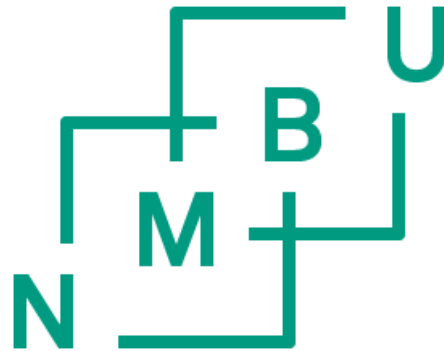


A Case Study on Planners Improving Through Their Reflections

- *Swedish Planners Reflecting on Dialogue and Learning in a University Partnership Workshop Series*
-



A Master Thesis in City and Regional planning
Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)


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I hope you enjoy reading it!


Ås 15. July 2016

"I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening."

- Larry King

Summary

This thesis explores the pivotal role of “reflection” in and on practice, in a workshop process of improving planning practice. The theoretical impetus of this research comes from the recent contributions of ideological critique against communicative planning. Wherein planners and planning in general often function as the scapegoats to the ideology when practice falters. Recent research has even questioned whether we are witnessing an ongoing ideological politicisation of planning by these mechanisms. There is therefore a need to reframe our research from the bottom-up, to examine “real” practice and its ideological influences.

Taking into account the recent conceptualisation of “spaces for action”, I concur that even though organizational improvements have enhanced “possible spaces for action”, the resulting practice is limited by practitioner’s reflections on “actual spaces for action”. This means that there is a need for a greater understanding of how practitioners reflect in and on their practice. In regards to this, the thesis takes a step back, to contemplate whether the new conceptual framework of “spaces for action” in conjunction with the established theory on “reflective learning” could represent a perspective to challenge contemporary ideological influences on planning.

I base this on the argument that a contemporary practice problem for planning is the repeating focus of organizations to respond to criticism through the reworking of an ideal of “best” practice. Consequently, I argue that the organizational process of improving is as much influenced by ideological factors in developing “best” practices ideals as practitioners are in their “real” practice. I analyse that both the theoretical contestation of communicative planning theory and the intermediate organizational focus of improving through “good” practices, diverts much needed attention away from actually improving practitioner’s capacity to deal with the complexity of “real” practice. As “good” practices focus on “possible spaces of action”, improving planners “actual spaces for action” are left virtually unchecked. “Good” practices therefore fall short to the same critique of “best” practice, when faced with the complexity of “real” practice.

I conclude that both contemporary theory and practice could benefit from a renewed interest in reflective learning theory, and that further research is needed to develop a system for

perpetual organizational learning through the “reflective” potential of their experienced practitioners, especially when faced with criticism to improve.

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Abbreviations and Translations

Abbreviations:

CPT – Communicative Planning Theory

EIA – Environmental Impact Assessment

NIBR – Norwegian Institute of Urban and Regional Research

NMBU – Norwegian University of Life Sciences

NPM – New Public Management

PBL (PBA) - Plan and building Act

Translations (English – Swedish):

Consultations – Samråd

County Administrative Board – Länsstyrelsen

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to explain the rationale behind the thesis focus. It does this through presenting theoretical and societal impetus, which forms the basis for a problem statement and research questions.

1.1 Impetus and Problem Statement

There have been many interesting contributions to the field of research on planning in recent time, but although there has been a multitude of new theories and practices in planning, their amount is trumped by their respective critiques. This has prompted researchers to question the influences behind the critiques of theory and the criticisms of practice. In the following section of text, a line is drawn between these theoretical contemplations and their practical implications, resulting in a contemporary problem statement for planning. The impetus being that this research could help to build a critical perspective for our continued efforts of improving planning practice in the face of criticism.

1.1.1 Theoretical Impetus

The theoretical impetus of this study starts with the argument that we don't know enough about the factors influencing planning practice today. And that we consequently, inspired by the introduction of ideological and agnostic theory, have to return our focus of research towards the explorative if we are to truly meet the challenge of improving in planning practice. So that we don't merely react to criticism and bend to these, but that we can start to develop understanding of the underlying causality of the criticism and a conceptual framework to analyse critique in order to bring about longstanding improvements.

A broader perspective on the historical shifts of ideals in planning and its following critiques

The data behind the ideological critic of planning theory could benefit from a wider theoretical perspective of the returning critique and consequent shifts between planning ideals in recent time. Culminating in the agnostic critique of the communicative planning ideal at the turn of the century. As Taylor (1998) describes, there has been 2 great shifts in planning practice: The first occurring in the 1960s, from the view of the planner as an aesthetic urban designer to a technical expert based in rationality and systems thinking. And a second shift

happening around the 1970s-1980s change in perception of the planner from a technical expert to more of a facilitator of process and views (Taylor 1998 p. 158). Taylor calls these transitions, shifts rather than paradigms. In this he argues that planning, as many other disciplines could instead be seen in retrospect to more underlying paradigm shift.

Exemplified in that of modernism, which stood on the shoulder of enlightenment thinkers in its unquestioned belief in human innovation to solve every problem, and that were the influence behind the first shift of planning ideals towards rationality. Without going into much detail of the specific critiques of these ideals, see Taylor (1998) for this, we will be inspired by Taylor to take a broader theoretical perspective in terms of the influence of paradigms and other influences in our research.

An antagonistic realisation renews an ideological focus in planning

This broader theoretical perspective in collaboration with the contribution of agonistic theory, renew the interest of looking at planning in an ideological light. As many postmodern theoreticians in planning (see for example Grange 2016; Gunder 2010; Mouffe 2005) have brought the important contributions of a poststructuralist thinkers into their own research. An argument can be made that this broader perspective is of particular interest when viewing the critique of the second shift of the communicative planning ideal in planning. Although the shift towards the communicative planning ideal was well situated in the critique of the rational planning ideal, as not every problem could be solved by the thought power of an expert behind a desk. The core of the communicative planning ideal was the belief in the power of argumentation. As communicative rationality set the concept that the best argument would dissipate all conflicting arguments, and to get this to happen one would have to set the table for real communication to happen leading to a facilitative shift for planning. As many have later argued (Pløger etc.) this theoretical ideal with its wholehearted belief in consensus would consistently falter when faced with the conflictual reality of antagonism. The main critique in this regard against the communicative ideal is that it thought itself outside of ideology, as neoliberalism was thought to be the end of ideology, and therefore it did not need to concern itself with conceptions of power. Which is a dangerous proclamation as then the ideal could potentially work as a smoke screen for what is really going on, by potentially tying up people's frustrations and energy in trying to achieve this ideal rather than actually creating change. As failures of practice mounted up, so did the criticism of communicative planning, leading to the creation of different strands communicative planning theories (CPT), as they were later known, in order to separate oneself from the criticism and thereby

dispersing communicative rationalities theoretical footing. Still the ideal remained a mainstay in planning, as failures were contributed either to ignorance to the depths of the communicative ideal or to the failures of another's strand of communicative planning theory. At the same time contemporary thinkers started to question the end of ideology and proposed a new conception of this phenomena.

An ideological perspective on planning leads to a hegemonic realisation

Even though the constant critique of communicative planning theory led to internal separation, which consequently led to become theory becoming even more difficult for practitioners to familiarize themselves with and for communicative rationality to question its footing in argumentation, it still managed to remain a mainstay in the contemporary political climate. This observation prompted theoreticians to question the relationship between neoliberal ideology and communicative theory, as the contemporary influences of New Public Management (NPM) in the neoliberal ideology seemed at times at odds with the lengthy processes of argumentative reasoning (see for example Campbell et al. 2014; Gunder 2010; Purcell 2009). In the same way as the first shift in planning ideals were inspired by the stepping away from the bureaucratically inefficient democratic ideals of the welfare state towards the competitive neoliberal efficiency of neoliberalism (Taylor 1998). An important contribution to answer this question came in the form of the poststructuralist thinkers, Laclau and Mouffe (Mouffe 2005). Their hegemonic theory predicting a facet of long lasting ideology, its apparent competitiveness against all other competing ideologies. Wherein an ideology keeping hegemonic status over other ideologies would also have to respond to the failures of its ideological values in practice. A process depicted as “ruptures” needing of “suturing” (ibid. 2005). In practice this “suturing” means, but it also has particular importance to the theory of communicative planning. As it explains the confusing relationship between neoliberal ideology and communicative rationality. As a theory that thinks itself above ideology, it makes itself especially vulnerable to the influences of ideology. As theoreticians going so far as to define planning as the hegemonic scapegoat of ideology (Gunder 2016). As the blame for democratic deficiencies of the hegemony, gets relocated to the failures of planning as neoliberal ideology is more than willing in these instances of failure succumb a portion of potential gains in favour of retaining its hegemony. A realisation based in hegemonic theory is that scapegoating seems to be a necessity of retaining hegemony, and planning has a problematic role in this, as the go-to scapegoat.

The poststructuralist argument for the “fantasy” of consensus over the “real” of antagonism

This all-encompassing and insidious nature of hegemonic ideology poses a very real challenge to improvements made to planning. A key aspect of this is the poststructuralist conception of “fantasy”. As the “real” meaning behind language can never really be represented by more than a signifier, which as a consequence will forever be defined by a hegemony (Gunder 2010; 2016). The reason why this happens is because of people’s preference for “fantasy”, a conception of a made up reality that has structure. Structure as in a set of rules that one can rely on, with the detractor being their “fear” of the “real” were they don’t have control. In this way this becomes the basis for a hegemony to exist, and consequently also an argument for why we happily “suture” it. We can draw a comparison between the communicative ideal in planning and the hegemony in this respect, in order to show how they have been able to coexist for so many years. Where our preference for “fantasy” conjoins with the idealistic belief of communicative planning, that consensus will be reached through communication. Whereas ideological reality might be more antagonistic. Not all confrontations can be negated and in real practice conflict often escalates and are resolved to negotiation rather than cooperation.

A recurring problem and an agnostic impetus to investigate the “real”

Purcell (2009) problematizes communicative planning’s ability to see or challenge the neoliberal hegemony. This shows a contemporary theoretical problem to planning, as planning’s role appears weak in relation to ideology and institutes an important impetus to bear an ideological perspective in mind in future research in planning. Pløger proposes an option in agnostic theory, where we instead of our preference for “fantasy”, realise that not all communication can reach a consensus (Pløger 2004). A light on this issue is shined by Mouffe who argues for the concept of “the political”, as a process of identification that needs to be an active part of public processes. She also argues for a return of bipartisanship (Mouffe 2005) and for the need for counter-hegemony movements outside of planning to challenge the hegemony (Mouffe 2005; Purcell 2009). In relation to the planning field Grange warns that we might be witnessing a politicisation through planning’s a weak opposition in the identification processes of “the political” to the hegemony (Grange 2013; 2016). Mäntysalo even argues that the faith of agnostic planning is at stake in the same way as communicative planning was, as seen in the ideological incorporation of communicative planning (Mäntysalo & Jarenko 2014). These observations forewarn in their presentations the complicated

relationship between planning and neoliberalism, and how improving could have unintended consequences. It is important to note that we instead of being eager to present a solution it is important for us instead to renew our interest in researching practice, if we are to ever understand the failures of theory. As the pragmatically researchers of communicative planning have noted before us how practice should inform theory (Flyvbjerg 2004; Forester & Peters 2005). In our research we have a responsibility to not shy away from complexity, as planning cannot avoid scapegoating when “ruptures” of ideology are “sutured” by our preference for “fantasy”. We cannot actually solve the core of problems by scapegoating their symptoms, instead we have to investigate the “real” practice of their causes. As the theoretical problem for planning is its recurring weak role in relation to ideology. The next chapter on the societal impetus will delve further into these practical implications of hegemonic theory in contemporary Scandinavian planning practice.

1.1.2 Societal Impetus

The societal impetus of this study is tied to the rather strong role of planning and planners in contemporary Scandinavian planning practice. A position which through politicisation legitimises hegemonic values when viewed in relation to the theoretical perspective of the previous chapter. The practical implications of the ideological perspective in a governance setting, reveals a weak opposition to organisational expectations of planners. Revealing how the theoretical contemplations of ideological influences have more genuine practical implications than thought. Consequently, validating the argument of the previous chapter that changes to theory and practice will have to start from the “agon”.

Decentralized Scandinavian planning practice in an ideological perspective

The Scandinavian countries have decentralized the responsibility of local planning, in the spirit of New Public Management Governance, consequently we find ideological influences in many aspects of Scandinavian planning. Where research on the strengthening of participatory principle of the 2008 revision in the Norwegian Plan and Building Law (PBL), show that although the wording of these principles were more pronounced, there were little advancement in opportunities for participation in practice (Hanssen 2013). The role of the state has slowly been changing in the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Where a strategy of decentralization, based on modern argumentation of governance. These countries are thought of as having advanced planning systems that are

continuously being worked on. Norway and Sweden adapting a similar major rewording of their planning laws in 2008 and in 2010 respectively. Some differences do occur as Sweden has kept a more hierarchical planning system, with Norway adapting a more hierarchical/interactive system (Hofstad 2013). Wherein Norway has more prominently stated in their law that participation should be started earlier in the planning process, as a counterweight to the fact that they in opposition to Sweden has opened up their state monopoly on plans to private actors. Especially in Sweden the role of the planner is considered strong role of the planner as a fact of the plan monopoly. Hanssen points towards that there is further need for a focus on the democratic principles in planning, even after the new wording of the law (Hanssen 2013). As she points out that participation is further problematized by that people show more interest in plans when they reach their formal hearing face, as then the plan is of more immediate interest, but that in practice most of the early decisions that could have benefitted from participation has been decided so to speak behind closed doors. Another development made able by the governance principle in Norway means that some municipalities in Norway have even chosen to go around the plan and building law in order to use less formal plans, effectively circumventing the participation clause (Falleth et al. 2010). To conclude one could say that there is a lot of good rhetoric, but that rhetoric doesn't really change practice that much.

The immediacy of organisational influence and its consequences for practitioners “acting space”

In practice we can see that our theoretical progresses are far from reality. There is a long road from antagonism to agonistic pluralism. As institutionalizing takes time and more immediate issues come into presence. As has been noted by Flyvbjerg in his study of Copenhagen, the organizational context of planning as politically neutral often comes in the way of planners expressing their opinion (Flyvbjerg 2004). Abram also notes how the organizational context for planners in a decentralized planning system as Norway's, mean that they often don't even express their opinion as it could make problems for them in the future (Abram 2004). In this way institutionalizing might point towards the politicisation of planning Grange mentions (Grange 2016). As planning laws might change, the underlying influences and problems that such powers impose can be seen to stay the same. Understanding these issues in regards to ideology is of interest. Grange points to how this power comes in the form of deciding what is valid knowledge and introduces the concept of “acting space”. In this the space from which practitioner feel they have the opportunity to act, which can come in conflict with the extents

of their thoughts or ambitions, becomes an important aspect. If we are to stand up to ideological influences and if our theoretical progresses are to improve on planning. It becomes important to research these practitioner's reflections on their limitations and on what could be possible. To see how their organizational context is influenced by ideological forces and how this in turn manages reflections on improvements to be made on past failures.

