How national parks change a rural municipality's development strategies – The Skjåk case, Norway

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The governance structure on which contemporary nature conservation policy and practice are based represents a new structure that may affect development strategies in rural municipalities. The purpose of the article is to analyse the dynamics of change in local place development strategies in the wake of proposals of and establishments of national parks in a rural municipality in Norway. The empirical analysis is based on a qualitative longitudinal study that spanned a period of more than 20 years. The author claims that neo-endogenous approaches represent a valuable addition to studies that have treated state-driven nature conservation initiatives in terms of local resistance and unbalanced power relations. This due to the article's focus on co-evolution and the development of local capacity through external relations. Additionally, the article demonstrates the value of longitudinal studies when rural dynamics of change are investigated. Both planning and complexity theories are combined with assemblage theory are applied in order to conceptualize the dynamics of change from a local perspective. The author concludes that the national parks trigger strategic shifts and new approaches to place development that challenge previous strategies. Moreover, the local ability to act for change is strongly connected to processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Additionally, new challenges grow in these processes of change, namely tensions between the defined and the undefined becoming when results in terms of goals and purposeful ends are not achieved.

1. Introduction

This article is about a rural society that is facing population decline and a large change in its structural context, namely establishment of two national parks in a substantial part of its area. In the wake of the establishment of the two parks, a local strategy process for place development started. The research question addressed in this article is how local strategies for rural place development can work progressively for change even if the structural surroundings seem to work against local will.

Two conditions constitute the basis of this article. First, there has been growing interest in the management of large protected areas through governance in many European countries. One reason for this interest is the paradigmatic shift from protection without use to protection through use (Mehnen et al., 2012). The movement has shifted from a static preservation approach that separates preserved areas from non-protected areas, towards a dynamic innovation approach that often involves participatory planning (Mehnen et al., 2012; Mose and Weixlbaum, 2007). The latter is based on the idea of cooperation between different parties' interests. The goals for such cooperation are often local and regional development at the same time as nature is

being protected or preserved. Mose and Weixlbaum (2007) ask whether we are seeing a shift towards a new paradigm for protected areas in Europe and claim that a multifunctional orientation is under development. The traditional nature protection paradigm is left behind in order to attend biodiversity, welfare-effects, gene pool, sustainable regional development, and environmental education and training (Mose and Weixlbaum, 2007). Despite the paradigmatic shift towards the dynamic innovation approach and participatory planning, the preservation of nature in large areas is still contested in Norway and a source of conflicts among traditional positions (Aasetre, 2013).

The second condition constituting the bases of this article is a new rural paradigm (Normann and Vasström, 2012). Central to this shift is the ideological focus on endogenous factors such as mobilization of local assets and investment-oriented approaches instead of attention to exogenous factors such as state redistribution, subsidies and support (Normann and Vasström, 2012). Furthermore, this means a shift from a sectoral to a territorial policy approach (Normann and Vasström, 2012). The implications of the shift are a new and broader set of actors and that in a broad sense competitiveness and place development are primarily a local responsibility; the logic of market is visible within this policy (Hidle et al., 2006; Shucksmith, 2010; Woods, 2009). Part of the

shift is a neo-endogenous perspective (Ray, 2006; Shucksmith, 2010). In addition to local actors, the focus is on *extra-local actors*: actors that are external but potentially important for local actors to cooperate with in order to extend local capacities. A neo-endogenous perspective is a 'notion that rural development is best achieved through a combination of local resources and local action integrated within wider networks' (Bosworth et al., 2015, p. 428).

Thus, we cannot think, speak of and analyse nature conservation and rural place development exclusively in terms of state power, management and dominance over local interests, local empowerment or local resistance. Important work has been done in Norway and elsewhere to investigate and analyse power relations, conflicts, management models, and relations between different scales of management (Falleth, 2004; Falleth and Hovik, 2009; Falleth et al., 2008a,b; Hovik and Falleth, 2003; Hongslo et al., 2016; Hovik and Hongslo, 2017; Hovik and Vabo, 2005; Hovik et al., 2010; Overvåg et al., 2015a). Hongslo et al. (2016) have investigated how the decentralization of management has been implemented in Norway and claim that mobilization of local actors is crucial in order to take care of the democratic dimension in a decentralized model. Interestingly, Hovik and Hongslo (2017) find that public participation in nature protection and local management boards is rather weak. However, I have a further focus in this article, as I claim that a neo-endogenous approach offers a valuable addition to the above-mentioned studies, first by seeing nature conservation in relation to local place development processes in a broader scope (territorially rather than sectorially), and second by opening up to see place development strategies as dynamic. For example, according to Shucksmith and Talbot (2015), social and economic dimensions of sustainability are often absent in environmental discourses on 'sustainability' in agricultural and rural policies. A broader and thus territorial scope on rural place development would necessarily include such dimensions.

