THE INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INTO STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Environmental sustainability has become important for organizations in conditions of surviving the 21st century. However, despite many increasing revelations, most companies face considerable difficulties in embedding sustainability within their strategic management systems; this translates into a significant disconnection between environmental priorities and long-term business goals. The study investigates building a case on how to integrate environmental sustainability within the framework of strategic management into alignment of ecological imperatives with organizational strategies for economic success and environmental stewardship. The research takes up a twofold challenge: first, a lack of standardized methodologies for incorporation of sustainability in strategic decision-making; second, an attitudinal barrier arising because of perceived conflicts between profitability and environmental responsibility. The problems are aggravated by the absence of clear yard sticks for evaluating effectiveness of sustainable strategies. This research is based on the urgency for corporate operations to be addressed on the environmental damage caused by such operations, while still remaining within the competitive thrust. This paper will explore innovative frameworks, case studies, and best practices in order to offer actionable recommendations relative to organizations harmonizing their strategic objectives and sustainability goals.

Keywords: Environmental Sustainability, Strategic Management, Corporate Strategy, Sustainable Practices, Organizational Resilience, Stake Holder Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Strategic spatial planning has been suggested as a means for environmental sustainability. However, there are significant challenges with operationalizing and integrating policy-driven strategic spatial planning within the standardized and process-oriented management systems of local authorities (Kashif and Iqbal, 2022). This aspect has motivated discussions on how implementation of strategic spatial planning with a focus on environmental sustainability is conditioned by management systems (Hassan et al., 2021). The empirical case is local planning and management practices in a local authority in Sweden. Interviews with planners, together with planning and policy documents, make up the empirical material. The analysis proposes that the integration of environmental perspectives into strategic spatial planning processes depends on (i) the overall concerns for environmental issues in local policy, and (ii) how administrative management systems can facilitate transformative practice in planning. In conclusion, this article illustrates how environmental sustainability in strategic spatial planning is formed and conditioned through interplay between local policy and administrative management procedures.

Although the local scale is widely maintained to be an important geographical scale for addressing environmental issues, and there are high expectations placed on local authorities (Baynham and Stevens, 2014), conclusions about implementation deficits in practice are reiterated by many authors (Norell, 2016). Different barriers are identified that may explain this situation, including politics, the legal framework, technological issues, economic resources and institutional framing (Malekpour et al., 2017). It may be considered a demanding challenge for cities to mobilize capacity to meet the expectations of initiatives for sustainability (Evans et al., 2005; Gibbs and Kreuger 2005; Holman and Rydin 2013; Joss 2011; Lawhon and Patel 2013). Strategic spatial planning has been suggested as an approach for local

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authorities to address these challenges (UN Habitat, 2009, Albrechts, 2010, 2013). It has also been emphasized that these visionary and political spatial strategies need to be integrated with the regulatory aspects of the planning system in order to ensure legitimacy, but also to be effective and have an impact (e.g. UN Habitat, 2009). Local authorities are important anchor tenants or process leaders for such interventions but integrating these two aspects of strategic spatial planning and regulatory systems is a significant challenge (Person, 2013) (Iqbal and Ali, 2024). This is especially true since some interpretations of strategic spatial planning call for transformative practices (Fahim et al., 2020), which refers to discontinuity and to the breaking away from established routines (Albrechts, 2010, 2013; Feola, 2015). Through this article it is discussed how, on one hand, strategic spatial planning, and on the other hand, administrative environmental management systems interplay. More concretely, it will be investigated in which ways objectives of strategic spatial planning for environmental sustainability are made operational through the administrative management systems of the political body of a city located in central south Sweden (Norrkoping). This city can be described as an extreme case because it is the destination for a train stop along the first part of the planned high-speed rail system in Sweden. This places high demands for planning capacity on this local authority. The argument that strategic spatial planning is a key means of achieving transformations towards environmental sustainability motivates a thorough analysis of some key elements of strategic spatial planning. Transformative change is maintained to be distinct from incremental change. Nevertheless, over time, several and continuous incremental changes may imply that thresholds are passed and, in aggregation, cause transformations (Feola, 2015; Fatima et al., 2023). This motivates analysis of the continuous path of small steps of revised routines, standards and expectations (Strambach and Pflitsch, 2018; Iqbal et al., 2024) as factors impacting transformative change. Management is a critical aspect impacting how such revisions introduced through strategic spatial planning interventions may or may not be adopted through the organizations and organizational processes of local authorities. From certain aspects, the logics of management are significantly different to the logics of strategic spatial planning while simultaneously being crucial in the operationalization and implementation of planning strategies (Iqbal, 2022). These interdependencies of strategic spatial planning and administrative environmental management for sustainability have motivated the integration of these elements for the discussion of this article. It is assumed that local management systems, in important ways, condition the interventions of policy strategizing, pronounced through strategic spatial planning. This approach conceives management aspects, relating to the conception of how local authorities integrate or separate different task fields (Hjelm et al., 2011; Hassan et al., 2021). This article therefore investigates the conditions for an integrated approach to environmental issues in planning (Levett, 1997; Cockrean, 2001; Burstr€om von Malmborg, 2002; Emilsson and Hjelm, 2009). The aim of this article is to investigate in which ways the management system of a local authority conditions the implementation of strategic spatial planning, integrating environmental objectives.

