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*Abstract*

**Objectively best or most acceptable? Power hierarchies and knowledge types in the Swedish wind power development**

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The paper analyses the permit process for Swedish wind power development in terms of two paradigms of spatial planning and environmental management. The Swedish permit process for wind power has been criticised for being inefficient and was revised in 2009. The revisions meant letting environmental permit procedures replace local planning as the instrument of spatial planning of wind power development. The article empirically examines the first instance handling processes for aspects of efficiency and effectiveness such as how long they take, who has a say, for what reasons people want to have a say etc. Further, a comparison is made between processes before and after the legal revisions.

The article is based on a sample from the permit processes for wind power in Sweden. A database has been constructed based on handling process documents collected during 2011, both according to the new as well as the old system. Early results indicate that the new process is not fulfilling its main purpose of higher efficiency without loss of effectiveness. It is neither faster nor does it include participatory aspects to a higher degree.

On the one hand there is in Sweden a national drive to increase the speed of wind power development, where legal changes is one measure taken, and on the other the spatial planning system is based on a local planning monopoly. The development of wind power in Sweden is an interesting case of conflict between *national* goals for technological development and *local* spatial planning and governance of land use. This conflict between central and local power is further emphasised by what can be seen as a paradigmatic conflict relating to what type of knowledge should control decision-making; on the one side there is a calculating rationality, where expert-based knowledge is held as the defining paradigm, and on the other there is a communicative or deliberative approach dealing with balancing legitimate but not necessarily compatible interests. This epistemological battle is also seen in the two major bodies of legislation regulating environment and land use in Sweden: the Planning and Building Act (PBA) and the Environmental Code. These two sets of legislation can be seen as expressions of two competing paradigms of environmental governance, *the planning paradigm* and *the environmentalist paradigm* for short.

The paper is based on a study within the Swedish national research programme "Tools for environmental assessment, MiSt".

**Keywords:** Wind power, planning regulation, spatial planning, planning paradigm, environmentalist paradigm, knowledge types.