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Understanding the governance system in the Campus Development; the cases of Norwegian University of Life Sciences and Norwegian University of Science and Technology

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to understand the governance system in the university campus development process in Norway. Norwegian cases can provide appropriate examples to study governance because of two main reasons; Firstly, local governments in Norway have historically performed crucial development functions. Secondly, the national government places a great emphasis on dialogue and cooperation between the state and cities and between public and private parties. This paper is based on the findings of the two different cases in Norway; Norwegian University of Life Sciences in Ås and Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. A new and modern, but still historically grounded tradition in Norway views the university as a product of its relationship with the city and its urban surroundings, with a strong belief in a university of the city, and not simply, in the city. Considering the ‘university of the city’ concept adopts different focuses at different stages, involves many internal and external stakeholders, and attracts divergent interests and power relations. A main result of this study is that a successful campus development depends to a large extent on the process of exchange and governance between the national government (mainly the Ministry of Education) and the universities in Norway. A delay in the campus development process can be a result of the university’s neglect of the role and power of the national government.

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The campus development may not be accomplished, if the governance is based primarily on a self-organizing network within the universities. The governance can be considered as a new strategy based on the plurality and complexity of both hierarchies and heterarchies. The national government should influence institutionalization of the local governance and the degree of autonomy among the local actors (university and municipalities) in order to flow the development processes. According to the findings, developing a mutual benefit and managing the contradictions demand continuing dialogue and resource-sharing between the university and national government, which is superior to the local government's collaboration. In this regard, the national government is recommended to play a significant role, as a prime actor in facilitating the process of networking, negotiation and coordination between local actors. At the same time, the government should try to reduce hierarchical features through decentralization and provide regulations that each local actor can agree to. In this view, national government helps universities to establish and sustain their (re)institutionalization to adapt to the development circumstances; not by having a complete power but by indirectly and imperfectly steering local networks.

1. Introduction

Recent studies show that many universities style are shifting to integrate their campuses both physically and socially with city (Bakken, 2012, Perry and Wiewel, 2005). With a belief that positive interaction between the city and university depends on the issue of governance, we aim to understand this through two cases of campus development in Norway: The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) in Ås. The Trondheim case is based on findings of an ongoing PhD research, including document analysis and interviews. The Ås case is based on participant observation during seven years (as director of property development at the university, who was also responsible for user participation).

The campus development in Trondheim and Ås gradually attracted many different actors with different problem perceptions, values and interests about what to do. Most often latent conflicts between different stakeholders' goals and interests become overt when they make numerous mutual influence attempts through power relations. In order to assure long-term benefits, these contrasting interests need to be reconnected and resolved. Thus, a successful university campus development depends on the process of exchange and governance between stakeholders. However there is no single best form of governance and details vary from case to case.

Our focus in this paper is on the difference of university management systems. Addressing the institutional barriers and imbalanced power relations in our cases can be learning examples to work out the principles of governance for campus development in other cases.

Norwegian universities, as part of higher education, are state-run. The Ministry of Education (MoER) and Research has the overall responsibility for financing, including grants for property development that is acknowledged by the Parliament. The University Board is the highest governing body, responsible for acting according to the Ministry framework and guidelines. A recent political signal from the Ministry has been a reorganization of higher education in order to reinforce academic, economic and administrative resources into larger and more competitive units. This reform has resulted in several mergers of different institutions. In addition, multi-campus universities are thought to be more expensive and difficult to run. In some cases, like ours, this has resulted in geographical changes. Our aim is to understand how several actors and organizations have responded to the challenges of the implementation of this reform. The focus is on the relation between the Ministry as the initiator of the reform and universities as the affected institutions.