Problem Statement

Academic debates focusing on spatial planning and administrative (environmental) management have often been separated into different disciplinary frameworks and academic institutions. The debate on strategic spatial planning is, however, an important invitation to bridge these spheres, which this article aims to do. Strategic spatial planning is a fuzzy concept that has evolved into different schools (Bafarasat, 2015) and has been debated in both research and practice since it emerged and was popularized in the 1990s (Albrechts and Balducci 2013; Hillier, 2013; Mantysalo, 2013). The citation below declares that strategic spatial planning is about transformative social processes; it involves co-production and has relationships to place (Zaheer et al., 2023; Arif et al., 2023). We can start by saying that strategic spatial planning is a transformative and integrative public sector-led co-productive socio-spatial process through which visions or frames of reference, justification for coherent actions, and means for implementation are produced that shape, frame and reframe what a place is and what it might become.

Rationale

The empirical case in this article is strategic spatial planning for environmental sustainability in a Swedish local authority. The local authority is the municipality of Norrkoping, a medium-sized city with a population of around 130,000 inhabitants. This city is in a unique situation because the major incoming investment for a high-speed railway called the East Link. This has been planned for several years and was formally decided on in 2012. This is the first step for future nationwide railway investments in Sweden. The East Link will start in Stockholm and run through Norrkoping. This national investment has triggered a number of large-scale local planning and investment initiatives for Norrkoping, which is in stark contrast to the city's rather slow and stagnant development during the past few decades due to negative impacts of de-industrialization processes (Hermelin, 2018). Norrkoping is located in central-east Sweden, around 150 km south of Stockholm. It is anticipated that the coming high-speed railway will support the accessibility of Norrkoping to the wider Stockholm area, which will expand the local labor market and facilitate business relations. These are important factors to make a city more attractive for the location of businesses and for habitation (Willigers and van Wee 2011; Ryder, 2012; Arts et al., 2016; Terrin, 2015). Based on such assumptions, the local authority believes that the East Link will be a turning point from stagnation to dynamic development (Swedish Transport Administration, 2016). Thus, it can be suggested that the city is in a unique situation for local planning and has a window of opportunity to develop strategies leveraging its development towards a sustainable city. In this article, the term 'local authority' is used to refer to the political body and administrative organization of the local municipality, which comprises the central city of Norrk€oping and surrounding areas with smaller settlements. One of these characteristics is the generic aspects of constituting bodies with impacts on how initiatives are prioritized, planned, organized and managed. The particularities of the local authorities in Sweden, compared to many other countries, refer to their extensive political sovereignty as well as the substantial scope of their obligations, and hence the resources to fulfill these. This means that local authorities develop large organizations to manage their tasks. To illustrate this, income tax of around 20% is leveled by local authorities and around 20% of all employment in Sweden is in the municipal sector (i.e. administration and planning, social care, schools, culture, etc.). It is also important to recognize that the Swedish local authorities, in principle, have a monopoly on land-use planning; that is, the local authority has the right to decide where and when urban development takes place (Persson, 2013). This article is based on longitudinal empirical research on local planning in Norrk€oping. Interviews were conducted in 2014 and 2016. These interviews, together with planning and policy documents, make up the core of the empirical material. In addition to this, the authors also participated in several seminars which focused on the development and planning process of the East Link and which provided observational empirical material.

Significance of Research

This article analyses how the management of Norrk€oping local authority conditions the integration of environmental objectives for strategic spatial planning initiatives. The steering model for Norrk€oping (as illustrated in Figure 1) is the starting point for this discussion. The management system for Norrk€oping – the Norrk€oping Steering Model (Norrk€oping municipality, 2018a) – is an ideal model, politically ratified through the local authority and not an illustration for how management is practiced. This model defines the ideal for the 'machinery' and management process through which policy and planning are to be made operational. The steering model for Norrk€oping is aligned to the logics of management; these being standardization, loops and organization (as in the PDCA). To exemplify this with the different building blocks of the Norrk€oping steering model: The planning preconditions and budget and objectives for the steering model (Figure 1) are part of Plan, where the organization identifies its current situation and performance and sets its vision and ambitions. The statutory plans along with mission plans, operational plans and operational activities (Figure 1) constitute Do, where the organization implements its actions towards the vision. The Check phase in the steering model corresponds to the quality reporting and internal management and control along with annual reports, and the Act phase constitutes developing measures and changes based on the results from the follow-up. This means that the Act phase is important for learning from experiences and outcomes in order to further improve the planning and management for

the next round of the management loop. Continual improvements are key elements and are based on implementing conclusions reached through learning from the experience of previous outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Spatial Planning and Administrative Environmental Management

The academic discourse surrounding spatial planning and administrative (environmental) management has often been divided into separate disciplines and academic institutions. However, the concept of strategic spatial planning presents an opportunity to bridge these domains, which is the objective of this article. Strategic spatial planning is a complex concept that has given rise to various schools of thought and has been extensively discussed in both research and practical contexts since its emergence and popularity in the 1990s (Albrechts and Balducci, 2013; Hillier, 2013; Mäntysalo, 2013).

