planning process, i.e. the boundary setting and written guidelines, thus created a discursive closure. It legitimized the decision of not involving the local communities because their perspectives were not conformant within the planning rationality or purpose.

This inability to include the community or everyday life perspectives challenges the collaborative planning arena capability to involve other actors (i.e. the public) than the planning system representatives, and thus its potential to handle broader perspectives of the subject matter than the ones represented in the system rationality (Elling 2008). This inability compromises the democratic potential of planning on both substantial and procedural terms (Hansen 2007). Although the municipal authorities were also community representatives and although the dialogue with the County Governor also created understanding for the lived life in the area, the formal planning arena was concerned with negotiations *within* the planning purpose – or system rationality. The collaborative development in Heiplanen was thus reduced to deliberating issues that could fit with the initial purpose of the planning process, namely the negotiation of wild reindeer boundaries. It was thus not challenged with perspectives of nature and society that transcended the existing system logic of nature protection and the focus on area boundaries.

If nature protection is an answer to broader sustainability challenges, then the planning arena must be able to be open to knowledge perspectives that can challenge sustainability through other means than the planning system logic. As criticized in the introduction and in the theoretical chapter, the planning system logic of nature protection is about restrictions and regulations of the general unsustainability of society (Cowell and Owens 2011). Sustainability however, requires a future orientation of the societal trajectory and is therefore in essence a democratic challenge (Clausen et al 2010). Sustainability can in this sense not be pursued by risk assessments, scientific modelling or technical means to avoid and inevitable dystopia (Harste 2000; Sachs 1999). Sustainability also requires hope, reorientation and creation of new perspectives, and therefore the necessity of bringing different rationalities into play. This is one of the main

aspects of the modernity paradox that is discussed by a broad range of reflexive thinkers; we cannot face the sustainability challenges by dominating the social trajectory with the same kind of knowledge totality that has contributed to their formation (Elling 2008;Elling 2010;Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a;Szerszynski, Lash, & Wynne 1996;Wynne 1996). If nature protection, in a longer term perspective, is to ensure the development of more sustainable nature society relations, then the planning arena also has to consider perspectives and knowledge that are not necessarily consistent with the existing system perspectives. Such different rationalities of nature and society – or sustainability – can be introduced through a lifeworld or everyday life perspective of the subject matter (Elling 2008;Elling 2010). The knowledge developed from the everyday relation between nature and society can thus contribute with aspects of nature protection that a pre-defined planning purpose might not be able to “see”. Further it can develop human commitment and responsibility to nature beyond the lines on a map (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a;Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a). The creation of more sustainable nature-society relations thus also requires the involvement of the citizens and the deliberation and development of their everyday life relations to their area. Collaborative planning endeavours and social learning between formal planning actors who negotiate within the planning system logic, are thus not enough to transcend the challenges of a broader sustainability (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007).

The critical utopian action research approach was an attempt to bring different rationalities into play on the planning arena. It was thus a search for different horizons and hopes for the future in the particular area that could point to nature protection as something different from area regulation. Further, as previously argued, it was an attempt to develop improved understanding about the area conflict that could form a broader perception of the area as a common third. The future creating workshops was an experiential opening – a space – for critical utopian deliberations about the subject matter unrestricted by the pre-defined planning purpose and categories. This “free-space” opened the generation of perspectives (or knowledge, values, relations) about nature protection and wild reindeer management. These deliberations bridged the life of the community in the particular area and nature with aspects of planning and management. The themes developed in the workshops were concerned with different aspects of nature and community, but revealed how interconnected “nature” or the area was in their thinking of “community”. One example was the concern for education or “bildung” of the local youth in relation to nature understanding and use, as a potential to strengthen local nature identity. Such local identity was again related to more responsible nature use, and place identity and thus the potential to re-attract the youth after their tertiary education in larger cities. Another, but related, theme was concerned with the strengthening of the local capability and competence of nature management through the establishment of local knowledge parks. Such strengthening was not only considered a remedy to improve nature management, but also a way to develop workplaces and forming better nature practices in the local community. These perspectives included the local experimentation and monitoring of for instance the revival of Seter agriculture as a remedy to explore if such practice created ecological niches for the wild reindeer feeding potential. The workshops thus presented different perspectives of nature protection planning and management that were connected with a community vision of re-vitalizing the nature

responsibility in the communities and thereby ensure a more long-term commitment to sustainable nature management in the communities.

The perspectives developed in these workshops could in this sense be understood as representatives of a different perspective on the subject matter than the boundary focus in the formal planning system. The problem of the collaborative planning arena of Heiplanen was in this sense that it was not challenged by “other” perspectives than what were conformed within the planning logic. In this sense the planning logic of nature protection was “reproduced” as an issue of boundary setting between human and wild reindeer, and thereby a closure for the development and enactment of other aspects of nature protection such as youth education, strengthening of local identity, creation of local knowledge centres, etc. The collaborative planning arena might in this sense be considered able to create legitimacy of the planning outcome, but it was not able to include and develop community perspectives towards more sustainable futures that transcended the planning purpose of boundary setting.

8.3 Nature between protection and use

Nature and its relation to the human society was the materiality (or concrete subject matter) of the planning process. Nature is, as previously described, contested by different meaning systems with different guiding values and knowledge orientations (Daugstad, Svarstad, & Vistad 2006; Macnagthen & Urry 1998; Reitan 2004). Nature, as a common materiality for humans, is sectorized and categorized through different understandings within a planning system rationality than in a lifeworld oriented rationality (Elling 2008). The planning system logic divides this common subject matter into categories of protection and use, while the everyday life orientation understands nature (and the area) as a complexity of relations and experiences in space and time (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a, Clausen 2011). The question is if such diverse nature understandings and experiences can be instrumentalized and reduced to a mere conception of protection and use through the establishment of boundaries on a map. Further, it can be questioned if the establishment of such boundaries actually generates more “protective” and in that sense – sustainable – nature-society practices.

The purpose of Heiplanen expressed a nature perspective influenced by a system rationality. Heiplanen was targeted to categorize areas of protection and use and establish boundaries that would secure the wild reindeer habitat from future human use. As a contrasting view, but still within a planning system orientation, Heiplanen was initially also aimed to generate “use” perspectives in the “human” areas. Nature use was in this sense understood as the development of economic growth related to the exploitation of natural resources, especially considering hydro power potentials and experience or tourism-based economies. The planning system rationality can be interpreted as a discursive closure of the deliberation of nature and use aspects. The reduction and categorization of nature use naturalized the discourse of nature as an asset for either economic exploitation or the protection of “nature” from human influence. Other perspectives of nature seemed irrelevant in the planning debate. The categorizations of use and protection thus served to close deliberations about what use and protection should be, by naturalizing the perception

of protective boundaries as the only possible means to “secure” the wild reindeer area from human use. Any problematization of the boundaries could thereby be marginalized or disqualified as an expression of local economic rationality that was not conformant within the “securement” discourse.

The initial phases of the formal planning process opened an exploration of the local “nature” and “use” perspectives through the meetings between the municipalities, the project leader and county governments (and the researcher). The project leader thus established a local planning arena that opened for questioning and discussing why Heiplanen was conflictual and what development aspects the municipalities were afraid to lose. This local planning space thus generated the first opening towards deliberating a more nuanced “use” or nature perspective in the planning process. The meetings revealed a municipal frustration with the simplification and instrumentalization of the nature and use perspective. Their understanding of the use of nature was not only related to economic exploitation of nature, but also concerned with the local citizens’ ability to use nature for recreational purposes, not least in relation to their traditional støy cabins³⁸. However, the frustration was also linked to the predictability for future municipal planning authority and its potential right to govern their municipal area without iterative conflicts with the county governors. Based on their previous conflicts with the County Governor they considered that nature (or area) use was threatened by the extensive area consequences that the wild reindeer map signaled.

These use perspectives were further explored through the future creating workshops. The workshops in this sense created a discursive and experiential opening for the deliberation of nature and use perspectives connected to the everyday life perspectives of the communities. The workshops constituted a space where experiences and values related to the life in the area could be expressed and collectively developed without a predefined agenda or established categorizations. During these workshops, nature was expressed as constituting part of the cultural identity of living in Setesdal, and the use of nature (roaming, skiing, fishing, hunting) was considered a privilege for the inhabitants. One of the primary concerns of Heiplanen was thus the consequences for this nature use – and the possibility for restoring old støy cabins in the wild reindeer habitat. The concern of area protection was not only related to the historic cultural identity and present use, but also to the future life and livelihood in the valley. The communities feared that restrictions on nature “use” privileges would reduce (young) peoples’ motivation to move (back) to the area. In this sense, it was emphasized that people chose to live in these remote areas because of their genuine interest in nature as part of their life values. The instrumentalization of the nature perspectives to “tourism” aspects was thus considered an insult towards their cultural identity. They did not want to be reduced to a second-home village. Their life was more than tourism. Despite these perspectives of identity and nature understanding, it is obvious that nature (or the area) is an economic asset to the municipalities. The securing of the wild reindeer habitat thus requires planning boundaries for the economic exploitation of

³⁸ As explained in chapter 6, the Setesdal area was previously dominated by Seter agriculture. The valley farms had seters – or summer grazing areas – in the higher lying mountain areas. The seters had sheds or small cabins – støyls – that served as shelters. These are now primarily used for recreational activities.

the area. This perspective was also reflected in all three workshops. The arguments made in the workshop were not that all kinds of “use” should be allowed everywhere. However, their argument was that an area planning system (expert bureaucracy) should be capable to differentiate between different nature uses and not judge all activities as harmful for the wild reindeer on a general basis. The workshops in this sense contributed to opening a utopian horizon for nature-society relations in the community, that not only made the participants consider their responsibility, but also contributed to envision how the planning and management system could improve their practice. The presentation of these local differentiated and complex nature and use perspectives on the regional planning arena might have contributed to opening the existing planning system perspective (among the county governors and county governments) of nature and use as something more diverse than the predominantly economic aspects. These openings of nature understandings were, as will be described below, also influential in the dialogue meetings and in the categorization and boundary setting in the final planning outcome.