The problem of presenting a solution to practice, from “best” practice to “good” practice

As presented in the theoretical impetus, ideological influences to a large degree influence the ideals planning and its consequent practice. In the societal context of a planning system influenced by NPM. There is, as mentioned above, an influence on practitioners to act according to organizational “best” practices. In terms of its ideological influences, this conception of practice is to a large degree inspired the modernistic rationality in surmounting and then affixing a general solution to problems of practice. As “best” practice does constitute a theoretical ideal it also falls to the critique mentioned in the theoretical impetus, the antagonistic realization that ideals of theory often do little to prepare oneself for the complexity of “real” practice. In recent time an alternative to “best” practice has therefore become prevalent. Being based in the opportunities for self-governance created by contemporary government, this practice ideal is called “good” practice. Where a main principle is that municipalities and regions are more suited to create their own methods and guides for how they handle practice. When viewed in regards to the antagonistic argument of the contextual and complex nature of “real” practice, this seems like a promising solution. Although as we remember from the later argument of the theoretical impetus, the hegemonic argument of ideology, then we need to question the ideological reasons behind opening up for such a practice. Are these practices indeed creating a solution to the causes of the problem, or are they just a temporary fix of a symptom.

1.1.3 Problem Statement

In this chapter I combine the theoretical and societal impetus and present a problem statement for this thesis.

There is a gap between the ideals of “best” practices and its consequent “real” practice. In this the continual reworking of “best” practice ideals to improve on practice, when planners

are faced with criticisms, constitutes a contemporary practice problem for planning. As an organisational principle to improving it does not necessarily develop a practitioner's capacity to deal with the complexity of "real" practice. Instead it could be that this organisational context is highly influenced by ideological values, and in turn the focus on developing "best" practices obfuscates improvements to planner's actions, as these are limited through their practitioner's reflections on their expected "acting space". Researcher even write about an ongoing possible politicisation of planning which could be problematic when viewing the theoretical impetus was based in contemporary theoretical planning research, describing a rather weak role of planning in relation to hegemony. Yet the societal impetus, based on research in Scandinavian planning practice, described a rather strong status of planners.

1.2 Thesis Focus

This chapter will describe a vital part of the practice problem that provides an opportunity to gain insight to the practice problem. The focus of this thesis through its extent and limitations will be based on this opportunity. Then an overarching research question will be formulated along with the specific research questions to answer this.

1.2.1 Explorative Focus and Extent

In order to gain insight into this practice problem we have to research the failures of practice and processes of improving from the bottom-up. We need to analyse the space between "best" practice and "real" practice as the "acting space" of practitioners play a central role in this. The focus of this study is made possible by the recent contribution of the theoretical framework of "spaces for action" to analyse practitioner's "actual spaces for action" amongst their "possible spaces for action". As this study shows how a reflective process plays an important role in determining practitioner's actions in the face of organisational expectations. In this reflection is an important factor in both the moment of choosing which actions to take and in retrospective analysis of learning and improving. In fact, reflective processes take many forms as such processes are necessary part of improving through in both organizations working to develop guidance for practice and in a researcher's contemplative process of generating theory. A more refined perspective of reflection could therefore be needed and this thesis seeks to research the reflections of the most immediate actor, the practitioner. As this is a thesis is built upon an exploration of reflection, this will also form the extent of the

thesis. As an explorative study of practitioner's reflections on their agency in the space between ideals of practice.

1.2.2 Overarching Research Question

Scientific questions are formulated so that their answers will confirm, deepen or revise some of what is considered knowledge in the field (Everett & Furseth 2012). A scientific question then consists of at least three components: Firstly, the overarching question that one wants to know. Secondly the impetus for these questions and then thirdly the specific questions important for answering the overarching question (ibid. 2012).

As the impetus of my research has already been stated my overarching question will build from my problem statement. In this my overarching research question is based on the difference between theoretical assumptions and observed facts and will open up for a discussion on concepts or ideas that no longer seem to be sufficient or useful. This difference is based in the fact that we have seen continuous attempts of improving through our theoretical advances, but yet we cannot seem to escape the criticism. Perhaps it is due to our inability to surpass ideological influences as these has been shown to limit practitioner's reflections on their "acting space". In the recent contribution of theoretical framework of "spaces for action" we can see how reflection plays an important part in determining actual actions in the possible spaces of action. Could it be that our practice problem is that we try to infer a solution that is not helping actual practice. To explore this, we will have to develop a more nuanced perspective on "reflection" in relation to "spaces for action" and use this to analyse the practices that we are inferring as solutions. We need to critically question how these ideals of practice affect reflection in order to examine how ideology influences practice. As a counterargument if we find out it does undermine reflection then it could perhaps also be the solution to improving practice more permanently.

Overarching research question:

- *As planners are repeatedly confronted with critique on their practice, can we still rely on the organisational ideals of practice to improve, or can we through reflecting on our practice learn to improve on practice in a more permanent way?*

The overarching question is based on the previously mentioned impetus of researching real practice on the basis of hegemonic suturing. Even though this is an explorative question, it does stand on a line of theoretical work. Namely the newer contribution of "spaces for action". Where a limitation of practitioner's agency within the structure of possible spaces for action, is limited by their reflections of actual spaces for action. Thereby "reflection" is the explorative focus of the thesis, within the theoretical line of thought of "spaces for action". This thesis explores a "best case" case study to reveal potential obstacles to improvements made.

1.2.3 Specific Research Questions

To answer this overarching explorative question, we need to operationalize the concepts of "hegemonic critique of real practice", "organizational principles of ideal practice" and "reflection on practice". As these concepts become central to answering the overarching question of how planners can improve on practice in in other ways than they are historically used to. A thematic narrative analysis based on the differing reflections of the attendees to the workshops will be used to try to answer this, as the concept of "reflection" is the main focus of the study. As it is mentioned in the practice problem as being a limiting factor in improving, this thesis searches to research whether an impulse of "reflection" could possible provide a solution to improving practice that breaks away from hegemonic suturing. To find an answer to the overarching question we will therefore first have to answer the specific questions, and analyse how these operationalized questions have interacted with each other in order to create a possible solution to improving in this case. To do this analysis the theoretical framework of "spaces for action" is used to measure improvements made to practitioners "possible" and "actual" spaces for action.

Specific research questions:

- 1. How does the repeating critique on practitioner's agency influence their reflections on their "spaces for action"?*
- 2. How does the organizational approach to improving through structure influence practitioner's reflections on their "spaces for action"?*
- 3. How does a "reflective" workshop influence change to practice, and how does our analytic framework of "spaces for action" help us to refine our understanding of such a change?*

To answer these specific questions, I first present a theoretical framework of “spaces for action” understand change in practitioner’s agency (Chapter 2). Then to answer my first and second specific questions I will use that theoretical framework to enlighten the empirical data found in my study, based on a narrative analysis of the interviewees reflections (Chapter 4). To answer the third specific question, I will use my empirical data to enlighten theory, by analyzing the possible effects of the introduction of reflection into practice (Chapter 5). This will form the basis for answering the overarching question, in the form of an analysis of 4 concepts of practice, existing and non-existent, that potentially contribute to a conception of “reflection” in relation to the framework of “spaces for action” (Chapter 6 and 7). (although none of them actually contribute to improving, instead they affirm the conception that theory needs to be built from the bottom-up and through practitioners “reflecting in action”, although “reflection on action” is an important factor none the less in spreading these new found knowledge and creating a learning environment)

1.3 Thesis Structure

The following Chapter 2 will present the theoretical backbone of frame theory and theories on improving through organisational learning and reflective learning. This is in order to create a theoretical framework to improving which nuances the difference between theories of organisational and practitioner learning. Viewing these theories of learning in light of frame theory enables us to develop 4 concepts of practice: “real-”, “best-”, “good-” and “reflective” practice. Chapter 3 will introduce the case study and present the choice and execution of the explorative research methodology based in the opportunity to research the concept of “reflection”. Chapter 4 will introduce the empirical data of the specific practice story to which the concepts of “best-” and “real” practice comes into light. Chapter 5 will present the explorative analysis of the empirical data, revealing the similarities between concepts of “best-” and “good” practice. Chapter 6 will be the discussion of how theory highlights the empirical data revealing “good” practice as an ideological compromise between “best-” and “reflective” practice. Chapter 7 will present the conclusion of the research questions along with suggestions for further research, acknowledging “reflective” practice as a concept of renewed importance in the gap between theory and practice.

2 THEORY

In this chapter on theory I will present the theoretical backbone of frame theory and theories of improving through organisational learning and reflective learning. This in order to create a framework which nuances reflection in both an organisational and individual context. As such a theoretical framework becomes integral to the process of analysing my research questions, by providing a lens to understand improvements made through reflection in practitioners “spaces for action”.

2.1 Frame Theory

The theoretical framework of this thesis is built upon the recent contributions to frame theory of Kågström and Richardson (Kågström & Richardson 2015; Kågström 2016). In their work they define the concept of “space for action” to better understand how changes in the environmental assessment field are implemented by practitioners. The purpose being to understand how theoretical changes are influenced when implemented in practice by practitioner’s reflections.

Acting Space

Frame theory is based the agency of actor’s in a structure, on this the concept of spaces for action further nuances the space of agency in “possible” and “actual” action space. It does so by building from Granges emphasis of research into practitioners “acting space” (Grange 2013).

...there seems to be a growing discrepancy between planners’ motivation and their actual ability to make a difference (Grange 2013 p. 225).

Grange introduces the concept of “acting space” as something discursively and continuously as processes of identification and struggles over meanings. In this struggles over hegemony relate directly to practitioners “acting space” and by this and the above argument argues that there is an ongoing process of practitioners attempting the process of “becoming of oneself” only to find oneself limited by the diagnosis of failure or success as this fact has been recurrently attributed to the planner. (Grange 2013) A need for further conceptualisation of processes of practitioners reflections in their “acting space” is clearly needed.

2.1.1 Space for Action

The purpose of using the concept of space for action lies in its application as lenses to analyse the process between the possible spaces for action created and the actual spaces of action in practice (Kågström & Richardson 2015). This concept goes to show how practice and changes are crucially shaped by its practitioners by their often vague descriptions of how to implement new ideas.

This leads to the problem of a gap between the idea for change, its institutionalisation, and the resulting practice. (Kågström & Richardson 2015 p. 110)

In that when new ideas are implemented practitioners have the opportunity to interpret and thereby choose how to implement them into practice. The framework grows out of the need to understand more deeply how new ideas affect practitioner thoughts of what could be possible actions and the practitioner's reflections on whether or not they should act on through these possible spaces. In this they imply that an internal dimension of self-restriction related to practitioner's ideas and ambitions when putting actions into practice, were more important than the external dimensions of restriction through acceptance for action in their organisational context (Kågström & Richardson 2015).

Good enough

Kågström (2016) continues her explorations into the hidden mechanics of how practitioners think and choose to act by looking their perception of practice as “good enough” as opposed to “best” practice. As EA is a relative new field the authors found that the consultants considered that they had key knowledge in that they knew how to reach the “level of approval”. This led to it being rare for the consultant to have to decrease the scale at which they worked, indeed it they were often asked to increase the scale of the application in order to be sure to get it approved. Important for the collaboration between the consultant and the plan proposer was on the other hand to have a good relationship and a good dialogue as to avoid ending in disagreements. Although when external restrictions could lead to an application below the perceived level of approval of the consultant, then that was a case where external limitations mattered to the degree where the consultant would argue with the developer to have it raised. Because disapproval of an application would negatively affect their professional reputation, as “level of approval” was considered their key knowledge as somewhere between “best” practice and “poor” practice (Kågström 2016).

However, it was clear that consultants thought that the level of approval only guaranteed 'good enough' quality, which meant that current practice was separated from 'best' practice (Kågström 2016 p. 5).

The authors point toward the importance of further work in frame theory to develop the respective concepts of “possible spaces for action” and “actual spaces for action”. In this they find importance of examining “responsibility” frames of the actors involved in the process of creating environmental assessments.

In the framing literature the focus on boundaries and delimitations is central. A frame makes visible what falls inside as well as what falls outside...it is also relevant to search for justifications and critique of one's own and others' actions (Kågström & Richardson 2015 p. 115).

Possible spaces for action

A responsibility frame is exemplified by the difference of having knowledge of what has to be done as in a reviewer of a proposal, and of actually knowing how to make such a thing happen as a preparer of a proposal. These types of knowledges were in that respect born out of the “responsibility” frame of for example the consultants informal and the CABs formal advising role. Through this interpretation of responsibilities, the “possible action space” of the actor is surmised as the external limitations of one’s responsibilities in an organisational context. Although this division in formality is not enough to build a framework on how to influence actions, as in the CAB as a reviewer would have to influence the actions of the preparer by providing more clear demands as this advice was considered to be mandatory (Kågström & Richardson 2015). As without such demands the “responsibility” of the preparers could not be expected to raise their “level of approval”. This necessitates a focus on the concept of “actual space for action” to further examine how decisions on actions are made.

Actual spaces for action

The researchers contrast the responsibility of the CAB as advisors on EA scope, but not taking part in the actual work of preparing the plan as this was the consultants responsibility as preparers of the plan. In this way the researchers found that practitioners influence in line with their ‘responsibility’ and in turn the importance of self-regulation becomes important for influencing what actions to take. The “actual spaces for action” being made up by the internal professional ambitions of the practitioner, up to the level of “good enough” as the “possible spaces of action” are to a degree open for interpretation when it comes to execution of

making the proposal (Kågström & Richardson 2015). Kågström points to how the perception of practitioner's main responsibility of achieving a "good enough" application could make practitioners withdraw suggestions to proposals. As they in their professional opinion could positively affect the quality of the application, but was not explicitly stated by the CAB as the reviewers (Kågström 2016).

Improving quality was thus a secondary responsibility (Kågström 2016 p. 6).

Kågström also notes the importance of the role of the consultant and the advice of the reviewer. In that there is rarely conflicts between the consultants and their clients and instead a mutual understanding and trust in their ability to know the "level of approval" (Kågström 2016).

The two dimensions in the framework can thus help us to better understand what is going on behind practice...and why practice does not always change even when understandings of the issue at stake do change (Kågström & Richardson 2015 p. 116).

To this the researchers conclude that there should be a higher focus on practitioner's thoughts and actions, as practitioners tend to underestimate their potentials to make a difference, in the fact that they self-restrict their role even though they have the possibility to play the decisive role in improving practice. In this the theoretical lens of spaces for action can help to analyse uncertainty in the exploration of the limits and potentials of acting space. There is a need to start a dialog with the practice community on this question in different contexts, especially in cases where practitioners understandings and actions diverge from what has been institutionalised (Kågström & Richardson 2015). Especially where the established frames that guide decisions could if changed improve the quality of the result (Kågström 2016).

To better analyse these narratives of frames we need a more nuanced theoretical perspective on how practitioners reflect which will be elaborated in the next chapter. Below is a simple diagram of spaces for action that will be built upon with a reflective perspective to become a theoretical framework for analysing the narratives of frames (figure 1).

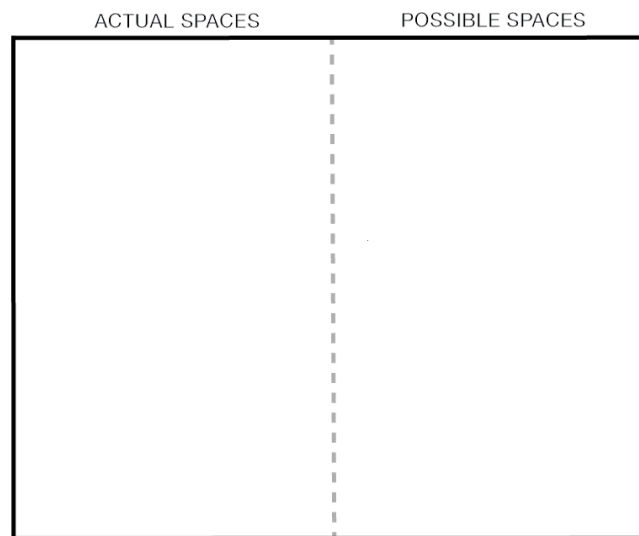


Figure 1 Diagram of spaces for action

2.2 Learning Theory

Through my focus on “reflection”, learning theory becomes an important part of the theoretical backbone of this thesis.

