Navigating Time, Scale and Identities in Facilitation of Regional Development

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Abstract. Facilitating regional development becomes increasingly demanding as complexity grows and multi-level and multi actor governance is required to achieve transformational change moving away from fossil dependence and enabling neo-industrialisation. Meta governance is a "practice by (mainly) public authorities that entails the coordination of one or more governance modes by using different instruments, methods, and strategies to overcome governance failures" (Gjaltema et al., 2020).

In Skaraborg, a sub-region of Region Västra Götaland in West Sweden a common energy supply plan is being established through a joint decision of 15 municipalities. The municipalities are also establishing energy plans as mandated by law, and some are developing plans for wind power. The more than 20 energy companies serving the region are also driving parts of the transition. This multi-actor, multi-level context is understood as complex and non-linear (Mowles, 2016) where relations of power and negotiation is central.

As an industrial PhD-candidate the question of what I am trying to do is multi-layered. On the one hand I am trying to prevent the loss of jobs in Skaraborg, and even enable new ones being added by addressing lack of electricity. This, in turn, supposedly safeguards tax income for the municipalities ensuring funding for schools, nursery homes and more. On the other hand my hope is that the contributions of the article will impact, and speed up, regional development and transition in other places.

The purpose of the research is to enable more productive planning and decision making through a widened discourse. This article presents initial interpretations of the transition of energy systems in Skaraborg and West Sweden. Strategies based in existential sustainability are then employed to enhance the productivity of the facilitation, including re-scaling, temporal aspects and a deepened understanding of identities.

1. Introduction

The endeavour to reduce, and indeed end, emission of greenhouse gases is global, based in the UN system: the International Panel on Climate Change and the Agenda 2030. The summary of the synthesis report from 2023 clearly states that there is progress, but nearly not enough (Calvin et al., 2023). This is true also on other levels, including the national level in Sweden where the Swedish Climate Policy Council clearly states that Sweden's achievement are non-sufficient (*Klimatpolitiska rådets rapport 2023*, 2023). The 2024 report of the council reiterates this, presenting comprehensive criticism (*Klimatpolitiska rådets rapport 2024*, 2024). This obviously calls for action, and to be more precise more productive action.

Regions are central actors in driving sustainable development, in Sweden even mandated by law to establish regional policy, strategies, for regional development. Region Västra Götaland is Sweden's largest region, encompassing 49 municipalities. To enable cocreation of regional development four intermediaries, regional associations of municipalities, are established. Spatial planning, a crucial tool for sustainable development, is in the Swedish context performed by municipalities. Regions and sub-regions have no formal power over municipalities, leaving different kinds of soft power options such as facilitation, political agreement and more.

Driving sustainable development entails balancing conflicts of interest (Kates et al., 2005) in ever increasing complexity (Norberg and Cumming, 2008). Sharpened tools and enhanced capacity for regional development is then paramount.

One current focus with regards to eliminating emissions is electrification. This creates high demand for electricity globally and also in West Sweden where demand is expected to at least double in upcoming years (Ackeby et al., 2024). Replacing non-visible emissions with visible energy infra structure (production sites, grids) produce local resistance, and the need for presenting holistic arguments to mitigate this is clear. Current arguments building on green growth and regional competitiveness are likely not sufficient. Existential sustainability paired with advanced facilitation of regional development is a possible contribution. Meta-governance is an established practice aimed at facilitating multi-stakeholder and multi-actor development (Gjaltema et al., 2020; Hooge et al., 2022; Jessop, 2011; Sundqvist, 2021).

New challenges demand a governance approach that acknowledges uncertainties, interconnectedness and potential consequences of decisions both intended and unintended. Traditional policymaking, reliant on public actors gathering expertise and implementing regulatory solutions, struggles to address modern societal complexities (Grothmann and Pütz, 2009). Policymakers express powerlessness with regards to this. Historically, regional policy focused on economic growth, but evolving strategies require

a more integrated approach. Productive regional policy necessitates collaboration across organizational boundaries, involving actors in decision-making processes (Hummelbrunner and Lukesch, 2002). Development is now viewed as transformative, emphasizing holistic behaviour and feedback mechanisms to avoid ineffective policymaking (Hummelbrunner and Lukesch, 2002).