The initial plan focus on generating use perspectives (in the planning programme) was closed by the restraint of the planning time frame and the related decision to reduce the planning purpose to boundary settings. The reduction of the time frame can be understood as an experiential closure of the planning process potential to develop new understandings over time. Further, it can be seen as a discursive closure that neutralized objections to the reduction of the planning purpose. The reduction of time and purpose thus generated a closure that naturalized the focus on wild reindeer boundaries as the core purpose of the plan. This reduction might also have influenced the closure of the local community involvement, because the focus of the plan became less oriented towards developing use aspects and nature understandings, and more oriented towards boundary setting. The purpose of the process was thus reduced to developing boundaries and categories that could fit a plan document and less open to the development of new nature practices.

The regional plan forums created discursive and experiential openings of the understandings of nature protection and use. The experiential openings were constituted by the generation of planning arenas, as space and time in the process, where the different (local and state authority) perspectives could meet and challenge each other. These arenas created discursive openings, in the sense that they generated the potential to deliberate the meaning and values behind the perception of nature protection and use. Although these discursive openings were still limited by the planning focus of boundaries and categorizations within the planning rationality, the regional plan forum accomplished in diversifying the nature understandings. The county and state representatives were in this sense challenged by the municipal understanding of different nature and use aspects in relation to the zones indicated on the wild reindeer map. These openings revealed and established a more or less unanimous perspective on the higher mountain areas as wild reindeer area. The main point of discussions targeted the “grey zones” or the actual boundaries between the wild reindeer and “human” zones. Although “use” might to some extent be the construction of second homes, the regional plan forums also created improved understandings for “use” as a more (life oriented) recreational or culturally relational perspective.

The openings of a more diversified nature and use understanding were also influenced by the study trip to England which presented different ways of working with nature and use with the citizens of the area (methods such as, sense of place, landscape character assessment). These methods of planning revealed that the nature managers and planners were influenced by a broader nature and use perspective than what is common practice in Norway. These collective experiences, which reflected nature and use in more diverse forms, could in this sense have contributed to opening the discursive processes between the formal Heiplanen actors by legitimizing diverse nature perspectives and qualifying non-expert perspectives in a nature protection process.

These discursive openings were furthered through establishment of dialogue meetings between the Setesdal municipalities and the County Governor. The legitimization of a more diversified nature understanding thus generated a more egalitarian dialogue between the local and state authorities about nature (or area) issues. The collaborative negotiations of boundaries and categorization of zones were thus opened and influenced by these more diverse understandings of nature and use. The county governors expressed a will to acknowledge that the lived life in Setesdal had to be considered in the boundary setting. Vice versa, the municipalities expressed a will to establish long term boundaries, in agreement with the planning purpose, of protection zones. The Setesdal model operated with very few boundary zones. They argued for smaller protection zones, but with more strict protection guidelines. The Setesdal boundary zone categorizations and guidelines differentiated between economic use (or construction) and the recreational use. These nature perspectives were difficult to grasp for the regional planning actors in the initial phases of the planning process (The project leader for instance found it difficult to understand why Setesdal wanted stricter guidelines for construction in the boundary zones. However, for the municipalities these stricter guidelines clarified that increased construction was not a primary objective, rather it was the ability to use and restore their støy cabins). In this sense, the Setesdal guidelines for the boundary zones had stricter restrictions for new construction than in the rest of Heiplanen, but allowed old støy cabins to be restored. This improved understanding between the County Governor and the municipalities about nature protection and use as a diverse and culturally and everyday life embedded perspective was thus directly influential in the planning outcome.

The understandings and conflicts between different nature use and protection perspectives are to some extent in line with the three dimensional complexity described by Daugstad and colleagues (2006), and with other analyses of local-central nature conflicts as part of a broader dispute of values, ideology, and knowledge (Grönholm 2009; Sandström, Hovik, & Falleth 2008; Zachrisson 2009). Heiplanen revealed that the nature planning conflicts were influenced by disputes between protection or use, nature or culture, and central or local management. These disputes were especially visible in the discussions related to the “grey” areas. Arguments of long term protection boundaries were challenged by arguments of future utility; pristine (ecological) nature values were confronted with landscape and cultural values; and central governance and knowledge perspectives were challenged with local responsibility and knowledge practices. My argument is however, that the understandings of nature and use expressed during the formal and

informal Heiplanen process reveal that the complexity is more substantial than a three dimensional framework. One essential dimension that could serve to broaden the understanding of these conflicts is the perspective of rationality. There is thus a fundamental different understanding (or rationality) of nature-society relations, and thus nature protection, between the planning system and the lifeworld (Elling 2008;Elling 2010). The planning system rationality serves to out-differentiate elements of nature society relations in categories that can be handled and administered by a planning or management system. The planning process becomes the remedy to fulfil the objectives within the pre-defined planning system purpose rationality. In the case of Heiplanen, this was illustrated by the reduction of the broad perspectives of nature use as one aspect of the nature society planning endeavour to a focus on the primary planning purpose of establishing boundaries for a national wild reindeer territory.

The local community, or everyday life understanding, of nature cannot be “out-separated” from the lived life and the relation to the area (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a). The boundaries on a two-dimensional map are in this sense “irrational” categorization of nature. The nature understanding is not only a perspective of utility, culture, or local knowledge and management pride. The human life oriented understandings and relations to nature are multi-dimensional. Nature is perceived as cognitive reflections and physical experiences in both space and time. The relations, values and knowledge about the area are thus not only influenced by mental reasoning about quality and characteristics, but also by the embodied experiences and senses of nature. The dimension of time: history, presence, and future, further generates inseparable relations and perceptions of the area in question. Nature perspectives are in this sense not only influenced by the current aspects of use, but also by the past through previous experiences and historical (or cultural) narratives. Further, nature-society relations are understood as part of a future development horizon, not just in an economic sense, but as a local community and individual potential for life, wellbeing and livelihood. The local community perspective reflects a perception of nature as part of a social common dimension. Nature is, in this sense, a quality or entity that bridges life and livelihood, history and future of the social and physical place. These multi-dimensional perspectives of nature perception were especially present at the future scenario workshops, but also expressed during the regional forum and dialogue meetings.

The collaborative endeavour between the municipal authorities and the County Governor did generate new and diversified understandings about the protection and use, or the relations to nature. These improved mutual understandings succeeded in creating more or less consensus about the boundaries and categorizations necessary to answer to the planning purpose and document. However, the focus on boundaries and categorizations closed for the development and involvement of emerging – and non-categorized – local perspectives of nature development and use as a common. As also problematized in the previous section, it can be questioned how these categorizations will or can influence the actual nature-society practices and understandings in the long run.

The challenge for the planning horizon is the ability to balance the system purpose rationality of process efficiency and area categorizations, with the possibility of opening for broader nature orientations that can contribute with non-sectored sustainability perspectives. The planning process must in this sense be able to open perceptions of nature protection that are not defined within the system rationality, but expressed on the local planning arena. This planning process, and the informal local community involvement, revealed that there were willingness and potential to unfold such diversified nature protection perspectives, but that they were unplanable within the pre-defined planning purpose rationality in the commissioning letter. Nielsen and Nielsen (2007) describe such planning openings as a “reversed participation” perspective. The participatory aspect should thus not only be invited to participate on the planning arena, but they themselves involved in defining the planning purpose based on their everyday life perspectives. In this sense, nature protection could be seen as a “common third” (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2007) that involves the local communities in the process of defining the substance. In this planning process the nature understandings ranged from an understanding of community commons to an understanding of ecological habitat protection. The process of planning must thus acknowledge that there is not *one* legitimate meaning horizon or answer. The essential challenges for planning lie in the openings and development *between* system and everyday life perspectives, experts’ and citizens’ understandings, and thus the different meaning horizons of nature.

8.4 Participation between legitimization and deliberation

Participation in planning has different meanings in different planning traditions. The question is who are considered the participants, who defines the subject matter, and “who’s” arena are they participating in. Such questions of planning challenge our understanding of who the public is in planning and not least “what” the public is invited to participate about. These theoretical considerations have been debated since Sherry Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizens Participation (1969) and Rittel and Weber’s discussion of wicked dilemmas in planning (1973), and continue to be one of the primary debates in contemporary planning theory (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo 2010; Hillier 2003; Innes 2004; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998). Participation is not only a question of procedural legitimacy or democratic rights; it is also a matter of establishing arenas where the participants can contribute with deliberations of the substantial issues. In this sense, the argumentation must transcend the instrumental and even coerced perspective of participation as a matter legitimization or the contribution of valuable knowledge. Participation must be oriented towards empowering the public to contribute to the common as democratic individuals in a process that can develop substantially different perspectives. It is through such empowered participation and the introduction of different rationalities that the planning arena can transcend its own purpose rationality. Participation on the planning arena is thus a matter of operationalizing the dialectic perspectives in society and thereby generating emancipatory knowledge and new societal development horizons. The exploration of openings and closures for participation is therefore a question of how the participatory elements were played out on the planning arena in relation to the definition of the substantial issues.

The process of Heiplanen was challenged with a regional scaled participation arena that should handle a planning purpose with significant consequences for the affected municipalities and local communities. The planning purpose of wild reindeer habitat securement has an intrinsic regional character as it, in an ecological sense, traverses municipal planning boundaries. The regional scale of planning was therefore considered necessary for the establishment of a national wild reindeer habitat. The process, however, revealed that the boundary setting involved complex and irreducible challenges in each municipality (and especially in Setesdal where the planning boundaries affected almost the entire area). The regional scaled perspective of the materiality was thus different than the local scaled understanding of the area. The municipal areas where in this sense not only wild reindeer habitat, but part of a broader socio-cultural nature relation understanding with historic and future perspectives. This question of understanding nature and protection from different scales therefore also affected the openings for participation, namely who were considered qualified and legitimate participants on a regional scale (and who were not).

