Confidence Building in Local Planning and Development. Some experience from Norway.

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This paper was first presented at the 12th Congress, Association of European Schools of Planning, Aveiro, Portugal, 22-25 July 1998.

Published in European Planning Studies Volume 8 Number 2 2000, p. 581 - 600

Abstract

Can local confidence building and co-operation strengthen local communities and have a positive influence on local development? This is the main question in this article.

In the first part of the article the conditions for confidence building, mobilisation, self-development and self-confidence in local planning are presented. A planning process called strategic and mobilising planning which is built on these conditions is described. This planning or development process is drawn as an infinite spiral with an increasing «radius». As examples of such local confidence building and mobilisation processes the cases of «Nordvest Forum» and «Co-operation in Haram commune» are presented and discussed.

Nordvest Forum is a collaborative activity owned by competing companies in the region, which have recognised that they have a common problem related to recruitment and training of leaders. This has lead to new activities and new co-operation especially related to management training and co-operation.

The collaboration between private and public institutions in Haram is an example where common challenges for companies and community were recognised. This process started as a concrete activity regarding recruitment of skilled workers with participation from a few but nevertheless important persons in the private and public sectors. The learning and confidence developed as a result of this co-operation lead to new and broader activities concerning the future of the community with many more participants.

In the conclusion some practical advice is given for community planning and confidence building, informed by the theoretical discussion and the empirical examples in the article.

Self help and confidence building as a strategy for local development

A local community or regional authority that develops plans and strategies for development that they themselves do not have faith in or believe can be realised, is seldom successful. Such planning is often a task stimulated from above to get access to funds or to fulfil national goals, a symbolic or ritual kind of planning.

A local planning process that tries to stimulate development from below, must engage all important local actors, build a common understanding of challenges and capability and a common trust related to the local response (Bennet and McCoshan 1993, Stöhr and Taylor 1981). Confidence building is an important part of all self-developing strategies like self-reliance, self-help, self-aid etc. Development must come from ourselves, must include us, we must trust and believe that our understanding of challenges and our response can help us «to regenerate through our own efforts» (Mao, see Galtung 1980:19).

Confidence building as a part of local development strategies is an integrating activity that includes not only economic goals and means. Often confidence in and willingness to develop the total community based on common understanding of the need for change, are more important than economic means in welfare nations like Norway. The economic differences between communities in central and peripheral regions in Norway are small due to the economic transfer system of the welfare state. But if the community itself does not believe that it has a future, no one will invest economic or social capital in that community.

Confidence building related to local values and strengths is a difficult task in a society where peripheral communities and regions are under a strong national and international pressure related to economic, cultural, social and communicative values and structures. Peripheral communities can never compete with central communities in the question of «urban values and services». A strategy that tries to copy urban development forgetting local strengths and weaknesses is easy, but seldom successful. But without self confidence it is difficult to develop and implement strategies that are built on our own identity and local social and cultural qualities as well as local resources and industries.

Self-confidence means that the community has faith in its own possibilities, its inhabitants, its resources, its know-how and its social system. At the same time the community must learn new ideas and co-operate with other communities and institutions as regards activities that can develop the community without making it dependent and destroying its strengths.

Such strategies are not new in Norway. In the struggle for nation building from 1840 onwards, local self-development strategies were used to increase local economic and political power by many local communities and communes in Norway (Bukve 1994, Teigen 1982). Local co-operative institutions like banks, dairies, shops etc. were established by local inhabitants to reduce the monopoly of private, centralised companies. Local cultural institutions like schools, youth clubs, temperance societies etc. were established to transfer and strengthen local, rural values and traditions. The commune as a new local political institution was an important entrepreneur as far as these activities were concerned. (The commune as a local political institution on parish/local community level was established in 1843.)

Crises in the 1960-ies lead to new local economic development activities from below called «tiltaksarbeid» (local economic development strategies), with a focus on the development of industries, employment and communications. These initiatives lead to new national economic funding for rural and regional development and a stronger national political interest in local and regional economic development (Teigen 1985a,b).

Today, in a society where unemployment is low (under 4% in most rural communities) economic development is important but not enough to recruit young families, the total community must be developed according to the qualities that all groups of inhabitants need in order to live a good life. This is an important goal in local and regional planning in Norway today (Amdam 1992, 1997) but often difficult to achieve and especially a lot of rural areas have problems (Hansen and Selstad 1999). Can local confidence building and co-operation strengthen local communities and have a positive influence on local development?

In this paper I will describe the vision of confidence building, mobilisation, self-development and self-

confidence in local planning. I will discuss the pre-conditions necessary for mobilisation, true local power and the possibilities of action for local communities. As examples of local confidence building and mobilisation I will present and discuss the cases of «Nordvest Forum» and «Co-operation in Haram commune». Other Norwegian examples can be found in Amdam J. (1992, 1995b, 1997) and Amdam R. (1997b). In the conclusion I give some practical advice for community planning and confidence building informed by the theoretical discussion and the empirical examples in the article.

Self-reliance

According to Johan Galtung (1975, 1980, Galtung, O'Brien & Preiswerk 1980), self-reliance and other self-development strategies are based on two main principles: a. *concentric solidarity* and b. *active participation and co-operation*.

Concentric solidarity means that co-operation with your neighbour gives both of you increased strength and new possibilities. If possible, all kinds of co-operation should be organised concentrically to reduce travel distance and to strengthen local cultural, social and economic networks. Local farms should co-operate with regard to all kinds of activity that will increase productivity and to produce products that are not possible for one or a few farmers to produce. Local communities and communes should co-operate to meet common challenges and possibilities. Regions should co-operate with neighbouring regions. Local companies should co-operate with other local companies to produce goods and services. This was the basic principle behind the co-operative movement in Norway from 1840 and onward which lead to a higher local control over the production and marketing of local products and a better control over local resources (called communalism in Norway). Communalism has also given us a lot of local social and cultural activities and organisations and especially the strength of the commune as the main welfare producer in our society. But this kind of co-operation must involve real partnerships between equal partners. If co-operation lead to situations where some partners are more dependent on the co-operation than others, this easily leads to a difference in power and conflicts of interests.