2.2.1 Reflective practice

As presented in the previous chapter reflection is an important part of deciding what actions take based on one’s available actual practice? Reflective practice is to reflect on actions made and in that way start a process of continuous learning, as experience in itself might not lead to learning. In this way reflection can also happen in deliberations in group, through the telling of a practice story. In this reflective practice is also important in the way that the practitioner can learn theory more effectively by seeing it in relation to practice. An important researcher of reflective practice theory is Donald Schön who contributed with the conceptualisation of reflection-on action and reflection-in-action (Schön 1983).

Reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action

Schön describes through the concept of reflection-in-action how practitioners of reflective practice can improve on their practice through using a sort of improvisation in-action, in other words the ability to think on your feet (Schön 1983). This in order to meet the challenges of complexity of their work. Reflection-on-action on the other hand is a more common reflection that especially when reviewed in relation to theory can have positive

effect. As a process of evaluating, categorizing and learning from past experiences failure to reach the intended purpose.

Single-loop and Double-loop learning

Schön later also introduces the concept of double-loop learning, which has implications for both practitioner and organisations. In which single-loop learning when detecting a fault continues to rely on the practice to fix it that it always has relied on. Double-loop learning on the other hand is a system were a modification to practice is made so that the problem will not occur again.

This thinking has inspired planners such as Forester in their approach to studying practice and complementing their brand of pragmatic deliberative planning theory. Both of these conceptualizations will have importance for the analysing the case, in which “reflective” practice give us a more nuanced picture why the pattern of improving to criticism, based in the revolving between the ideal of “best” practice and the complexity of “real” practice, keeps repeating.

2.2.2 Reflection on past, future and present actions

Through nuancing reflective learning as something that can happen both in-action and on-action as well as both organisationally and individually. Means we can develop our theoretical framework of “spaces for action”. In relation to adapting reflections to this framework I separate reflections along a timeline. As reflections on past, future and present actions. Below is a diagram representing the three forms of reflections relevant for this thesis (figure 2)

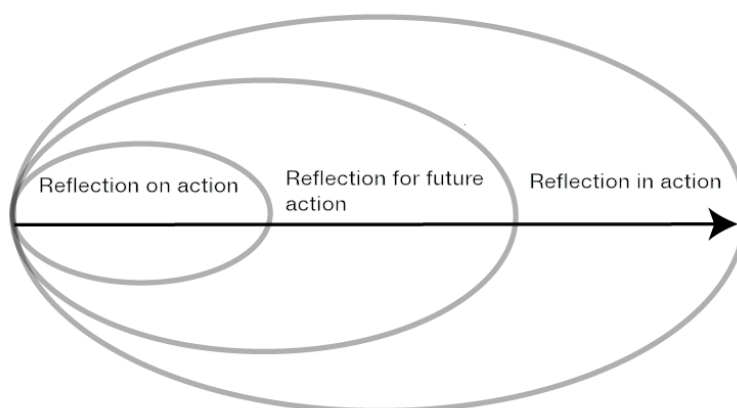


Figure 2 Reflection of three forms

Below is a representation of the three forms of reflection in to the theoretical framework (figure 3)

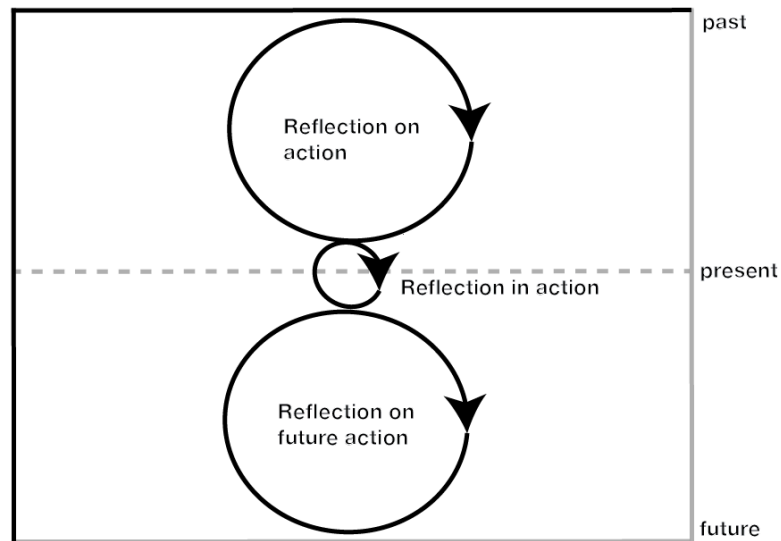


Figure 3 Three forms of reflection in a reflection diagram

This diagram of reflection along with the diagram of spaces for action are combined to form the theoretical framework diagram for this thesis (figure 3). The making up of this diagram will be described in the next chapter (Chapter 3 Methodology) through the building of a profile matrix. The reasons for creating a diagram in addition to the matrix is because there are factors affecting improving that cannot be shown just through a profile matrix.

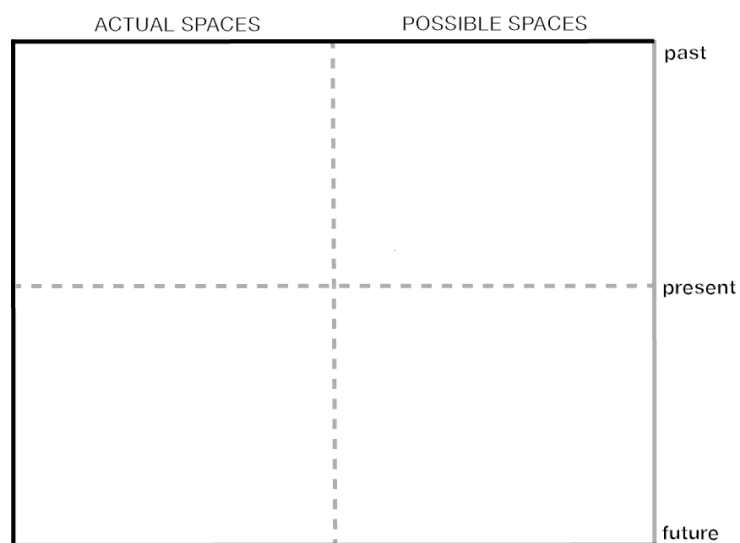


Figure 4 Blank final theoretical framework diagram

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present the choice and execution of the explorative research methodology used in this thesis. Through this I will show how I worked to develop and answer my research questions, based on the opportunity to interview a group of planners reflecting on dialogue and learning in a university partnership workshop series. First I go through my choice of research method, then I go through the process of collecting the data. Thirdly I will present my method of analysis before I discuss the quality of the research.

3.1 Choosing a Qualitative Research Method

Often it is the problem statement and one's research question guides the decision in which research method one chooses. The first choice is whether to follow the qualitative and quantitative method, as it can be argued for the scientific quality of both. As I argued for the need to build new knowledge in my introduction (Chapter 1) one could say there is a need for an inductive relationship between theory and data. The inductive relationship lends itself to the qualitative research methodology, as opposed to the deductive relationship of the quantitative research method.

We can also say this thesis adheres to the constructivist paradigm. A paradigm is the glasses we put on and see the world with. They affect all our assumptions and interpretations of what we observe. Viewing the world through the constructivist paradigm, means that the world is socially constructed even though we might not be able to see it. This aspect remains hidden from us because we over time get used to seeing it as fact. This affects my further choice of method since it bases its theory around the fact that it is important to find out where social facts come from and how they change. From the paradigm to the theory there is a red thread. A theory is a systematic explanation of observations and within each paradigm there is multiple theories. A perspective is gained by putting on a set of glasses and looking at reality from a specific point of view, only focussing on a specific cross-section.

The thesis has an explorative purpose, as we can say that since we need to start from the ground up, in other words little we deduce from. A case study research design is fitting in this regard to try and seek to get information about as many sides of the phenomena as you can. An inspiration to my work is the qualitative method of grounded theory. From this method I

implement an iterative process to my own research, but I don't start all the way from scratch as there are contributions to theory that can help us to understand the constructivist creation of reality.

What is important in picking one of the methods is to question whether you think the results of your study were in any way compromised by the choice of method used. A clear advantage to using a quantitative method is in its objectiveness, which can become a major challenge in qualitative method. To counter this transparency of my research process is a focus point, along with a mindful interview process, as the constructivist paradigm adheres to the fact that reality is created even in an interview process. In this regard the chapter on methodology in this thesis is somewhat extensive.

3.1.1 The Explorative Case Study Approach

The explorative potential of the case study research design

The explorative purpose of the thesis means that an interesting dimension of time is the present day situation. This makes it interesting to utilize a case study as a research design because of the possibility to study the phenomenon from multiple angles and thereby gathering as much data as one can on the phenomena (Yin 2013). Yin is considered one of the pioneers of the case-study approach. According to Yin, case studies are suitable to compare with existing theory and enable an evaluation if one needs to keep, develop or build new theory (ibid. 2013). Yin claims we have to study the phenomenon in the field as we cannot study the phenomenon directly, but we can study variables of it (ibid. 2013). In this it is therefore important that we study the variables that are of interest for our research.

Therefore, one necessarily has to take a wide approach to gathering data through different data sources. Then one through analysis can compare to see if they confirm or complement each other. This is what she calls case triangulation and is what builds to give a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon (ibid. 2013).

Flyvbjerg is also a prominent advocate for the case study research design. He argues that the explorations into the minutia of every day planning is what is needed today (Flyvbjerg 2004). And the explorative importance of looking into the hidden forces influencing planning today through structure and agency. Yin (2013) argues that it is a common misconception that you cannot generalize from a case study, as a good case study can be generalized from even if it's

not quantitative. She argues that the qualitative method has special value in that its results are not limited to the defined purpose we set out to research. Instead it remains open to new strands of explorations. As we might discover something that we have not yet thought of. To this purpose a process of exploration was maintained through the writing of this thesis. Where observations that one does not understand was kept so that one could get to grips with them later. Although the thesis is qualitative I hoped to find research results that may say something in general about the phenomena, which I hope to find might have meaning in more than only this case.

Selecting a case

Yin states that a case study of a phenomenon can take many forms through the study of a place, event or group of people. She also states that if you know that the case stands out from other cases, then that's a good reason to choose it to study the phenomena (ibid. 2013). After coming in contact with a couple of researchers involved with action-research on dialogue and learning in planning consultations. I found an interest in studying critique and the consequent improving processes of planners. The interest of these workshops of improving in a case study perspective is that they I see these processes as rare and positive developments for planners as they focus in a large degree on the practitioners learning through reflecting on their practice together and in workshops. I see this kind of improving as a positive development, but as it is a rare occurrence there is also not much research on this and consequently no blueprint on how to research it. This meant that the research method would have to be experimental and thereby challenging. As the workshops these researchers were involved with were diverse the selection of a case to study was based on finding a case that was ongoing and interesting in regards to planning, and where the practitioners were open to being interviewed.

I found these qualifications in a collaborative workshop between the researchers and a Swedish County Administrative Board, which was initiated in parts as a response to criticism of a particular scandal in regards to consultation process of the application process of a major environmental permit. What peaked my interest during the initial interviews was that the practitioners did not provide a clear focus in relation to the reasons for improving, as the different actors had differing views multiple possible angles of research opened up. In this sense the explorative purpose naturally happened. Although time consuming this did enable an iterative process to happen in regards to finding out what was really interesting in the case

and what we possibly could learn from it. I started with reading through guidance documents and workshop notes. And as I began to find out what actually was the reason for the start of the workshops. Questions started to appear, such as how the reflections of a researcher might differ from that of a planner and their chiefs on the reasons and goals of improving? And how the perspectives and knowledge of others influence the other participants? These findings in conjunction with further readings of on theory on the insidious nature of hegemonic influences, started to form an interesting study. A key focus on reflection became important to the study as a vital part of reasoning. In this a narrative study started to form, where the exploration of the minutia of the reflective process might bring into light potential ideological influences.

A “best case” case study

It is also an interesting case as the specific CAB of Gotland is rather small and is the only CAB to envelop only one municipality. As one would perhaps assume that collaboration and consultation processes would be easier for the CAB due to possibly closer ties between organizations. In decentralized Sweden the responsibility of the CAB in relation to planning is mainly to assure that state interest are maintained and that the municipality and developers follow national strategies. In this it makes a good case to research the impetus of my introduction (chapter 1), as even in a “best” case setting for communicative relations, consensus falls for antagonistic reality. It is also an interesting case in an international context as the Scandinavian countries are considered an advanced planning systems in relation to communicative ideals. The regional context is also interesting to research in relation to ideology, as actor of the state one would imagine them to be influenced in a large degree by NPM ideals of efficiency in their Scandinavian context.

Similarities in planning between the Nordic countries

There are many similarities to the planning contexts of the Scandinavian countries. Where planning policies have drawn influences from each other, but there are also ways where they are different from each other in their approach to planning. I will take on a case in Sweden to see what can be considered “best” practice in Nordic Countries. It is interesting to go to Sweden as there seems to be a greater transparency and training of practitioners, which could perhaps be seen in context with the municipalities monopoly on plans. Although researchers have shown how that the communicative issues faced by the Scandinavian countries are similar enough to be compared even though they have different implementations of planning

(Hofstad 2013; Mäntysalo et al. 2015). Lessons learned in this case should therefore be of relevance to future cases across the Nordic countries.

3.1.2 The Iterative Process of Developing a Focus

Both the theoretical and empirical parameters of this case necessitates an experimental and iterative research methodology. As the case I have chosen to look into presents a rare opportunity it also means that there no real blueprint on how to research it. This presented a somewhat time consuming and challenging study, but a natural iterative process developed through this as narratives to the case unfolded. The most challenging part of this thesis was related to the fact that its focus and consequently its research question would have to very open from the start, as there was not much research from which to base a research question on. In this way the iterative process became essential for developing a focus, wherein I would be constantly switching between theoretical and empirical explorations. As I took a wide approach interviewing different actors involved at different stages of the workshop process, different perspectives on practitioner's agency and their structure started to develop codes. These codes would eventually form themes when compared across data sources. Alongside my studies into theory these analyses would eventually take form of a problem statement and research questions.

Timing and an opportunity to focus on reflection

The researchers followed an action-research method of building knowledge and had recently published a rapport. The specific workshop process I was researching built on the lessons learned in the making of that rapport, and in this way it would be fitting time for me to interview them as they had many reflections on their work. The workshops were divided into three sections, where my study would be situated between the second and third workshop. This presented an opportune moment to interview informants as reflections where considered to be high at this point. The two previous workshops where in collaboration between the CAB and the researchers. The third workshop would open up to external parties such as the municipality. This meant that I could interview informants that had both participated and those who were going to participate in the workshop process.

The workshops are of particular interest in view of the constructivist paradigm, where reality is never set, but created in moments of interaction. In this the workshops are interesting by

the fact that they would bring together various actors with different perspectives. In this there would be a potential for transference of frames between the participants. The action-research perspective of the researchers became of interest in this regard, as it has a focus on “reflection” as a way of improving. Could this perspective on improving positively influence practitioner own process of evaluating criticism on their agency and their actions to improve on practice?