Björling (2016) introduces fragility: lack of mandate, resources and competencies as something preventing a sustainable development. Mowles (2016) argues that people, while co-creating, enable or constrain each other in relationships of power. Furthermore Mowles argues that actions have both intended an unintended consequences and proposes complexity sciences, the sciences of uncertainty, as well as social sciences might prove productive when understanding and promoting co-creation. This article proposes the existence of systems of powerlessness, based in observations. Perceived, and expressed, powerlessness appears with reference to a multitude of complex and interrelated phenomena such as regulatory challenges, high demand on investment (combined with scarcity of resources), lack of clarity around roles, responsibilities and more. This also appears in Rosas thinking, where policymaking is described as futile. *"It seems that … it has become politically impossible to plan and shape society over time; the time of political projects, it seems, is also over"* (Rosa, 2003, pp. 21–22). According to Rosa the *"structural problem at the heart of this disappearance of politics is the political system's fundamental inability to accelerate"* (Rosa, 2003, p. 22). The conclusion becomes: *"As a result, the future opens up to almost unlimited contingency and society experiences time in the form of perpetual change and acceleration"* (Rosa, 2003, p. 14).

Picchi et al. (2023) point out that the sustainability of the energy transition implementation process is affected by a lack of social-ecological systems thinking and that future development of sustainable energy landscapes requires informed decision-making.

The scope of the research is regional development, and the current case of regional development is transitioning of the energy systems, specifically electrification. The board of the (sub-)regional association of municipalities has decided that a (sub-)regional plan for energy supply is to be established.

The sub-region has 15 municipalities and there are no less than 21 grid owners operating in the area. About half of them are owned by municipalities, a common solution in Sweden. Apart from a couple that are privately owned, the rest are cooperatively owned. This too is a common thing in Sweden. Incentives vary between these different types of companies. Municipally owned companies might be expected by their owners to contribute to the transition where the cooperatively or privately owned might fear large investments needed for that.

2. Contributions

The contribution of the research is enabling more productive facilitation of regional development through faster and more productive planning, decision making and implementation where multiple actors integrate their efforts to achieve impact on speed and quality of the transition through a transdisciplinary approach combining technology and social sciences. This includes establishing or further developing existing methods and constructs, where the term *method* is interpreted a bit wider than the definition posed by March and Smith: *"a set of steps (an algorithm or guideline) used to perform a task"* (1995, p. 257). It also includes possibilities to adapt to ever changing contexts and changes in policy. According to March and Smith *"constructs or concepts form the vocabulary of a domain"* (1995, p. 256).

This particular article presents initial interpretations of the transition of energy systems in Skaraborg and West Sweden through the lenses of the theory identified.

As an industrial PhD-candidate the question of what I am trying to do is multi-layered. On the one hand I am trying to prevent the loss of jobs in Skaraborg, and even enable new ones being added by addressing lack of electricity. This, in turn, supposedly safeguards tax income for the municipalities ensuring funding for schools, nursery homes and more. On the other hand my hope is that the contributions outlined above will impact, and speed up, regional development and transition in other places.

3. Case in point: Electrification Governance Skaraborg

Figure 1. Skaraborg is a sub-region within Region Västra Götaland.

Electrification Governance Skaraborg consists of several initiatives. It is based in my work as a strategist for sustainable development at Skaraborgs kommunalförbund, one of four sub-regional intermediaries mentioned above. It is an organization facilitating regional development together with its members, the 15 municipalities in the former county of Skaraborg, now a sub-region of Region Västra Götaland.

Based on a political decision a (sub-)regional plan for energy supply is currently being established, to mitigate lack of electricity in Skaraborg, both power and energy. Within the project SUES-Digit, financed by the national research agency Formas, research on governing the transition and development of the energy system also utilizing digital models is ongoing.

The 15 municiplaities of Skaraborgs decided on a plan for energy supply

Excerpt from the decision:
- Concrete objectives on energy supply, self sufficiency, local production based un sub-regional and regional policy and goals
- Strategies and action plans for
  - Grid development
  - Local production
  - Large scale storage
  - Flexibility solutions
  - Efficiency, e g heating

Proposed structure
Introduction
- The good life in a future Skaraborg
- Capacities & characteristics (fossil free..), "MW, MWh"
- Identical introduction in all municipal energy plans

Current technical status
- Prognosis for demand
- Grid capacity for connecting new production
- Potential for local production
- DSO needs
- Objectives

Roadmap

Gap analysis → Actions

Figure 2. The decision on a regional plan and proposed headlines of the plan.