Active participation and co-operation means that, if possible, all inhabitants in a community and society must participate in this kind of activity. Only by active participation is it possible to strengthen the local community as a cultural, social and economic unit and to build confidence and loyalty to the local community and local institutions. Active participation will lead to a common learning process where mistakes are understood and new plans are developed and implemented to correct mistakes and exploit new possibilities. But such processes must build on common agreement between equal participants, and the inhabitants in a community must have equal rights and responsibilities. This means that local as well as regional communities need a continuous democratic planning process that includes inhabitants in the struggle for prosperity and self-initiated development.

Strategic planning as a never-ending learning process

The local community, commune or region as a political and administrative institution only controls some of the factors that decide the development of the commune as a society. Individuals, corporations, organisations, government, regional authorities etc. also have power. Whatever they do, the commune generally has to adjust to it. Ideally a system should be developed where all the actors agreed upon what had to be done, in total and individually, in order to achieve the desired future (a kind of co-operative strategic management based on negotiations and understanding).

An ideal strategy of participation necessitates that all the participants in the process of change have developed the same basic interests, a common vision if you will (Friedmann 1987). Similarly, all parties must have approximately the same degree of power. All parties must also develop mutual respect and a mutual acceptance of the role of each party in the development process. A typical situation of this kind is when a society or an organisation with clearly defined aims is working to achieve these objectives. In terms of strategy this is one of working one's way up from below (bottom - up), which presupposes that everyone involved in achieving these goals has almost the same visions, values, interests and aims (Amdam 1986).

This harmonic dream is a long way from the realities of our complex society. We must see conflicts and conflict solving as a natural part of planning, instead of trying to escape from it. In all situations with many decision-makers and participants, we will have conflict about facts, interests, values and persons (Amdam and Veggeland 1998). It is not possible or necessary to solve all conflicts. Some conflicts are necessary for prosperity and development - to encourage initiative and a change of paradigm. Other conflicts are bottlenecks for local development. An important goal for local strategic planning is to identify such situations. It must try to develop strategies and actions for conflict solving together with strategies and actions related to issues where there is little conflict but a real lack of knowledge and understanding of what must be done.

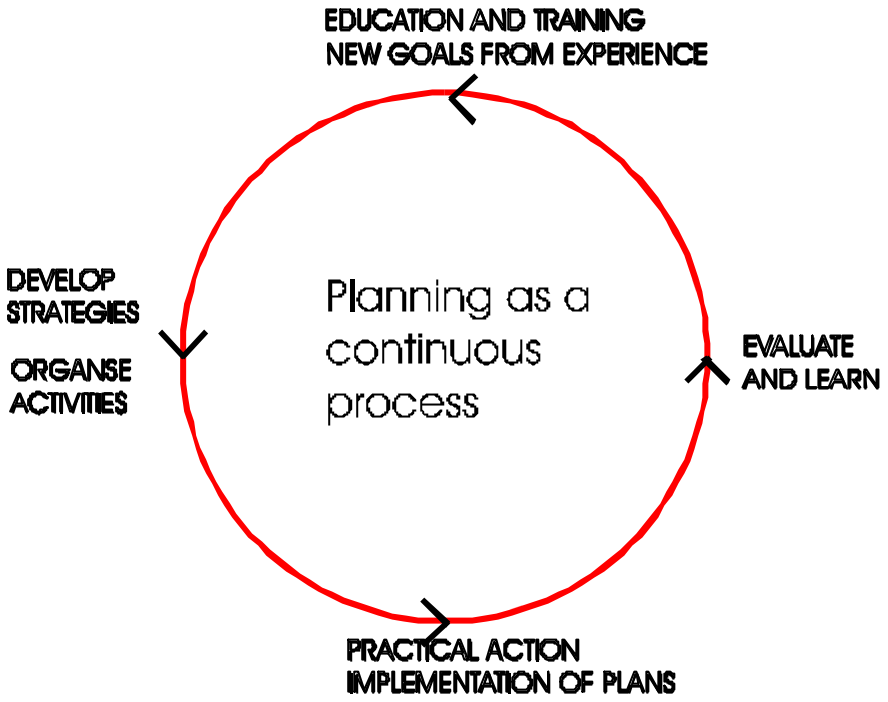
Social learning and mobilisation concentrate on a learning dialogue between participants. We must first concentrate on facts and interests. What do we agree and disagree on? What can be done to obtain new facts if the facts are unclear? What compromise can be reached in interest conflicts? This means that this planning is based on communicative processes between participants (Sager 1993, 1994).

According to Friedmann J. (1987 p. 81) the **social learning** tradition is built on both pragmatic «learning by doing» and Marx/Mao «On Practice». Rational project planning has: *«... treated scientifically based knowledge as a set of »building blocks" for the reconstruction of society, theorists in the social learning tradition have claimed that knowledge is derived from experience and validated in practice, and therefore it is integrally a part of actions."*

A communicative negotiation strategy presupposes that there is conflict of interest and that the aim is to arrive at a compromise, which guarantees the interests of each party to some reasonable degree. Such processes function most often as «slow-moving» learning where each participant evaluates effects from earlier steps, and takes a new step according to her/his own interests. Through such learning processes over time the participants can learn to trust each other and to understand which questions are best not asked, and on what issues real co-operation is possible. The co-operation changes from negotiation to discussion, and change is easier to introduce and implement. A strategic planning process can work like this if we take the time we need, to go through more than one stage or «circle» (see figure 1) and concentrate on issues where a solution is possible. It is like trying to set off an avalanche. Without snow and a steep slope you will have no success. Start with issues where success is most likely and introduce more difficult issues when trust and personal understanding is better.

A local community or commune is - naturally - full of tension and conflict about what the situation is like and how it should be (Healey 1992). Local politics is about values, interests and solutions. Local politicians are elected to represent specific interests. To some extent, politicians must disagree to attend to their voters' interests. But politics is also meant to develop compromises that are acceptable for at least a majority. Policymaking is a learning process, just as planning is.

Figure 1. Planning as a continuous learning process.



A **mobilisation strategy** goes further than a learning process related to a specific project or action. It assumes that all participating parties share a common interest or at least common values. Negotiations on questions of this nature will therefore not normally be necessary. Built on such agreement, a rapidly moving process of change can start. On the other hand, due to insufficient information, there may be disagreement as to the consequences of various alternative solutions, which in turn will require negotiations about data or probably more in-depth investigations to obtain better information. Since development activities and planning by nature are concerned with the future, of which no one has any definite information, dialogue and negotiation will form a natural part of the process.