According to Albrechts and Balducci (2013), strategic spatial planning is a transformative and collaborative socio-spatial process led by the public sector. It involves the production of visions or frameworks, justification for coherent actions, and means for implementation that shape, frame, and redefine the essence of a place and its potential future. The strategic element of strategic spatial planning has been a matter of concern for planning theorists and management scholars alike (Ahmed and Hassan, 2020). Management research argues that strategic planning by the public sector is crucial in managing the complexities and uncertainties of our world while progressing toward more sustainable practices. To achieve this, strategic planning must be flexible, dynamic, and capable of both stabilizing and adapting to bring about progress and transformation (Bryson, Edwards, and Van Slyke, 2018). These concepts of stabilization, flexibility, complexity, fixity, and uncertainty have also been explored by planning scholars (Albrechts and Balducci, 2013; Hillier, 2013; Mäntysalo, 2013).

The spatial planning discourse has often focused on the differences between "new" selective strategic spatial planning initiatives and more "traditional" comprehensive and regulatory land-use planning. However, the dichotomy between regulatory land-use planning and strategic spatial planning has started to be questioned, both theoretically and practically. Research on spatial planning in the Nordic context has examined the "strategic turn" in these countries, shedding light on the democratic tensions that can arise between informal and formal planning approaches (Mäntysalo et al., 2014). There are tensions related to the efficiency of project-oriented strategic planning practices and the legitimacy provided by hierarchical bureaucratic structures in traditional planning (Mäntysalo et al., 2011). The wave of strategic spatial planning has emphasized planning through projects as an important approach (Oosterlynck et al., 2011). Mäntysalo (2013) summarizes the current state of strategic spatial planning as encompassing visionary selectiveness and comprehensiveness, action orientation and plan orientation, dynamic and static problem descriptions, coping with uncertainty and fixation of certainties, as well as relational co-production and law-based procedures.

In practice, planning involves negotiations, cooperation, coordination, and learning that precede various decisions and agreements (Purkarthofer, 2016). Furthermore, planning is seen as a process that involves persuasion and inspiration in addition to the formulation of spatial visions (Healey, 2007). This pertains to the internal aspects of strategic spatial planning, which require co-production and coordination. Coordination can occur between local authorities and various stakeholders, including commercial actors such as real estate companies and entrepreneurs involved in urban development projects. Additionally, internal coordination is necessary among different departments within the local authority, such as industrial development, environmental, social security, and physical planning. This coordination aspect of strategic spatial planning stands in contrast to the compartmentalization often associated with sustainability planning (Gibbs et al., 1998). Strategic spatial planning is characterized as forward-thinking and encompasses diverse policy agendas, activities, and stakeholders (Banai, 2013; Tewdwr-Jones, et al., 2013). It harnesses the demand for organizational strategies and management procedures. While integrating environmental sustainability into planning can be complex, Swedish local authorities have demonstrated the potential of a gradual approach to integration based on organizational

maturity, fostering organizational learning (Emilsson and Hjelm, 2009).

Strategic spatial planning, unlike administrative management systems that prioritize processes and loops, emphasizes its inherently political and policy-driven nature, which evolves over time and varies across different geographical contexts. Furthermore, strategic spatial planning places significant importance on the spatial dimensions and geographical context when formulating strategies and implementing projects, with a focus on reimagining and creating places (Healey, 2007). A shared framework between strategic spatial planning and management is also conceivable, emphasizing the significance of implementation and evaluation. Local authorities and regions establish indicator systems and frameworks, often adopted from management models, to measure the performance of spatial planning strategies and monitor urban sustainability (Bourdic et al., 2012; AlQahtany et al., 2012; Magee and Scerri, 2012).

Erdmenger (1998) categorizes three types of environmental management approaches in the context of local authorities: political, spatial, and administrative. Although these perspectives are typically managed separately, they are interconnected through the same management loop and process-oriented approach (Levett, 1997). This article primarily focuses on the spatial and administrative perspectives and their interplay. To specify the management aspects, the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) cycle is applied. This well-established model, originating from quality management, is utilized for administrative management in various domains, including environmental management (Deming, 1986). Norrkoping municipality, for instance, employs a steering model based on the PDCA approach (Norrkoping Municipality, 2018a). This article aims to explore how environmental perspectives are integrated into the steering model, translating visions into planning practice.

Considering the environmental perspective as the focal point, let's exemplify the PDCA cycle from an environmental management standpoint. In the Plan phase, the organization assesses its current environmental performance by mapping and analyzing the existing practices. This assessment provides insights into areas for improvement and serves as the foundation for setting environmental objectives and action plans. It also aids in designing an appropriate process to support the implementation of action plans and achievement of objectives. In the Do phase, the management model is put into action, integrating the action plans into the organization's daily operations through instructions and routines. The Check phase involves evaluating and auditing the operationalization of the management system and assessing the organization's environmental performance. In the Act phase, based on the evaluation and performance follow-up, top management decides on necessary changes to drive further improvements. Feedback loops and organizational learning are integral components throughout the PDCA cycle. PDCA emphasizes a process-oriented and continuous approach, which distinguishes it from project-based organizational structures limited in scope and duration.