Skaraborgs kommunalförbund is a politically governed organization, where the board comprises of the mayors of the 15 municipalities. A multi actor and complex situation is at hand where there are 15 municipalities and no less than 21 energy companies, where some are only grid owners and other conglomerates with both grids, production, district heating etc. The board has adapted the role of meta-governor through the above mentioned decision and more.

The work as a strategist is aimed at regional development and regional transition, guided by (sub-)regional and regional policy. Several years of experience shapes a background for the research where one hypothesis is that there are systems of powerlessness preventing necessary decisions being made, and actions being taken. Hypothesis here being understood in the classical way, as a statement that can be tested through experimentation. (Park et al., 2020) In Björling (2016) fragility, described as scarcity of

resources, competencies and mandate is used to denote this. Another hypothesis, directed at mitigating identified challenges is that informatics, visualization using digital models, is a way to support decision making / policy making in complex contexts.

4. Theory: connecting existential sustainability with regional planning and development

Widening the discourse: sustainable existentialism

Kates et al. (2005) propose sustainable development as a process rather than a state that can be attained. Noting that values have a central role in sustainable development they also conclude: *"Finally - and in many ways, most importantly - sustainable development is defined in practice. The practice includes the many efforts at defining the concept, establishing goals, creating indicators, and asserting values. But additionally, it includes developing social movements, organizing institutions, crafting sustainability science and technology, and negotiating the grand compromise among those who are principally concerned with nature and environment, those who value economic development, and those who are dedicated to improving the human condition"* (2005, pp. 17–18).

This article proposes that existential sustainability ("Existential Sustainability," n.d.) adds several perspectives building on the foundations of general sustainable development, including:

On the scope of sustainability, and existential perspectives

1. Widening the scope of sustainability from only climate crisis to include loss of biodiversity where the first impacts all aspects of human life and the latter might even pose a real existential threat to human life, as pointed out by intergovernmental science-policy platform for biodiversity and ecosystem services, IPBES ("IPBES," n.d.).
2. Connecting the tangible with the intangible, the invisible and visible. One concrete example of this, proposed by Åsa Elmqvist at Energiforsk, is that mankind currently needs to replace invisible carbon dioxide with visible infrastructure (2023).
3. Realising the innate capacity for spirituality or interrelatedness within man.

Decision making and impacts on and by identities

4. Widening the understanding of human nature, and human decision making, from homo economicus, implying rationality, to downplaying sheer rationality (Mowles, 2010).

5. Widening the scope of sustainability even further to include the role of identities and impact on identities.
6. Realising that decision making evokes anxiety.

Temporal aspects, acceleration and powerlessness

7. Exploring systems of perceived power and powerlessness.

Possibilities associated with scale and re-scaling

8. Expanded sense of place, from local to global adding a connectedness.

The three later groups are presented below with the first group of perspectives interwoven. They are then combined in synthesised proposals on how governance can be enhanced.

Integrating perspectives: meta-governance

Gjaltema et al. (2020, p. 1771) define meta-governance as "a practice by (mainly) public authorities that entails the coordination of one or more governance modes by using different instruments, methods, and strategies to overcome governance failures". They explore the "who, what, why and how" of meta-governance where combining the who and what lead to four ideal types of meta-governance illustrated below: network meta-governance, multilevel meta-governance, meta-governance of multiplicity and meta-governance of modes (2020).
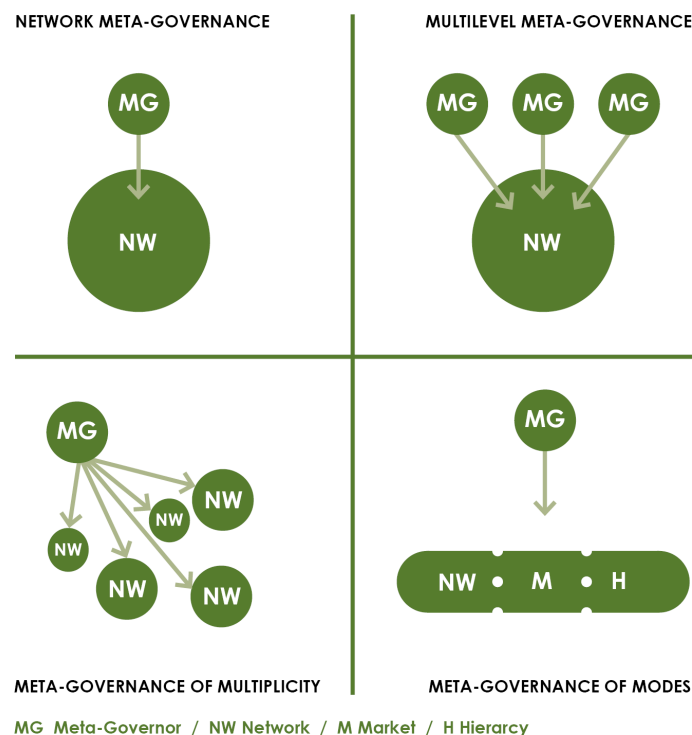