The difference between social learning and **social mobilisation** is that the latter is specifically concerned with *direct collective action «from below»* (Friedmann J. 1987 p. 83):

«Social mobilization is an ideology of the dispossessed, whose strength derives from social solidarity, from the seriousness of their political analysis, and from their unflinching determination to change the status quo.»

This is a radical view that is mostly connected to revolutionary movements. But change from below can also be introduced on a smaller scale when local inhabitants organise themselves against a top-down initiative or to solve a specific local problem. It can also be a broad and continuous movement for local development based on their own values and interests.

Mobilising processes most often include only a part of a community, the individuals, interest groups or organisations that have the same interests with regard to a specific topic. This can lead to mobilisation both for and against a specific action and a deepening of conflicts in the community. Strategic and mobilising planning tries to avoid this situation. It tries to mobilise the whole community or organisation for a specific vision, strategy and/or action.

For a participation strategy to be really successful, it will ideally require that the mobilised group has developed a common vision of the most important issues. This vision and related strategies must be agreed by the individual voter or member in the whole community, organisation or in all the co-operating organisations. This requires a long-term and comprehensive process of change - a social mobilisation towards common values - intrinsically if the co-operating organisations have opposing interests and

varying cultures. It is not necessary to change cultures or methods of working, since all parties mutually accept each other's distinctive qualities and special role in the development work. But each in his own way must try to work towards a common goal.

In mobilising planning, this means that the various communities, interest organisations, enterprises, political parties, etc. which ought to co-operate if one is to achieve a better and autonomous development, must try to develop common long-term goals. These objectives/goals must be so penetrating that they «automatically» lead at least to a co-ordination of the important principal aspects of the work. How can this be achieved?

There is no simple solution. Primarily it is a question of trying to «cross borders» and «to break down barriers» in everything one does, to work together to develop mutual respect and understanding. If the co-operation involves short-term conditions «with no perspective», it will be easy for the parties involved to find it meaningless and trivial. Such processes usually give the best results where there is a common understanding of crisis and a common feeling of being under threat.

Many claim that such processes work best if one can manage to create a common «outside» enemy on which all the resources can be focussed. How this can be done must depend on the local conditions, since the process here is one of mobilisation from the bottom. Such mobilisation cannot be achieved «on command» from «the top» (project group, management etc.). Instead, information about threats and/or possibilities must be brought forward so that everyone sees what must be done and that the co-operation comes of its own accord.

A further fact is that such broad mobilisation is most effective, if it is organised as a project with a clear-cut beginning and end and enthusiastic participants, almost like an intense «religious awakening». This can be used both in continuous and project planning as part of more «total» processes. It is then easier for politicians, administrators and others to put other matters to one side and concentrate on long-term thinking. This broad mobilisation must then in turn be developed in the form of concrete part/component activities organised in their own right and with motivated participants.

In case studies (Stöhr 1990) it was found that «social entrepreneurs», social network and arenas and strong local identity were important for self-initiated development. In almost all successful cases initiatives were taken by key individuals «*social entrepreneurs*», often free from formal political or administrative positions in the community like doctors, dentists, academics, industrial leaders etc. but with a strong identity to the community or region and a will to create change. This is also consistent with Norwegian research (Arbo and Bukve 1990).

But social entrepreneurs are not enough. They need access to local information and knowledge through *social and institutional networks and arenas* where ideas can be developed and promoted and where inhabitants can be mobilised. Such structures must be strengthened during the mobilising process and new networks and arenas must be created if necessary. Local newspapers etc. and direct social interaction between participants in the planning and development process were important to create understanding and comprehension of the situation and to develop and implement plans and actions. Ringholm (1994), Amdam and Amdam (1990) and Amdam J. (1994, 1996) have found that this is also important in a Norwegian context as far as local and regional economic development is concerned. To build partnerships and networks between social entrepreneurs in different sectors in the community, including political, administrative, market and civil society organisations and leaders, is an important task in all local development activities (Friedmann 1992).

Local identity is an important motive for social entrepreneurs. The motivation for co-operation locally must be stronger than co-operation externally. Concentric solidarity, a faith in local possibilities and a common will to meet crisis locally through co-operation are important factors. A Norwegian example is the pizza factory in the peripheral commune Stranda. Threatened by closure, workers increased their productivity by 40% in active co-operation with the local management, political and administrative leaders and the community, while workers in other factories took strike action. The outcome was that the company concentrated all their pizza production in Standa and today this remote community produces approximately 50% of the frozen pizza products in Scandinavia (Amdam, Isaksen and Mattland Olsen 1995).

But direct external intervention by central government can distort local action processes and weaken local feedback and learning mechanisms. Other important external conditions appear to be

decentralisation of decision-making, action and financing, so as to allow for the more effective operation of local networks, the reinforcement of local and regional learning mechanisms and the promotion of flexible institutional structures.

Continuous democratic planning

Mobilising processes are often related to actions or situations. What is needed is a continuous planning process that integrates mobilisation and co-operation in continuous learning and confidence building processes. Continuous planning is the type of planning process we use to govern societies and organisations like a commune or a corporation that has no certain time-scale - they are more or less everlasting or at least have no finite «death». The comprehensive planning and governing of a commune, county or state is a continuous and never-ending process.

The main purpose of this type of planning is to formulate long-term superior goals to manage by, co-ordinating functions and controlling the priorities of a scarce resource regarding such goals. This implies control of economic and human resources, as well as land use etc. - a process we never conclude. This shows that the process has no clearly defined beginning or end, and that the degree of participation will also vary.

Continuous planning is definitely «political planning». It concerns the development and learning of new values, choices between non-comparable quantities; qualitative as well as quantitative appraisals. In our political system we have handed over such control to the representative democracy - to the political bodies/authorities. **Participation** therefore enjoys a unique position in such planning. Because the main content is **wholeness** and co-ordination between the large number of issues in which everybody in the community has a true interest, either everybody has to participate in all actual decisions, or some of these matters have to be left to the representative authorities/bodies.

One way to do this is to develop a very active planning and super-democratic society similar to the one Friedmann outline in his books «Retracking America. A Theory of Transactive Planning» (1973) and «The Good Society» (1979b, see also Friedmann 1979a, 1981, 1987 and 1992). Specifically, this will require an extreme decentralisation of decision-making powers and the construction of local self-governed units. True local power would imply that society at large would have to accept that local priorities might vary greatly, which is difficult to accept in a social democracy like ours (Norway), based on the principle of equality.