Applying a PDCA approach to administrative environmental management (Erdmenger, 1998) involves analyzing the current situation through information gathering, setting objectives, and implementing processes to ensure environmental objectives are met. When considering environmental management in (strategic) spatial planning (Erdmenger, 1998), it's crucial to recognize that local authorities not only bear responsibility for their internal environmental performance but also act as societal actors influencing the transformative capacity of local spaces. Additionally, they must comply with national planning regulations and engage in networked collaborations with various stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical case in this article is strategic spatial planning for environmental sustainability in a Swedish local authority. The local authority is the municipality of Norrkoping, a medium-sized city with a population of around 130,000 inhabitants. This city is in a unique situation because the major incoming investment for a high-speed railway called the East Link. This has been planned for several years and was formally decided on in 2012. This is the first step for future nationwide railway investments in Sweden. The East Link will start in Stockholm and run through Norrkoping. This national investment has triggered a number of large-scale local planning and investment initiatives for Norrkoping, which is in stark contrast to the city’s rather slow and stagnant development during the past few decades due to negative

impacts of de-industrialization processes (Hermelin, 2018).

Norrkoping is located in central-east Sweden, around 150 km south of Stockholm. It is anticipated that the coming high-speed railway will support the accessibility of Norrkoping to the wider Stockholm area, which will expand the local labor market and facilitate business relations. These are important factors to make a city more attractive for the location of businesses and for habitation (Willigers and van Wee, 2011; Ryder, 2012; Arts et al., 2016; Terrin, 2015). Based on such assumptions, the local authority believes that the East Link will be a turning point from stagnation to dynamic development (Swedish Transport Administration, 2016). Thus, it can be suggested that the city is in a unique situation for local planning and has a window of opportunity to develop strategies leveraging its development towards a sustainable city.

In this article, the term 'local authority' is used to refer to the political body and administrative organization of the local municipality, which comprises the central city of Norrkoping and surrounding areas with smaller settlements. Although a local authority is a political body, for which the domains and responsibilities vary between national settings, these bodies also share important characteristics internationally. One of these characteristics is the generic aspects of constituting bodies with impacts on how initiatives are prioritized, planned, organized and managed. The particularities of the local authorities in Sweden, compared to many other countries, refer to their extensive political sovereignty as well as the substantial scope of their obligations, and hence the resources to fulfill these. This means that local authorities develop large organizations to manage their tasks. To illustrate this, income tax of around 20% is level led by local authorities and around 20% of all employment in Sweden is in the municipal sector (i.e. administration and planning, social care, schools, culture, etc.). It is also important to recognize that the Swedish local authorities, in principle, have a monopoly on land-use planning; that is, the local authority has the right to decide where and when urban development takes place (Persson, 2013).

This article is based on longitudinal empirical research on local planning in Norrkoping. Interviews were conducted in 2014 and 2016. These interviews, together with planning and policy documents, make up the core of the empirical material. In addition to this, the authors also participated in several seminars which focused on the development and planning process of the East Link and which provided observational empirical material.

Table 1:

Type of Document	Year
Norrkoping Vision 2035	2016
"Joint Climate Vision for Norrkoping/Linköping	2011
Municipal objectives 2015-2018	2015
Norrkoping municipal budgets	2012, 2013, 2014, 2015,2016
Annual reports/financial statements	2012, 2013, 2014,2015
Operational plan, Municipal Board Office	2016
Operational plans, Technical Department	2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016
Operational plans, Spatial Planning Department	2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016
Joint Comprehensive Plan Norrkoping/Linköping	2010
"Draft of in-depth Comprehensive Plan for Norrkoping City	2015
"PM for development of new commuter center and other projects related to the East Link	2014
"Time plan for East Link and project outline	2013
"Collaboration Plan for Mobility Management	2015
"City Development Vision for the Inner Harbor	2012
"Detailed Development Plan for the Inner Harbor	2014
Quality Program for the Inner Harbor 2016	2016

Traffic Planner, Technical Department	2014, 2016
Rail Infrastructure Manager, Technical Department	2014, 2016
Project Manager Inner Harbor, Spatial Planning Department	2014, 2016
Coordination of zoning plans, Spatial Planning Department	2014, 2016
Communication Strategist, Next Norrkoping	2014
Project Manager for Commuting Centre,	2014, 2016
Business Establisher, Business Department	2014, 2016
Controller East Link	2014
Process Manager Mobility Management, Municipal Board Office	2014, 2016
Development Manager/municipal coordination of East Link activities, Municipal Board Office	2014, 2016
Process Manager Exploitation, Spatial Planning Department	2016

In 2014, Norrkoping identified a number of key departments in its organization for the planning process of the East Link. A coordination group with planners from these departments was organized. This group comprised different competencies, including detailed development planning, infrastructure, industry development and sustainability issues. The members of this group were considered to be key actors for the strategic spatial planning and administrative environmental management in relation to the East Link. The authors have had continuous communication with this group and have also carried out 22 interviews in 2014 and 2016 with individual group members, in order to envision the progression of the planning process. Four of the departments involved in the interviews had staffing changes between the two interviews, meaning that different people were interviewed. It was also the case that some people were interviewed both in 2014 and in 2016, although for different functions, due to changes in work duties.