As discussed in the introduction and theoretical chapter, the argumentations for participation in planning express different understanding (or rationalities) for the essential contribution of participation in planning. This discussion is relevant to understanding how and why a particular planning process opened or closed for different participatory aspects. Within an instrumental rational planning perspective, the contribution of participation is to increase legitimacy for the planning purpose, and in this sense reduce conflicts about the subject matter. Such argumentation often ends up in as coerced legitimization, where the public is heard but not taken into consideration. Further, participation is perceived as a remedy for increased efficiency in the operationalization of the planning outcome, i.e. that participants deliver “data” to the process or implement certain aspects of the planning purpose. The collaborative planning approaches consider participation, not only as a matter of procedural legitimacy, but also to enhance the understandings and knowledge related to the substantial or material aspect of planning. The challenge for the collaborative planning approaches, as also discussed in the theoretical chapter, is its potential capability of deliberating understandings of the subject matter – or the materiality – that transcends the system planning rationality, and the negotiations of individual interests (Elling 2008). Openings for deliberative democratic participation on the planning arena is thus the potential of involving perspectives and understandings that are based on the citizens’ or local communities’ everyday life relations to the materiality of the planning process (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007).

The participatory perspective in the formal regional planning process was a question of involving the 18 mayors and five county government mayors in a regional steering board. The participatory perspective was in this sense scaled to a regional level of negotiating boundaries based on a wild reindeer knowledge premise. This participatory appearance was criticized by the mayors as a legitimizing strategy by the national authorities to reduce the inherent conflict potential in what they perceived as a pre-defined planning purpose. The knowledge premise would thus serve as a constitutional directive of the planning outcome that could undermine the decisions of the steering board. The participatory component in the planning process can thus be understood as partly closed in the preliminary and initial part of the planning

process. The municipal authorities were not qualified as relevant participants and contributors in the process of constituting the planning purpose and process. The participation of the municipalities was thus not a question of deliberating the very premises of the planning process. These premises had been established beforehand by regional and state authorities. The participatory contribution was reduced to a rational-instrumental remedy for ensuring local political legitimacy and to avoid significant conflicts between local and state authorities in the planning process. The local municipality participation was thus pacified to act on the planning arena that had been framed and premised by the national environmental authorities.

The constitutional power to define the planning process premises through decisions taken at a higher hierarchical level than the operational (user) level is problematized by Ostrom in her book 'Governing the Commons' from 1990. The participatory legitimacy and value in nature protection is undermined when local actors or institutions are invited to participate in a game where they have not had the possibility to influence the creation of the rules (Björkell 2008). Ostrom argues that participatory governance of the commons requires that the users of the (environmental) system must also be influential in making the rules and framework for the foundation of the system. Not only due to legitimacy, but because they might have other fundamental perspectives of what must be done on a day to day basis to make it work³⁹.

The first opening for municipal participation was the project leader's visit to each of the 18 municipalities. These local meetings generated an arena where the understandings and perceived challenges related to the planning purpose and process could be openly discussed. In this sense, it created an opportunity (or discursive opening) for deliberating the municipal frustration and critique, and to discuss alternative perspectives for the planning process and substance. These "local planning arenas" also contributed to the project leader's understanding of the complexity of the situation in the present, past and future. This opening of the planning arena and the improved understanding of the complexity of the subject matter also generated an opening for the local community involvement, i.e. the research initiative was acknowledged.

Paradoxically, this discursive opening and the improved understanding of complexity of the subject matter contributed to a reduction of the planning purpose. The improved understanding of the substantial complexity of socio-cultural and ecological aspects, in combination with the primary objective of the commissioning letter, in this sense closed the planning horizon for aspects other than the boundary setting. The argument was that a deliberation of use perspectives within this material areas complexity would be too diverse to "plan" within the timeframe of the project. The reduction of the plan purpose naturalized the planning purpose as a matter of discussing boundaries. It was thus not open to deliberations about the subject matter (nature-society) in terms other than protection. The reduction of the planning purpose

³⁹ Ostrom's theory (1990) is created on the basis of common-pool resource systems, which is not the same as environmental planning of large areas. However, planning for nature protection bears at its core a long term engagement of the environmental system, and balance with humans and society. Her theories are therefore relevant for discussing the quality of participation in societal planning and management of large areas.

directly influenced the perspective of who were the considered relevant participants. The participation became more a matter of negotiating boundaries on a map, than about deliberating diverging perspectives of nature-society relations. This reduction of the planning focus and the subsequent reduction of the time frame was thus influential for the closure (or disqualification) of the local community involvement.

When that is said, it must also be noted that prior to this reduction of purpose and timeframe there was an opening for local community participation. The researcher's engagement with the municipal authorities and the facilitation of the local community workshops succeeded in generating an opening for broader local participation beyond the purpose orientation of the formal planning process. The workshops, in this sense, facilitated a social community space for deliberating everyday life or local life oriented perspectives of the nature-society relations. These broad perspectives were thus not reduced to pre-defined categorizations of ecological or economic interests. Rather, they exhibited the intrinsic relations between the lived life and the use of nature and the frustrations with being "governed" by national authorities. The workshops developed visions for improved local management systems that could not only serve to re-vitalize the local nature identity and but also create workplaces that could re-attract the local youth. The workshops thus experientially and discursively opened the potential for local community engagement in nature-society issues and the ability to consider these issues as something different from the systemic categorizations, and broader than individual interest orientations.

The potential local community engagement was not furthered or opened in the formal planning process. The outcome from the workshops was legitimized in the formal plan process through the recognition of the project leader and the invitation to present their perspectives in the steering board meeting and regional plan forum. The presentation of the local workshop outcome might have served to open the perspectives among the regional representatives about the potential for local participation and the complexity of a regional planning purpose on a local level. The closure of the local community participation was grounded on arguments of qualification. The local community perspectives were not considered qualified to enter a regional plan process that was aimed to establish (objective) boundaries for the wild reindeer habitat. The creation of wild reindeer habitats was thus legitimized as a higher order purpose than the local community perspectives of nature relations and developments. The focus on the boundary setting in this sense naturalized the participation of the formal planning actors as more valid or important than the local community participation. This closure was not only imposed by the regional planning actors. The municipal authorities also contributed to this disqualification of the local community perspectives, firstly because they were worried how such broad perspectives of community-nature relations could contribute to the formal argumentation and process of securing "human" areas in the planning outcome, and secondly, because the current focus on boundaries could mobilize individual interest claims to the area, which was not in the municipal interest. Based on these reflections, the reduction of the planning purpose to the definition of area boundaries generated a closure for the participation of the local community perspectives. On one side the local perspectives generated at the workshops were considered unplanable, irrelevant or

complex in relation to the planning system categorizations, and on the other side, the involvement of local perspectives within this system rationality was perceived to mobilize individual interests or area claims.

This system planning argumentation around local participation thus represents a major paradox in planning. The broadness and irreducible aspects of the collective community lifeworld or everyday life perspectives of nature-society relations are not fit to enter the sectorized and pre-categorized planning system purpose rationality. However, participation, within the system purpose rationality, generates (unintended) opportunities for the claims of individual (economic) interests. The capability of generating broader democratic participation arenas in planning thus also requires a broadening of the systems purposive rationality.

The Setesdal secretariat can from one perspective be perceived as a strategic action, a demonstration of power, to improve the potential influence of the Setesdal municipalities in the formal planning process. In this sense, it could be interpreted as a discursive closure for broader deliberation, because the municipalities pointed to some ultimate claims to the area plan that confronted the wild reindeer map. Although this act did not facilitate further dialogue between the levels of planning, it communicated a broad perspective of local nature relations on the formal planning arena. In this perspective, the Setesdal secretariat thus contributed to raising the awareness of the planning challenge of scale between regional and local area perspectives. The proposal could, in this sense, be understood as a discursive opening: de-naturalization of the boundary zones and legitimacy to deliberate (different) perceptions of the area from the local to the regional scale. Their proposal in this sense demonstrated that there was a (new) willingness in the municipalities to establish national wild reindeer areas in the high mountains through the regional plan process. However, it argued that the areas close to the valley floor were too complex to categorize and negotiate on a regional arena, but would require local planning processes.

Participation in a planning arena that involves both regional and local aspects constitutes new challenges for the understanding of the materiality – or subject matter – at different scales. The regional plan purpose and the local perspectives must in this sense be deliberated through a mutual exchange of perspectives on both a regional and local planning arena. The opening for understanding the area (and thus nature protection) differently from a local to a regional perspective thus opened the horizon for understanding the municipalities as more legitimate and knowledgeable contributors in the planning process.

This was furthered through the regional plan forums that generated discursive and experiential openings for participation between the local and regional-state (county governor) authorities. These planning arenas gradually facilitated a mutual understanding of the necessity of regional and local collaboration. The increased understanding of the area boundary complexity in relation to both reindeer requirements and local community consequences served to improve the mutual willingness and recognition for the necessity of dialogue across authoritative levels. The establishment of the dialogue meetings was in this sense an opening for local participation in the planning process, not just as a legitimizing factor for predefined outcomes, but as committed and qualified contributors to the deliberation of the outcome. These arenas

thus empowered the local authorities to opine about the area in question based on their local perspectives (also as citizens). The local in the regional, and the regional in the local gradually became mutually legitimate perspectives of the area in question. The previous naturalizations of the planning purpose as primarily wild reindeer habitats was thus challenged by local understandings of the area as part of the lived life and history. The process of disclosing values and knowledge (scientific, local and experiential) about the area - topography, ecology, and human use - opened for the generation of new meaning orientations. The dialogue meeting arena was thereby an opening for local participation *within* the planning arena where local opinions and values about the area were allowed to influence the regional authority understandings. This increased mutual understanding became directly visible in the accomplished agreement of the zone categorizations and boundary establishments. The Setesdal municipalities, in this sense, directly influenced the crafting of the final planning guidelines.