In the aftermath of nature conservation, both planning and place development strategies are heavily embedded in contexts of many actors that together constitute a complex system of social actors and both material and immaterial dimensions, different scales, different types of knowledge, and different questions, and fairly frequently uncertainty about the outcomes of planning and strategies (Boelens and de Roo, 2014). In the case of nature conservation in particular, rural municipalities have to cope with this complexity and uncertainty in their planning and strategizing for place development. At the same time, the two paradigmatic shifts mentioned above have in principle opened up a new space of opportunities and responsibilities for local actors and municipalities in their engagement with large protected areas and nature conservation in order to create and stimulate local community development.

This article presents an investigation of a particular case in a rural municipality, Skjåk Municipality, in Oppland County, Norway. I start by describing the establishment of the national parks in the municipality and how they have been part of the municipality's planning and policy strategies for place development. The analytical scope in this article is change in rural societies. My aim is to provide substantial insights into how local strategies for rural place development can work progressively for change even when the structural surroundings seem to work against them.

2. Contextual setting

Mountain municipalities in Norway are in general experiencing a demanding situation along several parameters such as a decreasing population (Arnesen et al., 2010). In this respect, Skjåk Municipality is a typical mountain and rural municipality with emphasis on agriculture, forestry and small-scale industry and tourism. The following is an overview of contextual key factors.

Skjåk's population has in general decreased since c.1990, with the exception of some periods (Fig. 1). In 1990, the population was 2612

and on 1 January 2018 it was 2179. Of the total area, 83% is mountainous. The municipality is 420–2172 m above sea level. About 79% of the total land area in the municipality is protected by the Nature Conservation Act of 1970. The protected areas are mainly mountain area.

There are two national parks in the municipality: Reinheimen (established in 2007) and Breheimen (established in 2009) (Fig. 2). Additionally, there are several other national parks in the region. About 95% of the total area in Skjåk is community-owned common land, or almenning in Norwegian. This means that the area is not owned by the State but by the local farmers and landowners in the municipality, and all inhabitants have the right to hunt in the area. This has been the case since the local Skjåk Almenning (*almenning* means community-owned common land) was established in 1789. Community-owned common land is a special arrangement in Norway, which is regulated by law, whereby the right of ownership applies to at least of the half of the total agricultural properties that traditionally have had the right of use of the common land. Furthermore, part of the land cannot be sold, but under certain circumstances it may be leased. The common land tradition has roots back dating to the 16th century in Norway, but it varies according to whether the land was owned by private landlords, groups of farmers, or local municipalities, such as Skjåk (Reinton, 1961). Skjåk Almenning' main business has traditionally been timber, but business related to hunting, fishing and lease of second home plots have become increasingly important over the years. In 2012, 17% of the population was employed in agriculture – a 33% fall since 1992 (Skjeggedal et al., 2015).

The mountain area and forest in Skjåk have been administered as a common land by Skjåk Almenning on behalf of its stakeholders since 1789, when the farmers in the municipality jointly purchased the property from shipowner Bernt Anker. Today, it is the largest non-State property in Norway. The large property and the organizational and ownership structure make it a special context. It was therefore not unproblematic when, in 1986, the Government suggested the establishment of two national parks on almost 80% of the municipality's land (NOU 1986:13; St.meld. nr. 62 (1991–92)). Decisions on the proposals were made by the Norwegian Government in 2006 (Reinheimen National Park) and in 2009 (Breheimen National Park).

In Skjåk Municipality there has been clear opposition to the establishment of the national parks, especially Reinheimen National park. The opposition is still noticeable, despite the number of years since the parks were established (Reiten, 2013; Skjeggedal et al., 2015). However, as the description and analyses in this article show, the attitude towards the nature conservation and the national parks has changed in recent last years in favour of another approach, namely nature conservation as part of place development. In Skjåk, there have been several local public planning initiatives and projects, as well as among private actors, who are trying to link the impacts of nature conservation to place and local community development.

The Norwegian concept of national parks is based in the Nature Conservation Act under which national parks should conserve types of nature that are particular to a region. Outdoor life, recreation, and traditional land use can also be part of the purpose of such conservation. The aim and the conservation rules vary with each national park in Norway, as do the conservation criteria related to local use interests. Thus, in Norway, the national parks do not represent a clear and unambiguous level of conservation (St.meld. nr. 62 (1991–92)).