Friedmann as well as Galtung (The True World - 1980), therefore, point out the need for the development of a superior equalising structure in symbiosis with local government, based upon self sufficiency and concentric solidarity (Amdam 1986a,b). (In the Scandinavian welfare state the government has this role.) This must imply that in decisions that are not of national interest, which mainly concern the inhabitants of the local community and have consequences only in these communities, the local community is to have the real power. The development of true participation in such a context will mean a reinforcement of democracy at the local level. The crucial point is that the units themselves must have the responsibility for planning their own future in harmony with higher authorities.

True participation by continuous planning is, as you surely understand from this brief outline, much more complicated than developing delicate techniques of presentation etc. In our experiments with communal planning (Amdam J. 1992, 1995b, 1997, Amdam R. 1997b) the main idea is to activate local politicians, representatives of corporations, organisations, local communities and civil servants in a common analysis and development process (strategic management) towards common long term municipal goals for society. After that strategies have to be found and implemented. This means a communicative and collaborative form of planning (Healey 1997). The main activities of such confidence-building, communicative planning processes will be to (Amdam and Veggeland 1998):

- Increase co-operation and self-confidence – local partnership building related to all kind of activities in the local/regional community
- Stimulate common social learning and confidence in local activities and plans
- Stimulate comprehensive development processes related to cultural, social, political as well as

economic activities

- Strengthen and diversify the local economy and local markets, stimulate local saving and investment, self-financing
- Use local resources according to ecological principles

This approach is often referred to as a continuous strategic and mobilising planning process. The idea behind this and similar processes is to develop acceptance/recognition, a collective vision and to arrive at concrete changes. This requires a high degree of participation and active confidence building, co-operation and communication among participants. Such processes may in fact be compared with traditional voluntary community project work in Norwegian local communities (Amdam R. and J. 1988, Amdam J. 1992, 1995b).

Built on theories about confidence building, social learning and social mobilisation, the process of continuous strategic and mobilising planning are summed up in figure 2. The continuous learning process (figure 1) is divided into stages like obtaining knowledge about the situation, the comprehension of this knowledge with regard to individual situations and the challenges for the community, the development of visions and goals for the community, the development and implementation of strategies and specific actions and the evaluation of results. This evaluation should lead to new experience and learning of what is functioning well and not so well, what challenges the community have, what capacity the community has to meet these challenges, how implemented strategies and actions worked in real life, eventually form the basis of new knowledge and comprehension in the next round.

The stages are almost equal to the stages in a typical strategic planning processes (Bryson and Roering 1987), but instead of a line or a diagram with a finite start and end, the planning or development process is drawn as a spiral with an increasing «radius». The planning process might have a specific start or initiative, but also a history and a context, which are important for further development. Successful processes most often start with small ambitions and, as participants learn to trust each other, more ambitious goals are formulated and new participants are engaged in the process. It is typical that the development of activities both in Nordvest Forum Inc. and Haram (see below) has followed this process, starting with actions that the partners felt were necessary and which gave good results with regard to common needs. A good start created new involvement and confidence and new visions, strategies and actions – and more collaboration.

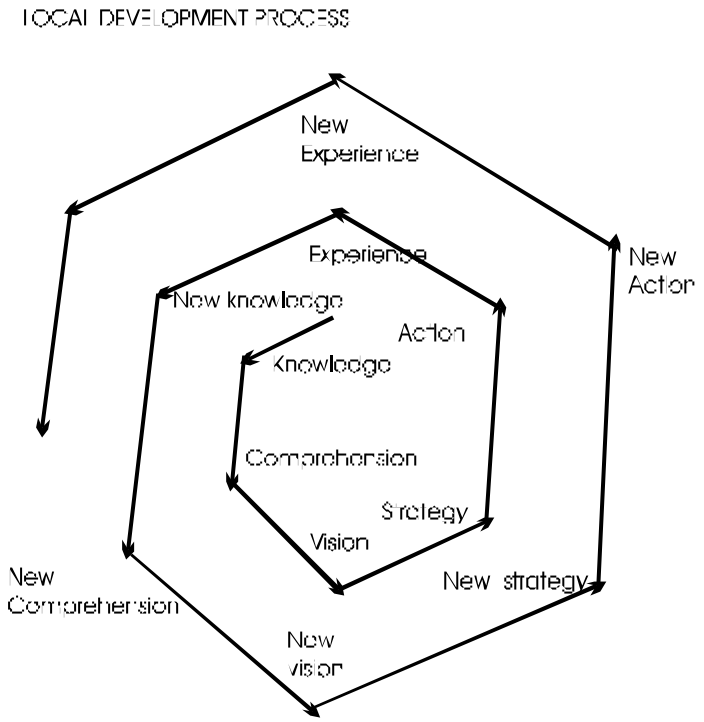


Figure 2. The development process as a learning spiral.

A process like this can be mapped historically as in figure 2 (see the case of Haram below), or in reality as a process which maybe starts with a lot of enthusiasm, loses energy and goes slow for a while, starts up again or is laid aside. A continuous mobilisation on broad issues is almost impossible. But a concentrated mobilisation can identify specific actions, mobilise enthusiasts to promote these actions and create a self-driven development process. Over time the process might go through many «loops», but with stages in between each «loop» that are more «slow-moving» and maybe more intent on finding technical solutions or compromises for specific problems, than on participation and mobilisation on broad issues. We all know that processes like this can take on problems that are too big or too full of conflict, so that the process is destroyed or reaches a stage where most participants are satisfied with what has been achieved and pull out of the process.

Cases in the Norwegian north-west region as examples

Can active confidence building and co-operation actually lead to local and regional development? Can the process described above as strategic and mobilising planning be used to increase self-confidence, concentric solidarity and co-operation? My examples are from the county of Møre and Romsdal, a part of the north-west region. I will try to show that it is possible to meet new challenges by co-operation and collaboration and thereby introduce new confidence, development and optimism.

Norway is often divided into three areas with regard to the historical development of industries and societies (Asheim and Isaksen 1997):

central areas like the Oslo area with a high level of industrialisation, knowledge production and innovation,

peripheral areas with an industrial milieu especially with traditional manufacturing production which are declining, of which the north-west region is an example and

peripheral areas with little manufacturing tradition outside a few large isolated companies like those involved in aluminium production.