Data gathering and developing a focus

Developing a focus started with preliminary interviews with the researchers and looking through the presentations from the two previous workshops. Through carefully reading through the minutia of these presentations one quotation sparked my interest:

“It is useful to recognize both the possibilities of practitioner’s agency and the reality of structural constraints in the study of NRM and planning processes” – (referenced to Jessop 2007 in the second workshop presentation)

This perspective of agency and structure as somehow important to improving contributed to my focus and theoretical investigations into frame theory. I also was given access to notes written on the whiteboard during the reflection sections in the workshops. This also prompted the interest in reflection as a theme for improving. These themes of agency, structure and reflection was furthered through a document study on “best” practice guidance as well as preliminary interviews with practitioners on these themes. These steps formed the first part of the iterative process of finding a focus. Due to the explorative purpose of the thesis the research questions and interviews were left open to be able to go where my explorations could take me.

3.2 The Turn Towards a Narrative Study

As reflections on themes of structure and agency appeared as an important part of improving the study of my thesis started to move towards narratives. As a narrative study would enable me to research these themes through the reflections of different interview. For example, their reflections of practice problems of agency and the structural possibilities to work on these. In this the thesis lies in the moment of reflection between the phases of the workshops. In the moment of reflection and collaboration, where new ideas are brought about. In this the value of the explorative qualitative research design shines, as we have the opportunity to find the

questions that we didn't know we had. And in this we can see how reflection as something best studied in narratives, as reflection in itself could be seen as a narrative process (source).

Narrative triangulation

As interesting case studies deal with contrasts and differences since in order to explain something it not enough to just conclude that something is the case, one must also be able to point towards that something else is not the case (Everett & Furseth 2012). This thesis focuses on the different perspectives of the interviewees to do this. Even though data sources such as guidance documents, observational notes and preliminary interviews were used to focus the thesis, and helped to streamline the interview process through the interview guide, they will not be used in the analysis. As data triangulation will be achieved by comparing narrative data across interviewees from different backgrounds (Yin 2013).

3.2.1 Interview Method and Interviewee Selection

To explore reflections in the interviewees the interview style was inspired by a method called “practitioner profiles” (Forester & Peters 2005) and a selection of the various participants was made in relation to time limits and to secure comparable data.

Interview method

The interview method of “practitioner profiles” was developed by Forester and Peters, in their respective fields of planning and education, as a way to learn about the challenges and opportunities that practitioners face in their work. It bases itself on letting the interviewee tell a “practice story” in their own words, and where the interviewer carefully listens and prompts further explanations to aspects that are confusing or of interest to the research. Following this method allowed me to explore the messiness and complexity of practice (Forester & Peters 2005) while in the form of practitioner's reflections. Below is a sample from one of the interviews that exemplifies the method, where the process of prompting further explanation of a value-laden word that could need to be defined in the language of the interviewee is highlighted:

*And then we will work in workshop form, of course, to be able to collect all the viewpoints. [Although] first we will have an internal workshop here very soon, but we should not present a complete proposal outward. For that becomes of course **dangerous**. The idea is that the viewpoints should come from the outside. Although we should have a small picture internally in the house of*

where we want to go, partly what the project entails so that everyone has the same perspective and also [to find] what requests there are in-house. - (CAB chief)

You mentioned the word dangerous. Could you elaborate a little more on that on how you perceive it as dangerous to present a finished plan proposal? - (interviewer)

Yes, because it becomes often so: that the state comes in with something on a map and then that is that, then it can't be changed. Here our intentions are to collect views about what is actually going into that map. Because one does not get personally engaged if you get served like that. And one does get a greater commitment if one gets the opportunity to contribute to what goes into that map. - (CAB chief)

Interviewee selection

Selection of interviewees followed the snowball method where saturation would be considered achieved when at least one informant from each of the participant groups in the workshops had been interviewed, as to not gather an unmanageable pool of data. Self-selection was used as well, as preliminary interviews were held to ensure that the participants had experience and reflections on consultations in planning. In total 5 interviewees were interviewed in 4 interview sessions. The similarity of the interviewees where that they were all involved in planning consultations and that they were politically neutral. The differences between the practitioner groups where that they were engaged at in different positions. As they belonged to groups of researchers, practitioners and section chiefs. I use the label of planning practitioners to describe my interviewees, as a diversified group who are involved in the planning law, but might not have a specific degree in planning or might not even view themselves as planners. The 4th group interviewed where planning practitioners from the municipality, that had not attended any of the workshops yet, but where to attend the last workshop. In this way they functioned as a control group on aspects of reflection.

3.2.2 Carrying Out the Qualitative Interviews

The interview guide

The constructivist interview guide builds on the assumption that there is more than just one reality and that a reality is created in the interview situation between the researcher and informant. And therefore if a different researcher where to ask the same questions, they might not get the same data. Therefore, the researcher should try to intervene as little as possible in

the interview process in order to not project his own reflections into the data. By keeping the form stricter than an open interview will also be easier to research themes that are not yet in the informant's reflections. In semi-structured interview all the questions are in a way open and might open up a conversation into inductive aspects of research that the researcher had not anticipated. As the interview guide was based on "practitioner profiles" the guide consisted of three-parts: In the first we talked about the interviewees background, then they talked about their story of practice and lastly their reflections on the workshops (Forester & Peters 2005). The interview guide is attached to the end of this thesis (cf. appendix 2).

The interview process and study participation agreement

The work on the thesis necessitated a trip to the workshop base in Gotland to gather empirical data. The trip was taken during April, but due to illness in the research group the majority of the interviews had to be postponed to telephone interviews the following month.

The form of the interview was a semi-structured along themes structure the interviews around themes, but also open up for the interview to go conversation go to other places. After getting in touch with possible interviewees a participation agreement explaining the purpose of my study and the interview process was sent out. The interviews lasted between 75-90 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. After transcription the recording was deleted and the transcription sent back to the interviewee to be controlled. Their identity and where kept out of the data per the agreement and they had the ability to back out or edit any of the data that had been transcribed at any point. The participation agreement can be found attached to the bottom of this thesis (cf. appendix 1).

3.3 Thematic Data Analysis

To analyse the narrative data in relation to my research question a thematic analysis was used. In order to follow the inductive ideal of digging through the data, the empirical data was reviewed in three rounds based on a refining of themes in relation to new findings across the narratives.

3.3.1 Process of iterative coding

An iterative process of coding was necessary in such an explorative thesis. In this the themes and codes were not set as new findings necessitated repeating coding revisions of the data.

The preliminary codes in this research were made from the document study of guidance documents for consultations and the workshop material I had. These first few rounds of coding helped to focus my interests and helped to build a basis for an interview guide. After going through the data and coding, I went back to theory to see if I could make better sense of what I was seeing, and this process continued on. The process was open for new input through the empirical gathering of the data. As I set out to find what was interesting in this case before finalizing a research question. An extensive coding process began where in the end the themes created would develop a research focus that would focus on a couple of these themes.

3.3.2 The Thematic Narrative Analysis

From the interviews I gathered a lot of codes to which factors that might affect a consultation process and the improvement of it as well. There were a multitude of factors affecting improving, which validated the explorative research design. This would provide an interesting view of how different themes influenced improving.

Preliminary themes

As mentioned the preliminary themes of my thesis were structure, agency and reflection. These were formed on the basis of going through the workshop presentations and group reflections. From these themes emerged several codes that eventually formed new themes. The explorative-inductive part of the thesis continues with every revisit of categorization into themes based on new data. The iterative process continues until you reach a point of saturation in data. Where no new data can be found. The amount of information can at this point be overwhelming, but it is the most frequent categorize of codes that are the most relevant to answer the research question. Below is a graph showing the frequency of codes in the emerging themes (Figure 5). Some of the themes could be seen to form narratives.

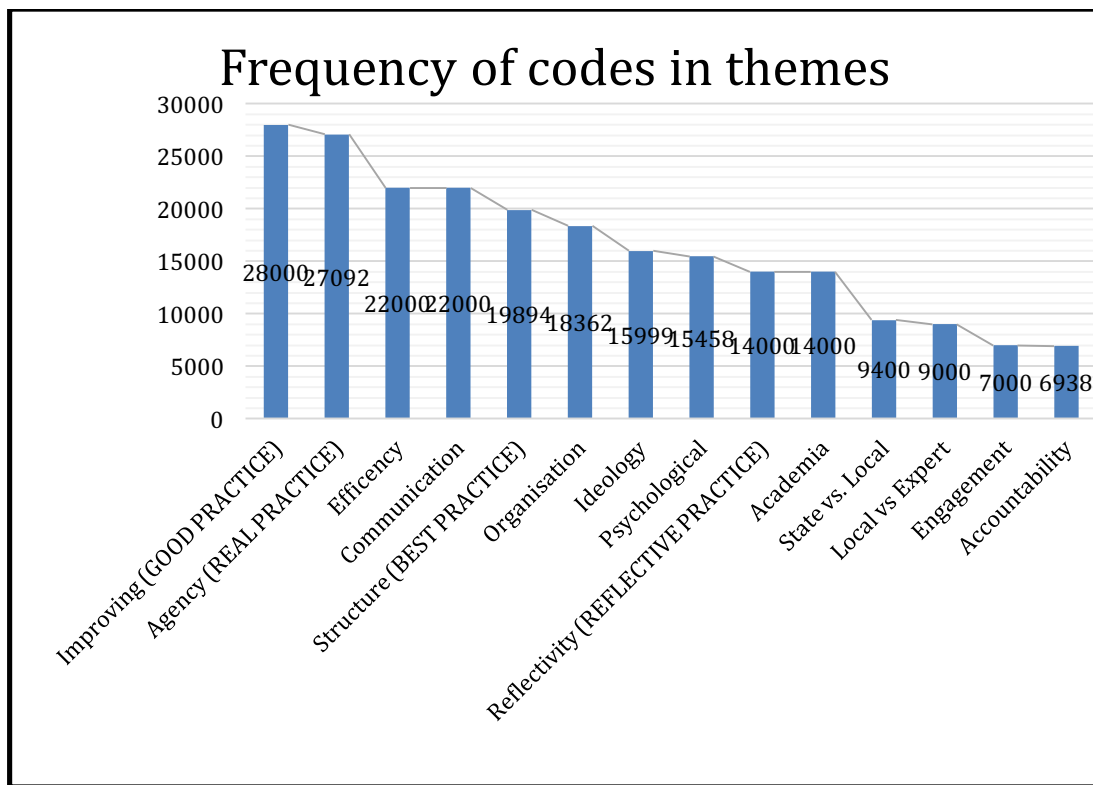


Figure 5 Column graph of frequency of codes in themes

The emergence of narratives as “perspectives on practice”

During the coding process narratives started to appear when compared between the different groups and stances of the participants of the workshop. The narratives made up what I call “perspectives on practice”. To better understand the difference of the narratives and their relation to my theoretical framework I used a profile matrix. Silverman (2013) argues for the use of a profile matrix from the start of our research. In this thesis the profile matrix is used to locate different narratives in relation to the theoretical framework of “spaces for action”. The profile matrix gives us an opportunity to get an overview of the work and to quickly get started with the analysis. In this we start the thematic analysis by using the profile matrix as first technique to analyse the data. This allows us to quickly compare narratives in relation to our theoretical framework in order to see if our framework is arbitrary or indicative. The profile matrix (figure 6) made up by the columns representing the narrative’s relation to “spaces for action”, and the rows representing the narratives “reflections” on whether it was existing practice or a possible future forms of practice after the workshop.

ACTUAL SPACES	POSSIBLE SPACES	
		PAST
		FUTURE

Figure 6 Blank profile matrix of spaces for action and reflection

The different and colliding narratives of the workshop series

The narratives that emerged were situated in the profile matrix and given a name. The practitioners contributed to a perspective of “real” practice, the organisation contributed to the perspective of “best” practice, and the researchers contributed to the representation of a “reflective” practice. The perspectives of “real-”, “best-” and “reflective” practice became important analytical tools when viewing the workshop as collision of frames. As an important analytical step was to explore which narratives came out on top and on the bottom due to “reflections” in and outside of the workshop. To this end a new perspective of practice appeared as a consequence of the workshop to fit in this matrix. Called “good” practice it emerged from melting together of the perspectives of “best” and “reflective” practice. These 4 “perspective of practice” could after the analysing be placed in the below profile matrix (figure 7) in relation to their categorisation to theoretical framework of “spaces for action”. Through the process of answering the research questions, the makeup of this profile matrix will be explained. Yet this profile matrix does not tell the whole picture of making actual improvements to practice, as reality is more complex than a profile matrix. We need to question the emergence of “good” practice and its principles and to do this we need a thematic analysis and a nuanced perspective on “reflection”.

ACTUAL SPACES	POSSIBLE SPACES	
REAL	BEST	PAST
REFLECTIVE	GOOD	FUTURE

Figure 7 Profile matrix for perspective on practice

A thematic analysis method

To realise this narrative matrix and to answer the questions this materialised I had to start with an analytic method. When you draw out the essence of an interview or text, you analyse. In other words, you break down a text into smaller parts to find its constituent elements. There are several techniques for this, but I have chosen to use a thematic analysis and to use a profile matrix to analyse this. Since this is a good approach to narrow down the data and to arrive at defensible scientific connections. As and Silverman (2013) describe thematic

analysis as iterative in the way that it is part deductive and part inductive based on your research question assumptions. During the process of coding and aligning these codes into themes, thematic analysis depends on revision of these themes at periodic intervals based on discovering new data in order to strengthen the description of the phenomenon.

Example of analysis

As it is not possible to show the entire process of coding and analysis in a readable way this paragraph will present an example in order to improve validity. In thematic analysis, there is never a clear-cut distinction between code and theme. Through the first working with theory I will build on what could be called deductive themes (main codes), such as “reflection”. In the case of a narrative qualitative study most of one’s codes are in fact sections of text. As the theme of “reflection” can constitute a sentence or a paragraph along the lines of the previous example:

“Yes, because it becomes often so: that the state comes in with something on a map and then that is that, then it can’t be changed”

After then working with the data one might find subcategories within the main codes. These will be synthesized through the building of criteria for any code to apply to the sub category. As for example the sentence above would be coded as “reflection on past action” Where this sentence:

“Although we should have a small picture internally in the house of where we want to go, partly what the project entails so that everyone has the same perspective and also [to find] what requests there are in-house”

Would be coded as “reflection on future action”. This is the inductive part of the work. In other words, the inductive part of my thesis is looking for patterns in the data that we didn’t know about before we started.

The creation of the narratives through the profile matrix allowed me to take what had been unordered set of themes (figure 8) into something that was more readable (figure 9) and that could be intersected with the theoretical framework diagram to be decoded (figure 10). The final analysis to answer the research questions was done by analysing the relationship between the themes as they related to a specific section of one or another reflection process, this could be done since the framework contained both a conception for spaces for action and for reflection. A factor that eased this analytic process was the fact that the actor groups

where so fixed to their to own "perspective on practice", this enabled me to easily analyse the narratives relation to their nearby themes as a part of one or another reflective process.