1.1. Trondheim case

Trondheim is the third largest city in Norway with a population of approx. 170.000 inhabitants. The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) was established in 1996, as a merger of the former Norwegian Institute of Technology (founded in 1910) and the Norwegian College of General Sciences (founded in 1968). Because of the merger, the university today has two main campuses at Gløshaugen and Dragvoll. Since 2000 NTNU has undergone a reorganizational reform, which has led to the idea of merging departments located at these two campuses and co-locating them in one campus. Both NTNU and the municipality agree that this co-location should take place in the Gløshaugen area, which implies the re-location of Dragvoll campus. The process of moving Dragvoll is an intricate

evolution that has brought different social, economic and ecological issues into questions and initiated lots of resistances among different actors. A majority of employees has opposed the co-location idea, due to a long historic controversy between the different cultures and disciplines of these two campuses. The controversy surrounding this idea caused the NTNU board to stop the process in 2006, proceeding the development of each campus separately but with the priority of development of Dragvoll due to the lack of space and facilities. Despite this priority, nothing happened at Dragvoll campus until 2012, when local politicians brought up the case of co-location again. The Ministry initiated a process of assessing possibilities for co-location and imposed a condition for furthering it, under which NTNU leadership should stand aside letting the Ministry takes the full responsibility. The new process has not faced the same opposition and dilemma that the previous one did.

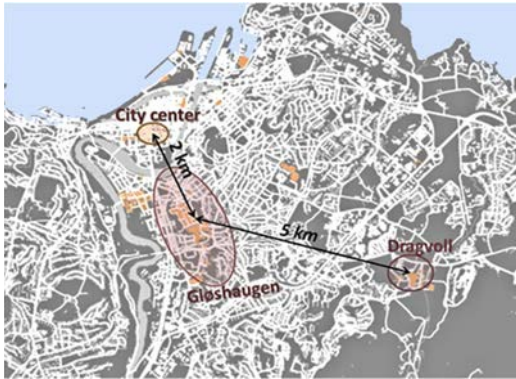


Fig. 1. The location of Gløshaugen and Dragvoll campus.

Our hypothesis is that in 2006 the employees and their representatives in the board were successful to lobby the MoER to not support the co-location case. Given this power base to employees, the questions are remained that why no development happened at Dragvoll in the following years and why the opponents stayed silent when the process started up again in 2012.

1.2. Ås case

Ås is located approximately 30 kilometers south of Oslo, and has about 20.000 inhabitants. The Agricultural university of Norway (1859) and a subsequent railroad line (1870s) were the key precursors to the city. The town is located about 1, 5 kilometers from the university campus. The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) merged with the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science in 2014, based on a decision of the Norwegian Parliament to move the education of veterinary students from Oslo to Ås. In order to provide 63.000 m² of new facilities for veterinary education in 2019, the construction has started in 2015 after 7 years of planning.

Since 1990s, the veterinary school in Oslo has suffered from lack of space and outdated learning facilities and thus needed an urgent remediation. The clinical facilities for livestock were more outdated than the facilities for companion animals. In response to these needs, some collaborative and external attempts were made to merge the veterinary school with NMBU and move it to Ås, partly due to biosafety concerns and partly due to possibilities for cooperation with existing research environment at Ås. However, the majority of employees and the board of Veterinary school tried to lobby to stop a process of merging with NMBU and moving the school to Ås. As a result, they could successfully but temporarily (until 2005) stop the process of merging and moving to Ås in order to enhance the development of facilities at the veterinary school in Oslo. Nonetheless, no further development took place in Oslo for three years (until 2008) that the Ministry of Education and Knowledge eventually proposed the case of merging and moving to Ås again. The Parliament, by emphasizing the need to develop a new and integrated university, also approved it. This decision raised anger among veterinary academics, who up to that date believed they had succeeded in preventing the merger and movement. In this case, our aim is to understand why no development had happened in Oslo from 2005 to 2008 and why the idea of merging and moving to Ås was proposed again and was supported by the Parliament unlike the employees' demand, which was to stay in Oslo and develop the required facilities there instead.

2. The concept of Governance

According to Evans et al. (2006) governing indicates two related and intertwined processes; government and governance. Government is characterized by its ability to make decisions and its capacity to enforce them (Stoker 1998, p.17), within legal, financial and political processes. Governance, however, is the sphere of public debate, partnership, interaction, dialogue and indeed conflict and dispute among local citizens, organizations and local government that may or may not derive from legal or formally prescribed responsibilities' (Kooiman and Vliet, 1993,

p.4). The outputs of governance are not necessary different from those of government. So the value of understanding the governance is to provide a framework for understanding changing processes of governing (Stoker, 1998).