My cases are not from the most peripheral areas in Norway, but an area with a lot of challenges today

and in the future as a result of its remote localisation and high employment in declining manufacturing industries.

The Norwegian north-west region

The Norwegian north-west region consists of two counties, Møre and Romsdal and Sogn and Fjordane, with a population of 350000 or 8% of the population in Norway. The region has no dominating town - the biggest is Ålesund with a population of 36.000 and a labour market of 70.000. Because of the geography with deep fjords and high mountains, the region is divided into 14 labour market districts. Only three of these districts have towns with a population higher than 10.000. Travel time by car from Ålesund (the most central town) to the periphery of the region is more than four hours. To travel by car from Ålesund to the nearest cities Bergen and Trondheim takes more than six hours and ten hours to the capital Oslo. Travel by air is the normal means of personal transportation from the region - it has nine airports. Before the development of road and air travel, transport by sea and fjord was the main means of communication. This also lead to a cultural integration dependent on fjord transport, so that the region has six cultural or identity areas, each with their own distinct dialect.

In spite of (or maybe because of) its peripheral localisation, the region has been rather successful. Apart from the most remote areas, the population has increased the last 30 years, but out-migration is slightly higher than in-migration. There is also a concentration of population to the central areas in the region. The region has a problem related to jobs for well-educated youths, especially women. Since more than 50% of young women take education on college or university level, this and the high preference for urban life among young women, has lead to net out-migration of young women and a male surplus of approximately 10% in the age group 20 to 39.

One reason for this development is a strong manufacturing tradition in the region and industries dominated by men. The region is the «winning region» with regard to Norwegian fisheries. An increasing part of fish landed in Norway comes to this region. Ålesund is in fact the main fishery town in Norway and companies that have their headquarters there control more than 50% of fish product export from Norway (Amdam J. 1995a).

In close partnership with fisheries, a strong shipbuilding industry has evolved, as well as strong equipment industries producing both equipment to catch fish and equipment for specialised boats both for fisheries and oil activity. In 1990 approximately 40% of the jobs in shipbuilding in Norway were in the region (app. 12.000) and this was increasing by comparison with a reduction of 40% in Norway from 1980 till 1990 (Isaksen and Spilling 1996).

Furniture manufacturing in Norway is dominated by the region, in spite of the fact that most of resources have to be imported from other regions or nations.

Typical of these activities is that local entrepreneurs develop them. In spite of an ongoing concentration of ownership, most of the activity is still controlled by local owners. Employees have a high degree of loyalty to their company, a loyalty that seems to be transferred to bigger companies owned by local capital or lead by local industrialists. After 1993 the manufacturing industry in the region has had a fabulous growth and a lot of problems in recruiting skilled workers. Especially in shipbuilding, more than 10% of workers today are from Finland or Sweden, but not on a permanent basis.

Challenges for manufacturing companies in the region

In 1997 we interviewed the directors of the main manufacturing companies in the region and asked them also what their biggest challenges were (Amdam 1998). Among the challenges mentioned by most of the managers were these, which were in various ways connected to the (lack of) confidence, co-operation and collaboration between the local and regional community and the company:

Recruitment and training of leaders. Potential leaders and their families have high demands related to the community they were living in – stimulating and challenging communities with a high service and culture activity level. To recruit leaders from other regions was very difficult if they or their families had no links

with the region. Often both were highly educated and had difficulties in finding proper and stimulating jobs for both. They felt that public authorities like the commune and county did not do enough to develop attractive communities for in-migrating families and young people and to create attractive and stimulating work for well-educated people. This had lead to a growing interest in public planning and local politics. (Traditionally leaders and owners of local industries were often very active in local and regional policy making.) To recruit skilled leaders they must develop their own people through their own trainee-programs and by co-operation with other companies. The Nordvest Forum network leader programme (see below) was for all of them an important co-operative activity in the region.

Inter-human communication between top leaders in the company, but also between different groups. How to establish better co-operation and motivation, so that everyone pulls together in the same direction. Inter-human communication was necessary for a top management group to function but also for the dialogue with employees, customers, public authorities, politicians, local pressure groups etc.

Reorganisation of the company - strategic planning – related to the integration of different manufacturing plants, new challenges in their market, costs etc. There was a permanent challenge related to a) change and pressure from the outside (market, international and national regulations, local expectations etc.) and b) established internal structures, traditions and knowledge – a continuous struggle to adapt and develop. Top leaders' main challenge was, in co-operation with employees, to develop and implement well functioning strategies where new ideas, products and markets were developed, to create a better organisation, as well as having competent leaders on all levels.

Knowledge building in modern manufacturing organisations. They needed a continuous knowledge building in their organisation. Higher flexibility and more advanced production and development activities lead to a higher demand for knowledge and knowledge transfer in the organisation and from the outside. A lot of different professions and skills were represented and to obtain higher flexibility and adaptability they needed workers with multiple skills and a lifelong learning process that included all permanent workers. All employees must be included in their development activities and they needed partnerships and alliances externally with educational and training organisations, research institutions etc. They needed a continuous focus on quality control on all levels – to get the importance of quality «under the skin» of all employees. In their opinion the public education and training system did not function as well as they needed both in relation to lifelong learning and to the education of new skilled workers, engineers, administrators and other groups.

Recruitment of skilled workers. More skilled workers were needed in their company, in the industry and in the region. Since an increased proportion of young people took college and university level education (approximately 50%), the number that were educated for the manufacturing industries was low. They asked if manufacturing work did not suit the community any longer, what kind of motivation processes in families, schools, society lead to these individual decisions. Increasingly they tried to influence these decisions by setting up motivation, training and education programs in partnership with schools on all levels and also by giving financial support for equipment, further education for teachers, etc. They had learned that their company needed strong partnerships with public and private institutions and organisations in the community and region to recruit skilled employees with a strong local identity and a strong motivation for the development of the company as well as of the community.

This list of development challenges for the biggest self-developed companies in the north-west region in Norway is remarkably like the findings of Stöhr (1990) with regard to local and regional development, but of course seen from a business point of view. The rapid growth and demand for skilled workers over the last five years has taught the company leaders that their company is dependent on the local and regional community as well as the community being dependent on them. There is a strong demand for co-operation and partnership between companies in the region and between companies and public and private organisations.