Figure 3. Different types of meta-governance, from Gjaltema et al. (2020).

"Thus, the meta-governance literature demonstrates a dialectical development in the debates on the shift from government to governance. The thesis of hierarchical steering by the sovereign state was followed by the anti-thesis of the hollow state in the new networked reality. Meta-governance can be perceived as its synthesis: it often implicitly tries to reconcile the government versus governance debate by looking into the new role of the state in the networked society. Meta-governance is "government plus governance" and can be constraining as well as enabling, as it "combines control and facilitation"" (Damgaard and Torfing, 2010, p. 260).

Hooge et al. (2022, p. 1594) present an institutional design approach where three types of meta-governance strategies are introduced: 1) network design strategies entails shaping and structuring networks, with in- and exclusion of actors and policy. 2) Network framing strategies focuses on formulation of goals to pursue, influencing the perception and sensemaking of actors creating a connection with identities. 3) Different kinds of participation by the meta-governor is the third type. However, it is understood that increasing complexity challenges a too mechanistic approach to governance (Mowles, 2010).

Examples of these strategies are presented in a heuristic analytical framework, from Hooge et al. (2022, p. 1595).

Table 1. Meta-governance strategies from Hooge et al. (2022).

Network design strategies	Influence the composition of the policy network.
	(1) Establish new actors
	(2) Re-arrange and shift positions of actors
	(3) Influence actors' roles
Resourcing strategies	Influence the activities undertaken by actors.
	(1) Provide/withhold actors with funds for specific purposes
	(2) Enable/disable activities by actors through provisions such as regulations and fiscal law
	(3) Grant/retract actors with knowledge and authority
Framing strategies	Influence the perception and sensemaking of actors regarding.
	(1) The (content of the) policy issue
	(2) The urgency of the policy issue
	(3) The purpose of the policy
	(4) The scope and/or specifics of policy goals by setting indicators, standards and targets

Emphasizing complexity, non-linearity and dialogue – Forum, Arena, Court

Several frameworks for understanding decision making in a complex setting with regards to strategic planning of society exist. Outlined by Fredriksson (2011), the Forum Arena Court framework proposes a widened understanding of strategic planning. *"Development discussions, strategic planning, and strategic decision-making, do not necessarily proceed in a linear chronology throughout forums-arenas-courts."* (2011, p. 83) Rather, strategic planning is described as messy and iterative. Capturing ideas and more, detecting emergent patterns and assisting them in taking shape in a more complex process than the legal system suggests (2011).

"…strategic planning becomes not a matter of designing rational processes to make logical decisions … but rather a matter of convincing other actors in a situation of multiple realities and multiple truths. It is about forming a story of what could/should be done based on the own mental image of reality and of using this as a base to strategically 'experiment' throughout the three forms of strategy construction sites, and in the struggle between discourses" (2011, p. 82).

However, forum arena court does not seem to directly address issues of power, or powerlessness.

Decision making and impacts on and by identities

Decision making involves moving from understanding to action, and it is the underlying assumption of this paper that understanding supports action, but in and of itself is not enough. *"Well-informed actions (i.e., those based on true beliefs) are more likely to achieve desired ends. Information is valuable insofar as it helps individuals form true beliefs which, in turn, promote effective, goal achieving action"* (March and Smith, 1995, p. 251). Decisions are, so far, mostly made by humans. Despite rather prevalent, neo liberal, ideas of homo economicus that imply rationality it is obvious that many things apart from objective, science based, material conditions impact decisions being made regarding sustainable development (Calvin et al., 2023).