The Norwegian nature administration and conservation regime has relatively recently changed towards a dynamic innovation approach, which means that decentralization of decision-making and management has had a stronger and decisive local voice (Aasetre, 2013; Daugstad et al., 2006). As an example, in 1996 the Norwegian authorities initiated an experiment with local cooperation in managing large nature conservation areas (Falleth et al., 2008a,b). However, Daugstad et al. (2006) argue on a general level that centralized management still prevails, despite new approaches and international trends. It has also
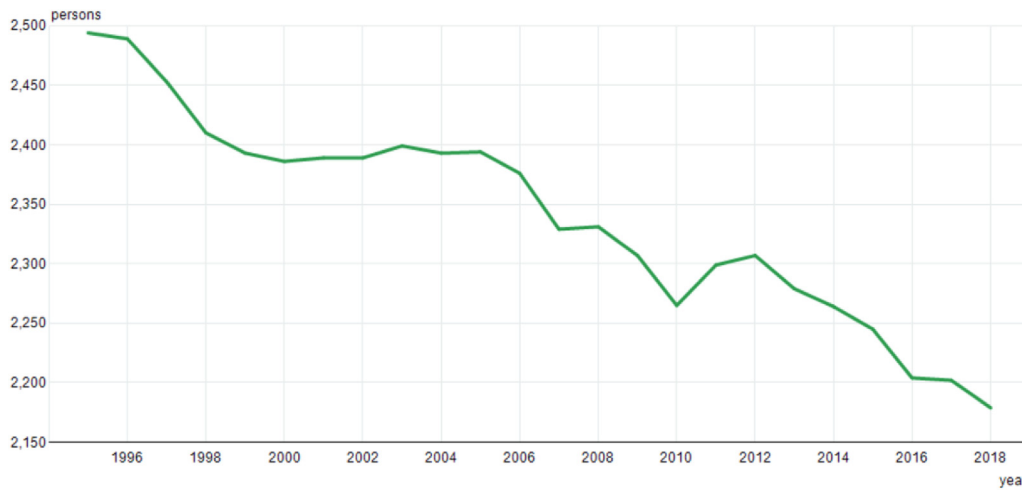
Fig. 1. Population and population changes in Skjåk 1995–2018. Note that the y-axis does not start at zero (source: Statistics Norway).
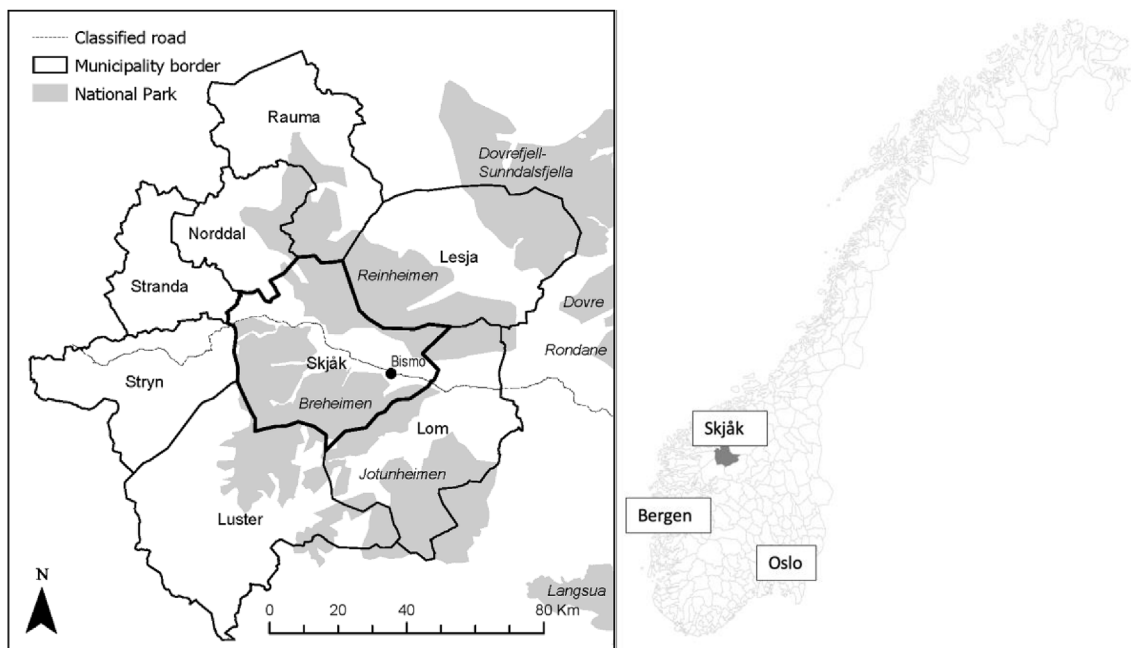

Fig. 2. Skjåk Municipality, neighbouring municipalities, and the national parks.

been shown that conflicts between Norwegian local authorities and the Norwegian state government are continuing, despite new trends and political intentions towards more collaboration between the local level and state level (Overvåg et al., 2015b).

A new management model was introduced by the state in 2009 (Falleth and Hovik, 2009), which model delegates management responsibilities to the local level (Fig. 3).