Seen from the outside, the north-west region is often described as more dynamic (Amdam R. 1997a) and more innovative (Asheim and Isaksen 1997) than other peripheral industrial regions in Norway. Is this dynamic and innovative development a result of co-operation, collaboration and local confidence building? I can not answer this question fully, but what I will do is to present two cases as examples on how some of the challenges above have been met in the region. One example is related to co-operation between

companies in the training and recruitment of local leaders (Nordvest Forum), the other one co-operation and confidence building between private companies and public authorities in Haram commune. Both initiatives were taken in a period (1988-93) where unemployment was high and a lot of local companies were closed down or bought by regional or national companies.

Nordvest Forum

Nordvest Forum Inc. is a multi-firm regional learning network centred in the city of Ålesund and covering most of the north-west region. It was established in 1989 in a period with a lot of problems in the local manufacturing industries, when 46 shareholding firms set up Nordvest Forum Inc. to service the network and to manage its activities. Nordvest Forum's stated purpose is to improve regional competitiveness by upgrading the management capacity of the shareholding companies and other firms in the region. (Hanssen-Bauer 1997). This network can be seen as a direct response to some of the challenges mentioned above, especially leader training, transfer of knowledge to the region and between firms, co-operation between firms, individual network building and training in inter-human communication. The Nordvest Forum Inc. has only two employees whose main responsibility is to develop, stimulate and implement activities in close co-operation with their owners.

So what kind of activities have evolved? Among its main activities today are:

The management of change program which was the first and still is the main activity particularly designed for Nordvest Forum based on to the needs as defined by the owners of the program and especially related to leader training and development. It is organised as a 1,5-year program with five one-week modules covering a wide range of management skills and issues. 20-25 managers from enterprises and public institutions in the region attend each class, and the teachers and facilitators are recruited from various universities, from R&D institutions, and from advanced companies. To date, more than 200 managers from nearly 100 firms and institutions in the region have passed the program. This program has built a strong identity among participants and networks between them and facilitators. Through the programme, new knowledge and ideas of management are spread to the region just as early as to companies in the capital Oslo.

The forum for senior executives. More than twice a year they arrange a two-day gathering for senior executives in the region (up till now 17 meetings in 7 years). The primary objective of this forum is to provide a meeting place where executives can hear presentations on international subjects and discuss issues of importance to the companies in the region. Such gatherings are also important in stimulating network and confidence building among executives.

Custom-made training programs for enterprises. Nordvest Forum Inc. design and implement management training programs for their owners according to their needs.

Special seminars and workshops on issues that have been defined as interesting by the participants in the network. An example is a program for management and information technology – how to meet new challenges and possibilities from a very rapidly changing technology.

Participation in the Norwegian Research Foundation's research and development program, Enterprise development 2000 (BU2000). In 1992 Nordvest Forum Inc. organised two groups of enterprises which were linked to the University of Trondheim. Each group played host to a management doctoral student who worked in the enterprises on themes which were important for the firms, as well as doing observations which were used in their doctoral work. With financial support from BU2000, three new groups were established in co-operation with the University in Trondheim and Bergen School of Economics. A supporting senior research network was established.

These activities show that Nordvest Forum Inc. is an important instrument for enterprises in the region to meet managerial challenges. It is a typical example of a self-development strategy lead from below, built on concentric solidarity, co-operation and self-confidence. Typically, all the involved companies send their best young leaders to the management of change programme, knowing that this programme also functions as a «market». They have learned that it is important to train a lot of good management recruits living in the region and who identify with the region, that this co-operation is for the best of the region, for the manufacturing companies as a group and for themselves. But the activities of Nordvest Forum would

not have been possible without the active enthusiasm and support from the leaders of the biggest companies in the region.

Nordvest Forum Inc. has some public financial support, but from the beginning the owners have covered most of costs. Each of the owners has provided the same amount of capital to establish the network and holds one share in the company – they are equal partners whether they are big or small. Payment is related to activity – they have to pay costs related to their attendance in programs, seminars etc. The program is self-owned, self-controlled and self-initiated by competing companies in the region, which would have been impossible without a common understanding of the challenges and of the need for co-operation. This is also the only example of this type of co-operation in Norway.

Today, Nordvest Forum is acknowledged as having developed one of the best networks in the country for quickly accessing management-oriented professionals and institutions in Norway, Europe and the United States (Hanssen-Bauer 1997). The total structure of the network activities can be analysed as a regional development organisation for the participating enterprises – a co-operation built on concentric solidarity and confidence building. The co-operating companies are co-operating in activities that are of common benefit, and competing at the same time. An evaluation of the network activities showed clear indications of positive results on the management capacity of the participating firms (Hanssen-Bauer and Snow 1996), a success that has gradually been translated into a demand for renewal and for more learning. Over time, new activities have been established, as well as changes made in established programmes as a result of learning and new demands.

Co-operation in Haram commune

Haram commune, which is located on the periphery of the labour market of Ålesund, has a population of 8700 inhabitants. During the last 30 years the population has been stable due to out-migration to communes nearer to the town and to other more central regions in Norway (Amdam 1995a).

Haram commune is one of the most important manufacturing communes in the north-west region. In 1996 41% of the labour force of 3850 worked in manufacturing industries and another 17% in fisheries, agriculture and house building – a total of 58% involved in the production of goods, compared to under 30% in Norway as a whole. As in other parts of the region, the self-developed manufacturing industry operates in the fields of fisheries, ship building and furniture. Production and development activities are recognised as advanced technically and are competing successfully on the world market. The knowledge and flexible specialisation of enterprises in the commune has lead to a situation where most of the larger factories have been bought by major companies, from the region or nationally, during the 1980s and 1990s.

During the entrepreneurial period where these enterprises were established, local entrepreneurs that were active in local politics and other local activities owned them. New ownership from outside the commune and a focus on internal structures lead to a low level of co-operation between these companies and the local community in the 1980s. This was a new situation that is essential to understand in relation to the co-operative process in the 1990s (Tangen 1999). The communicative and co-operative process can be described in stages as in figure 2.

Introduction of new knowledge. In the beginning of the 1990s Nordvest Forum introduced the thinking of Porter (1990). Strategic planning based on his book and comparable Norwegian works (Reve, Lensberg and Grønhaug 1992) was introduced in the companies engaged in the Norvest Forum network and in branch companies in Haram.