The participatory perspectives of the Heiplanen were thus turned from a matter of legitimacy and conflict reduction, to a collaborative means to understanding complexity and improving the boundary establishment. The participation was thus at the regional scale, and within the planning rationality, opened towards improved mutual understanding and collaboration between the local and regional-state authority level. However, the regional planning arena, and the broader issues of nature protection and use were not opened towards the involvement of the broader local communities or the broader life-oriented perspectives of nature protection. Although the collaborative effort resulted in an agreed planning document and broader understandings across planning institutional levels, it did not succeed in opening the planning horizon to the participation of the public as such. In this sense, nature protection was still a matter of setting boundaries, and not about encouraging local responsibility and initiatives to the nature – society relations.

This analysis claims that that the participation of the local communities would have created a “better” planning outcome, in the sense that it could have broadened planning institutional perspective of nature protection with *different* perspectives. The closure of the local community participation as unplanable or an irrelevant “good” thus marginalized perspectives about nature protection that could not be identified or expressed within the planning institutional purpose rationality. Further, the disqualification of the community participation on the planning arena, serves to undermine the potential nature responsibility and re-orientations that were present in the communities. The local workshops indicated that there were aspects of nature protection that could have been furthered and developed towards long term nature engagement in the communities. From a sustainability perspective, this marginalization and disqualification of the broader public disregards the potential for redirecting the nature-society trajectory based on collective lifeworld perspectives. Such redirections are important in nature protection planning exactly because they can develop perspectives for changes in the very nature-society practices that we are trying to protect nature against. Although the formal planning outcome mentions that local processes about nature use should be undertaken after the establishment of the wild reindeer habitats. It is plausible that the closure of these participatory endeavours during the Heiplanen process has generated a mistrust or

fatigue among the local citizens that will reduce their willingness (and sense of responsibility) to participate in a new round.

The openings and closures of participation in planning generates discussions about the how the planning arena and process handles issues of (individual) interests versus the “public good” of the system rationality versus the everyday life perspectives, and of participatory contributions to the different scales of the materiality in planning. (Collaborative) Participation is extensively criticized for being an opening for interest and strategic actions on the planning arena where “real” powers settle the game and thus erode the “public” purpose of planning (Flyvbjerg 1998; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998). This discussion is highly relevant in contemporary collaborative planning where local participation is often directed towards negotiating a complexity of stakeholder interests to reach a better (agreed) outcome (Innes & Booher 2010). Although collaborative planning might be relevant in some situations where there is a fairly agreed understanding of the situation (if that is ever the case) it cannot transcend established institutional logics. Therefore collaborative planning is thus predominantly a matter of balancing existing powers and interests and thus relates to a *predefined* public. The public can provide the planning arena with information, but they are not appreciated as qualified democratic individuals. The public, as citizens, are thus not encouraged to contribute to planning as social responsible beings. My point of argumentation is that to avoid the reduction of planning to a matter of interest negotiation and power plays, then participation in planning should be able to involve the public exactly as “un-sectored” or “non-interest” representatives. The participation of the public must, in other words, be encouraged through what constitutes the public, namely the common and social concern of society (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a). Such involvement of the public requires that citizens are recognized as deliberative contributors and representatives of a lifeworld based or everyday life orientation to the subject matter. The argumentation for citizens’ participation as a democratic goal in itself is, however, not just a matter of procedural legitimacy in planning. It is also a matter of encouraging citizens’ emancipation and social responsibility for society (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a). Such can only be developed when citizens are genuinely recognized and involved in what they consider a meaningful deliberation about the subject matter. Participation and public deliberation thus require that the substantial issues are experienced as relevant or making sense in the perspective of the “public participant” lifeworld or everyday life perspective (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a). These perspectives elucidate the tension between the collaborative and deliberative understanding of public participation in planning. The collaborative perspective is thus concerned with a “relevant” public or stakeholders that can contribute to understanding the complexity of the situation. Such participation is thus concerned with balancing and negotiating established interests or perspectives towards an agreed planning outcome. The deliberative perspective, on the contrary, is concerned with bringing the public into play as something different than interest holders. It is thus an attempt to enrich the democratic planning arena, and the substantial outcome with different rationalities from the institutional or interest based rationalities (Hansen 2007). If the planning arena is reduced to considering categorizations defined by the planning system, or interests defined by stakeholders, and aimed at communicating *within* the planning institutional logic, it can seem meaningless (and impossible) for the public, as citizens, to contribute with their everyday

life perspectives of the subject matter (Clausen 2011). The argument is therefore that the planning system must be able to open for “reversed participation” where citizens and communities are considered legitimate contributors of different perspectives and agendas to the subject matter than what is (pre)defined by the planning system (Nielsen and Nielsen 2007a).

This discussion of the public in planning is perhaps especially relevant in environmental planning or more broadly, in the search for sustainable trajectories. Such endeavours cannot be reduced to a matter of strengthening the expert bureaucracy or producing decisions based on the “right” knowledge. Environmental planning – as a search for more sustainable societal trajectories – has to acknowledge and encourage the participation of the broader public, exactly because they can contribute with perspectives that are not “visible” within established scientific, bureaucratic, or interest based discourses. The involvement of a public as citizens thus opens a perspective that is not limited by sectoral interests or scientific categorizations. An emancipatory participation can thus deliberate the subject matter (nature and society relations) as a social common, i.e. a common third. This is, as previously argued, a fundamental prerequisite for developing alternative or utopian horizons for sustainable futures. Nature protection can thus not be reduced to a matter of establishing boundaries for current unsustainability; it must be a search for common alternative futures. The opening of broader public participation in planning is thus in a procedural sense a matter of developing citizens’ emancipation and responsibility for the social common, and in a substantial sense a matter of generating different perspectives to the societal (commons) trajectory.

8.5 Openings and closures of the planning horizon

This section attempts to analyse the openings and closures of the planning horizon. The planning horizon is understood as the conglomerate direction of the planning discourse that is moulded and formed through the understandings of knowledge, nature, and participation. The argument is not that either the “planning system” or the “life world” has the “right” or the “wrong” perspective. The research interest lies in exploring the openings between these different rationalities and meaning systems in different phases and events of the planning process. It is through these openings of understandings that occurred during the process that I will attempt to point to more general openings and closures of the planning horizon, both as a theoretical conceptualization and related to the actual planning purpose or horizon of Heiplanen.

The previous sections analysed different openings and closures of the understandings of knowledge, nature and participation between the planning system rationalities and lifeworld based perspectives. These analyses revealed that the initial understandings of knowledge, nature and participation were challenged and opened during the process and through the establishment of a dialogue between the local and regional-state authorities. The empirical description of Heiplanen is therefore in many ways a story about how a conflictual instrumental planning process gradually developed into a collaborative planning arena that produced a more or less consensual planning document. The state-commissioned planning process initially generated severe frustrations among the involved municipalities (and especially Setesdal). It was a

process within an area that contained a long history of nature planning conflicts between the municipalities and the (regional) state authorities, which had moulded deep barriers of mutual mistrust. The knowledge premise and the wild reindeer map became a symbol of this mistrust that served to strengthen the municipal opposition to the plan process. The municipalities thus perceived the planning process as a local alibi for a pre-defined outcome given by the national environmental authorities. The planning horizon was in these initial phases shadowed or closed by historical conflicts and the natural scientific knowledge premise expressed as the wild reindeer map.

The planning horizon was gradually opened through the initial dialogue between the project leader and the municipalities. The researcher's involvement with the local communities in Setesdal and the facilitation and presentation of the future creating workshop perspectives contributed to opening the discussions about the subject of the matter in a regional forum, namely the nature protection in relation to the local community perspectives. The first regional forum in this sense became the first opportunity to discuss the disagreements between municipality and County Governor on more egalitarian terms and led to improved understandings of the complexity of the area, and to the decision of setting aside the wild reindeer map. However, as previously stated, the understanding of complexity paradoxically also influenced a closure of the planning horizon. The plan purpose was in this sense reduced to considering only the protection aspect and boundary setting, and left the development of use perspectives to the future. This reduction or closure of the planning horizon must be interpreted in the light of the commissioning letter and the timeframe of planning. The primary objective of the commissioning letter was in this sense the establishment of boundaries for a national wild reindeer territory. To fulfil this purpose within the given timeframe, the project leader found it necessary to reduce the complexity by focusing the planning horizon of the boundaries and categorization of zones. The plan horizon was in this sense closed to a more narrow purpose of drawing lines on a map and defining their meaning in a set of guidelines. In other words, the planning horizon was rationalized and instrumentalized.

The reduction of the formal planning purpose was to some degree compensated for through the opening of a broader planning arena where municipalities and the County Governor could discuss the meaning behind the boundaries and zone categories. The second plan forum generated the possibility to deliberate the complexity of the nature protection process from both a "wild reindeer securement" and a local community perspective, and in this sense served to problematize the boundaries. The planning horizon was thus partially opened through the discussions of the complexity of subject matter that created new understandings about the area, and thereby reduced the initial influence of the knowledge premise and wild reindeer map. The increased understanding of planning complexity further generated a new understanding of participation and a willingness to negotiate, which resulted in the establishment of the dialogue meetings. The previously conflictual relations between the municipalities and the County Governor were countered through new collaborative dialogues within the formal planning horizon. It became a negotiation space where municipal planners and county governor representatives had equal rights to opinion and where the strategic agendas were changed with pragmatic considerations. The

iterative dialogue meetings in this sense opened the possibility to express and challenge different meaning spheres of the subject matter that generated improved mutual understandings for the complexity of the wild reindeer and local society planning reality. It was thus a space where both municipalities and the County Governor learned from each other's perspectives and gradually developed mutual trust. This trust resulted in a mutual agreement between municipalities and county governors to let the municipal planners craft the final plan document and draw the final boundaries. The municipalities of Setesdal were in this sense content with a planning document that would create predictability in municipal planning processes, and the County Governor was satisfied with the establishment of new boundaries of protection. Besides the crafting of a particular plan document, the dialogue meetings also became a trust building process between municipalities and the County Governor. The historical mutual mistrust was in this sense openly discussed, and new understanding about their respective roles in nature planning was generated. In that sense the dialogue meetings might have been one of the most beneficial achievements of the planning process in a longer term perspective. The outcome of the dialogue meetings might in this sense constitute a more radical change of the planning horizon in Setesdal than the Heiplanen document itself.