This new structure is relevant for all national parks in Norway and incorporates representatives from the state, local municipalities, regional authorities, and the regional authorities responsible for the management of wild reindeer. Some have argued that the model is mainly a way to include local actors in the management by the State instead of actually transferring power to the local level (Overvåg et al., 2015c). Nevertheless, the most visible change is that the National Park Board (Nasjonalparkstyre) consists of mayors from all municipalities affected by the national parks, as well as representatives from the County Governor (Fylkesmannen). Interestingly, Hovik and Hongslo (2017) claim that in general national park boards are formally restricted from dealing with local economic development. Thus, the national park management model is a separate institutional structure from
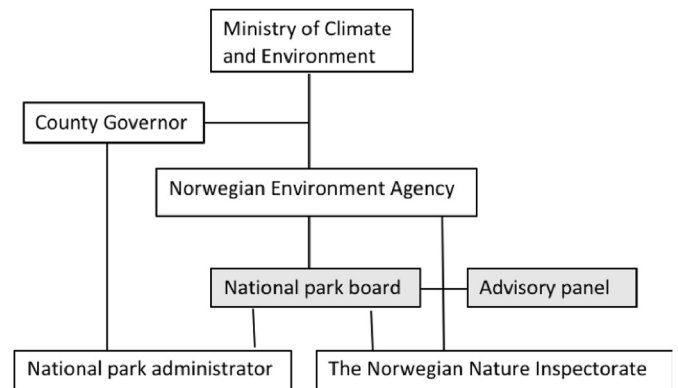

Fig. 3. National park management model.

the municipality institutional structure, which is responsible for place development policy and planning in a broader sense. After pressure from local actors, also representatives of Skjåk Almenning and the

regional Wild Reindeer Committee were represented in the National Park Board (Overvåg et al., 2015b). The board's advisory panel consists of landowners and members of relevant public services and panels, the business sector, and NGOs. In the case of Skjåk, local agents are now in central positions, such as the national park manager (a local person, but employed by the County Governor of Oppland (Overvåg et al., 2015b), and the Norwegian Nature Inspectorate (Statens naturoppsyn), which is part of the Norwegian Environment Agency, is represented by two persons with responsibility for Reinheimen National Park and Breheimen National Park respectively. These actors, among others, are responsible for the daily management of the parks, drawing up strategic and operational management plans and ensuring that the rules for each protected area are followed.

The establishing of the two national parks in Skjåk involved two different processes. In the case of Reinheimen National Park, the establishment went relatively smooth in the period when the process of proposing the protection plan began in 2005 and was approved in 2007 (Skjeggedal et al., 2015), despite the fact that the local opposition against the park was very strong in the 1990s. The involved municipalities mainly accepted the plan, and there was agreement about local management and economic compensation (Skjeggedal et al., 2015). The model was introduced in 2010. However, many actors in Skjåk felt that the local authorities should have managed the area through different legislation than the Nature Conservation Act, and many were not comfortable with receiving instructions from outside (Reiten, 2013; Skjeggedal et al., 2015).

It took longer time to establish Breheimen National Park than it took to establish Reinheimen National Park. The planning process started in 1997 and the protection plan was approved in 2006 (Skjeggedal et al., 2015). There was disagreement among the involved actors as to whether a national park or the weaker form of protection as a *protected landscape* would be the best solution for the area (Skjeggedal et al., 2015). The process resulted in an administration model with a co-ordinating board, and with each of the involved municipalities responsible for their own areas. In addition, Skjåk Almenning is represented on the board. This management model was introduced in 2013 (Skjeggedal et al., 2015). Skjeggedal et al. (2015) performed a thorough analysis of land use planning in Norwegian mountain areas, Skjåk included, and asked the following question: Which issue is highlighted the most, local development or nature protection? They concluded that from a local perspective 'The combining of use and protection in protected-areas management in practice is weak' (Skjeggedal et al., 2015, p. 17). In other words, the objective is primarily nature protection.

The remaining question is how do local processes handle the contextual setting that is apparently working against this rural community, and how is it possible to work progressively for change in such context?

3. Analytical framework

In order to approach the question of *change* in rural place development policy, in this article I argue for a combination of elements from (1) planning theory, especially theory related to complexity and becoming, and (2) assemblage theory. Uncertainty, complexity and the undefined have long been issues in planning theory (Hillier, 2008, 2011). They have also been issues in the social sciences in general (Urry, 2005), and especially since the introduction of the global networked society into social analyses (Castells, 1996). The particular context described above has elements of several dimensions that make the situation complex, uncertain and undefined, at least with regard to purposeful ends. On the one hand, the nature conservation policy is initiated from the state in a kind of a modernistic frame – a typical top-down approach – whereby local municipalities have to respond to the initiative from above. Scale complexity is then introduced as an element. On the other hand, there is also a strong collaborative element in the context, especially with respect to the management and

organization of the parks (Daugstad et al., 2006; Skjeggedal et al., 2015). This situation close to what Healey (2003) discusses as implementation of plans, not as fixed blueprints for defined areas, but as part of a collaborative process. Such processes open up for uncertainty in how the result of planning processes and strategies because it is not possible to define the end with precision. Faludi (1989) describes this dimension as *strategic plans* that are momentary agreements, contains various projects, and where the future remains open because many decisions depend on future perceptions.

