



Negotiating climate change responses: Regional and local perspectives on transport and coastal zone planning in South Sweden



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ABSTRACT

Putting climate change policy-integration into practice is challenged by problems of institutional misfit, due to, inter alia, deficient vertical administrative interplay. While most focus within the field of climate change research has targeted the national–local interplay, less is known about the interface of regional and local perspectives. Here, the aim is to study that interface with a specific focus on the relation between regional and local spatial planning actors, through a case-study of transport and coastal zone management in a Swedish municipality. The article is based on interviews (focus group and single in-depth) and official planning documents. The material reveals a tricky planning situation, replete with conflict. In practice, various institutional frameworks, claims and ambitions collide. The attempts to steer the local spatial planning initiatives from the regional level led to conflicts, which in turn seems to have hampered the overall work for climate change management through spatial planning. Furthermore, there are few traces of prospects of a smooth vertical institutional interplay able to support the overall aims related to integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation in spatial planning.

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1. Introduction

Spatial planning has been ascribed a significant role in meeting the current challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation (Biesbroek et al., 2009; Davoudi et al., 2009; Wilson and Piper, 2010; Romero-Lankao, 2012). Scholars have demonstrated that spatial planning influences mitigation through, inter alia, urban development, land use and mobility patterns that are shaping energy demand and CO₂ emissions (Banister and Anable, 2009) and adaptation by affecting the extent to which climate risks, e.g., sea level rise (SLR), flooding, erosion, are allowed to influence urban development patterns (Campbell, 2006; Wilson and Piper, 2010).

However, effective responses to climate change in spatial planning will require the co-ordination and integration of perspectives, knowledge and interests, across sectors and governance levels (Hurlimann and March, 2012). In practice, studies from the westernized world have documented problems related to both horizontal and vertical institutional misfit, goal conflicts, and an

overall low capability of governing climate change adaptation and mitigation in concrete planning practice (Urwin and Jordan, 2008; Burch, 2010; Dovers and Hezri, 2010; Storbjörk and Hedrén, 2011; Dannevig et al., 2012; Glaas and Juhola, 2013; Hrelja et al., 2015).

Such studies of vertical institutional interplay have mostly examined the interplay between local and national level actors. Here, several studies of climate change adaptation have documented how unclear distribution of responsibilities hampers climate adaptation and that there are few guidelines at hand to support the work of local government actors (Næss et al., 2005; Aall, 2012; Bedsworth and Hanak, 2013). Less attention has been paid to the interplay between the regional and local level actors, despite the fact that studies have shown the capacity of the regional level to be critical in multilevel governance (Hanssen et al., 2013) and the institutional interplay between regional and local actors in general to involve tensions (Pearce et al., 2011; Storbjörk and Hedrén, 2011; Nilsson et al., 2012). The recent study by Dannevig and Aall (2015), have also concluded that the role of the regional–local interactions has been under diagnosed. Accordingly, our paper aims to analyze the institutional interplay between regional and local spatial planning actors. The objective is to provide a deeper understanding of the characteristics of this interplay, to explore some of the tensions involved which makes it possible to also discuss ways forward. The research is carried out as a qualitative case-study of climate change

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governance in spatial planning in the small municipality of Vellinge in southern Sweden. Specific attention was paid to the management of issues related to transport and coastal-zone development in the process of developing a new Municipal Comprehensive Plan (MCP). The process has served as a rich source for exploring vertical institutional interplay between regional and local spatial planning actors. We acknowledge the key importance of the ‘street-level bureaucrats’, i.e., the officers working in the regional and local administrations (e.g., Lipsky, 1980; Grange, 2013; Hill and Hupe, 2002). By analyzing the views and perspectives of planners as well as their formal standpoints and written policy statements thereof, our paper examines how climate change concerns are negotiated between a municipality and a County Administrative Board (CAB).

Our research approach is inspired by existing research on multi-level interplay from the field of climate change governance where we also make use of Young's (2006) framework for categorizing different types of vertical interplay (see Section 3). The following research questions have guided our analysis:

- 1) What is the local and regional planning actors' approach to spatial planning and its role for climate change mitigation and adaptation?
- 2) What local strategies are being developed to handle climate change considerations in critical planning cases related to transport and coastal zone management?
- 3) What tensions and critical interfaces can be identified between the local and regional planning actors?
- 4) What do the strategies and tensions identified imply for the prospects of a smooth vertical institutional interplay capable of supporting the overall aims related to climate change mitigation and adaptation in spatial planning?

