ETT POLITISKT BYGGE
- ÖVERSIKTSPLANERINGENS INNEHÅLLSMÄSSIGA UTVECKLING

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Akademisk avhandling
som för avläggande av Teknologie doktorsexamen vid
Blekinge Tekniska Högskola kommer att offentligen
försvaras i C413A, Karlskrona, 2020-01-24, kl. 13.00

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Abstract

Debate often describes the evolution of spatial planning as a process of neo-liberalisation. However, this evolution has not been studied from the perspective of planning in general in Sweden. Whether comprehensive planning is also undergoing neo-liberalisation is considered here based on these overarching research questions:

- To what extent has spatial planning undergone neo-liberalisation?
- How can the evolution of comprehensive planning be understood as a neo-liberalisation process?

Answering these questions requires an understanding of the content characterising this planning, and of what a neo-liberalisation process entails. To achieve such an understanding, this dissertation examines how planning in general can be understood as both a political control system and a market-based land use regime.

The discourse of comprehensive planning was studied by analysing 17 comprehensive plans adopted in five municipalities over the 1989–2014 period.

Generally, these plans follow a few main evolutionary paths. Municipal comprehensive planning has transitioned from being instrumental, encountering few problems, to becoming increasingly abstract and all-encompassing. Comprehensive planning increasingly concerns how growth is to be achieved locally. This change is occurring in both form and content. Change in form refers to the fact that comprehensive planning has been encompassing more and more subject areas over time, whereas change in content refers to the increasingly market-based content of such planning.

The research question regarding the extent to which spatial planning is undergoing neo-liberalisation is answered by the obvious trend towards neo-liberalisation. This trend is not pervasive, as countervailing tendencies are also present. Spatial planning is thus becoming internally contradictory, with earlier values persisting, albeit often in interaction with new ones.

The question of how comprehensive planning can be understood as a neo-liberalisation process has a three-part answer:

- As content in comprehensive plans, neo-liberalisation can be understood as a focus on market rationality.
- As form in comprehensive plans, neo-liberalisation can be understood as policy production with content that assumes an ever more neo-liberal orientation. Comprehensive planning during the studied period has come to include more and more municipal areas of activity.
- From a neo-liberal perspective, neo-liberalisation is understood as economic utility maximisation.

Planning is becoming increasingly neo-liberalised, but not neo-liberal. That this has occurred as a result of increasingly comprehensive policy formulations is somewhat surprising. We are faced with the politicisation of planning in general, which is increasingly informed by market-based policy. This trend represents a comprehensive policy shift towards more neo-liberal planning content, accompanied by more policies. More principles are appearing, addressing how planning and development are to proceed compared with the content of pre-existing plans. The neo-liberalisation process is thus occurring via means that are contradictory from a neo-liberal perspective.

Keywords: comprehensive planning, spatial planning, neoliberal, governmentality, policymaking, översiktsplanering, fysisk planering, neoliberal, nyliberal, governmentality, policy