According to Boelens and de Roo (2014), the openness in planning and development is a result of 'a growing awareness that planning needs a wider portfolio of tools beyond "the plan"' (Boelens and de Roo, 2014, p. 2). They call this awareness a course towards a 'planning of undefined becoming', meaning situational planning focuses on the communal, the co-operative, and dynamic intentions and needs, and the ultimate goal not necessarily is known in advance. In planning studies, complexity is an important theoretical backdrop for the undefined becoming approach: it refers to systems that co-evolve overtime while new elements and new actors are added or removed, and new steps, new orientations, new decisions, and new strategies have to be taken. Furthermore, complexity is dynamic and is a characteristic of self-organizing systems that interact and influence later events (Urry, 2005). Complexity is about systems that have the ability to act and change in terms of their power of instability. Complexity is thus more about emergence (i.e. becoming), than it is about stability and complicated systems in equilibrium. However, certainty and uncertainty, and stability and instability are often parallel and current dimensions. This notion of complexity is central in de Roo's perspective on change in planning processes (Aasetre, 2013; de Roo, 2010). de Roo (2010) makes three assumptions. First, an open system evolves through time from order towards chaos. This happens because of a higher degree of complexity. The reason behind the development towards more complexity is that planning develops from a technical rational stage to a communicative rational stage. The second assumption is that complex systems are visibly out of balance, and there is a high degree of self-organization. Self-organization means that components of a system spontaneously communicate with each other, as a consequence of feedback and feedforward mechanisms. The result is a spontaneous development of new structures. de Roo (2010) argues that this is not a random development, but a path-dependent one. The third and final assumption is that new systems will emerge from this system as complexity increases.

What de Roo describes is a system of becoming (de Roo (2010). It has structures and mechanisms that allow the system to gravitate between order and chaos, fixity and fluidity, and stable and unstable conditions. Gravitation makes the system flexible and able to change. To a certain extent, de Roo's elaboration is a proposal of how planning should be further developed, normatively, and is not a description of how it is actually practised. Complexity theory has an important role in this dynamic and normative approach to planning and change. However, elsewhere de Roo argues (Boelens and de Roo, 2014) that many planners consider complexity as more in line with reality than approaches that focus on, for example, order and predictability. Conceptually, Boelens and de Roo (2014) argue for a *spatial epistemology*, *spatial theory*, *spatial strategies*, and *spatial techniques of becoming* by referring to a wide range of literature.

The *epistemological approach* means a shift from planning content and processes to planning conditions. Self-organization is an important element in the epistemological approach. In practice this means that planners seek new insights when new relations and connections evolve and simultaneously try to become involved as actors in new co-created systems. *Spatial theories of becoming* are connected to the epistemological dimension by their focus on temporary notions of planning. A theoretical example is evolutionary economic geography (Balland et al., 2015; Boschma, 2015) and its focus on innovation in the interactive behaviour of firms, in co-evolution with, for example, other sectors,

technologies, and institutions (Boelens and de Roo, 2014). Another example is the above-mentioned theory of rural neo-endogenous development that is searching along the same tracks (Ray, 2006; Woods, 2009; Woods and McDonagh, 2011). Shucksmith and Talbot shows that many scholars who discuss *networked development* have shown that 'social and economic development processes in any locality inevitably include a mix of endogenous (bottom-up) and exogenous (top-down) forces' (Shucksmith andTalbot, 2015, p. 257). Shucksmith and Talbot continue by claiming that 'the critical issues are the balance of internal and external control of development processes and how to enhance the capacity of local actors to steer these larger processes to their benefit' (Shucksmith and Talbot, 2015, p. 257). Boelens and de Roo (2014) show that since the 2000s several experiments have been conducted that take co-evolution as an approach. The lesson from these experiments is the importance of contextual fit, and that planning or planners are just one of many forces, and thus planners need to co-evolve with the myriad of forces in order to facilitate common futures across and within scale (Boelens and de Roo, 2014).

The last field of literature I will refer to from the work done by Boelens and de Roo (2014) is *spatial strategies of becoming* (i.e. adaptive planning). Adaptive planning means proactively attuning to changing circumstances. According to Boelens and de Roo (2014, p. 8),

> adaptability is especially concerned with the circumstances or the conditions with which the object of planning might co- evolve. It is defined as a strategy that starts explicitly from contexts (the specifics of the location, its latent co-actors and institutional settings) and tries to develop the capacity of these contexts to respond to changes and exploit circumstances.

In other words, adaptability is about taking a context seriously and pinpointing challenges and selling points in a specific situation. In this perspective, here are connections to deliberative approaches and in particular to what Healey (2008) calls *practical judgements*. Practical judgement resulted from 'the willingness to talk, to listen to other people' (on Rorty, 1980 and pragmatism, see Bernstein, 1983), but as Bernstein (1983), with reference to Rorty, writes about the willingness to talk and keep dialogues going, 'these are simply moral virtues … and no guarantee of success' (Bernstein, 1983, p. 198). However, practical judgement implies something more than just talking. Healey (2008, p. 283) refers to how Bernstein defines practical judgement as follows: 'it always implicitly appeals to and requires testing against the opinions of other judging persons'. Healey argues that, understood in this way, practical judgement has been important in the interest in deliberative democracy and collaborative policymaking. Thus, pragmatism has potential as a force of change.