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview over planning and climate change governance in Sweden. Section 3 summarizes existing literature on vertical administrative interplay within climate change planning and is where we introduce the analytical framework. In Section 4 the case study and research design is described. Section 5 is the results, divided into three sub-sections. The first concerns the local and regional planners' views on spatial planning as an arena for climate change mitigation and adaptation, the second strategies and tensions regarding sustainable transportation, and the third coastal zone management, including both adaptation and mitigation measures. The article ends with a discussion and conclusion.

2. Spatial planning and climate change governance in Sweden

Sweden is well-known for its high ambitions when it comes to climate change governance, but has challenges to overcome not least when it comes to putting concrete climate change responses into action (Lidskog and Elander, 2012; Finnveden and Åkerman, 2014). One challenge follows from the highly decentralized spatial planning structure in Sweden. By European standards, Swedish municipalities enjoy a uniquely elevated status in controlling land-use and spatial planning often referred to as the local planning monopoly (Hrelja et al., 2012; Storbjörk and Hjerpe, 2014). Municipalities are responsible for the planning of land-use and water within a legal framework set and supervised by national government (SFS, 2010). Regional or national authorities have no formal power over local development decisions as long as they do not violate national regulations. One pivotal regional authority in Swedish spatial planning is the County Administrative Board (CAB). The CABs are regional representatives of the national government with a task to support the implementation of national objectives in the

21 Swedish counties. At the same time however, the CAB is also a key regional development actor with a central role for coordinating regional development work. When it comes to spatial planning, the CAB is mandated to review MCPs and detailed development plans and is consulted during the local planning process. The CAB here has the task to ensure that local MCPs satisfactorily address the impacts of climate change (Lundqvist, 2015). In relation to climate change issues, the CAB has the task to regionally coordinate and assess activities related to climate change mitigation through the national environmental objectives. Since 2009 the CAB also have extended responsibilities for climate adaptation. In essence, the CABs has a somewhat double position and their approach may vary depending on what perspective they take and also on the exact stage in, for instance, a planning process (SOU, 2012).

3. Vertical institutional interplay in planning for climate change

Responding to climate change in general clearly requires coordination across sectors and between governance levels (Bulkeley et al., 2009), suggesting the importance of a well-functioning institutional interplay (Young 1996, 2006). Many empirical studies have documented policy co-ordination and implementation problems that are related to horizontal and vertical institutional interplay (Urwin and Jordan, 2008; Burch, 2010; Dovers and Hezri 2010; Storbjörk and Hedrén, 2011; Dannevig et al., 2012). In the context of planning for climate change, vertical institutional interplay, i.e., cross-scale interactions involving public actors operating at different administrative levels, has primarily been studied between the national and local levels (e.g., Urwin and Jordan, 2008; Amundsen et al., 2010; Baker et al., 2012; Juhola et al., 2012) and more recently between the EU and the national level (Glaas and Juhola 2013).

In most countries, climate-change policy integration is expected to take place and be converted into real action at the local governance level; this explains the large scholarly interest in cities and climate change. In order to approach climate change in planning, these studies have demonstrated barriers related to, for instance, resources, institutional setting, political priorities, and knowledge (Naess et al., 2005; Adger et al., 2007; Burch, 2010; Anguelovsky and Carmin, 2011; Baker et al., 2012).

When it comes to institutional interplay between national and local actors, many scholars have suggested that clear guidelines and directions from national government are an essential condition for enabling effective local climate change responses. Studies have documented how unclear roles and distribution of responsibilities hamper local climate responses, showing that currently there are few such national regulations at hand to support the work of local authorities (Naess et al., 2005; Storbjörk, 2007; Keskkitalo, 2009; Amundsen et al., 2010; Aall, 2012; Nilsson et al., 2012; Bedsworth and Hanak, 2013). While stressing the importance of increased national level support (Urwin and Jordan, 2008; Amundsen et al., 2010; Dymén and Langlais, 2013) there are also indications that the lack of clear national agendas and incentives burdens local governments differently, depending on their different capacities (Juhola and Westerhoff, 2011; Anguelovsky and Carmin, 2011; Dannevig et al., 2012). However, there are other studies that suggest that local climate action actually could be spurred by the lack of national incentives (Amundsen et al., 2010; Storbjörk and Hedrén, 2011; Dannevig et al., 2012; Hjerpe et al., 2015). They also contend that centralized approaches, driven solely by national governments, may in some cases constrain local initiatives and create unfortunate dependencies (Amundsen et al., 2010; Dannevig et al., 2012). Interviews have shown that excessive national steering, for instance, in relation to the tradition of local planning monopoly, is not necessarily desirable from a local government perspective

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