A transition from a modern to a post-modern context has taken place during recent years. This impacts decision making and processes supporting decision making. Foucault essentially argued that where modern democratic and bureaucratic institutions see themselves as rational, almost scientific, this is not the case (Bevir, 1999). Rüsen (2005, p. 136) surveys the transition from modernity, bringing about the notion of <u>the</u> history to postmodernity where the idea of *"anything like one single … historical process of the development of humankind"* is *"radically rejected"*. (2005, p. 137)

An existentialist understanding of this, based in Kierkegaard and Sartre, is that the freedom that humans are condemned to, produces anxiety. Sartre distinguishes two types of existentialist anxiety where vertigo is a response not to external factors but freedom. Vertigo is therefore directed towards the future, and focuses on the consequences, intended or unintended, of decisions (Cox, 2021). Hence decision making, being about the future, is closely linked to the existentialist dilemma and vertigo.

One of the implications of this, regarding relations between civil servants and politicians, is that complexity, uncertainty and the possibilities of unexpected, specifically negative, outcomes of decisions now are a part of these relations. This, in turn, proposes that civil servants repeatedly place politicians in a state of anxiety. Obviously, this poses risks to the relationship and indeed the working environment of both parties, as they quite frankly make up big parts of each other's work lives.

As in any social context, strategies emerge to mitigate states and processes. Among them are requests for reduction (simplicity) often phrased as a demand for more concrete presentations and alternative solutions. This has consistently been the case within Skaraborg while working to create coherent and relevant strategies for the transition of the energy systems. Demand for simplification and visualisation is always high.

Decision making involves choosing between alternatives, prioritising and more. Making decisions also entails wielding power, where power is a notion that this paper does not seek to explain further. The opposite of power, powerlessness, is also not described. It is, however, an underlying assumption of this paper that systems of powerlessness exist and often come into play when (trying to) establish and implements decisions driving a sustainable development, especially in a multi-actor context of meta governance.

Identity, Alcoff points out *"is also a way of inhabiting, interpreting, and working through, both collectively and individually, an objective social location and group history"* (2006, p. 43). Wielding of power and living with the consequences is integrated into both individual and group history. Alcoff concludes: *"We might, then, more insightfully define identities as positioned or located lived experiences in which both individuals and groups work to construct meaning in relation to historical experience and historical narratives. Given this view, one might hold that when I am identified, it is my horizon of agency that is identified"* (2006, p. 43). Agency being the capacity for decision making implies that identities impact, and are impacted by, decision making.

Temporal aspects, acceleration and powerlessness

The German sociologist Hartmut Rosa grapples with modernization and presents the temporal dimension and specifically acceleration as a prerequisite for understanding the process of modernization. Acceleration, according to Rosa (2003), takes place in three forms: 1) Technological acceleration in goal directed processes speeding up communications, production and more. 2) Acceleration of social change where rates of change in society themselves are changing, increasing. 3) Acceleration of the pace of life

Rosa moreover identifies three drivers of acceleration: the economic, cultural and structural motors: 1) The economical motor where acceleration in short is driven by capitalism. *"The most obvious source of social acceleration in Western societies is, of course, capitalism. Within a capitalist economy, labor time figures as a crucial factor of production such that saving time is equivalent to making (relative) profit, as expressed in Benjamin Franklin's famous equation of time and money. Also, 'time leads' over competitors in the introduction of new technologies or products is a key element of market competition because it allows for crucial 'extra-profits' before the competitors catch up. Finally, the accelerated reproduction of invested capital is crucial with respect to what Marx called the 'moral consumption' of technology and to the credit system. As a consequence, the circle of production, distribution, and consumption constantly accelerates"* (2003, p. 11). 2) The cultural motor where acceleration is presented as a strategy to mitigate expectations of a fulfilled life, filled with realising as many options as possible, and the fact that time is limited. *"Now, on this cultural logic, if we keep increasing the speed of life, we could eventually live a multiplicity of lives within a single lifetime by taking up all the options that would define them. Acceleration serves as a strategy to erase the difference between the time of the world and the time of our life"* (2003, p. 13). 3) The structural motor where the principle of functional differentiation drives acceleration: *"In a society that is not primarily segregated in hierarchical classes but rather structured along the lines of functional 'systems,' like politics, science, art, the economy, law, etc., complexity increases immensely. As a result, the future opens up to almost unlimited contingency and society experiences time in the form of perpetual change and acceleration"* (2003, p. 14).

All of this impacts decision making and politics. Rosa points out: *"As a result, politics, too, has become 'situationalist': it confines itself to reacting to pressures instead of developing progressive visions of its own. Very often, political decisions no longer aspire to actively steer (acceleratory) social developments, but are defensive and decelerator"* (Rosa, 2003, p. 21).