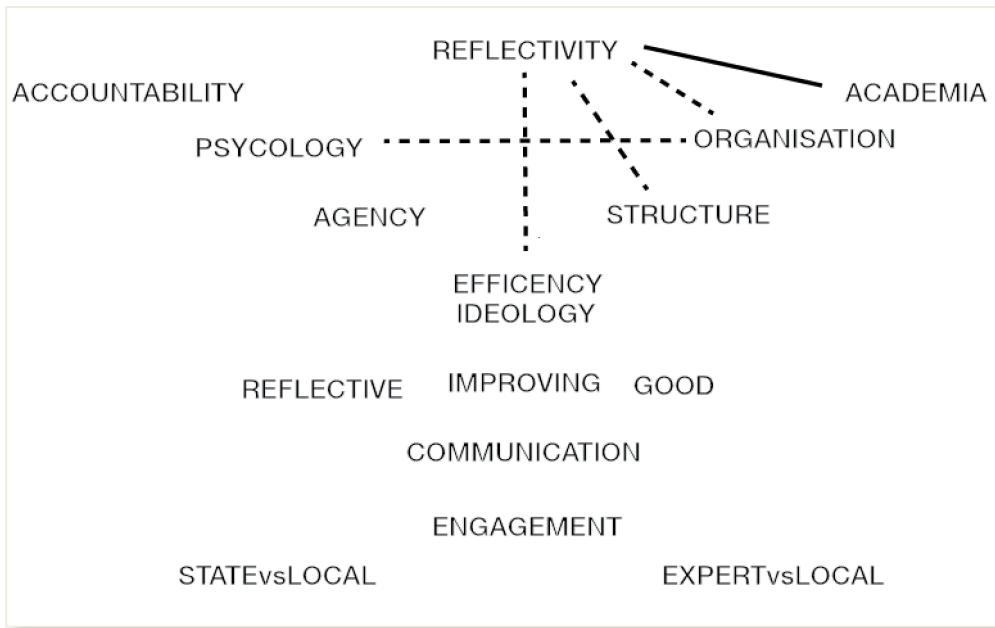


Figure 8 Example of unorganised relation of the theme "reflection"

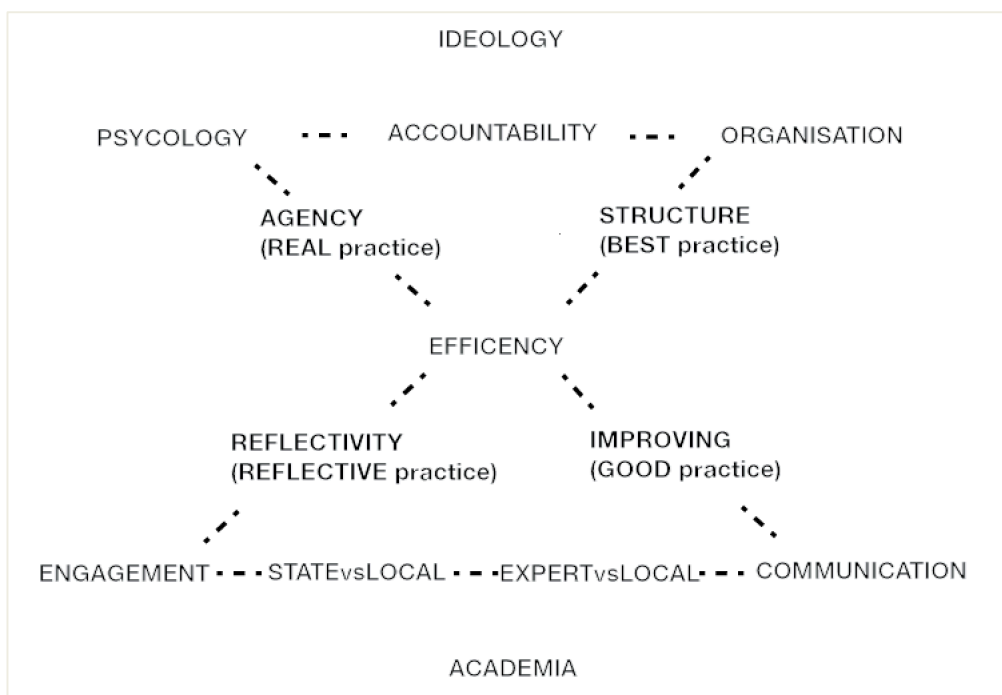


Figure 9 Themes in relation to perceptions on practice

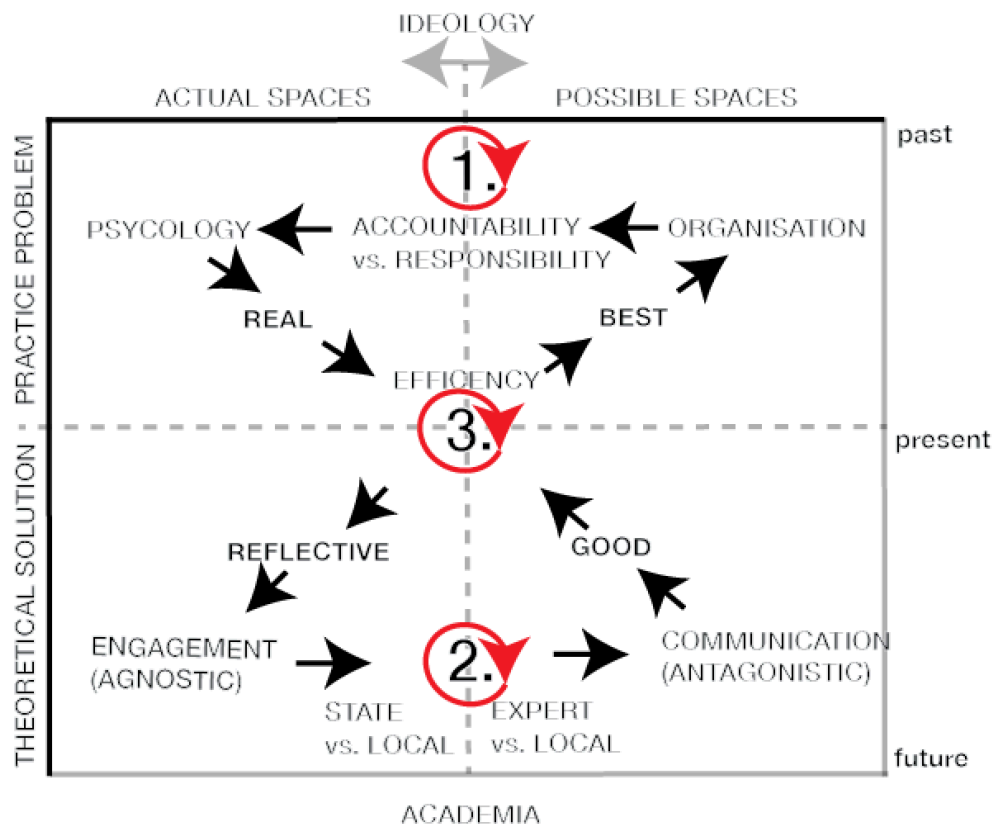


Figure 10 Themes within the theoretical framework and themes, revealing three possible reflective processes

3.4 Research Quality and Ethical Discussion

3.4.1 Reliability

The reliability of the research is determined by its verifiability. In other words, that the measurements do not contain errors. This is a challenge for qualitative research since it can be difficult to verify research, since reality is created in the interaction between the researcher and informant. This means it is important to choose the right instrument for measuring the phenomenon. The instrument should give the same result in every case, as reliable as a thermometer. The measuring instrument is in the interview study the interview guide, which should reliably give the same results when used on different informants. We need to avoid “high interference descriptors” of the sort that the researcher interprets the results from the informants. And instead keep to “low interference descriptors”, of trying to present as much as an accurate description of what the informant said. In this way the reader will be able to see how the researcher interprets the raw material. Especially 4 conditions can affect the

process: the environment, the researcher, aspects of the investigation and matters relating to the analysis. A solution to this could be to introduce other researchers into the analysis of data and to show how one interprets the informants own statements through text. As to not interfere with the reliability of the analysis, the interviews were held and transcribed in the interviewees native language. Only after analysis were the quotes used in this thesis translated. Following the “practitioner profiles” interviewed method allowed me to keep myself out of the data as much as possible, as this method relies on the practitioners own reflections. If any questions were leading their answers were removed from the analysis.

In reality my research design could have been better if I had more subjects or perhaps more practical a more structured interview guide, as to make the data more comparable. But I have been working from the principle that a good qualitative study should be from the ground up, and I am of the belief that my interview subjects are telling the truth.

3.4.2 Validity

Validity in a paper means measuring what you say you are going to measure. A high degree of validity will mean you have a good match between your operational definition and what you measure. A low degree of validity could be caused by using the wrong instrument for your measurement. In such a case the instrument might measure correctly, but it does not measure what you say you are going to measure. The validity is therefore connected to the reliability by a high degree of reliability is needed for there to be a high degree of validity. The validity of the research is to describe its authenticity, in terms of how the method used reflects reality and the purpose of the study. Validity can be defined by its credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Research credibility is weakened when retold as in form of an anecdote, this is because you don't know if the researcher interferes in a way that interferes the data towards a specific conclusion. This because there is a known tendency in research to select the data that leads to your preconceived ideas. A way to strengthen the credibility is to open ourselves towards the possibility that our assumptions about reality are wrong. The research transferability means if it has potential to be generalized to have value beyond the case study. In other words, this points to its external validity. I will be researching facilitative planning dialogue, which is processual and widespread in its current neutral form. The prospects of finding something which has relevance beyond the case are therefore good. The researches confirmability builds on the question if other researchers would come to the

same result if they do the same study. In other words, this points to the thesis objectivity. To support this, I will show how I translate my findings from quotes to codes. In addition, the document study will continue throughout the work with the thesis in order to stay open towards new possible angles the research might take. A feedback process did to some degree occur with the researchers involved in the case during the process of finding the focus of the case and to the time of the last interview with the researcher, although not in the analytic part of the thesis. In order to improve on the projects validity, the interviewees had the ability to edit any of the transcribed data from their interview.

3.4.3 Ethical Evaluations

Privacy

The research followed the guidelines of the Norwegian data protection and privacy commission (NSD) (*NSD www...* 2016). In this no identifying material of the interviewees was kept in the empirical data during the work with the thesis. This choice was taken early on in the research as to make the interviewees more comfortable talking about these issues in the interview due to the sensitive nature of talking about perceptions on failures and their consequent improving. Although the snowball method was used the selection of the resulting actual interviewees final was not discussed with anyone.

Ethical challenges:

It is also important to be aware that data that we perceive as harmless can be seen as problematic in certain cultural and political contexts. I am not able to see this at this point, but I will continuously assess this during the work. Other ethical challenges that I face is that one of the practitioners is also a researcher doing “action-research”. This might make it difficult to remain neutral as a researcher during the interviews since there is a want to discuss the case in a more theoretical perspective with this informant. To handle this, I will remain neutral during the empirical interview process and rather do follow up talks with him where it would be interesting to collaborate with him as a researcher in a feedback process of thoughts. This is to make sure that I don’t let his reflections divert the empirical gathering process and thereafter the result. I will not, however, lead or deceive him or any other informant about saying to them what I am interested in researching. This I will do by giving them an information letter about the interview and research before interviewing them (see appendix 1).

A challenge of an explorative case is the fact that the projects focus might change, an ethical evaluation then has to be taken if the information letter is still valid (cf. appendix 1). It was therefore important to prepare the study as well as I could before the interviews started. It was important for me that I in an ethically good way informed the interviews as well as I could of the purpose of the project, the interview method and of their rights in the information letter after accepting the informed consent. To strengthen the validity of the thesis I used informant validation by sending the informants a transcript of their rapport to see if they wanted to change anything, 4 of the 5 interviewees made minor changes.

It is a moral responsibility for the researcher not to omit data that goes against their own assumptions. The research must be conducted as an objective analysis and should therefore avoid such skewed projections and drawing conclusions too soon in the empirical process. In this way the further interviews will not be led by former informant opinions. In keeping the analysis open I actively searched for data that went against usual assumptions in order to reassess them before I search for data that will support them, most notably by questioning hegemonic influences. I also considered the fact that preliminary talks with the researchers might influence the way that I see the study, so that my interviews with the researchers were of the same nature as the other interviewees. This was to not go into too much of a discussion which might have influenced my “fly on the wall” starting perspective.

4 EMPIRICISM

This chapter will introduce the case and focus on presenting the perspective on the existing practices of “best-” and “real” practice. This section will focus on “what” is current practice in light of theory. This chapter aims to answer the first and second specific research questions.

4.1 Introduction to the case

In 2012 an environmental conflict erupted in the Swedish municipality of Gotland. The municipality is unique in its rich supply of limestone that is both a national and a local interest. National in that is an important ingredient in the Swedish steel manufacturing process. Local in that it supplies the inhabitants with jobs. Where the conflict appeared was in the fact that Gotland has a natural environment unique to Sweden and to this end it also has many protected areas. The spatial question that started this particular conflict was the approval of a test excavation of a quarry that would involve stripping a large area of forest between 2 environmentally protected areas. This authorization was based upon law, but sparked a mobilization of environmental activist to protest the quarry. It also sparked a much larger national debate in Sweden related to the precautionary principle in Environmental management.

The approval was eventually revoked and in the aftermath of this conflict a partnership between University researchers and the County Administrative Board (CAB) responsible for approving the application was initiated in Gotland. A collaboration over a series of Workshops were planned and initiated between them on the subject of “Dialog and learning in consultations”. These focused on practice problems related to consultations and the potentials improve practice. 2 internal workshops have been completed internally and in this moment before the 3rd workshop, which is planned to open up more to external actors. This is where the study starts in the moment of reflection on problems solutions. This case represents an opportunity to see what happens researchers and practitioner exchange ideas.

4.2 Real Practice Narrative

As mentioned in my methodology (chapter 3) "perspective on practice" appeared in my analysis as distinctly different across the actor groups. The specific perspective of "real" practice will be presented in this chapter.

4.2.1 Theoretical Critique of “Real” Practice

As the “real” of real practice is mentioned in the impetus and the theoretical framework I won’t go into it too much here. Other than to say that real practice is dampened by reflections on “actual space of action”. Consultants guide to “the level of approval”. As the central role of the planner is to make a “good enough” application to send in to the environmental court in a request for approval. The repeating critique on the practitioner’s agency was mentioned in the impetus as hegemonic problem and having the ability to think outside the box does not necessitate actually thinking outside the box.

4.2.2 Real Practice as the Narrative of Practitioners

Practitioners reflections on their action space was in alignment with their narrative of “real” practice and will here be presented as the second half of the single-loop learning circle in “actual spaces for action”. In this space they had potential to influence their “action space” through the reflective process through: Responsibility to Efficiency.

Theoretical framework of Real practice

In the theoretical framework diagram below I have allocated the themes related to reflection of the narrative of “real” practice. It is allocated to the side in “actual spaces for action”. In this way we can better understand how practitioners use “reflection” to act within their “possible spaces for action” (figure 11) The framework reveals a reflection-on-action process based on previous practice problems, between the organisation and their practitioner.

