

Summary:

Mission impossible?

Application of county planning to achieve coordinated and consistent transport policies at the regional level

The motivation behind this project is to establish a more closely integrated, better coordinated and more efficient resource allocation in the transport sector, both at national and regional levels. The main questions the project address are concerned with what can be achieved within the current planning framework with regards to:

- ?? Which conflicts arise when trying to balance a wish for efficient sectoral processes and the need for democratic control and legitimacy?
- ?? What level of integration and coordination can be achieved in planning, and is the wish for integration a barrier for successful implementation of plans?
- ?? How does the institutional framework affect the outcome of the planning? Which institutional reforms can contribute to the development of a more appropriate division of responsibilities and better integrated regional transport policies?

The project pursues these questions in two case studies of contemporary attempts to develop integrated regional land-use and transport policies in Norway.

The county plan for the Sørkorridoren transport corridor address land-use and transport policies in a corridor spanning the Oslo and Akershus counties. The planning area is to the south of Oslo and includes the main rail and road transport routes to Sweden and Europe. The aim of the plan was to determine future main transport arteries for both road and rail, and establish guidelines for future land-use in the area. The plan was submitted in May 1997 and adopted by the County Council in Akershus May 2nd, 1999 and the City Council in Oslo January 19th 2000.

The County plan for long-term urban development on Jæren, concerns urban development in the greater metropolitan area around the cities of Stavanger and Sandnes. The aim of the plan was to develop long-range goals and guidelines for land use and transport, clarify areas of conflict and provide a framework for the development of binding policies for state, county and municipal authorities. The planning is part of a long-term land use and transport planning effort in the area. Conflicts between urban development, conservation and farming are factors motivating the planning. The plan was submitted January 31st 2000 and adopted by the County Council in Rogaland on October 10th 2000.

The analysis is based on three sets of variables – background variables, process variables and outcome variables.

Background variables. These are variables used to describe the character of the planning: Planning background and purpose, participation horizontally from the regions and vertically from the different levels of government, planning perspective, degree of specificity in the planning and to what degree the planning is centralised or decentralised.

We find that both plans contain both short- and long-term elements. The short-term elements are mainly infrastructure measures developed in policy arenas outside the county planning. Long-term elements (i.e. land-use, urban development) are more within the scope of ordinary county planning. Participation by various decision-making bodies and the public has been quite extensive in both cases. The participation has been most extensive in the Jæren plan, due to the chosen organisational structure and the wide range of themes in the plan. However, public transport seems to be insufficiently addressed in the Jæren plan, while Sørkorridoren fails to address both land-use and public transport in an adequate manner. Both planning processes are decentralized, with a local basis of participants from regional state bodies, the County Governor, the county municipality and affected municipalities.

Process variables. These are variables that concern key elements in the planning process and that may explain the outcome: The coupling of the processes to the formal planning system, the degree of integrated vs. sectoral planning, the asymmetry between actors, the role of the institutional framework and the extent of political vs. administrative control over the process.

The infrastructure elements of the plan are largely incorporated in the national infrastructure planning. However, the study reveals that there can be gaps between local and national priorities. Other elements, i.e. land-use and public transport, have more tenuous links. In both plans, key elements in the plans are decided and implemented in other decision arenas than the county plan. Thus, certain actors can isolate their decision-making from outside influence from other actors and processes. This may create asymmetry between actors in the planning, which contribute to reduce the degree of actual integration in the planning.

Both plans complies well with the existing institutional framework and do not explicitly challenge the existing division of responsibilities. However, both plans attempt to establish guidelines for land use, which is an area that is the municipalities' domain. Sørkorridoren provides rather vague, descriptive guidelines, while Jæren attempts to provide win-win solutions by focusing on common long-range solutions to long-standing land use conflicts. The Jæren process has a significantly stronger political involvement than Sørkorridoren, which is an administratively managed process. It also appears that Jæren has a firmer political and professional basis and therefore is more likely to be implemented. Sørkorridoren on the other hand, appears to lack sufficient political backing with respect to land use aspects.

Outcome variables. These are to what degree instrumental rationality is evident in the planning, whether the plan is characterized by means-end efficiency and to what degree the plan generates sufficient political legitimacy. We also examine the degree of actual integration in the planning and the role of the institutional framework in shaping the outcome.