The interviews were open, in-depth and adapted to the informants' function, expertise and role in planning processes. Nevertheless, they all covered the following themes: (i) organization and time plan; (ii) policy documents and planning documents; and (iii) projects (ongoing and future) in relation to the East Link development. These projects were frequently carried out in collaboration; with other municipalities, the regional authority, national partners, consultants and companies.

The documents are divided into three categories: visions, policy documents and planning documents. These can be seen as forming a scale from visionary and strategic policies to framework documents and spatial plans or project plans. The first category comprises long-term visionary policy documents such as the Norrkoping Vision 2035 and the Joint Climate Vision for Norrkoping/Linköping (Linköping is the bordering authority and of a similar population size). The second includes policy documents such as the municipal objectives, municipal budgets, annual reports/financial statements), and operational plans for individual departments, that is, the Municipal Board Office, the Technical Department and the Spatial Planning Department This second category of documents is an important source for understanding the management system of the local authority, while the third set of documents – spatial planning documents and project documents – contributes material which aids in understanding planning content and how environmental issues are addressed.

The requirement to be selective is most evident for the third category of documents. In addition to general planning documents, such as the joint Comprehensive Plan for Norrkoping/Linköping (2010) and the draft of an in-depth Comprehensive Plan for Norrkoping City (2015), this selection includes planning documents related to two particular projects: the Inner Harbor (an area that will be developed into a residential district) and Mobility management. These two projects are used as illustrations of how strategic spatial planning initiatives are connected to environmental management. The two projects were identified by several of the interviewees as key examples of planning for sustainable development.

RESULTS

This article analyses how the management of Norrkoping local authority conditions the integration of environmental objectives for strategic spatial planning initiatives. The steering model for Norrkoping (as illustrated in Figure 1) is the starting point for this discussion. The management system for Norrkoping – the Norrkoping Steering Model (Norrkoping municipality 2018a) – is an ideal model, politically ratified through the local authority and not an illustration for how management is practiced. This model defines the ideal for the 'machinery' and management process through which policy and planning are to be made operational.

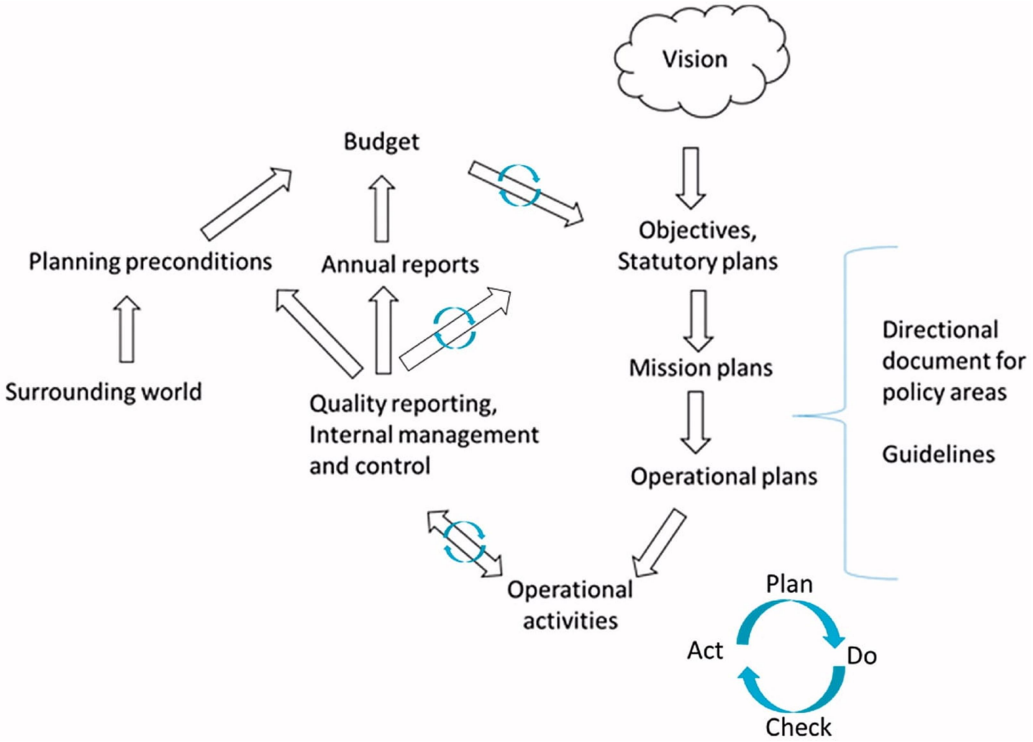

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The steering model for Norrkoping is aligned to the logics of management; these being standardization, loops and organization (as in the PDCA). To exemplify this with the different building blocks of the Norrkoping steering model: The planning preconditions and budget and objectives for the steering model (Figure 1) are part of Plan, where the organization identifies its current situation and performance and sets its vision and ambitions. The statutory plans along with mission plans, operational plans and operational activities (Figure 1) constitute Do, where the organization implements its actions towards the vision. The Check phase in the steering model corresponds to the quality reporting and internal management and control along with annual reports, and the Act phase constitutes developing measures and changes based on the results from the follow-up. This means that the Act phase is important for learning from experiences and outcomes in order to further improve the planning and management for the next round of the management loop. Continual improvements are key elements and are based on implementing conclusions reached through learning from the experience of previous outcomes.