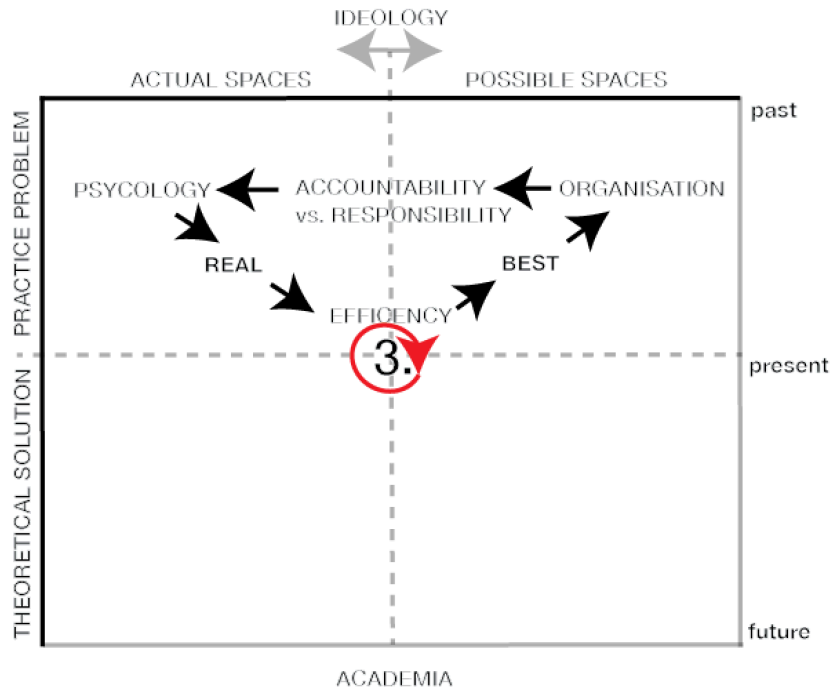


Figure 11 "Real" practice in relation to the theoretical framework

Responsibility

The start of practitioner's "action space" is related to their responsibility frame, as the interviewee pointed out that is the first determiner of "actual spaces":

...if there are interests that are of national interest then this is where the County Administrative Board comes in as an interest position for the consultation, for example regarding health or the environment, then these things involve the Environmental law, then it is another matter who is responsible... (Cab administrator)

He also talks about how it was his responsibility to give advice, but that this did not have to be agreed upon:

It is often so that when we use the material [guidance documents] then it is not because we have to things one way, but that in our guidance role there is that we should try to help people to do what is the best. But this is not forcing... it is called consultations and we do advice the developer to do one or another way, but do they choose to do it on another way then that is possible. There is although some responsibilities that one has to achieve from the developer's side: one must have an appropriately consultation and thereafter it will show if one cut corners...and then it can be possible that the examining authority decide that one did not have an appropriately large consultation... so it can be good to listen to advice as if one does not then it might be that there are issues further down the line of the examination chain. But then it is not the CAB as an examination authority that decides this, then it is the next examination

instance...I just want to develop this because it sort of puts a finger on the burning issue: because it is not the CABs role and that is the reason why there is so much "should" [in the guidance documents] We decide nothing. Or the consultation process more rightly said: it is not owned by us, we just give lots of advice. Afterwards one can choose to follow or don't care about the advice. After that it is the subsequent agency that decides. Through how they interpret the rules. (Cab administrator).

From this we can see that reflection on the responsibilities of the CAB could limit their "actual spaces for action" as their experimental ideas might not be heeded.

Psychology

In this way the next stage of the reflections of practitioners is a psychological phase where an interviewee reflects on his professional ambitions as a basis for what actions to take:

...from the start it was the interest for the environmental issues. An opportunity to work with the environmental questions. And then later it has maybe grown to also encompass these subject such as community planning and community development. The issue of democracy, legal security and those issues. That's another side of the coin with working in government. To work with State administration, it sorts of has a value, no matter the area of expertise one works within (Cab administrator).

But also how psychological factors limit these actions based on reflection on not knowing their results:

Concretely I can see that: "I did like that in that consultation and then that happened and that wasn't good. What if I instead do like this" ...So it can be that sometimes one feels that one maybe doesn't have a right handle of what one does, one does not know what actually happens through the advice they give... (Cab administrator).

"Real" practice

This line of thought is continued as these reflections ultimately end in line with the perception of practice as "real" practice. Where we see that there is some room in "actual spaces of action" that can lead to slightly different practice:

...one just does it because one has always done it like that. One usually sets demand, but why does one do that? It is always good to question how things hangs together.... with for example the problem that the permit process of water applications is so different from the permit process of environmentally hazardous applications, even though we have just the same processual rules. Still the environmental assessments are done very differently, and the

application decision is written very differently... which is no fun, especially if one works in between these departments. And to trial applications that contain both then one gets frustrated over that the practice is so different (Cab administrator).

Efficiency

In other words, there are some room for reflection to change practice, but the final reflective loop of “real” practice related to efficiency problematizes how it is difficult to argue for extended room for “actual spaces of action”:

...now it is so that we are independent governments so choose ourselves. It can also be about how much resources on chooses to put in from the government side. If one really goes in to counsel... but it becomes really difficult this with what is most efficient in the long term. This can be hard to determine. One can have a very quick consultation process and a quick application process, but then one might get stuck in a lot of appeal processes. It is important this with the whole picture: how quick and with what resources on gets from an idea to a finished project... Does steps take different lengths of time. If one puts a lot of power into the consultation for example then that will take more time, but it might involve that one gets less questions to a project in the end. So one might get situated more quickly, but one has put down considerably more time both with the developer and the consultation agency in the consultation chain. So of course this is considered a very inefficient consultation process that took a very long time, but seen in the whole process: the consultation, the application and the appeals. Then it might have been a very efficient consultation process. What I mean is that if one cut corners in your consultations then one might get a very complicated and hard to handle application process that drags out in time (Cab administrator).

4.2.3 Answering Specific Research Question 1

1- How does the repeating critique on practitioner’s agency influence their reflections on their “spaces for action”?

The answer to this question is that the repeating critique on practitioner’s agency has led to a careful practitioner, which consequently leads to a lack of experimentation within “actual spaces for action”. In this way reflection in the narrative of “real” practice is behind the fact in a single-loop learning way. Most reflection is on the justification of their “possible action space” and on the failures of practice. Practitioners reflect very little on changing their “actual spaces for action” and could therefore be very likely to be affected by unforeseen consequences of their actions or inactions. They are also susceptible to any resulting hegemonic scapegoating, should neoliberal “efficiency” be scarified at any point. In this way

the diagram of “real” practice in relation to the theoretical framework worked well to explain practitioner’s reflections on their “spaces for action”.

4.3 Best Practice Narrative

The "perspective on practice" of "best" practice will be presented in this chapter.

4.3.1 Theoretical Critique of “Best” Practice

Critique of best practice and the emergence of good practice

Beza describes “best” practice as the development of expert knowledge in one context and its application in another (2016). In this he questions whether this transfer sometimes brings with it assumptions from one structure, which may not be appropriate in its application in another. Effectively ignoring the coproduction efforts that made it and this removal of planning from its context leads him to refer to “best” practice as the planning ideal of “placeless-ness”. This he argues through the fact that achievement of some specific outcome as that which elevates a practice to what one could call “best” practice loses the particularities and coproduction process of “placemaking” that made the practice successful.

Instructors at educational institutions and their teaching practices may argue that “place” (a special quality of a given location) comes from the unique qualities and “self-expressed priorities of the local population” (Beza 2016 p. 5).

He also argues for reflection upon an argument of art as it is a focus in planning schools. As art as an experience in reflection is detached from human experience. As although art comes from a human experiences the artist has intentionally detached art from the human. When such a piece then achieves benchmark status it is even further removed from its context, in effect viewed in isolation. He problematizes with this how architecture schools in his country of Australia encourage this type of detachment through the idea that one they their own work might become precisely such a benchmark. In this they forget that work is a reflection of the institutions of social life (Beza 2016).

The chief institutions of social life reflect a continuously evolving relationship influenced by the government, the citizenry, private stakeholders/organisations and the third sector (Beza 2016 p. 5).

This reflective process of the student becoming an expert constitutes for Beza a problem through enforcing a seductive factor to the achieving of desired outcomes, yet the process of

achieving desired outcomes are often at odds with the process of creating a place through “place-making”. This is because the creative process of creating a “place” evolves many people including the locality, the designer and the setting. “place-making” cannot come from the application of best practice as the expert is taught (Beza 2016).

In this sense, place identity is a concept that has been around since the late 1990s and presented in terms of the “plurality” of a community...To gain an understanding of these groups and their interests, revolving around an aspiration and/or a desired community outcome, deliberative planning allows for the values and visions of the group to emerge (Beza 2016 p. 6).

Beza argues that these deliberative ideals of planning have been used in varying degree around the world in different combinations of expert-based or bottom-up based models, but that a problem exists in the argument of generality of these. He argues that there exists a problem in the mind-set of experts and their organisations in the transfer of planning ideas from one context to another, often preferring expert knowledge over local knowledge in the process. What results is a plan that reflects the placeless-ness of expert knowledge, without allowing the process of development of ideas to be generated through the local settings. Beza argues that the deliberative process of developing such ideas also presents an opportunity for the practitioner to gain valuable knowledge rarely occurs in practice (Beza 2016).

Although the intention of this [best practice] educational approach is sound, its application or utilisation can lead to problems. These issues sometimes come about through the designer’s inflexibility or unwillingness to compromise on their aesthetic vision.... (Beza 2016 p.10)

Beza instead argues for a “good” practice which acknowledges the importance and value of “place-making” and uses this to partner expert and local knowledge for local. He notes that adaptive traditions in deliberative planning have achieved this at times.

4.3.2 Best Practice as the Narrative of the Organisation

The organisations reflections on their action space as in alignment with the narrative of “best” practice will here be presented as the first half of the single-loop learning circle in “possible spaces for action”. As it was here the organisation to influence practitioners “action space”. This reflection will be presented from the themes of: Efficiency to Responsibility.

Theoretical framework of Best practice

In the image below we can see how “best” practice is allocated to the side of “possible space for action” (figure 12) This is because this to a high degree is their “acting space” as it is here they use the first half of the single-loop learning circle to adjust “possible spaces for action”. The framework reveals a reflection-on-action process based on previous practice problems, between the organisation and their practitioner.

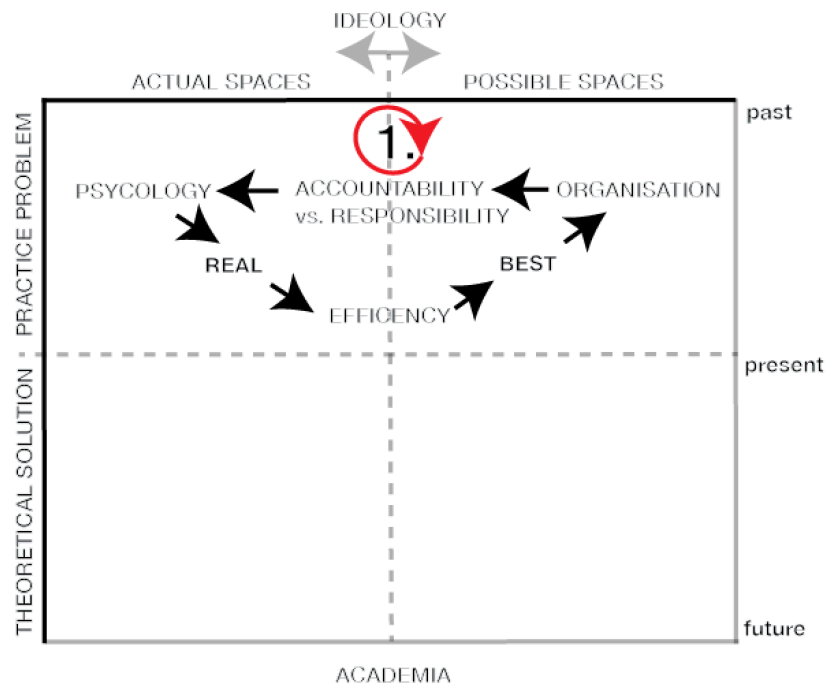


Figure 12 “Best” practice in relation to the theoretical framework

Efficiency

The start of defining organisations “possible action space” is based in the argument for efficiency, where the organisation influences strict “possible spaces for action” as practitioners in their urgency for efficiency can make mistakes:

Often we have actually been quite eager: “The Developer often comes and has little time and then say that they have 2 weeks to get to an agreement”, and then they might not even have any good base for the proposal either that we are able to take a stand on and then a quick meeting maybe. And one sit and everyone might have read the document, but one has not been able to gather oneself in-house yet... (CAB chief)

“Best” practice

Effectively the “best practice” principle is that which the decision-making process is removed from its context:

But the actual permit process that we don't handle because that is handled by the Environmental Examination Commission. Before every CAB had an Environmental Examination Commission.... but now one has concentrated on the Environmental Examination Commissions of 7 larger CABs, so our Environmental Examination Commission is in Stockholm. But every one that apply for a permit after chapter 9 then has to have a consultation with the CAB and the externally affected (CAB chief).

Organisation

Through the “best” practice approach of organisations to streamline action we can see how the reflective practice of the organisation adheres to “possible spaces for action”

And then the internal referrals, nature conversation and environment that shall speak on that. So this is a sort of process that runs over many units. So then we have seen the need to begin to join these processes. So that anyone that come in as a new co-worker shall be able to go into these processes and take a look and see what they shall do in accordance to these steps. Because that has been a little unclear sometimes, and the errand has ended up between the cracks, and one has been a little unsure of how one shall handle this (CAB chief).

Responsibility

The justification for “best” practice then lies in the responsibility framing of the CAB, wherein practitioners are there to efficiently assist developers:

I have been on many such consultations and that is not really the CABs consultation instead that is the developer that has the responsibility to hold a consultation with the CAB...and it is them that control the consultation, but we bring the background material. So they come here and we should be represented at that meeting, so broadly as possible from the CABs side...Because it is very hard as this is what the developer is going to use as the background in his EIA application. And then it becomes very hard if there where to appear things afterwards, when one already has turned in their application and there appears a whole bunch of hard questions. That need to be supplemented, that really should have been addressed in the consultation. So what we are discussing now I the context of these workshops that we had internally that what is very important is that when we get signals that the developer wants to come here and have a consultation, that we actually take the time internally to have a meeting with those that we think can be affected in-house. And that we then take a meeting with this developer, where we discuss what questions that can appear and that we should be prepared to answer (CAB chief).

4.3.3 Answering Specific Research Question 2

2- *How does the organizational approach to improving through structure to influence practitioner's reflections on their "spaces for action"?*

The answer to this question is that the organisation through their work of improving upon "possible action spaces" actually work against practitioner's improving their "actual spaces for action". As a rigid framework of "possible spaces for action" in fact lessen practitioners need to reflect on their actions. This by effectively introducing an easier to reach level of approval, which is met by the effort of "good enough" from the practitioner's. This makes up the perspective on improving practice through "best" practice. Yet as a single-loop learning circle it is continuously vulnerable to unforeseen consequences of actions. Often minor as shown above where the organisation reapplies a "best" practice principle, but sometimes problems of a larger institutional degree could occur as in the case started the workshop sessions. Where several extensive appeals were undertaken.

What happened to start the workshop collaboration

We can see how this is what happened in the case started the workshop collaboration between the CAB and the University. Where extensive use of best practice led to a failure of practice that led to the questioning of the system. When viewed in relation to hegemonic theory one could see how this led to a rupture that the hegemony would have to suture. This led the Cab into a period of improving that eventually culminated in the workshop sessions.

Below is a diagram of "best" practice based on guidance documentation of a permit application process (figure 13). Representing the possible times for reflection and input by the various actors involved in the application process. Looking at this we can see that there is room for reflection even in even in "best" practice guidance there are "possible spaces for action" and in this way we need to develop practices that are more oriented towards reflection. In the next chapter I will explore the changes introduced after the rupture of hegemony in the case as more extensive than single-loop learning, introducing reflection in varied ways.