Complexity and becoming, as described above, are to a certain degree close to the planning context that many rural communities with large protected areas face today, at least if we take into consideration *the paradigmatic shift* from protection without use to protection through use (Mehnen et al., 2012), *the new rural paradigm* that has been developed (Normann and Vasström, 2012) and neo-endogenous perspectives. Despite the fact that drivers of rural change are exogenous, co-evolutionary planning is expected to happen within the structures that are created. However, there is no doubt that several scholars in planning theory inspired by complexity theory, becoming and the like are concerned with the normative side, namely how planning should be carried out in practice, which possibilities planning represent, and in particular that planning is not something that only professional planners do (Boelens and de Roo, 2014; Hillier, 2007, 2008; 2011; de Roo, 2010). Boelens and de Roo (2014) give us not only epistemologies and theories of becoming, but also *techniques of becoming* in order to implement the theoretical and epistemological practices of becoming in planning. Hence, they aim to fill the theory-practice gap that has been under debate for decades within planning studies and theory (Lord, 2014).

However, the main aim of this article is not to fill the theory-practice gap or to give advice on how planning should proceed in rural

contexts and nature conservation areas. Nevertheless, the theoretical elaboration on becoming and complexity are important in this article for at least two reasons. First, this literature represents an important translation and elaboration of highly relevant theories into the practical field of planning. Second, the theoretical elaboration to planning outlined above represents an independent analytical approach to change and policymaking with high relevance to studies of place development in the wake of nature conservation.

However, there are still some shortages, given the analytical scope of this article. The discussions of complexity thinking and theories of becoming presented above are primarily descriptive and, as already stated, normative. Change is an explicit and implicit part, but how change occurs or does not occur needs further clarification. Co-evolution and adaptability are both highly connected to change, but analytical concepts of the dynamic of change need to be added. In this regard, becoming and co-evolution are concepts that need some analytical tools. Further clarification can be found within assemblage theory, which is one of the theoretical sources behind the concept of co-evolution.

Assemblage theory, as elaborated by DeLanda (2006), is an analytical approach to change, social formation and social complexity. It is related to becoming and co-evolution and has been applied in a number of studies of place development, rural change and planning, as well as in geographical thought in general (Allen, 2011; Anderson et al., 2012; Boelens and de Roo, 2014; Dittmer, 2014; Dressler et al., 2018; Haarstad and Wanvik, 2016; Hillier, 2011; McLean, 2017). With reference to Deleuze's concept of assemblage, Hillier (2011) uses assemblage to map potentialities of becoming.

My purpose in this article is related to Hillier's purpose, but I use assemblage as an analytical concept to analyse mechanisms and conditions for change and transformation of rural places through planning and policy. DeLanda takes Deleuze's concept as a point of departure but elaborates the concept more thoroughly into 'a reconstructed theory of assemblages' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 4). In his elaboration, assemblage means 'wholes characterized by relations of exteriority' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 10), or *clustered* relations of exteriority. Exteriority implies that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and made a component of another assemblage. The components role may be material (e.g. plans, texts, labour, pressure groups, figures, and illustrations) or expressive (e.g. discourses, expressions of legitimacy, postures, and expresses about ourselves and themselves). The components of an assemblage often have a mixture of material and expressive capacities. Fundamentally, all places are assemblages (Dovey, 2010). When a component is detached from one assemblage it may be plugged into another assemblage. The components' interactions in each assemblage differ because the components' properties are in interaction with other interacting entities. This means that properties of a whole are not reduced to the properties of its parts but to the actual exercise of their capacities. Capacities mean the ability to act or make change or to resist change. Skills, knowledge, and jurisdiction are examples of capacities that may have an effect in an assemblage in general and in a rural context in particular.

In this article, Skjåk as a community network or organizational network consists of different heterogeneous components. However, the important question is not what the assemblage is in all its details, but what it does (Van Wezemael, 2018).

Furthermore, in this article, the analytical core of the question of capacity is how the interaction between components (i.e. co-evolution) contributes to stabilization or destabilization of local strategies for place development as an assemblage. Processes that stabilize the assemblage are referred to as processes of *territorialization*. This happens by increasing the assemblage's degree of internal homogeneity, stabilizing its identity and sharpening its boundaries (e.g. spatial boundaries, jurisdictional boundaries, and social boundaries). By contrast, processes that destabilize, transform and change the assemblage are referred to as processes of *deterritorialization* (i.e. change). State

initiated nature conservation that allows or forces local actors or authorities to break with past routines may be seen as a deterritorialization force when local actors start collaborating with the State.