It is important to stress that the analysis does not assume that the steering model shows how management is practiced at face value, which means that divergent practices not in line with the model will be described. The way in which planning and policy are integrated into this model is through 'entrances' from the side and from the top into the management loop. Planning, which is contextualized into the 'surrounding world', is shown entering on the left side of the model. Visions (which are associated with policy) are illustrated by a cloud (in the sky) which enters from the top of the model. This

means being open to and integrating, 'unstable' policy-driven aims, plans and projects into the 'stable' management loop.

In order to show more clearly how planning is integrated and molded through the steering model, the discussion now moves on to describe different activities in Figure 1 and with a focus on those relating to aspects of transformative practices for sustainability. To start with, inputs into the model are shown entering from the side, that is, the surrounding world. This is an elusive aspect that is difficult to define strictly. This is understood to involve guidelines, initiatives and programs through the national government, which impact on the planning preconditions of the local authority. Moreover, it includes expected societal transformations based on prognoses produced through the local authority (Norrkoping Municipality, 2018b). In the 2016 planning preconditions, 16 different themes were defined, of which an elderly population, city development, participation and infrastructure are a few (Norrkoping Municipality, 2018b).

The municipal comprehensive plan constitutes an important local policy and planning document, entering the management loop of the steering model from the side. In accordance with the Swedish Planning and Building Act, it is mandatory for all local authorities in Sweden to have an updated comprehensive plan (Planning and Building Act, 2010). The municipal comprehensive plan defines strategic spatial planning issues and provides the overall framework for land-use development. In order to realize the aims of the comprehensive plans, the local authority develops more detailed and legally binding development plans that are required for all urban development projects. During the period in which the research for this article took place; Norrkoping was developing a more in-depth comprehensive plan for the city, which would come into effect in June 2017. There are environmental requirements in the national legislation on planning that the local authorities need to take into consideration in their local planning processes and for their plans is at the frontline of Swedish local authorities when it comes to environmental management (Vision 2035, author's translation).

The position in the loop for the steering model of the mission plans and operational plans for different departmental political boards and their administrative departments is a few steps down from the budget. The investigation and interviews for this article show, however, that these steps in the management model are not fully operationalized across the different departments of the local authority. In principle, such plans were only found for the department managing physical spatial planning. The annual report is the 'end point' for the upstream part of the loop and is produced through an auditing process. The outcomes of the annual reports feed into the planning preconditions and budget, and the cycle starts for a new year. Annual reports have very similar formulations for environmental ambitions over the years. Little or no progress in environmental performance is reported.

None of the interviewees, either in 2014 or in 2016, mentioned the local authority's overall vision or budget documents as guiding their work. The documents that were considered important for their activities were mainly the spatial planning documents, such as the municipal comprehensive plan, detailed development plans and the local traffic strategy. Only two interviewees mentioned the operational plans (which are operationalization of the steering model) as important documents for their work. The operational plans were seen by one of the interviewees as informal or unofficial documents that were used in different ways by different departments, and as documents that are rarely made public. Another interviewee explained that the operational plans only managed part of the activities and that these plans did not give the full picture of the department's activities or management.

It is interesting to reflect upon the PDCA loop again, because if there is little focus on the operational plans and if the follow-up (Check) is based on the Do phase (including operational plans that seem to be marginalized), then it is not explained what directs the next feedback loop and what is evaluated and acted upon. This brings us to a discussion of whether management models become non-operational paper tigers, rather than having a relevant impact (Emilsson and Hjelm 2009), and that the steering model, illustrated in Figure 1, only partly reflects the management conditions for spatial strategic planning visions and initiatives. At a more detailed level, there are also more 'scattered' environmental objectives formulated through the analyzed planning documents. The absence of the industry development department may reflect that sustainability initiatives are primarily oriented towards the

organization and areas on which the local authority has an impact (such as spatial planning). What is actually managed in these systems and what is followed up? For our case, Norrkoping, this is not clear. Consequently, it is also unclear how environmental perspectives, as defined through policy and planning documents, are integrated into the steering model.

Previous research has stressed the importance of coordination and implementation for achieving environmental ambitions (Emilsson and Hjelm 2009). This motivates pointing out that the steering model is not a helpful tool for planning initiatives through cross-departmental organization comprising a wider range of competencies and perspectives and which has been maintained by different scholars to be particularly important for environmental sustainability (Cherp, et al., 2006). Nevertheless, such integrative planning interventions are organized, which is one illustration that the steering model is an ideal management model and not a description of operations. The discussion will now move from a general discussion of the steering model to a more detailed analysis of particular planning situations in the context of the coming East Link. Two particular planning interventions will be discussed, which address environmental sustainability. These are organized through collaborations across departmental and organizational borders.