Haram commune took the initiative in establishing an arena between business leaders in Haram and local political and administrative leaders (Haram næringslag). This was the first time that many of these local leaders had met each other in a discussion related to local development. They recognised that the commune had a dynamic and expanding manufacturing industry, but also that the local community had not been able to use this in its own strategic planning and development.

Crisis – new understandingf. In 1995 the labour market situation changed into a positive crisis with regard to the recruitment of skilled workers. Each enterprise tried a number of strategies to recruit skilled workers locally but without success. A local study showed a need for more than 200 skilled workers. At the same time the unemployment rate was under 3% in the commune and labour region. It was not possible to recruit the necessary workers locally. A study showed that only 25% of those who had out-migrated from the commune were motivated to move back and that the commune was not recognised as a suitable place to move to and live in for unemployed skilled workers living in other regions in Norway.

New strategy and action. In co-operation between enterprises, Haram commune and the job centre, a new recruitment strategy was developed. A national consultant company was engaged to plan and implement a national recruitment strategy involving the national press. This strategy was very successful and set the focus on the remarkable situation in Haram commune on national television, in newspapers nationwide etc. From all over the country more than 2000 skilled workers applied for work and the short-term crisis was solved.

Experience, learning and new confidence. Through these actions local leaders learned that co-operation was very efficient and had created a win-win situation of high benefits for all involved. But a new crisis evolved related to the lack of housing and the quality of the local infrastructure and services. To ensure a more permanent development and recruitment of workers the total local community had to be engaged in a local development process.

Development of new long-term visions and strategies. The success of the implemented strategy and actions gave new confidence in the idea of co-operative planning. A new planning process started whose main goal was to «put Haram on the national map». A common vision was formulated – to develop Haram to be the most important maritime-related manufacturing commune in Norway and one of the best communes in Norway in which to live.

To fulfil this vision they developed three main strategies:

Development of competence and skills – a strong co-operation was developed between the local state schools, enterprises and the commune with a view to motivating students to apply for manufacturing related education, higher quality in education and the training of workers and the introduction of new technology. Children, teachers and parents are introduced to modern advanced manufacturing activities by the enterprises themselves. Partnerships were established with the major national Telecommunication Company (Telenor) and the national branch of IBM. The commune is today connected to the high-speed telecommunication network in Norway and IBM is setting up an experimental computer network, which integrates enterprises, schools, public institutions and private homes – giving all of them high-speed access to the Internet.

Development of private business – not only manufacturing industries but all kind of private business activities needed by a modern community to supply goods and services and to give inhabitants access to demanding jobs in accordance with their education.

Development of the commune and local communities both related to infrastructure such as houses, roads etc. but also the development of social and cultural activities suitable for all groups of inhabitants. Such activities can create stronger local identity and confidence that the commune and the local community have a good and prosperous future.

These strategies have now been planned and implemented in detail involving more than 150 inhabitants in various activities (summer 1998, see Tangen 1999).

Conclusion, practical lessons about community planning as a never-ending confidence building process.

The discussion of confidence building, participation, concentric solidarity, co-operation and mobilisation lead to a description of a local, continuous planning process called a strategic and mobilising planning process. This process has approximately the same stages as a strategic planning process, but instead of viewing this process as a line or a diagram with a finite start and end, the planning or development process is drawn as a infinite spiral with an increasing «radius» but with a finite start (see figure 2.). This figure is, of course, a simplification of what might happen in the real world. Processes like this maybe start with a lot of enthusiasm, lose energy and go slow for a while, start up again or are laid aside. A continuous mobilisation on broad issues is almost impossible. The planning process might have a specific start or initiative, but also a history and a context, which are important for further development. Successful processes most often start with small ambitions and, as participants learn to trust each other, more ambitious goals are formulated and new participants are engaged in the process. Over time the process might go through many «loops», but with stages in between each «loop» that are more «slow-moving» and which maybe concentrate more on finding technical solutions or compromises for specific problems, than on participation and mobilisation on broad issues. We all know that processes like this can take on problems that are too big or too full of conflict, so that the process is destroyed or reaches a stage where most participants are satisfied with what has been achieved and pull out of the process.

Active and successful participation and mobilisation in planning processes like this can lead to new activities and ambitions and to «parallel» processes that are co-ordinated, but also to competing processes in the local community as regards public engagement, participation, resources etc. The two cases show that processes that are built on a common understanding and acceptance of challenges and common visions and goals in the community have lead to co-ordinated activities like the leader training programme and the community development activity in Haram.

Nordvest Forum is a collaborative activity owned by competing companies in the region, which have recognised that they have a common problem related to recruitment and training of leaders. This initial activity has lead to new activities and new co-operation especially related to management training and co-operation. This is, of course, a type of activity where companies are not competing directly and where «economy of scale» is possible. On the one hand, companies will learn from each other and leaders will develop personal relationships with leaders in other companies which can be used to recruit them and to gain access to knowledge etc. This co-operation is not without risks. On the other hand, none of the companies could have developed activities of this quality and quantity on their own. The opinion is that the activities of Nordvest Forum have lead to a more effective transfer of knowledge to the region, between companies in different branches in the region and also more trust and co-operation between companies with regard to the development of new products, markets etc. (Hanssen-Bauer 1997). It is my opinion that Nordvest Forum and other local co-operative activities involving companies in the region have developed a high degree of managerial self-confidence.

The collaboration between private and public institutions in Haram is an example where common challenges facing both companies and community were recognised. This understanding lead to co-operative processes that can easily be described by using figure 2. This process started as a concrete activity aimed at the recruitment of skilled workers with participation from a few but nevertheless important persons in the private and public sectors. The learning and confidence developed as a result of this co-operation lead to new and broader activities concerning the future of the community with a great many more participants. The process functioned almost like trying to set off an avalanche. Without snow and a steep slope you will have no success. The processes started with issues where success was most likely, the challenge was recognised and understood etc. and introduced more difficult issues when trust, self-confidence and personal understanding had been better developed.

If we look back on figure 2, what kind of practical advice can be developed from the theoretical presentation and the two cases as regards each stage in the planning process?

a. Mobilisation presupposes knowledge.