There is a dynamic between territorialization and deterritorialization and it is similar to what de Roo (2010) describes as becoming and gravitation between stable and unstable conditions. This is a theoretical approach to how societal change occurs. In other words, social formations are assemblages of complex formations whereby different assemblages may play roles in other larger or more extended complex formations, such as in the relationship between local rural place development formations and national and global and/or urban formations concerning nature protection. In this regard, local development formations or the state are not simple, but contain material, social and expressive elements. Thus, as social assemblages, community network and institutional organizations contain a variety of components that are necessary to include in empirical descriptions and analyses.

The theoretical approach in this article has implications for methods and empirical research. The following is an account of the methodological approach in this study of change in rural place development strategies.

4. Methodological approach

The methodological approach in this article is based on *qualitative longitudinal research* (QLR) (Thomson and McLeod, 2015). In this context, QLR's analytical significance is its sensitivity to temporal and durational phenomena (Thomson and McLeod, 2015) and its epistemological flexibility (Taylor, 2015). My particular interest is to investigate how strategies and attitudes changed during a period of more than 20 years. The resistance against the national parks and the local strategies developed in the wake of the establishment of the parks are social phenomena, and to understand their dynamics of change requires a methodological approach with a greater time perspective. QLR opens up the possibility to investigate phenomena in complexity that avoids 'fetishism of the present' (Morrow and Crivello, 2015). QLR provides insights into how development processes unfold and change over time and thus reduce the chance of reproducing deadlocked positions and images of 'the other'. In addition, it allows us to capture flexibility, interruptions and changing circumstances in a radically different way compare with studies that only focus on one moment in time or a particular event in a very limited duration. QLR differs from research in historical studies, which are mainly retrospective in their approach. Instead, it combines past, present and futures in order to investigate phenomena that evolve through time. Thus it is an important methodological contribution to theoretical approaches that focus on complexity, co-evolvement and the dynamics between territorialization and deterritorialization processes as elaborated above.

Place development processes are typically durational. They evolve and change during time, while they are simultaneously related to past, present and possible futures. The empirical work for this article can be divided in two phases. The first phase began in 1995 when local resistance against the two national parks was significant. Two periods of fieldwork were conducted, one in 1995 and one in 1996. Qualitative interviews and public documents formed the main part of the empirical material. The analytical strategy in the first phase was to understand the meaning of the resistance, specifically how the resistance functioned in terms of expressive and material components. This was investigated by analyses of the argumentation by local actors, such as the municipality and Skjåk Almenning, and how the national parks became part of different meaning contexts when the resistance against the parks was articulated. Additionally, material from the interviewees was used to investigate how skills (local knowledge) and jurisdictions functioned as capacities to act.

As Miller (2015) shows, many studies based on QLR are based on rekindling previous studies in ways that were not anticipated at their inception. The research strategy may have to follow other questions than were originally posed. This is also the case in this article. The second phase of the empirical work started in 2010, after the establishment of the parks, and lasted until 2018. The analytical strategy in that phase changed, primarily because the actuality in empirical field had changed: the resistance against the parks had faded and new initiatives and new approaches were being taken. Therefore, contacts were re-established and contacts with new agents were established. Indepth, open-ended interviews and field conversations were conducted and different types of public documents were collected, such as municipality plans, public applications and project descriptions. The analytical strategy in the second phase was to map and gain insights into how different actors in the local municipality – knowledgeable respondents associated with Skjåk Municipality, Skjåk Almenning and other community-based organizations and businesses – planned for a future with the national parks within its territory while simultaneously bearing in mind the previous story of resistance. The following thematic codes were used: planning goals and intentions, different projects, how projects developed and what kinds of networks were established, and the argumentation and the meaning behind the different initiatives. This material was used to analyse change in terms of co-evolvement, how relations of exteriority works, and the dynamics between territorialization processes and processes of deterritorialization. During the second phase (2010–2018), four periods of fieldwork and revisits were conducted. The research strategy made it possible to follow the durational nature of strategy development with a combination of retrospection and focus on the present (i.e. what is actually going on right now). Typically, a municipal master plan will be forward looking, while interviews often will have their focus on the present and near past.

Overall, the longitudinal material was approached using a strategy that Miller explains as an analysis of earlier data 'alongside primary analysis of the newly collected data' (Miller, 2015, p. 300). In the case of Skjåk, this strategy meant tracing how argumentation and perspectives on the future related to the national parks, nature protection and place development shifts in public documents, how projects evolved in relation to new ideas, the establishment of new networks, and how interruptions happened. Additionally, it was important to trace how internal resistance and doubts were expressed among different local actors, in order to investigate how the heterogeneous components functioned. Thus, change in relation to local agency was at the core of the analytical strategy. Moreover, the theoretical approach adopted in this article serves as sensitizing concepts (Bowen, 2006). They are interpretive devices that make it possible to systematize and discover dynamics of change in the research context.

The informants comprised c.30 different individuals. Some were interviewed several times during the whole study period, while others were interviewed only once. Some informants were key informants and conversation partners. The informants were selected on the basis that they were connected to the ongoing strategic works in the municipality. The interviews were conducted at the informants' workplace or home. About half of the interviews were recorded.