Planning and Management for the East Link

Planning for the coming high-speed railway, the East Link is a real challenge for the local authority in Norrkoping. This involves many actors and (sometimes conflicting) interests, ambitions and agendas which must be taken into account in the planning process. Therefore, the cross-departmental coordination group was formed (as described earlier). The main function of the coordination group was to share information about progress in the national planning process (primarily the Swedish Transport Administration, the national body responsible for building the railway) and to share information between the different local planning initiatives and projects related to the East Link.

The coordination group had an important function in the early years of the local planning for the East Link, which was from around 2012. However, during the interviews in 2016 it became clear that this group no longer existed. One reason for this, as mentioned by one of the interviewees, was that awareness of the conditions derived from the coming East Link had become well anchored internally in the organization, which meant that the initial function of the group was no longer needed. This can be described in terms of an achievement of an internal policy learning process (Moodysson et al., 2017).It also seemed that high demands on the local authority to be involved in external collaborations and negotiations with the Swedish Transport Administration, the National Negotiation on Housing and Infrastructure (commissioned by the Swedish national government to enhance the East Link's impact on regional growth) and other local authorities hosting train stops along the East Link challenged the time allocation for internal collaborations across departments of the local authority. In 2014, there was an emphasis on internal communication and information sharing related to the East Link, while in 2016 the emphasis was instead on external communication and information sharing. This illustrates how the operational organization for planning is moving regardless of the stable structure of departments.

Communication of information and ideas is a fundamental condition for how planning evolves. Likewise, management models consider communication to be a highly critical factor. Communication is also an issue discussed by the interviewees, and it was maintained that communication was insufficient, for various reasons, among which time constraints and weak interest in planning issues among the politicians were mentioned. The planners interviewed also experienced a deficit in communication between the local authority and local businesses. One initiative of the local authority for communication was a brand for all local initiatives and projects related to the East Link, called next: Norrkoping. The purpose of this was to market the city and communicate its redevelopment. However, sustainability issues were not included in this brand. Communication is about sharing ideas and learning. In relation to the sharing of ideas for environmental objectives, one of the interviewees indicated that sustainability issues have become more often addressed and discussed through planning in the last few years. Moreover, one of the spatial planners argued that the new generation of planners had environmental sustainability 'in their bones' and that all spatial planning is permeated by environmental values, even if this is not always

spoken about. In this way, environmental sustainability is seen as the foundation for spatial planning which becomes 'sustainable by default' (Persson, 2013).

The strict time plan for planning interventions in preparation for the coming East Link has been conceived as a restriction on communication and collaboration, which, in turn, may restrict learning and integration. There is time pressure throughout the planning process, but also synchronization issues, since the projects fully or partly depend on each other's progression. To manage this, a plan was set up with the aim of spreading planning operations over several years and, in this way, easing the stress on staffing and other resources of the local authority. The overall time plan for preparing for the coming high-speed rail in Norrkoping, which was communicated through the abovementioned coordinating group, pointed out a number of different projects, two of which are described in more detail below. These represent very different project logics. One is primarily based in one department for physical planning and which is to plan for a new residential area (the Inner Harbor). The other project is managed from the central strategic department of the local authority and targets the soft space of mobility management. Nevertheless, both projects come under the Norrköping steering model, as the spatial planning committee's translation of the overall municipal vision, objectives and statutory plans into political mission plans for the spatial planning forms the basis for all operational spatial planning in Norrkoping, including the Inner Harbor.

The Inner Harbor City District

The Inner Harbor is a city district in Norrkoping that will be converted from an industrial harbor area into a waterfront residential city district. The planning process for the Inner Harbor had a tight time schedule and was positioned early in the overall time plan in the East Link process, as a vanguard for a number of different urban planning projects. The Inner Harbor has been promoted as a flagship project for developing city districts in proximity to the future railway station for the coming East Link.

The planning of the Inner Harbor grew from a city district vision in which sustainability had a central role. This city district was planned to be a residential area for around 2,000 people, and for which sustainable housing became a core issue. The planners developed a model for public–private collaboration, which was to be driven by joint processes integrating planners and developers. The model defined core values across the partners. These were: urban, multifaceted, ground-breaking and responsible. The involved companies integrated these values into their development projects. Furthermore, each developer was given an assignment of choosing one particular target to promote environmental sustainability, in which they were supposed to exceed the minimum required standards. In this way, the collaboration between the developers was staged in a manner which encouraged competition related to environmental performance. This shows the dependency of the local authority in relation to private actors for the implementation of environmental objectives. It also illustrates how physical planning is influenced by strategic spatial planning through features of negotiation and coordination. The organization of this planning also highlights the varying and non-standardized logics of spatial planning. This means that planning for the Inner Harbor city district required the coordination of a range of private and public actors, and that the physical planning department became the anchor tenant for mobilizing other organizations in particular directions, that is, to include environmental objectives. This means striving for transformative practice among other organizations (i.e. the developers) for environmental sustainability. The accomplishments of the Inner Harbor should be considered from the positioning of this planning project at the core of physical land-use planning, which offers efficient 'tools' for planners through regulations and established routines. Thus, the intersection of increased attractiveness of Norrkoping for developers as an effect of the coming East Link, powerful planning tools of local authorities for physical planning, and the motivations of included partners to achieve environmental objectives allowed the implementation of an integrated approach to planning for the Inner Harbor.