The opening of the planning horizon was founded on changes in the understandings of the individual actors, i.e. the subjective and inter-subjective meaning orientations. It was therefore, not the planning institutional rationality that was opened towards new understanding and practices, but the willingness of the single actors to recognize the complexity of the planning process. The dialogue thus created an opportunity for the representatives from the local and state authorities to develop new mutual understandings. This dialogue, as also described in the evaluative interviews, contributed to opening the regional planning actors' understanding of the area, as part of a lived life. However, although these discussions touched upon the everyday life aspects of the life in the valley, these were not unfolded as potentials for new planning trajectories or projects, because they did not fit with the stated purpose of the planning process itself. The purpose orientation in the planning process thus reduced or closed the potential for deliberating broader and uncategorized perspectives of nature protection. The changes and openings were thus not created at the institutional level, but through the perceptions and actions of its representative actors.

The openings and closures of the Heiplanen horizon can be interpreted differently from "within" or "outside" the planning institutional rationality. Within the planning rationality this is a story about how dialogue and collaboration can craft new understandings and consensus about an initially conflictual nature protection plan. The process produced an agreed document that answered the initial purpose of the commissioning letter: to establish boundaries for the wild reindeer securement. As stated by the project leader and the County Governor, it can thus be seen as a model for future planning. In this sense, the planning process and outcome can be interpreted as successful *within* the purpose oriented planning horizon. However, interpreted from the "outside" of this purpose rationality the planning horizon did not open towards transcending nature protection perspectives or broad participation. As stated by one of the municipal planners in the evaluative interview, it can be questioned if the planning process has actually

improved the wild reindeer conditions or if it was more a matter of bureaucratic exercise. This question thus challenges the potential of the plan purpose orientation to actually change the nature relations towards a longer term responsibility.

The question is then whether to discuss democratic participation within or transcending the existing nature protection planning horizon or rationality (Elling 2010). Within the system rationality, the collaborative development of Heiplanen must be considered a process that against all odds created a legitimate planning outcome in both a state and municipal authority perspective. However, if we start tampering with the very planning rationality of nature protection itself, then the collaborative success reproduced the idea of boundaries as a means to “protect” nature from humans, and did not succeed to deliberate the more fundamental sustainability concerns. If nature protection is the planning system’s answer to more sustainable society trajectories, then it is relevant to question if a plan document or the establishment of boundaries are a proper means, or if such boundaries only serve to protect nature against the general unsustainability of the society (Cowell & Owens 2011). Planning towards more sustainable nature relations would in this sense require participation towards emancipating local citizens, to develop their perspectives of more sustainable future, regardless of the plan system purpose (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a; Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a).

The purpose orientation in planning, and the reduction of the possible planning horizon, thus reduces the potential of generating more sustainable perspectives that cannot be foreseen by the system rationality. A pre-defined purpose orientation in planning, like the boundary setting, thus influences the potential trajectory of planning and thus the participation of broader perspectives that do not fit the initial purpose. These perspectives create a dilemma in planning between efficiency and purpose orientation versus substance and long term engagement. The planning purpose of creating a plan document that could be accepted by national authorities within a time frame, in this sense, shadowed the possibility of developing a broader dialogue of the sustainability of the subject matter. The planning arena was in this sense too restricted to open for deliberation about knowledge and values in relation to how local life and wild reindeer could co-exist in a long term perspective through increased local engagement and responsibility.

The planning horizon of Heiplanen was thus not opened towards approaching the area as a common third, or a nature-society concern shared by both institutions and citizens. The perspectives developed in the local community workshops generated an outlook on this horizon. The themes were oriented towards the development of the commons in the local community, but not categorized in the planning system logic. The themes were in this sense not planable within the existing planning horizon. The limitation or marginalization of the use and development perspectives was also problematized by the municipalities in the finalization of the planning process. However, it was argued by the regional actors that such exploration would be more relevant in the “next phase” or after the boundaries had been established. In this sense, perspectives of local society development were under-ranked the commissioned primary purpose of ecological boundary setting.

If the planning purpose is to develop more sustainable nature-society relations, then the planning purpose has to be defined through processes with the local communities. The planning process can in this sense not be oriented towards filling pre-defined categories. It must allow these categories to be developed by the local community life orientation. Participation is in this sense not just a question about the legitimate right of local citizens/actors to participate in planning (which within the current rationality can be “settled” through a hearing round or public meeting). However, dealing with issues such as nature protection, requires that the participatory rationale involves a deliberative process to unfold the meaning horizons of the subject matter as a common concern. Participation is, in this sense, the recognition of the local citizens’/actors’ capability to contribute to the planning of substantial aspects with different perspectives than what can be seen from the system itself. It is thus a matter of recognizing nature and society as a matter of commons that embrace different human relations and values.

Participation is from this perspective directed at making the sustainable endeavour, or the nature society relations, a meaningful common social concern, a matter of commoning. Such participatory endeavour is a matter of opening or transcending the existing planning rationality to allow the exploration of other perspectives during the planning process. The complexity (and wickedness) of sustainability requires the emergence of such perspectives that transcend our (social and systemic) existing rationalities to develop new practices. Such perspectives must be developed around a common issue but between different rationalities. The commons must in other words be recognized as something more socially and societally fundamental than the mere management of resources and stakeholder collaboration. It must embrace the public relation to the commons, as part of their life orientation to both society and nature. The argument is therefore not that the everyday life perspective has the answer. The argument is that everyday life perspective can contribute with perceptions, knowledge and responsibilities of the commons, that planning institutions and stakeholders cannot detect or implement through a sectored and purpose oriented perspective.

In this process the local participation was opened and developed *within* the purpose of the planning process between the local authorities and County Governor through dialogue arenas and collective experiences that were established during the process. However, local participation as exploring and understanding the local perspectives of the subject matter (wild reindeer and lived life) on a long term basis was reduced to a difficult “good”. My argument is that if the underlying rationale for nature protection is to accomplish more sustainable nature society relations, then the planning arena and process must be able to permeate its own purpose rationality and allow new perspectives to influence this. It is therefore not enough to accommodate a planning space for local suggestions within a predefined realm. The planning perspective must also be “turned around”. Planning must, in this sense, also explore the local life perspectives (not just interest clarifications) of the subject matter indifferent of the planning purpose. Such exploration or “reversed” participation can contribute with *different* perspectives of the common concern to the planning arena.

8.6 The action research contribution to the openings and closures of the planning horizon

The action research approach was an attempt to understand and challenge the tensions of the current planning logic with new perspectives of participation. The research participation in the formal planning process was aimed at improving the dialogue and understanding between the local authorities/communities and regional-state authorities. However, the action research engagement was also an attempt to challenge the formal planning arena by facilitating local community workshops as a potential different participatory outlook. This “informal planning process” was initially planned as a longer local community process that could develop the local perspectives over time and in collaboration with formal planning actors and experts as “research workshops” (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007a; 2010). This ambition of the local process was, as described in the methodological and empirical descriptions, redirected during the planning proceedings. However, my engagement on the formal planning arena continued as a participant – or critical action research – observer. Throughout the planning process, my role in the formal planning process was to advocate for increased dialogue between the formal planning actors, and continuously question the understandings and rationale behind the boundary setting and categorizations of the area. However, it was also aimed at exploring how everyday life oriented understandings of the area were deliberated on the formal arena.