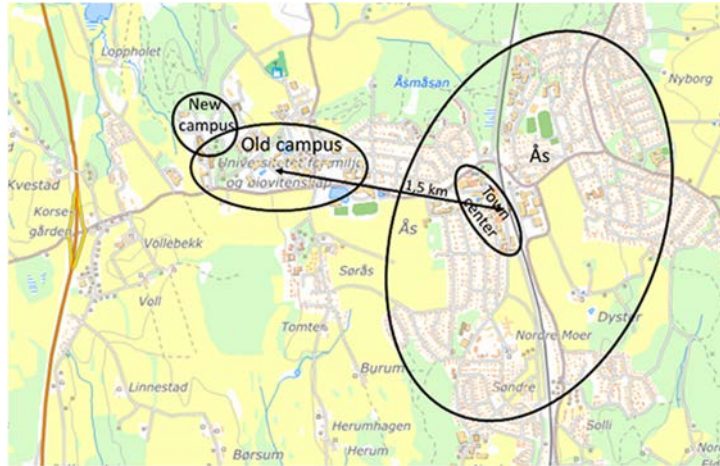


Fig. 2. Ås Campus to the west with new development, town and center to the east.

3. Discussion

In this part, we try to answer and discuss the questions raised at the end of introduction to each case.

In the Trondheim case, however different actors tried to lobby or influence the network to achieve their goal, the co-location alternative was rejected in 2006. We think the main reason was not because the employees had the power to stop the case but the leadership of NTNU underestimated the role and power of the MoER and thus lost the Ministry's support and backing. Up to 2012, the governance model was a bottom-up process, in which NTNU proceeded the main investigation and decision-making process based on internal consensus building. The Ministry by rejecting some of the decisions NTNU made and rocking the boat, tried to express its power and role, although NTNU still considered itself as a key decision-maker and neglected the Ministry as the real power behind the throne.

On the other hand, the Ministry was astute to recognize that it would be difficult to carry out the process when NTNU's norm was to have a large degree of discretion to deal with its' work. Additionally, the Ministry knew that it was necessary for NTNU to have sufficient economic resources to accomplish the process. So the Ministry utilized networks and channels of energy flows to not support the case of co-location and most likely to stop it for a while. The reason why nothing had happened at Dragvoll during 2006 to 2012 was that the Ministry together with local politicians subtly tried to inhibit any development at Dragvoll but making some inexpensive changes/developments to silence the opposition, and to bring up the case again in the best time. It became obvious that if Ministry wanted and pushed the process to move forward, the case would have not stopped in 2006. But by letting time passed, the Ministry's aim was to resolve many of latent conflicts. Many of actors, particularly the leadership at university and Ministry, had common interest to support co-location but the direction of their dynamics and strategies was not uniform.

There was a need to understand the roles, power, interests, perceptions and strategies of other actors to build trust and ensure that all activities will create benefits for all partners.

In Ås case, the former school of Veterinary Science had evolved from an original emphasis on livestock into companion animals. The supporters of this transformation at veterinary school believed that a merger with NMBU would be of benefit to research on livestock, which was less desirable for them. On the contrary, the Ministries of Agriculture and Food (MoAF) and Trade, Industry and Fisheries (MoTIF) paid much more attentions to livestock than companion animals. Furthermore, the Ministries believed that aquaculture, a major industry in Norway, could better be developed through a merger and moving to Ås. The aquaculture might be considered both as a suitable resource for laboratory experiments (ex. in nutrition studies and in genetic studies), and as a branch of livestock industry. Moving

the school to Ås and merging with NMBU would facilitate such ambitions better than developing the facilities in the center of Oslo.