Rüsen connects time and values where history *"clothes values in temporal experience"*. (2005, p. 25) One might argue that Rüsen connects temporality and identity, where values and identity are inter-related.

Possibilities associated with scale and re-scaling

Extension of scale might follow from sense of interrelatedness. This also correlates to the Judaeo-Christian notion of shalom – a state of oneness and peace for instance outlined by Harry Månsus, in what is described as the first instance of eco theology in Sweden (Månsus, 1983). Månsus continues to expand his themes, venturing again into the cosmic cathedral, stating: *"Surely, even life itself has an existential, religious dimension. Life provides overwhelming moments in awe and large gratitude"* (Månsus, 2021). (Translation by the author.)

Places, one type of scale, are hard to define but apparently socially constructed. *"While place is clearly central to human geography as well as to everyday life, it is equally clearly a changing and contested concept. Places range in scale from the corner of a room to the whole planet. They are, in the broadest sense, locations imbued with meaning that are sites of everyday practice"* (Cresswell and Holloway, 2009, p. 9).

Kärrholm et al. (2023) propose a "rudimentary vocabulary of modalities" to enable a discussion of rescaling. Referring to Caniggia and Maffei (2001) they expand the understanding of scale from geographical taking place, "big or small" to "different level of complexity of the components internally arranged to construct a whole". It is my understanding/proposal that this definition enables an understanding in part disconnected from the most basic notion of space, and that different systems of multiple actors and dynamics between them can be included in different scales.

The proposed modalities include:

- **Extension and compression** – whereby the importance of a specific scale is either extended or compressed by for instance adding actors from elsewhere.

- **Sidestepping** – whereby parallel situations are produced.

- **Multiple-scalar orders** – whereby the very idea of a single vertical scalar order is challenged.

- **Upscaling and downscaling** – whereby a vertical movement on existing scale relations take place.

Elaborating Kärrholm et al. note, highlighting the role of power: "This also means that scaling is often closely related to issues of power and the ways in which power is embodied, exercised and distributed" (2023, p. 273).

The efforts on regional development in Skaraborg builds on The Structural Image and is mainly perceived as an effort based in spatial planning. The Structural Image for Skaraborg is one of the empirical bases of Nils Björling's dissertation. Björling addresses scale in several ways: "Through architectural thinking assemblage thereby becomes useful, because it is open for a continuous rearrangement of components and processes and have the capacity to combine transformations and conditions from different scales" (Björling, 2016, p. 303).

The current work on developing the energy systems in Skaraborg involves (at least) one region (Region Västra Götaland), one sub-region (Skaraborgs kommunalförbund), 15 municipalities and 21 grid owners leaving the national level, industry and many relevant stakeholders out of this text.
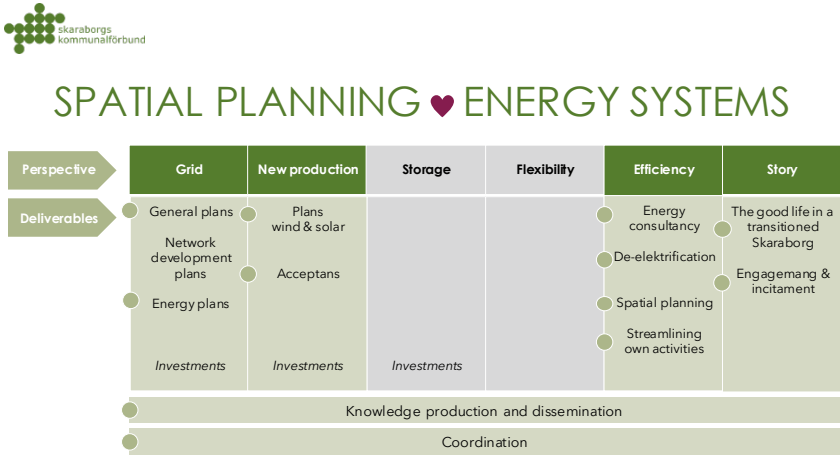

Figure 4. Connecting spatial planning with the development of local and regional energy systems, describing roles between municipalities and energy companies.