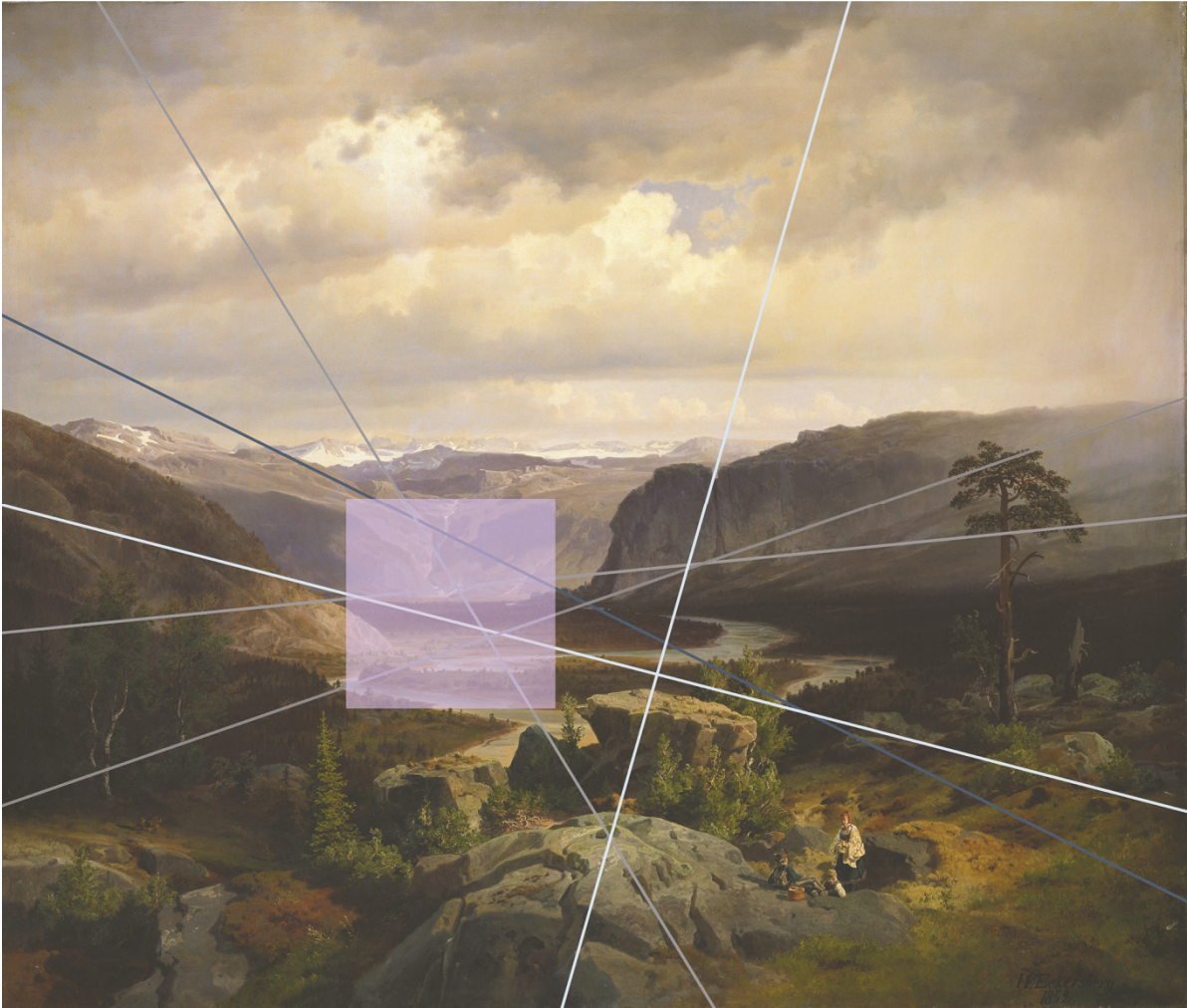
The action research process firstly opened the perspective of a broader participation process through the initial meetings with the project leader, county governments and the municipalities. The furthering of the process with the municipalities generated the opportunity to discuss the meaning of participation in nature protection planning. These discussions could have contributed with new understandings among the municipal authorities about the role of the public in planning and the potential of broadening the planning horizon for something different than boundary setting. This was also accentuated by the municipalities during the evaluative interviews: that the research engagement had served to open new ways of involving the citizens.

One of the primary intentions with the action research process was to generate openings in the formal planning arena for the participation of the local communities and the everyday life related perspectives of the area. The local community workshops generated new perspectives of the community nature understandings, relations, and future perspectives. However, these budding perspectives were only, to a limited extent, influential on the formal planning arena and outcome. The development and presentation of these perspectives may have contributed to nuance the regional planning actors understanding of the area as something different than just protection and use. The presentation of the local perspectives in this sense generated an opening on the formal planning agenda for understanding the area as part of a lived life reality. As such, the exploration of the community perspectives and the engagement of an “outside” researcher could have contributed to a more egalitarian collaboration between the municipal perspectives and the regional state actors. The research engagement in the formal planning process and in the development of the dialogue meetings was thus concerned with being a critical partner. This “outside”

position enabled a research role that could reflect about the subject matter and encourage discussions about some of the difficult and conflictual issues. In this sense I was able to act as a reflective partner for both municipal and county governor representatives.

The role of the action researcher is thus on a general level to advocate for the local in the common *and* common in the particular. On the empirical level the action researcher thus attempted to advocate the local understanding on the regional planning arena and conversely the regional concerns on the local arena. In this sense, the engagement of the action researcher was not only to explore and develop the local perspectives, but also advocate for the common concerns for nature and wild reindeer during the process. On the regional planning arena the research engagement was in a similar sense directed towards improving the understanding of the local life-oriented understandings of the area in relation to the more regional or common wild reindeer concerns. The action researcher was thus not only interested in exploring and understanding the tensions between different perspectives and rationalities in a planning process. Rather, it was an attempt to use this emerging understanding to challenge and reorient the planning horizon.

This thesis is not able to evaluate or analyse the long term effects of either the planning process or the action research engagement. However, it can argue that the involvement of the action researcher contributed to develop, and to some extent reorient, some of the understandings that were predominant in the beginning of the process. In this sense the involvement in the local communities, and the advocacy of the common on the formal planning arena, can be interpreted as contributions to a gradual opening of the particular planning horizon. Further, the action research as the writing of this thesis can be understood as a contribution to new understandings of the environmental planning horizon on a more general level. The theoretical contribution of the action research has thus been an exploration of the tensions and dissonances that challenge the participatory efforts in environmental planning. The theoretical ambition is in this sense to further general understandings, based on a particular case, of how the environmental planning horizon can be opened towards deliberative participation as a fundamental requirement for approaching sustainable planning trajectories.



9. Conclusive perspectives

This final chapter aims to clarify my analytical findings to more conclusive perspectives. The primary objective is to answer the initially stated research questions. I will first answer the four partial research questions before I return to the main question:

- *What were the discursive and experiential openings and closures in the planning horizon of Heiplanen for deliberative democratic participation?*

9.1. Partial research question 1 and 2

- *Why was nature protection planning so conflictual in the municipalities and communities affected by Heiplanen?*

The state-commissioned wild reindeer protection plan, Heiplanen, was an attempt to bridge challenges of protection and use through collaboration between local, regional, and central authorities. The planning process generated substantial and procedural conflicts between the perspectives of the local municipalities and communities on the one hand, and the state expert bureaucracy on the other. The substantial conflict involved various ecological, socio-economic and cultural claims to the area, while the procedural conflict concerned the legitimacy of the knowledge and the premises and rights to govern the area. The controversies in this planning process were also highly affected by the history of nature conservation processes in the area, and the decades of area conflicts and single case quarrels between the municipalities and the County Governor. Heiplanen thus entered a communicative landscape affected by mistrust and non-communication between the key stakeholders in the process. The ability to find a common ground for planning was thus in the initial phase of Heiplanen shadowed by a myriad of conflicts.

The substantial conflicts were on the one side grounded in ecological interests of protecting wild reindeer habitats, and on the other side the considerations of human use aspects of the area. The wild reindeer behaviour and population ecology require large desolate areas to secure feeding and calving areas that are not disturbed by human activities. Issues of human use were not only concerned with economic interests of (second home) construction or hydropower aspects, but also human (motorized and non-motorized) traffic in the areas. The substantial conflicts were further influenced by the potential effect on the local communities recreational use (and historic-cultural relations to the Seter areas) of the mountains, especially in Setesdal where the initial planning area of Heiplanen affected approximately 99% of the municipal areas.

The procedural conflicts were related to issues of legitimacy and the right to govern the area and different knowledge perspectives of how to classify nature protection and design area management. The natural scientific knowledge premise and the introduction of the wild reindeer map accentuated and catalyzed this conflict. From the municipal point of view, the natural scientific knowledge premise undermined their participation and claims in the planning process. The wild reindeer map was thus considered a pre-defined

outcome which the planning process attempted to legitimize through the establishment of a local political steering board. The expert bureaucracy considered the wild reindeer map as a necessary means to balance different interests against the wild reindeer habitat requirements in the planning process. The wild reindeer map was thus perceived as an objective knowledge foundation for the further political planning process.

The continuation of the planning process, and the action research engagement with municipalities and communities, revealed that the construction of area conflicts and steering disputes were grounded in different paradigmatic understandings of nature and knowledge. Heiplanen in this sense mobilized a clash of foundational comprehensions of the qualities and character of nature, its relation to society, and the meaning and role of “knowledge”. These “clashes of discourses” were especially outspoken in the discussions of the “grey areas” or the boundaries between the high mountains and the valley areas. The conflicts were thus not primarily concerned with the primary wild reindeer habitats in the high mountain areas, but with the areas that were (potentially) both humans and wild reindeer “habitats”. The discussions of the boundary zones in this sense served to materialize the different value and meaning orientations related to perceptions of nature and knowledge.

The conflicts of Heiplanen accentuate that there are different regional and local (paradigmatic) understandings of nature-society relations and different bases of knowledge at stake in a planning process. Although the nature protection issue was conflictual, the main conflict was concerned with *who* should be involved in defining *what* means and remedies that were necessary to outline and protect the wild reindeer habitat. The different reality perceptions and rationalities of such conflicts are essential to bring into play on a democratic planning arena to generate new understandings and planning legitimacy. The existence of different meaning orientations and the possibility of egalitarian communication can develop new and better understandings of nature protection as something distinctive from a two-dimensional boundary settling. Furthermore, the potential democratic engagement can generate empowerment and emancipation among local and regional actors to pursue improved nature responsibility, as a common concern, on a long term basis.

➤ *What were the different understandings of nature protection, participation, and knowledge at play among both the local communities in Setesdal and the regional institutional perspectives, and how did they develop during the planning process?*

The commissioning letter, and the state expert bureaucracy, perceived Heiplanen as a remedy to protect certain nature areas against human use by generating boundaries. Nature and wild reindeer were in this sense perceived as a “resource” that required protection from increasing human interest claims in the area. The role of the natural scientific knowledge was to (objectively) determine wild reindeer habitat requirements and key-resource areas. Natural scientific knowledge was in this sense ranked over other types of knowledge claims to the area. Participation of the municipal authorities was considered necessary to ensure local legitimacy and anchorage for the national nature protection policies and reduce potential

conflicts (that had previously been influential in the area). The decision-making arena was, however, framed by a fundamental knowledge premise. This was materialized and instrumentalized as a wild reindeer map of the area in question. The planning outcome was expected to be grounded on this knowledge foundation as an answer to the commission by the national authorities. The planning arena was in this sense shadowed by the hierarchical power of the national authorities to validate and judge the final planning outcome. These underlying expectations from the national authorities served to restrict the potential directions of the planning arena. The primary concern of Heiplanen therefore became to establish area boundaries for human construction (economic interests) that could serve to protect a viable national wild reindeer territory in a longer term perspective.