In order to estimate the costs for developing and building new facilities of veterinary school in each model either in Oslo or in Ås, the concept study was carried out and delivered in 2005. The concept study was based on the inputs from the veterinary school without questioning facilitating companion animals vs. livestock. The result showed that the rehabilitation of veterinary facilities in Oslo was feasible and also cheaper than new development at Ås. However, MoER with pushes from other Ministries questioned the outcomes of the concept study that whether developing six hectare facilities for veterinary purposes in central Oslo is wise decision and whether such development enables furthering the desired ambitions on aquaculture and animal production sciences. This questioning from the Ministry together with other factors changed the focus of the concept study to the merging solution. For instance, the international research activity on animal and aquaculture sciences that have already been started at NMBU could emphasize the significance of merging and moving the Veterinary school close to NMBU. Moreover, the general political signals, which were prioritizing and encouraging larger and more competitive research units, were more in harmony with reinforcing the livestock industry than companion animals that politicians also showed their support before. The additional costs of merging and moving to Ås, compared to developing in Oslo, was also rationalized in a way that will be compensated by the academic and research benefits in return. These cunning rationalities and reasoning overrode the idea of developing the veterinary school in Oslo and instead enforced the merging and moving alternative.

The Trondheim and Ås cases can both be seen as a battle between academic hegemony and a question of resource allocation for campus development. NTNU in Trondheim is a case of fusion of two dissimilar cultures, traditions and disciplines at two different campuses. The departments of human and social sciences, which are located at Dragvoll, did not want to be merged with more technological disciplines at Gløshaugen. This was probably important for the opposition to co-location. Similar for the case of Ås, the majority of veterinary academics did not want to merge and co-locate with the NMBU. The reason for this was different views on the future of veterinary medicine. These complexities and differences between strategies and interests of different actors caused changes and challenges in the decision-making process. The contrasting interests should have been reconnected to a comprehensive vision, which should be approved to be the most likely to accrue long-term benefits to the local community in both cases.

The findings show that the governance once failed in both cases due to misalignment of leadership, power and role at universities and Ministry, and depth of social conflict within universities network. At the beginning, the governance system in both cases had relatively a horizontal network of interdependent actors, but with an operational autonomy. Neither the university leadership nor other actors had sufficient knowledge or capacity to dominate the case unilaterally. Decisions had been made in an informal way that it was difficult to identify who was responsible for what and who should have be held accountable for the policy carried out.

According to our findings, there was a need to recreate an institutional design for a collective learning, and establishment of shared visions and trust among diverse stakeholders. The campus development could not be accomplished, if the governance was based primarily on a self-organizing network within the universities. Developing a mutual benefit and managing the contradictions demanded continuing dialogue and resource-sharing between the university and the Ministry. The new governance in both cases was formed to create an interactive problem solving arena between the Ministry and university, although the administrative rationalism has been still dominant in the current governance and has formed based on ‘solving on behalf of’ rather than ‘solving together’.

The evidence also implies that the effectiveness of the governance has been secured more through administrative operation and a top-down process rather than a bottom-up and democratic way. On the other hand, the structural arrangement of governance is still heterogeneous and is between traditional hierarchical and newer democratic interactive forms. However, it is closer to traditional mode, in which the national government is a prime actor and plays a significant role among all stakeholders.

4. Conclusion

Campus development is a process with major social, economic and environmental consequences that can create tensions and conflicts between different actors over who bears the costs and receives the benefits of the development.

The impacts of campus development are diverse and should be negotiated and managed jointly between university and national government (MoER) in one way, and university and local government (city and region municipalities) in another. It is important how and when each group of actors, with specific interests and strategic power reacts to perceived imbalances in their collaborative network in this process.

According to our findings, the success of governance is dependent highly on the quality and success of ‘university and national government’ network. The Ministry of Education and Research is recommended to play a significant role, as a prime actor in facilitating the process of networking, negotiation and coordination between local actors. At the same time, the government should try to reduce hierarchical features through decentralization and provide regulations that each local actor can agree to. In this view, the Ministry helps universities to establish and sustain their (re)institutionalization to adapt to the development circumstances; not by having a complete power but by indirectly and imperfectly steering local networks. We can sum up that the solution in our cases was in bringing the Ministry back in a way that not having a complete power and ‘occupying a sovereign position’ (Stoker, 1998, p.24), but indirectly steering the networks.

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