A rather obvious application of up- and downscaling is facilitating efforts on multiple scales such as only the grid owners, only the publicly owned grid owners, the municipalities and the grid owners and more. This modality has been tested, and the result is a proposed structure for co-creation of the desired transition depicted above. The grey columns are the sole responsibility of the energy companies, activities with a green dot are the sole responsibility of the municipalities.

The diversity with regards to legal structure and ownership of the grid owners in Skaraborg ranging from private to publicly owned via co-opted poses challenges for co-creation and indeed financing. In short, municipally owned companies are expected to contribute to regional development where the transitioning of the energy systems is a part, where privately owned and co-opted owners of grid lack incentives for that. Bringing in another financier, in this case the locally owned insurance company, for the facilitation of the cooperation between energy companies is an example of sidestepping.

Models and visualisation

Decision making in complex, multi stakeholder, contexts demand reduction to enable conversations and learning. One plausible way of facilitating this is the use of models and tools for visualisation.

Design of models that on the one hand enables decision making and on the other hand do not limit assessment of relevant outcomes or even relevant outcomes is then key. (Norberg and Cumming, 2008)

Visualisation is a pedagogical tool with capacity to present complex systems, enabling learning with regards to understanding consequences of decisions (Sterman, 2000). However, visualisation builds on reduction, and a perceived understanding might be false (Norberg and Cumming, 2008). Whether visualisation has a capacity to reduce actual anxiety is unclear.
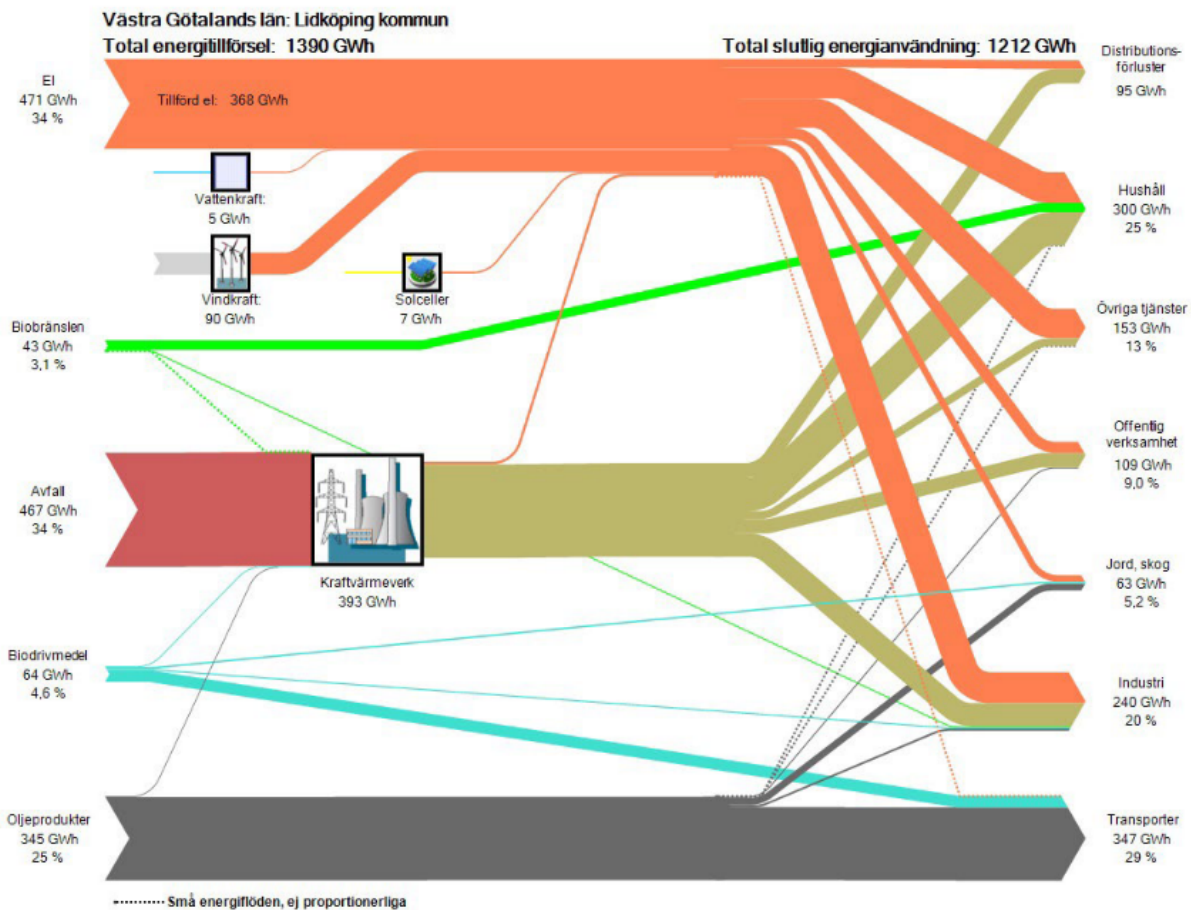