The municipal understanding was influenced by previous planning processes and considered Heiplanen as yet another area claim by the national environmental authorities. Despite its “use” rhetoric, Heiplanen was considered a disguised conservation process. The wild reindeer map was not only considered a flawed and arrogant tool to justify conservation claims. It was also considered an attempt to reduce local perspectives and arguments to illegitimate “opinions”. In this sense, the process and the municipal participation were considered tokens of coerced local legitimization of expert bureaucratic defined outcomes. The sense of incapability to affect the Heiplanen outcome was therefore considered not only a threat to future municipal planning authority in the area, but also an unpredictable menace in relation to its consequences for the citizens’ daily life in the area. From the municipal perspective, the challenge of defining protection and use, especially in the problematic “grey areas”, would require broader local processes. Their definition of nature protection and use was related to fundamental questions of potential community development. This involved not only considerations of economic facets, but also the recognition of nature as part of a historical, present and future socio-cultural relation to the area. Nature protection in a longer term perspective was therefore also a question of crafting and strengthening local competence and responsibility to the herd and area management.

The future creating workshops (and the research collaboration with the municipalities) revealed that although Heiplanen mobilized dimensions of protection and use, culture and nature, local and central steering as relevant points of critique and conflict. The understandings of nature in a utopian perspective were, however, intrinsically related to the pride and joy of living in the area and the hope for future community existence and development. Nature was considered a constituent part of their local identity and the socio-cultural life in the area. This also represented potential economic interests and opportunities to create a livelihood. Nature was in this sense considered an inherent part of the life and livelihood in the area, or in other words the common ground for the social cultural future of the local community. The plan purpose of drafting boundaries seemed meaningless compared to the “real” issues of developing community responsibility and local institutions that were better capable to manage wild reindeer and human use in a long term perspective.

The future creating workshop ideas of developing different nature protection perspectives from plan boundaries (local knowledge centres, youth “ranger” education, etc.) were not followed up by the municipal authorities or Heiplanen. Although the municipal authorities were arguing for local processes on the regional planning arena, they also considered the workshop perspectives as too diverse to enter a plan process. In this sense, the municipalities recognized the relevance of the perspectives generated during the workshops, but considered them unplannable within the Heiplanen purpose. The ending of the local community processes were affected by the request of a formal municipal proposal to Heiplanen, and in that sense, the request to answer to the national authority commission of planning boundaries. This requirement mobilized the formation of the Setesdal Secretariat that could craft a professional planning answer. The broad development horizons of the local communities were in this sense used strategically, along with other perspectives to argue for local nature engagement. The presentation of the local community workshop perspectives and the municipal proposals on the regional planning arena illustrated that there were great disagreements about the nature protection and use perceptions. However, the presentation of these perspectives generated the possibility for deliberating these disagreements as different legitimate perspectives and served to influence the subjective meaning orientations of the involved planning actors. The recognition of disagreement, or the acknowledgement of different understandings, thus served to generate a more egalitarian communication on the planning arena.

Movements of understanding

The initial phases of Heiplanen were influenced by tensions between a purposive and instrumental planning rationality that used natural scientific knowledge to restrict potential deliberations between different rationalities on the planning arena. The municipal participation was a matter of legitimizing the (predefined) outcome, rather than contributing to its constitution. The community workshops and the first regional planning arenas generated the potential to challenge this initial planning rationality. In this sense room was created, and budding recognition, for deliberating and discussing different perspectives of what nature protection might be. These first movements of understanding on the planning arena generated an understanding of nature as not only a matter of ecological or economic interests, but also part of a lived life in a local community. The perception of nature protection was in this sense developed into a more complex matter than objectively defined (potential) wild reindeer habitats. It was thus the recognition and acceptance of disagreements that generated a legitimate ground for deliberating different perspectives on the planning arena. These recognitions, or movements of understanding, generated the potential for crafting a planning arena where municipalities, counties, and the regional state bureaucracy could discuss nature protection and wild reindeer habitats based on different legitimate perspectives. The Heiplanen process in this sense gradually recognized the necessity to develop local- regional collaboration, as a goal in itself, to deal with the nature protection complexity on a long term basis.

The collaborative effort between the municipalities and the County Governor could be understood as a local-regional agreement of the necessity to answer to the national authority commission to avoid the

interference of the national authorities in the planning process. The area boundaries and the guidelines thus became the primary objective of the planning arena to satisfy national expectations and to facilitate predictable area management. The planning arena was aimed at crafting boundaries and categorizations of key wild reindeer areas and consideration zones through balancing local and regional area knowledge claims and interests. Although the collaborative arena also created “space” for understanding the area as part of the lived life in the community, these perspectives were not considered directly influential in a planning process. The collaborative planning arena was in this sense not concerned with deliberating nature protection as an effort beyond the purpose of boundary setting. It was a collaborative means to reach the “best” solution to the predefined purpose. Nevertheless, the development of the collaborative arena and the improved dialogue between previous conflicting local and regional institutions can be understood as a nature planning improvement in itself. Local and regional state authorities thus developed a basis for discussing and negotiating future planning and management issues that could recognize different knowledge grounds and area understandings. The development of this common ground might be able to further continuous learning processes between local and regional understanding of the area as something more “common” than either wild reindeer or human “habitats”. The development of improved mutual understandings and the building of trust between previous conflicting actors, can thus, on a longer term basis, prove to be even more influential for the nature protection and use aspects in Setesdal than the planning document on its own.

9.2. Partial research question 3 and 4

- *What were the openings and closures for improved mutual understandings and new participatory practices to nature-society planning among local communities in Setesdal and regional institutions, and how did it influence the Heiplanen process and outcome?*

The primary closure to participation and mutual understandings in Heiplanen was the knowledge premise for decision making. The knowledge premise naturalized the nature protection discourse as a matter of balancing ecological facts. This premise served to neutralize other rationalities, values and meanings of the subject matter. This neutralization served as a discursive closure of the deliberation of different opinions about what nature protection is and could be. Thereby it also closed the potential of discussing who were, and should be, considered relevant participants in the planning arena. In this sense the knowledge premise performed to disqualify perspectives other than the expert perceptions of the area, and reproduced the power of the established planning institutions to qualify the legitimate participants in the planning arena.

The materialization of the natural scientific knowledge premise as a map served to legitimize the planning purpose of boundary setting. The ecological and biological dynamics were in this sense instrumentalized as static truths with objective definitions of the wild reindeer habitat and the necessary planning boundaries. This instrumentalization of knowledge served as a tool for the established environmental authorities to disqualify any other meaning or understandings of the area “categorizations”. The use of knowledge as a

means of power to define the area thus closed the potential development of local-expert knowledge interaction and the generation of new knowledge perspectives.

The plan commission and plan programme reduced and categorized the relation and use of nature as either exploitative or protective. This naturalized the discourse of nature protection as a matter of defining boundaries as the only possible means to secure wild reindeer habitats from human exploitation. In this sense, other (local) perspectives and understandings of the area and nature protection could be disqualified as illegitimate economic claims. The protection discourse thus served as a discursive closure that neutralized the deliberation of “other” perspectives of nature planning and management. This closure of deliberation of what and how nature protection could be was furthered by the experiential closure of the time frame. In this sense, the understandings of nature protection and use as a more complex matter than boundary settling were neutralized by referring back to the limited timeframe and the necessity to answer to the requirements of the plan commissioning letter. This focused and naturalized the planning purpose as a matter of defining boundaries, and not about developing new understandings.

The planning arena was thereby closed to the participation of actors other than the ones considered relevant contributors to reaching the predefined planning purpose. The focus on fulfilling the planning purpose of boundary settings thereby naturalized the understanding of which actors were considered relevant in the planning arena. Participation in planning became a matter of contributing and negotiating knowledge and understandings that could accomplish the complex process of defining the boundaries between human and wild reindeer areas. This perspective of participation served as a discursive closure to the questioning and deliberation of “what” nature protection is, “how” it should be done, and what other possible trajectories the planning process could explore with a broader public. In this sense, the focus on the planning purpose served to close the potential participation and deliberation of other perspectives to nature protection planning that might have been experienced as more meaningful by a “different” public from the institutional planning actors.

The establishment of the broader regional planning arena generated an experiential and discursive opening for deliberating different perspectives and understandings of the area, and gradually building mutual understanding (social learning). This opening was established through the iterative questioning of the municipal political level, especially related to the quality of the wild reindeer map and its role in a planning process. The opening of the planning arena was furthered by the decision to set aside the wild reindeer map as constitutional for decision making. The planning process generated space and time for several meeting arenas which were necessary to gradually generate an understanding of the values underlying the conflicts or tensions of understanding. The planning arena developed an opening for recognizing the legitimacy of different understandings of the area and the relevance of disperse knowledge orientations to plan a regional area with severe local implications. The understanding of nature protection and use was thus not only deliberated as economic or ecological interests, but also related to the life orientation of the municipal actors. The local community workshops and the presentation of the results on the regional

planning arena could have contributed to further the more complex understanding of what nature use and protection could be from a daily life orientated community perspective. In this sense it can be seen to have opened a de-neutralization of the planning protection purpose as boundary settling, and legitimized other perspectives of nature protection. It was based on this initial opening of egalitarian communication of different rationalities that laid the ground for a collaborative planning arena. The establishment of the collaborative planning arena (the dialogue meetings) created an experiential opening, or a time and space, for local and regional state authorities to experience different understandings of nature management, as well as broader understandings of the area as part of a local community. The meetings thus generated discursive openings where local based knowledge and scientific knowledge were recognized as equally qualified or mutually important to develop better nature management practices in the future. Although these meetings were targeted to answer the purpose rationality of Heiplanen (the boundary settling), they also generated understandings among the involved actors beyond this purpose.