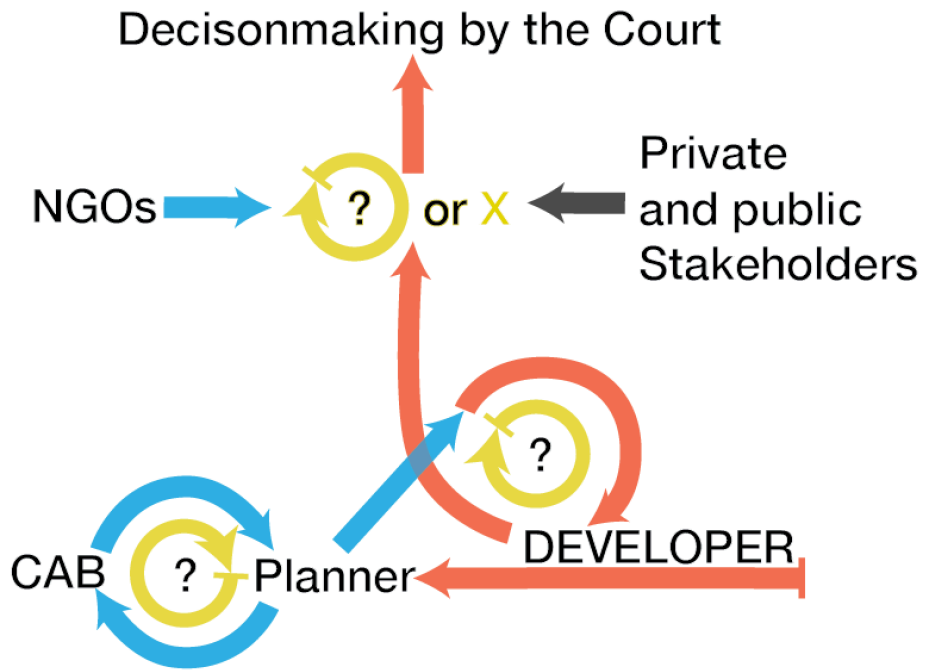


Figure 13 Possible spaces for action and reflections in “best” practice guidance

5 ANALYSIS

In this chapter I answer the third specific research question, I will use my empirical data to enlighten theory, by analysing the possible effects of the introduction of reflection into practice (Chapter 5). To this end the perspective on practice of “good” and “reflective” practice will be presented before answering the research question.

5.1 Good Practice Narrative

The "perspective on practice" of "good" practice will be presented in this chapter as it appeared as a distinctive perspective on practice.

5.1.1 Theoretical Critique of “good” practice

The critique of good practice as best practice

Vettoretto on the other hand adheres to a more sceptical definition to “good” practice than Beza. As he argues that the use of “good” practices is widespread and consequently diffused. In this he states that “good” practices can be seen in every-single policy field these days and this can be seen as part of the Europeanisation processes as the idea of European “good” governance (Vettoretto 2009). As a natural way of improving through:

...processes of construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’(Vettoretto 2009 p. 1068)

He problematizes the ideal of these processes as the making of these cannot be better understood as discursive processes, as the interactive dimension of these processes is not always discursive as they involve many actors from different institutional levels as they often are in the policy-making game (Vettoretto 2009).

This game produces different (mainly unintentional) consequences at the same time: regulation, creation or strengthening of communities of practices, emergence of new local or regional elites and so on (Vettoretto 2009 p.1069).

He questions if good practice is in itself good, as the processes of selecting them are influenced by the actors who’s cultural and cognitive frames are more legitimate than others, and in that way also impact cognitive frames. Through this the making of good practice can be normative and subject to the same critique as communicative planning of consensus. He

questions if this is true, then the terms of good and best practice should be used interchangeably. As the entire process of selecting, evaluating, codifying, narrating, communicating and diffusing, will only lead to a practice of generalisation for transferability and which is politically legitimate at all institutional levels (Vettoreto 2009).

This situation depends both on the particular conditions of European policy-making (where there is no classic political authority and/or bureaucracy but rather a multi-level governance and non-clear borders between regulators and regulated)(Vettoreto 2009 p. 1070).

As the purpose of good practices is both regulative, constitutive and purposefully implemented to affect cognitive frames. Vettoreto is therefore unsure of whether the impact of good practices is good in itself. As a polyphonic product of abstraction the resulting practice can even be surprising to its producers, wherein the resulting material does not provide any information of what has been removed. In this good practice is cleansed of its political dimension of policymaking as well as its local context. The real, political, social experiences of muddling through is softened in its final written consensual form (Vettoreto 2009).

5.1.2 Good Practice Narrative

The "perspective on practice" of "good" practice will be further presented below. As an implementation of reflection by the organisation the narrative of "good" practice will here be presented as the second half of a double-loop learning circle in "possible spaces for action". As it was here they had potential to influence their "action space", this reflection will be presented below from: Expert knowledge to Efficiency.

Theoretical Framework of Good practice

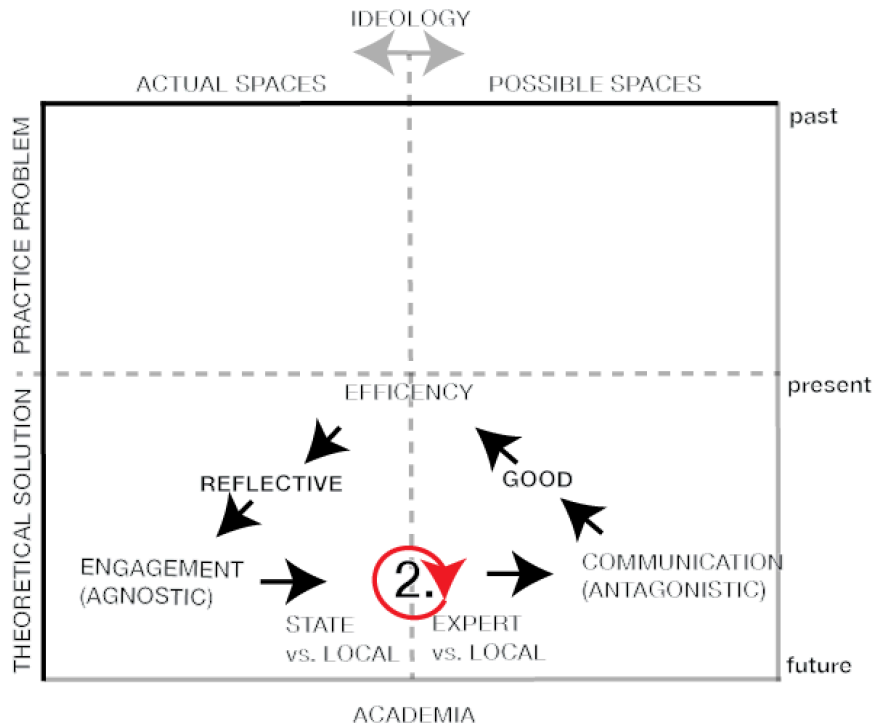


Figure 14 Double-loop learning, Good and Reflective practice

Expert vs. Local (Expert knowledge)

The first link of the reflective process of “good practice” is accumulate expert knowledge into abstracted routines:

We note down hours when we work with different codes. So we can register what we have done during a day. So then we have done such that our core processes that we shall work with we have made a great Excel spreadsheet with the different departments. For every code there are codes for the units that are process owner and some co-workers that are process owners. Then we have identified those processes that are green, the goal is for all to become green, then we have a routing and a link that one can press and see how one does this. Then a document appears that one can follow to the dot for how one does this process and how one then as an administrator manages the errand and what documents and so on. We have never had something like this before so it is a really good project (CAB chief).

Communication (antagonistic)

The second step of the reflective process is to achieve widespread consensus on these ideas:

And just this with working in workshops, that we haven't done before. If I look back only a few years back in time, then we haven't used this method much or at all. But it feels like a good way to work. That one at relative short and effective time can gather together different viewpoints and then develop this.

And maybe from a collated image that one has gotten from the first workshop that one can go on and delve deeper into the next step. If it is about creating strategies or whatever one wants for goals with these workshops, but I think it is a good way to work (CAB chief).

“Good” practice

These steps lead to the creation of “good” practice which is effectively a routine as in “best” practice

An administrator has always done one things one way and so it continues. And when a new employee comes along then one shall go in and talk to this administrator about how one does things. And so it sort of settles into the wall. And then it becomes hard to change routines. But then if one collaborates in the case management then everyone can come with a point of view, about how this case should be handled a how one does to get the most out of it. And then it gets commonly known for everyone that this is what we do.... (CAB chief)

Efficiency

The last step is value evaluate the routine in line with efficiency;

... and even the one who has worked another place get to change and think anew, and it is always good to stop and think: if I do this on the most efficient way. And one might not do that, for example these errands where there are internal reviews from other units...where one makes it clear for the one that gets this internal review that they shall think about different issues that one wrights as an answer in the internal review. In a particular fashion and there are certain aspects that one shall take in and it says so on this paper what those are and nothing else, one cannot mix in anything personal stuff. It should be a clear structure. And the one that then gets this internal review also has a structure so that this follows the same rules that the other ones that come in. So that one doesn't have to sit and look for fragments...the structure will of course cut down on the work of course, even though the process to make it takes a lot of effort just when its ongoing. But when it's done it will become a very efficient tool for us to use (CAB chief).

Before the third research question is answered we will have to describe another “perspective on practice” influenced by “reflection”.

5.2 Reflective Practice Narrative

The "perspective on practice" of "reflective” practice will be presented in this chapter.

5.2.1 The critique of ideals of practices as not always “good”

As Vettoretto question the nature of good practices to not be good, he at the same time hypnotized that there was a potential for them to be good. In this the creation of “good” practices are a political process and as such requires deliberative skills and collaborative attitudes. In this there is the potential for “good” practice to be good. As for good practices to be alive they need to be regularly activated (Vettoretto 2009).

Good practices are good if they are quickly overtaken, transformed or even replaced. A learning society is a society in which the “goodness” of practices is constantly discussed and regenerated (Vettoretto 2009 p. 1078).

In this there is a potential for good practices to be powerful instruments of enactment and mobilization:

...as they can work as “generative metaphors” as a general contextless representation that stimulates ideas, builds social relations and changes cognitive frames (Vettoretto 2009)

We can see how “good” practice is somewhat contested term that requires to be further separated. In view of the findings in this I side with Vettoretto on the “good” practice as being another form of “best” practice, but that it has the ability to become something generative for the context. And by viewing this in line with Beza’s critique of the placelessness of best practices, we find that his argument for a need for a definition of a practice that can effectively deal with “place” in practice, aligns with Vettoretto. In this I argue that a name for this type of practice should could be called it something else. In this thesis we give it the name “reflective” practice as it fits inside our theoretical framework. As a practice that is not concerned with creating guides for possible action, instead it is concerned with the “actual action space” of knowledge from the bottom up.

5.2.2 Reflective Practice as the Narrative of the Researchers

The researcher’s reflections on their action space as in alignment with their narrative of “reflective” practice will here be presented as the first half of the double-loop learning circle in “actual spaces for action”. As it was here they saw the potential for practitioners to influence their “action space”, this reflection will be presented below from: Efficiency to Local knowledge.

Theoretical framework of Reflective practice

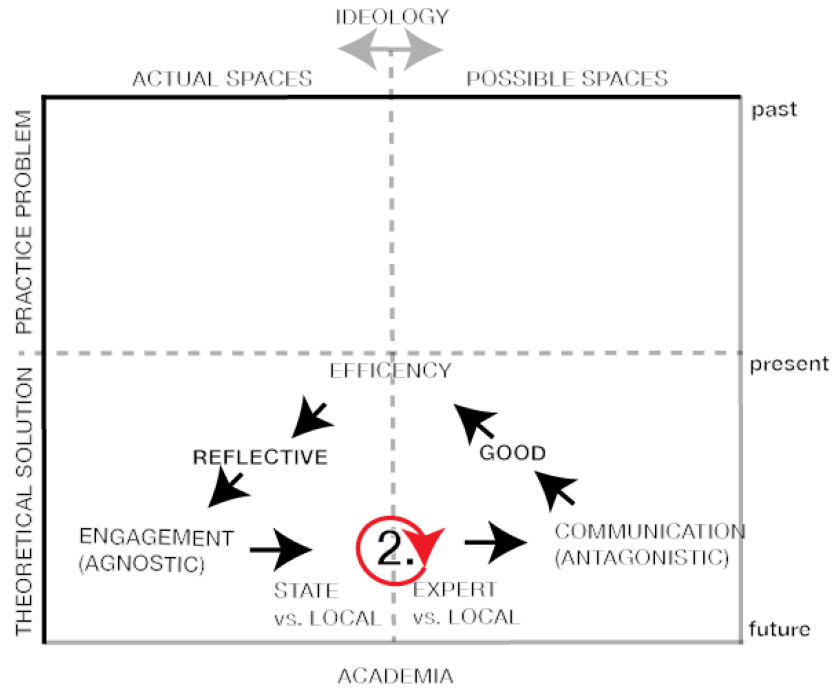


Figure 15 Double-loop learning, Good and Reflective practice

Efficiency

When talking about the last workshop the researchers bring up the adaptable nature of reflective practice in relation to efficiency, which is the first aspect of reflective practice:

But then we will have our own presentation where we bring forwards our ideas and recommendations about consultations. And that just deals with the fact that there needs to be much more ambitious and thorough consultations the next time a major conflictual case appears. But now as it is still a sensitive subject for the case to bring up...so I think my colleague and I will be the ones that bring up that conflictual case as an example of why one need much more ambitious consultation, that are done a little more differently when it comes to very complex questions (Researcher).

Reflective

The second aspect is to implement reflection in more than one place:

So this with reflection is something very important. Because just the word reflection has been very foreign to them. As an example when they have talked about improving their internal collaboration at the CAB then we have tried to implement this term: reflection. That when it comes to complex questions, then there should be room for reflection at the CAB. That when one prepares a consultation, one talks with each other and reflect on different scenarios that can happen during the consultation. But not at least after the consultation, that the administrators get the opportunity to reflect on what happened and

on how one precedes. So we have pressed on reflections both in the workshops and in our recommendations to the CAB (Researcher).

Engagement (agnostic)

There is also an aspect of on getting people engaged when it comes “reflective practice”, this can be contrasted with “good” practice:

A practice problem that the County administrative board brought up is that it is hard to get people to engaged in an issue early on because there are few who care at this stage, but then later when the trees start to come down as in the case of the Ojnare Forest that is when the engagement really started. In the Ojnare forest case there wasn't any cooperation between the municipality and the County administrative board. There were also conflicts between these organisations and between politicians. There was a need for better communication within in order to reach a consensus (Researcher).

State vs. Locality (local knowledge)

Here we see how reflective practice has an aspect of identification processes to it:

And it is clear that we have taken this with us from action-research as we try to be clear with the what is normative in what we bring forth. In other words, we try to be clear when we believe something is right, with why we believe it is right. We signal that this is a normative suggestion that we come with. That we try to be careful to not dress up things in some sort of false objectivity. Without we try to tell in our own experiences as process managers. And that is perhaps an important part of action-research, that the researcher is open with the influence of the process. In this way you could say that our backgrounds as action-researchers has influenced the workshops. (Researcher).

5.3 Answering Specific Research Question 3

- 3- *How does a “reflective” workshop influence change to practice, and how does our analytic framework of “spaces for action” help us to refine our understanding of such a change?*

The answer to this question is that the collision of “perspectives on practice” in the workshop resulted in one of the perspectives coming out on top. This perspective was “good” practices as a double-loop learning perspective allocated to “possible spaces for action” as seen in the diagram below (figure 16).