Figure 5. Includes as an example: a Sankey diagram of energy added and consumed in one of the municipalities. (Länsstyrelserna, 2023)

As a part of the aforementioned project SUES-Digit pilot testing of digital models and visualisation have been performed. Through open data, provided by several agencies, different scenarios based on for instance different levels of adaption of electrical vehicles,

introduction of local solar- or windbased production of electricity and others can be compared via Sankey-diagrams. These diagrams, or more specifically the differences between them, are then used as a basis for facilitating conversations and decision making. Models have been established for at least two municipalities. This work is presented in an article that is currently under peer review. (Fredricson et al., n.d.)The next step is to build a geographical model of the entire sub-region with enhanced visualisation capabilities of more perspectives than energy systems, for instance mobility, road infra structure and housing. This work is already in progress.

5. Contributions by Existential Sustainability within facilitation of regional development

Finding and implementing strategies enabling productive facilitation of regional development is challenging. The introduction of meta governance helps analyse and develop structures enabling governance and co-creation. Different parts or approaches of existential sustainability could be utilised to enhance the performative capacity of such facilitation.

Different approaches to re-scaling, enabling connectedness – stated above as one perspective of existential sustainability - are outlined above and have proven meaningful. Changing perspectives from invisible emission of greenhouse gases to visible energy infra structures often times faces NIMBY-based resistance from local communities. Offering a narrative including different scales might be a way to change the local discourse. Connecting local production of energy with the global scale and a sense of awe for the interconnectedness of biodiversity, threatened ecosystems and one's life and context is a path built on a widened scope of sustainability worth exploring. This is the case in upcoming efforts to establish several wind farms in Skaraborg. Connecting local and regional development in the shape of more job opportunities providing taxes financing schools and nursing homes is fairly common strategy. It might be the case that this strategy can be further developed and combined with the one above – connecting the global, human and local scales.

Appointing, or at least identifying (sic!) meta governors with an awareness of how identities are impacted by and impact wielding of power or performing of governance is a possibility. As Alcoff points out identity impacts "horizon of agency", which in turn would impact capacity for decision making (2006, p. 43). Both network design and framing strategies impact identities of actors. Framing strategies contain formulating meaning and objectives both related to formulation of identities. Being a part of or being excluded from an effort also influences self-image and identity. Wielding power, in this case being the meta governor, also impacts identity. One obvious strategy would be to spend time

aligning narratives around common ground with regards to vision and objectives. Another way of phrasing this, related to Rüsen (2005) is connecting narration and interpretation thus creating history is another. However, there are no guarantees that such common ground even exists or is large enough to enable co-creation. This is, in part, one of the challenges in Skaraborg with the different kinds of energy companies and other actors.

A more untried strategy would be to reflect on current and desired identities of the meta governor. "Circularity, along with hypothesizing, is a technique nurtured by curiosity" (Cecchin, 1987, p. 5). Circular questions or assumptions are an established way to support reflection. "Circular assumptions tend to be associated with holism, interactional principles, structure determinism, neutral attitudes, and systemic approaches" (Tomm, 1988, p. 3). Circular questions supporting this reflection might include: how does our identity promote or hinder our efficacy as meta governor? How are identities impacted by accepting the role of meta governor, and what are the risks associated with that? Productive questions are probably ones related to the notion of a "hard look at yourself in the mirror". These types of questions will be explored in upcoming research. Interviews with mayors and other policy makers will survey perceived powerlessness and power driving transitional change, indeed relating to identity.

Adding a more holistic approach on existential sustainability, integrating identity, place and time, a question worth reflecting upon is: what are productive identities of a meta governor or other actors enabling different types of re-scaling and enabling decision making to become less 'situationalist' and hence less powerless? (Rosa, 2003, p. 21)

6. Poetical postscript

Know thyself echoes the inscription from Delphi.

This seems to include both "you" and "I".

Together we are narrating history through time and space,

unavoidably in human scale, as the human race.

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