Mobility Management Project

Norrkoping has been involved for several years with Mobility management in order to achieve a more sustainable travel pattern among employees and citizens. The initiating phase for this endeavor was

formed within the context of a nationally-funded project and was converted some years ago into a permanent activity for local strategic planning. Compared with the example of planning for the Inner Harbor, as discussed above, the planning tools for Mobility management were not as efficient. The funding was primarily external and for fixed-time projects. Sustainable personal transport is one of 21 explicit objectives for Norrkoping's budget, but this is formulated to target the employees of the local authority. Nevertheless, initiatives in this area have also included campaigning towards the local population more generally to motivate individuals to change their behavior (Fareed and Iqbal, 2022). Mobility management in Norrkoping has addressed this issue in various ways, for example by arranging car-free days in the city, encouraging cycling instead of car driving, etc. The planner at the local authority responsible for coordinating initiatives for Mobility management was also involved in developing traffic strategies, parking norms and other planning processes through which sustainable mobility was addressed. The coordination of Mobility management was organizationally-located centrally, at the department for the Municipal Political Board. Despite its strategic organizational position, mobility management was perceived as being weakly implemented throughout the different departments of the local authority. One of the interviewees stated that mobility management as a project did not have a very high status in the municipal organization, and it was therefore not highly prioritized internally. Weak planning tools, along with ambivalent norms towards personal transport by private cars among local politicians, as well as officials at different planning departments, could be seen to undermine the possible substantial impacts of this local planning endeavor. It is also an example of how strategic spatial planning is being operationalized through projects which the politically ratified steering model for Norrkoping is not very efficient in terms of integration and operationalization.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article has been to explore how the operation and impact of strategic spatial planning is conditioned by the operation of administrative environmental management of local authorities. Through this approach it has been possible to identify factors explaining why environmental sustainability is, in general, rather sparsely implemented for Norrkoping, although the coming East Link, in combination with a strong emphasis on the environment in current policy guidelines, may be considered to offer a significant window of opportunity for strategic spatial planning supporting transformative practices for sustainability.

The results of this investigation into how the management system of a local authority conditions the implementation of strategic spatial planning integrating environmental objectives can be summarized into three main conclusions, accompanied by some reflections on policy implications: First, and what may be seen a naïve statement, is the condition that local authorities are policy-driven organizations. Thus, although the overall discourse for sustainable development formalized and promoted through international and national political bodies and other stakeholders is strong, it is necessary to conceive how such objectives are translated and integrated into the local policy steering documents. It is not reasonable to expect strong integration of environmental sustainability if such objectives are not prioritized in the local policy debate and made explicitly visible in general local guidelines. The situation in Norrkoping, where environmental objectives are not promoted with any notable emphasis through political steering documents, means that these aspects are not strong incoming claims either 'from the side' or 'from above' in the steering model for Norrkoping (Figure 1). Thus, the management approach envisioning the standardization of processes points to the importance of setting this standard. This means appreciating the role of the overall political ambitions (i.e. the Plan phase in the PDCA cycle) for strategic planning. Second, assuming that strategic spatial planning requires policy integration, there is a demand for resources, including time for politicians and planners to be involved and to communicate across fields of expertise and departments of the local authority organization. This could be coordinated through the administrative management system. However, having an integrated approach requires maturity and organizational learning (Emilsson and Hjelm 2009). A lack of time is a barrier to this, which is evidenced by, for instance, the devolution of the coordinating group for the East Link planning process. Thus, resources for learning need to be mobilized to ensure that environmental sustainability initiatives are

relevant and have clear objectives. Administrative management needs to balance comprehensive systems with space for 'bottom up' initiatives for inventing ways to integrate environmental sustainability objectives into spatial planning (i.e. the Do phase in the PDCA cycle). This is illustrated by the Inner Harbor, which exemplifies that transformative practices are feasible while being primarily hosted and led from one particular department of the local authority, making it manageable and not an excessively demanding comprehensive steering and control system. Third, planning objectives need to be supported by well-organized management and this require efficient interplay between organizational maturity, institutional capacity and compatibility with professional cultures (Hjelm et al., 2011). The weak implementation of Mobility management seems to be related to an absence, as well as a lack of interplay, of these factors. In contrast to the conditions for the Inner Harbor, the management context for Mobility management in Norrkoping represents a fragmented situation which is also undermined through weak normative support. Thus, management checklists with factors required to pursue projects would help to avoid failed sustainability projects (i.e. related to the Do phase in the PDCA cycle).

To conclude, it is hoped that this discussion has illustrated how strategic spatial planning is formed through the interplay of policy and the administrative management procedures for the local authority. The endeavor of strategic spatial planning to leverage environmental sustainability requires forwarding policy and planning preconditions addressing environmental objectives. It also asks for efficient integration of such objectives into the administrative management processes. The discussion has also illustrated a complex relationship between the logics of management and planning, more generally. On one hand, implementation of planning demands management. On the other hand, the logics of management are not well equipped to integrate the logics of planning to be in a state of constant change.

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