Spread *knowledge* about conditions, with a special emphasis on today's faults, strengths, opportunities and threats. In particular, threats can have a very uniting force, if these are felt to threaten the existence of the community or the organisations, as they are known today. If information is produced which shows that if the present change is allowed to continue, it will result in depopulation, a gradual reduction of the community and its organisations, etc., this will lay the foundations for a common understanding of the fact that something must be done. For example, a dramatic decline in the numbers of farmers, fishermen, industrial enterprises, young people and the working population will threaten everyone who is dependent on a vigorous community. Businesses, municipal activities, voluntary organisations etc. will be diminished instead of developing, if they cannot co-operate to reverse the trend or manage in co-operation to develop new tasks and find new areas of activity.

b. Mobilisation requires acceptance of the facts.

Knowledge alone is not enough. The facts must be accepted, it must be recognised that this concerns us and that it concerns me. This was the situation with regard to the establishment of Nordvest Forum Inc. and the development process in Haram. While the development of knowledge can be done analytically, such an acceptance of the facts must be created through active processes where all the participants themselves discover that this applies to them. There is, for example, little understanding of any crisis in many communities today, in spite of considerable unemployment, because this affects school-leavers and weak groups like those without much formal education. These do not have the strength and are not organised for mobilisation. Acceptance involves getting as many as possible to understand that the crisis will also affect him or her, no one can escape it. This again makes it necessary to run an extensive education program to convey information about the *crisis* and its effects, combined with active processes where the participants together and, preferably integrated with those from other co-operating organisations, learn to accept the consequences for themselves and their organisation. Only when such an acceptance has been built, have the foundations been laid for a participation or mobilisation strategy in the development process. In our development work related to local planning, we have very positive experience with well-organised *mass meetings*. Facts are first presented; afterwards the participants, in integrated groups with representatives from different organisations and interests, discuss faults, strengths, opportunities and threats, before finally recommending a course of action (Amdam and Amdam 1990, Amdam J. 1992, 1995b). The areas of priority are the large and important areas in which action must be taken in order to effect great changes. Such changes may be to direct negative trends in a more positive direction or to change a community's methods, and co-operate in working towards objectives other than those previously identified.

c. Mobilisation requires common/joint visions.

Knowledge and acceptance are not enough; the path ahead must also be mapped out. When the facts have been accepted, it is important to work on describing what conditions ought to be like and what the future should be like. In private industry this is known as a business idea. In public planning we refer to long-term guidelines or objectives. I prefer to call such uniting pictures of the future a *vision*. A common vision must be developed together as has happened in Haram. The best thing is if all the members «discover» the vision themselves, that the vision is built up from the areas of priority that the members themselves have identified (see point b). What is primarily required is that everyone becomes conscious of this common vision. Ideally it must be imprinted in everyone's consciousness, as many as possible must believe in it and spontaneously act so as to fulfil it.

d. Mobilisation requires strategies.

The next step is to translate the vision into plans of action or strategies. What is necessary in order to make the vision a reality? This will be part-plans for each of the co-operating organisations or communities, part-plans that integrate/cut across all them. The first group of strategies should be left to the appropriate organisation/community itself after having arrived together at what must be done and what responsibility this particular organisation/community has towards the common cause/fellowship. If

necessary, guidelines for these partial processes concerning possible products can be jointly established, should a co-ordinated strategic plan be desirable.

Great emphasis must be placed on the challenges that are inter-organisational - which break down the barriers between them. After such areas of priority have been identified, mandates for the work must be agreed upon and great effort should be put into the makeup of the inter-organisational working groups. These not only have to find solutions, they must also provide opportunities where the learning in the organisations or communities is to take place. Similarly it must be stressed that such working groups must work openly and present their interim results in hearings, etc., so that the results «belong» to everyone. The worst thing that can happen is that these groups «dig themselves in» with their work and attach prestige to the solutions they arrive at. Of vital importance in this sort of processes is the use of creative methods.

The basic knowledge, acceptance of the facts, the vision and the main strategies must be combined in a *long-term development program* that clearly shows what one is heading for and how the responsibility is shared between the parties in a fair and honest way. Such development programs can be prepared for an organisation, a local community, for the commune as a community and an organisation, for regional co-operation etc. These programs must be revised systematically on the basis of new knowledge, new goals, new strategies, new partners etc.

e. Mobilisation requires common priorities and/or sharing of labour in the implementation of action.

In such an active process of involvement with these strategies, a whole host of ideas and courses of action will be suggested. It is not possible to put all of these into effect. They must therefore be sorted on the basis of criteria such as: demands made on resources - available resources, consequences, responsibility, enthusiasts, bottlenecks, priority in time and agreements between participants.

On the question of joint projects and the need for financing from several sources, agreement must be reached on the contribution of each partner, where relative benefit should be an important criterion for the size of the contribution. If regulations etc. prevent the participation of some of the parties who would benefit from doing so, then «larger» agreements should be established where this is compensated for in other areas, so that all the parties involved find it acceptable. In all project work there is a great danger of misunderstandings that can cause unnecessary conflicts. Make sure that agreements are drawn up between the parties, which in the clearest possible terms describe what is to be done, by whom and when, how and why - note down what there is agreement on and where disagreements exist - and how agreement is to be reached.

For most projects there exist obstacles to their success that are either outside the local communities/organisations themselves or within them. Identify these bottlenecks as early as possible and find how they can be removed and by whom. If possible, form special «action groups» or «guerrilla groups» with enthusiasts to get rid of such bottlenecks.

The strategies and projects that have been given priority must be jointly described in a plan of action that clearly shows what is going to happen where, when, how and why, and where the responsibility for planning and carrying out the program is defined. The responsibility for the implementation of action is given to certain partners who are made responsible through contracts and agreements.

f. Experience - reporting and evaluation.

All the co-operating organisations/communities ought to present an annual report on the work for change, in which they discuss their area of responsibility in relation to the long-term plans and the plan of action. This annual report must describe what has been achieved in relation to the program and in addition to the program, what has been partly completed and why, and what has not been done and why. Likewise the combined project must present a similar report. Separate communicative processes to discuss the content must be associated with this evaluation of the results. The plans of action should be revised frequently to incorporate new knowledge, remove what has already been accomplished and add new projects/activities.

The evaluation process is an important activity for producing new knowledge and new goals for further planning and action, a new «loop», see figure 2. If strategies and action plans function properly, the implementation process will function as a series of co-ordinated implementation «loops». Changes in challenges and situation, evaluations that show that strategies and actions that are not working properly as far as visions and goals etc. are concerned, will eventually lead to the necessity for a new strategic «loop» with high participation and communication where existing beliefs are challenged.

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