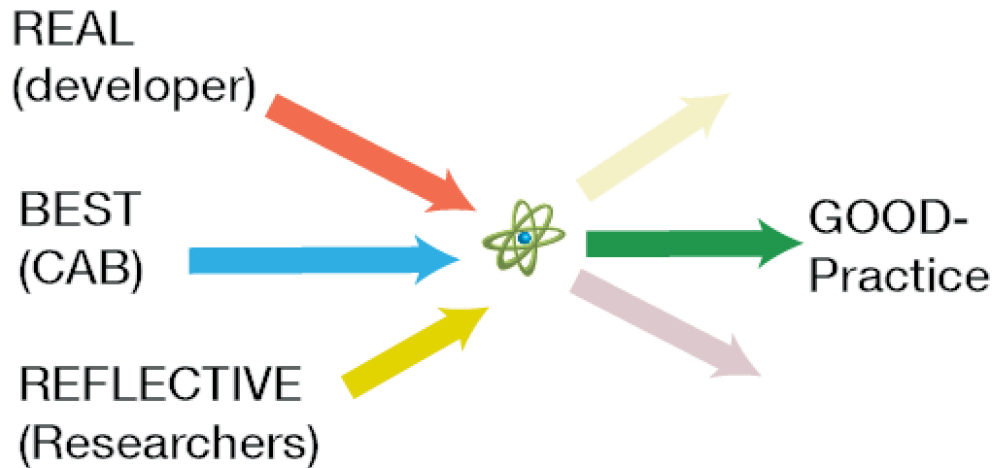


Figure 16 A collision of frames result in Good practice

This happened although the researchers were highly allocated to reflection on the “actual spaces for action” of “reflective practice”, this could be because the researchers were not able to explore “actual spaces of action” to the degree that they had hoped. But elaborate this argument through my theoretical framework, as the process of implementing of “good” practice was already ongoing before the workshop series started, that we can theorize that the researchers went into a reflective process which was already on its way. To which they would have to muddle through already elevated ideas of practice. To this end the process of improving was largely through a process of elevating ideas of “actual practice” into “good” practice executed within “possible spaces of action”. In this way our theoretical framework can help us to understand how change happened in this workshop series. In the next chapter although I will question both “reflective” and “good” practice as different “perspectives on practice”, then “real” and “best” respectively.

6 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In this chapter I will answer the Overarching research question and point towards further avenues of research.

6.1 Answering the Overarching research question

- *As planners are repeatedly confronted with critique on their practice, can we still rely on the organisational ideals of practice to improve, or can we through reflecting on our practice learn to improve on practice in a more permanent way?*

To answer this question, we have to analyse the value of ideals in practice in relation to the different forms of “reflection” in the completed theoretical framework, shown in the diagram below (figure 17).

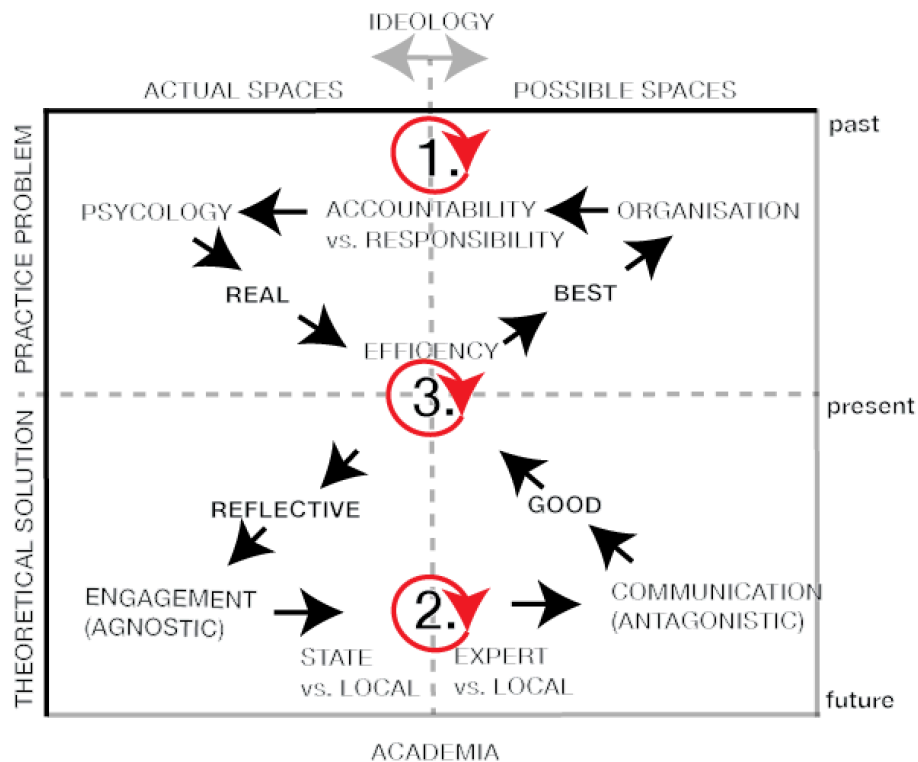


Figure 17 The three different forms of reflection in this thesis

The answer to this question is that we cannot rely on organisational ideals of practice as they currently do not provide practitioners with a pragmatic approach to “reflection-in-action”. In this the oversimplification of my profile matrix becomes clear (figure 18).

ACTUAL SPACES	POSSIBLE SPACES	
REAL	BEST	PAST
REFLECTION IN ACTION		PRESENT
REFLECTIVE	GOOD	FUTURE

Figure 18 Profile matrix for reflection in action

In relation to hegemonic theory we problematize these “perspectives on practice” as they consequently lead to either scapegoating of practitioners as in “real” practice or hegemonic rupture as in “best” practice. Through a reflective lens we can see how these two practices effectively relate to each other in a single-loop reflective relationship, which is deficient with dealing with new issues. And although the emergence of “good” practice introduces double-loop learning it does not necessarily create a learning environment. Another complication can be seen in relation to hegemony as “good” practices as it actually leads ruptures to be more easily sutured by scapegoating. We can therefore not improve on practice through organisational ideals of “best” and “good” practice.

To this end we can contrast these ideals with “reflective” practice that bases itself on the other side of “actual spaces of action” through its creation of action based in local knowledge. Although we can theorize it “reflective” practice might still not give us the tools to effectively deal with issue the issues of “reflection-in-action” or “the political” of identification processes. Further investigations into the nuances of learning, can possibly facilitate this as this thesis has shown that for us to improve on practice more permanently we need engage in creating learning communities. In this the aspect of “reflection-on-action” is still an important factor of spreading new found knowledge.

6.2 CONCLUSION

This chapter will present a conclusion to my research by presenting suggestions for further research.

How did the theoretical framework work?

My contention with this thesis was to build a theoretical framework, of which to understand why we continually fail to improve on practice. What this framework fails to tell us however

is how we exactly should improve. As it merely tells us how we should not improve. For this one must look further into the work of deliberative and agnostic planning traditions. By collecting the codes of the different interviews in their separate thematic documents, differences in their reflections appeared. More so than expected in a process of collaboration. Through further examinations and thematic analysis of the practitioner groups revealed narrative perspectives on practice that the different practitioner groups seemed to adhere to through their reflections. These "perspectives on practice" varied when viewed in relation to the theoretical framework of space for action, these findings make up the empirical findings of these thesis. When cross-examined in relation to their approaches to reflections, the results make up the analytical findings of this thesis in a possible furthering of theoretical line of thought. These "perspectives on practice" was used to answer their respective research question.

The final analysis to answer the research questions was done by analysing the relationship between the themes as they related to a specific section of one or another reflection process, this could be done since the framework contained both a conception for spaces for action and for reflection. A factor that eased this analytic process was the fact that the actor groups were so fixed to their own "perspective on practice", this enabled me to easily analyse the narratives relation to their nearby themes as a part of one or another reflective process. It also allows us to question if reflection-in-action possibly needs to engage more with the theme of efficiency argument as it is part of all three reflective processes.

What can we learn from this thesis?

- Through the theoretical framework we learn that ideals of practice are not enough. We learn that we have to create learning environments, it is not enough to develop good practices. What we need is to actively engage in the reworking of these practices. We need to open up for telling our failures of practice as storytelling a narrative is a way of making sense, as this thesis is a form of this. Providing us with guidelines of how we look at the world. We need to make sense together and to never stop learning.
- The theoretical impetus of hegemonic preference of fantasy over real. We need to continue our research into the "real" and the "political". Future planning research and

practice must adapt a poststructuralist perspective, if we are to face the increasing ideological pressures to “real” practice.

- We need to focus on “reflection in action” and how we can achieve this. We have to develop routines of reflection. If planners can legitimize experimentation in their practice, then perhaps such a focus could help to defend planning from politicisation.

6.2.1 Further research

Further research will have to take a stance about whether we know enough about the practice problem? Or if we still have to start from the bottom-up again. If we do have enough data on the problem and understand the situation, then what can we do about it? In this kind of research, a quantitative study would be suitable for further research in order to say something about the generalization of findings. Where one on the basis of an inductive qualitative thesis results can take a deductive quantitative approach where a representative enough selection would be researched to generalize findings. A disadvantage of the inductive method I used is that it might not be that it became that focused as inductive thesis are. In this many possible veins can be built upon this thesis. For example, to research if the results in this thesis can generalised by researching a deviant case. A case that distinguishes itself from my generalization and would therefore make a good comparative study. Or a case selected upon purpose which would be a case that implements the purpose. Or a theoretical selection which would be through comparing the phenomenon across 2 different implementations. One could also take some of the unexplored themes in this thesis that could warrant further research. And do research on these based on grounded theory, which would in a larger degree be based on observation. One can do a grounded theory study even if there have been themes made before. The value in this would be to see if the themes are applicable still or in other places.

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APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION LETTER

FOR PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

29/03-2016

Dear.....:

I'm writing to ask if you'd allow me to interview you on.....

This ongoing research study seeks to better understand a status of planning consultations in Nordic countries in planning and the processes of learning how to improve practice. This is done by exploring the day-to-day work and their thoughts on the workshop process of improving practice of professional planners and official mediators. It also seeks to provide planners with the opportunity to reflect further on this work so as to deepen their own understandings of planning education and to strengthen their professional skills.

To do this study I will first do a selection of interviews based upon first person voice “profiles” of practitioners talking about their work in real cases. These interviews focus upon your work as a third party, and therefore not the case as a whole: how you began, how you handled the tasks and challenges and surprises at hand, how you improvised, how you worried and handled those worries, how you turned a corner at critical moments, how you failed at X and succeeded at Y, how you achieved any instructive, desired outcome, what you learned in the process, what you'd do differently “next time,” how third parties can do this work better.

The interview will be conducted by myself. The interviews will be tape-recorded, transcribed, and edited into “practitioner profiles.” The identity of the interviewees is confidential and therefore only known to myself, in the thesis they will be cited under a pseudonym. Our interviews are confidential and subject to your control. Here's how we do it. I will ask you about your work in the case you've chosen, and we'll tape record our conversation. I will transcribe the tape before deleting the original recording. I will edit the resulting transcript for sentence fragments, “ums and ahs,” and transcription problems: I will not change your words. I'll create paragraph breaks to make the transcript more readable. Then the transcript comes right back to you for your review, for any clarifications or deletions you wish to make, and for your approval for use in my work. If you've decided that the passage about Smith's losing

it in a meeting needs to be changed somehow, here's the chance to do that (or to delete it). If you remember a crucial line that Smith said to change the whole flow of the meeting, this is the time to put it in.

I will use these interviews to continue my analysis of consultations and learning in my thesis. and sections of the transcript will be used in my thesis after being translated to english to show the reader on what basis I draw my conclusions. Finally, should I, as a matter of my on-going research, wish at any future time to write about any material contained in your profile, I will of course ask for your express permission to do that. You are under no obligation to agree.

Consent:

The study has been described to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation in the project at any time without penalty. I understand that the interviewer will listen to the tapes and type up the conversation we had. (These records will be kept confidential.) I also understand that the interview transcript will be edited into a "practitioner profile" and that I will have a chance to review, correct, amend and approve (or not approve) the written profile. Finally, I understand that the final profile – in whole or in part – will not be shared with any one (beyond the interviewer and his thesis supervisor), nor will it be cited in published articles or professional presentations, without my explicit permission. Such permission will be sought after the profile has been completed and approved.

I have read and understood the above information, and I consent to participate in this study by signing below.

If OK, your signature here: _____

Date: _____

Many thanks for your consideration. If you're willing, I'm very much looking forward to talking to you.

Best wishes,

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part Zero: Pre-interview Questions

1. Spend some time introducing yourself to the educator, and ask the educator to do the same: As I mentioned earlier the case of my studies is the workshop processes between the University and the County Administration Board. These workshops have only been internal as of now, but is to be opened up for external actors soon. As this forms the starting point of the thesis it is interesting to interview you as a, or soon to be, participant. Where my hope is to get insights into participant's reflections on practice problems of consultations and the possibility of learning in practice.
2. Reminding the interviewee that the interview will be tape recorded, transcribed and then edited as agreed upon in the information letter. Asking if this is still ok?
3. In the interview, we'd like to focus on the way you work with consultations in a way that really shows the challenges and possibilities of the work that you are engaged with in these workshops. We want to understand what you do as a civil servant as you work with others in promoting learning and action around public issues or problems.

Interview Questions

Part One: Short Background

1. What's your current position? Can you give me a brief overview of what it is you do in your work?
2. What would you say most motivates you to do what you do? What are you most excited or passionate about?

Part Two: The Practice Story (how are we trying to get better at collaborative planning)

1. So let's move on now to the story you're going to tell. Give me a brief overview of the specific project you are going to talk about today?
2. Tell us about your specific role and contributions in this project. Let's start with the first thing you did. What was it?
3. Were there any surprises or key turning points in the project?
4. What were the key relationships that mattered most? What were the key sources of support or resistance you encountered?
5. What was most rewarding?

6. How do you think your background as a action-researcher has influenced your method used in these kinds of workshops?
7. How are you learning from the workshops?
1. In the same way as your method influenced your work, do you think that the method used in these workshops might influence the participants work?
1. Focusing on broader terms instead of a specific process, how do you feel having the workshop participants choosing the focus of the workshops have worked?
2. How are the workshops setup, from the first to the second and the third? How are you planning to use the next workshop on these issues that have been brought up?
3. What about further down the line, what are the challenges towards implementation of learning?

Part Three: Reflections and Lessons from this practice story, with the workshops in mind

1. What are the lessons for someone like me, a student or fresh graduate, who might be embarking on a project similar to this one?
2. What do you think you taught the participants?
3. If you could do this project over again, would you do anything differently? Why, and what would you do?
4. Do any metaphors come to mind to describe the kind of work you do, especially in this project? (If needed, give examples like “orchestra conductor,” “coach,” etc.)
5. What were the skills you had to have to do the work you just told me about? Where and how did you learn those skills?
6. What does the project you’ve just talked about tell us about the central benefits and challenges of public education and development?
7. When you think of the future of the kind of work you’ve talked about here, what gives you a sense of hope? What makes you concerned or worried?

Agency vs. Structure (best, good, real practice)

2. How do you find that collaborative learning has the ability to change the structure or frame, can the participants improve on their agency?
3. On what points do you feel that the participants have changed their minds on their agency? For example, in their viewing of their role or the possibilities of learning and dialog in consultations? Or perhaps in the degree that they involve themselves more in

the hard cases, such as mining? (Perhaps just by collaborating more with the Municipality or: Perhaps in view of the practice problem of getting people involved early before the trees come down.)

8. Are there any structural challenges to what the participants can implement? The messiness of life?
9. What about the Efficiency factor and the unaccountability of the practitioners?
4. How do you see the participants improving on their practice? Through improving their guidance or through improving their knowledge in action as inspired by the workshops?



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