We have found that both plans have tried to ensure efficiency and political legitimacy within the limits given by the planning system and the division of responsibilities in the sectors. Efficiency is however weakened because the County planning institute lack a coupling to actors with an implementation apparatus. Uncertainty over available policy measures, and the preconditions for the plans long-term perspectives, also reduce the possibility of the plan having its intended function. Political legitimacy is weakened in Sørkorridoren due to the lack of political involvement in the process and the negative reactions of local municipalities to the attempt to impose land-use policy guidelines. Although the Jæren plan has greater political legitimacy, the study questions whether the municipalities will adhere to the outlined land use principles in the long run.

The coordination and integration achieved in the plans are clearly territorial. Different measures within a geographically determined area are considered in a coordinated and consistent manner, across horizontal and vertical levels. The Jæren plan appears to be an integrated product, with the integration spanning a wide range of issues. However, long term planning implementation is uncertain. The Sørkorridoren plan attempts to weigh between investment in public transport infrastructure, and road infrastructure but without impairing the autonomy of the sectors with regards to the location of the infrastructure in the corridor. Based on our definitions of levels of integration, the achievements are characterized as moderate for the Jæren plan, and low to moderate for Sørkorridoren.

In general, the study indicates that the institutional framework did not provide for the development of a genuinely integrated regional policy over an area as wide ranging as land-use and transport policy.

Measures to strengthen the role of integrated land-use and transport planning

One important measure is to increase the formal status and legitimacy of the County plan compared to sector plans and municipal plans. This should be augmented by measures to increase the legitimacy of the planning through more direct forms of cooperation and participation from municipalities and sectors affected by the planning. One area of special concern is land-use policy, where a more regional approach necessitate more active municipal involvement. Our informants also call for increased planning capacity in the Counties, in order to reduce reliance on consultants. Mechanisms that ensure consistent behaviour from state authorities will also strengthen regional integrated planning. Our informants also stress the need for a stronger regional transport authority, with responsibility for road infrastructure, operations and maintenance and public transport. However, this must be preceded by appropriate institutional reform, ensuring sufficient control over measures and means. Some steps in the right direction have already been taken. The introduction of road pricing has been delegated to the regional/local level, and certain areas of responsibility, namely local environment and agriculture are to be transferred from the County Governor to the County municipality. In conclusion, the development of a better integrated regional planning seems possible. On the other hand there are also obstacles to this development.

Institutional trends as a barrier to integrated planning?

Norwegian institutions are organized in accordance with the Weberian principles of specialization and hierarchy. The division of responsibility is based partly on a functional and partly on a geographical principle. An important trend has been an increasing decentralisation of responsibility from state to regional and municipal levels. This trend is likely to continue in the future. However recent proposals for reorganisation of the National Roads Authority may introduce a superregional level for the transport area, in the range of 5-8 regions in contrast to today's 19 counties. The implications of this for integrated land use and transport policies are so far uncertain, but it's obvious that it poses a challenge.

In the last decade, the New Public Management (NPM) school of organisation has inspired institutional reform in the transport sector in Norway. Important motivations have been a wish for higher efficiency and a more strategic perspective in political decision making. This development has been followed by a trend of organizing public actors in the transport sector according to a corporate model with increased market orientation, devolution, managerialism and the use of contracts to regulate relations between different parts of the organisation. In some cases, former public actors have been split into separate business units, with a competitive relationship between them. Some of these actors (i.e. telecom, railways) used to have roles as social institutions under the old state controlled regime, being used as tools to ensure employment and development in the regions. These were to a large degree politically defined roles, and are not included in the mission brief of the new market oriented actors. The focus of these actors will naturally be to maximise profits, and they have less incentives to take externalities into consideration or to cooperate with other actors in order to achieve societal goals for the common good.

The NPM-inspired trends in public institutional reform seems to be moving in a direction which can lead to increased coordination and integration problems. This development might therefore be contradictory to the development of integrated policies. Although there is agreement about the general goal, increased integration of transport and transport planning at the regional level, the measures that could achieve this are not a vital part of the inventory of measures that current institutional reform initiatives employ.