The local community workshop constituted an experiential and discursive opening for discussing nature protection and use in relation to the life of the affected citizens and communities. The critique developed in the workshops revealed that the communities experienced the institutional categorizations as meaningless and that they felt ridiculed by the formal planning authorities. The utopian dimensions created perspectives for a different orientation to the nature protection logic that was grounded in development and strengthening of the community's competence and responsibility. Although these perspectives were not directly influential on the formal planning outcome, they nevertheless served to raise awareness among local and regional authorities for citizens and community participation as something different from claims of "individual interests". In this sense, the local community involvement facilitated the discussion of nature protection as something different from answering a plan purpose.

The generation of the collaborative planning arena and the development of improved mutual understandings about nature protection and use influenced the final crafting of the Heiplanen document and area boundaries. The collaboration between municipalities and the County Governor succeeded in negotiating the area boundaries in combination with the definition of the planning guidelines for the areas. The "Setesdal model", written by the municipalities in agreement with the County Governor, became positioned directly in the final planning document of Heiplanen.

➤ *What were the contributions of a critical utopian action research approach to the openings and closures of understanding and participation in Heiplanen?*

The engagement of the action researcher served to generate openings between the local municipal understanding and the formal regional institutional planning actors. The researcher in this sense served to question the planning purpose and the role of participation in both local and regional arenas. The researcher thus opened a "planning position" on the planning arena that was neither disqualified nor neutralized, but acknowledged as a critical reflection partner. The role of the action researcher was thus

able to question aspects of the planning process that were seemingly taken for granted, which served to encourage reflections among the planning actors.

In the initiation of the process, the research position particularly opened the deliberation of local understandings and rights to offer opinions about the subject matter differently from the regional actors. This was particularly outspoken during the engagement with local municipalities and communities. The planning and creation of the community workshops thus opened a different entrance to discussing nature protection. It facilitated deliberations about local community relations to nature that generated different outlooks of what protection and use could be and how the local community could be involved. These workshops might have been influential for generating broader legitimacy for the local community perspectives as something different from economic claims. However, the action researcher did not, as initially planned, facilitate an opening of the regional planning arena for these utopian perspectives.

During the continuation of the process, the researcher also served to critically reflect with the regional actors about their own role and purpose in the planning process. The action researcher thus opened discussions in the planning arena about the local concerns in the regional challenges, and the regional concerns in the local challenges. These discussions and the acknowledgement of disagreements were further encouraged by the researcher as a potential ground for dialogue between the local and regional authorities. The action researcher, through the participation in the formal planning arena, thus insisted on the potential for improved understandings through further dialogue. The researcher can in this sense, be seen to have contributed with the openings of the (initially) controversial dialogue meetings between the municipalities and the County Governor.

9.3. Main research question and emerging perspectives

- *What were the discursive and experiential openings and closures in the planning horizon of Heiplanen for deliberative democratic participation?*

The knowledge premise and the wild reindeer map served as a closure of the deliberative democratic participatory potential in the planning process and of the potential substantial development of understandings between different knowledge spheres. The national commissioned knowledge premise and the sectorized understanding of nature use as exploitative naturalized the planning purpose as a matter of settling boundaries to protect the wild reindeer from human area claims. The plan purpose, despite its participation and use rhetoric, in this sense closed the planning arena for deliberating other perspectives than those which could contribute to answering the national authorities. In this sense, other understandings of the area and perspectives of what nature protection could be were neutralized as irrelevant opinions. The naturalization of the plan purpose and the neutralization of other perspectives were strengthened by the time pressure of the plan, which served to limit deliberations about other perspectives than those which answered the planning purpose. Although the initial commissioning letter

had the ambition of exploring both protection and use, the ultimate purpose of boundary settings became the answer.

The collaborative arena was an opening towards more deliberative communication about nature protection and use, but it was limited by the focus on the plan boundaries. Although the dialogue meetings opened improved understandings between the actors in the process, also related to life orientations of nature, they were not considered relevant contributions to a planning document. The dialogue meetings were thus not able to permeate the purposive planning rationality and explore different (and utopian) outlooks for nature protection.

The local community workshops served as an example of how nature protection and use could be deliberated from a different and life oriented outlook on the horizon. It illustrated that the local community related to different aspects of nature as part of an everyday life, with economic, cultural and social facets. Further, nature was inherently related to both historical and cultural understandings, as well as future horizons for the existence of the community. In this sense, the workshops served to deliberate nature and local societal relations as common concerns in the community.

Perspectives

From these conclusions it could therefore be questioned if the regional outset for Heiplanen was a proper means to “securing wild reindeer habitats on a longer term basis” or if the concern for the wild reindeer habitats should have been opened and encouraged from the local public. One of the challenges of the regional planning arena was the circumstance that its holistic and distanced perspective was unable to deal with the local nature-community complexity. Yet, it is also a point that wild reindeer habitats are “regional”, and that their use of the mountains spread across different administrative boundaries. Wild reindeer management therefore inherently holds regional challenges. This mutual acknowledgement generated the willingness to develop local-county dialogue meeting arenas, and the ability to negotiate the local regional values and interests to a more or less mutually agreed compromise. However, the future creating workshops illustrated that there was willingness amongst the local public to participate in generating collective perspectives for future management of the nature-community relations. These were different from the boundary setting purpose of Heiplanen, and related to the essence of living in the area with its irreducible recreational, cultural and economic aspects of nature-community relations.

The openings for a more democratic deliberative planning horizon, beyond interest negotiation, thus require that the planning purpose is broadened. A broadening of the nature protection planning purpose as part of a human social life orientation, will also serve to broaden the understandings of who is considered a relevant public in planning. The opening of the planning horizon for deliberative participation of a broader public is not only a question of procedural legitimacy, or a matter of feeding the planning arena with relevant information. More importantly, public deliberations are an essential concern to developing knowledge and rationalities beyond the established orientations, and a way of encouraging responsibility

for the common matter. If such public deliberations are not taken into the environmental planning horizon, the essence of nature protection, as a sustainability endeavour, might be reduced to a matter of risk assessment and boundary setting.

The problematization of participation in a rational-instrumental planning arena and a collaborative planning arena is especially relevant in a sustainability perspective. The sustainability endeavour cannot be reduced to a question of estimating risk of the current trajectory and defining the “right” direction based on expert perspectives and knowledge. Sustainability can similarly not be reduced to a matter of balancing existing perspectives, knowledge or interests through collaborative efforts between “relevant” stakeholders. Sustainability endeavours must be a question about generating different and alternative perspectives of existing rationalities (knowledge, interests, values, norms, etc.). It is, in other words, difficult either to instrumentally or collaboratively meet the sustainability challenges with the same logic that, in many ways, has paved the way for the present situation. The existing expert and institutional rationalities must therefore be challenged through other ways of thinking in order to open other horizons.

This argumentation of dialectics in planning raises the potential of the utopian horizon in planning. Instrumental and collaborative planning approaches often become reduced to answering the initially set purposes of a plan. The objective of fulfilling the purposes of a plan thereby becomes a matter of either producing rational-instrumental and authoritative decisions and implementations, or a question of (collaboratively) negotiating and balancing existing interests and values towards a mutually agreed compromise. However, if nature protection is an answer to the ethos of sustainability, then it should also embrace and encourage the generation of development trajectories or planning horizons other than the purpose of planning institutional objectives. It is through the empowerment of utopian perspectives that new and alternative perspectives can emerge that can redirect the societal trajectory into a different direction. The utopian perspective can in this sense serve as a nerve of energy in planning that challenges different actors (both institutional and citizen) to envision and create different outcomes in a planning process from what the initial planning purpose could foresee. The utopian perspective is in this sense an understanding of planning that transcends the purpose rationality of both instrumental and collaborative planning traditions.

Participation can, in other words, not just be a question of fulfilling procedural legitimacy within the planning institutional purpose rationality or as a comment to expert defined agendas. Participation in planning must also offer the potential to deliberate different perspectives that do not answer the planning categories, but contribute with other rationalities and alternative perspectives. As argued in this thesis, the contribution of the public in planning is the contribution of perspectives that are related to the public as such, the everyday life orientation to the subject matter as individuals in a common social reality. Deliberative participation or reversed participation must therefore also be a question of encouraging the broader public to participate. Such encouragement, and the basis of engagement, requires that participants, from their life orientation, consider the planning arena and direction meaningful.

Participation, from this perspective, is therefore a matter of empowering participants to become involved in social meaning deliberations about the subject matter and thereby allowing different rationalities to meet and develop in the planning arena. The recognition and encouragement for such deliberations can in this sense generate an increased responsibility towards the subject matter, as well as substantial contributions.

Knowledge in planning might be understood as an inevitable remedy of power for dominating institutions to govern the discourse orientation in a process and dis/qualify the participation of certain actors. However, the meeting and deliberation between different types of knowledge bears the potential to develop new understandings and orientations in environmental planning and management. A potential that is fundamentally important within the sustainability endeavour because it inevitably requires knowledge development beyond that which exists today.

Nature protection in a sustainability perspective is a matter of the foundational aspects of nature and society relations and our understanding of these. The characteristic dimensions of protection and use, culture and nature, and local or central steering and knowledge that are echoed in the nature planning and management literature and praxis are relevant for understanding these different conflictual aspects of nature society relations. However, the question of nature and society relations more fundamentally raises challenges of the commons. Environmental planning, as an institutional endeavour, must essentially be a matter of encouraging, supporting, or constructing the engagement to nature as a common societal concern. Nature, as part of social reality, is thus a common third amid different rationalities and relations. It is through our cognitive and experiential “relating” to the common that it becomes meaningful to participate in inter-subjective dialogue and mutual understanding. If the social relation to the common becomes enclosed by economic interests or distanced authorities, then the foundation for human engagement erodes and perishes. Conversely, the social human engagement requires an orientation towards a common sphere to develop inter-subjective understandings and social responsibility. In this sense, social responsibility for the common nature society relations is a prerequisite for the sustainability endeavour.

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