To do field studies in a relatively small and transparent community such as Skjåk may be a challenge concerning anonymity. Taylor (2015) argues that QLR poses particular dilemmas in this respect, and depending on research topic and purpose, it creates 'a dynamic context to ethical processes that must accommodate shifting priorities and understandings' (Taylor, 2015, p, 286). Performing QLR was a challenge in Skjåk because, as the different initiatives emerged and different people and actors have different roles and positions, it was sometimes easy to connect projects, comments and perspectives to particular individuals. However, it was always important to maintain confidentiality and anonymity in the project as far as possible. Naming participants with, for instance, specific roles and positions may signal authenticity, but was avoided in the reporting from Skjåk. Thus, highly detailed reporting on the actors, roles and personalized initiatives is not included in this article. Instead, descriptions of projects' content and intentions, actor descriptions on a generic level, and argumentation are presented

in this article. In order to reduce the risk of interviewed actors' rationalization of past events and overemphasis of their own role, several different actors were asked to comment upon the same events and strategic choices that were taken.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1. Assembling local resistance – the 1980s and 1990s

When, in 1986, the Norwegian state suggested the establishment of two national parks, Reinheimen and Breheimen (NOU 1986:13; St.meld, nr. 62 (1991–92), Skjåk was one of the affected municipalities that demonstrated the strongest resistance against the parks and the preservation, especially in the case of Reinheimen. Skjåk municipal council stated that the management of this large nature area should be a local task, also in the future, in order to adapt to the local community's need for development. The bill was passed unanimously (Skjåk kommune, 1987). Preservation pursuant to the Norwegian Nature Conservation Act was seen as a deprivation of the local right of beneficial use (Senter for Bygdeturisme, 1994). Skjåk Almenning argued that higher pressure resulting from tourism would probably be a negative effect of the planned national park. At the same time, it argued that the local community scarcely had any resources. A national park would probably mean restrictions on the use of resources such as hydroelectric power, mineral extraction and commercial tourism (Skjåk Almenning, 1987).

The Planning and Building Act (1985/2008) and the Community-owned Common Land Act (1992) have been the most important legislations affecting the management of the areas affected by the national parks, and both Acts give power and responsibility to the local authorities. The history of the community-owned common land in Skjåk (Skjåk Almenning) since 1798 is an important backdrop to the argumentation and is evident in the expressions of local legitimacy: 'I do not feel they [national authorities] show us the appropriate respect … they should not turn down the local tradition of administration of the area' (Informant, Skjåk Almenning, 1996). Outside Skjåk Almenning's administration building there is the following memorial inscription: 'In thankfulness to the far-sighted men who bought Skjåk Almenning in 1798'. The inscription was made in 1948 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Skjåk Almenning (Bruheim, 1969). A reinterpretation of the history towards a sacred history was important, together with the Acts administered by local authorities in order to express legitimacy of the local authority and resistance against the proposed national parks. To a certain extent, the mountain area constitutes a *singular* category (Kopytoff, 1986), as something that is not changeable into something else, such as a national park. One informant from Skjåk Almenning explained in 1996 why he was so strongly against the national parks: 'I feel that it is first and foremost other interests that are going to be cultivated. Other administrations.'

The singularization of an area is an expressive element in assembling local resistance and territorialization. Another expressive element is the structure of ownership. Skjåk Almenning is a strongly territorialized organization with only local owners, which is a material element in the local assemblage. Under the Community-Owned Common Land Act, the local population is classified according to the following three rights: (1) the right of ownership and the right to vote in annual meetings (296 households in 2018), (2) the right of ownership (194 households in 2018), and (3) the public right of access, without ownership. Skjåk Almenning is governed by a board elected among those who have the right to use the area (categories 1 and 2 above). The daily running of the business is under the administration of a daily chairman. The threefold structure of relationship, the fact that the large area administered by Skjåk Almenning constitutes 90% of the total area of Skjåk Municipality and the long history of management are all factors – material and expressive – that contribute to the maintenance of the identity of a local assemblage.

As an organization, Skjåk Almenning is involved in what DeLanda (2006) calls *imperative coordination* of social action. In the local context, both Skjåk Almenning and Skjåk Municipality had this imperative coordination role in the area suggested for national parks. According to DeLanda (2006), such organizations have an authority structure. The above-mentioned Acts play an expressive role in this authority structure. In addition to the structure of ownership, the two Acts express the legitimacy of the authority. In the 1980s and 1990s, the history of Skjåk Almenning and the mountains in Skjåk was expressed in, for example, commercial flyers and local history books (Mølmen, 1988, 1991).

The imperative coordination had several material dimensions. The chairman had responsibility for the daily running of Skjåk Almenning's business. The forest administration, the administration of all hunting and fishing in the municipality, water management, and in general wilderness management were all taken care of by Skjåk Almenning' employees who had appropriate levels of education and skills for the tasks. Some of the employees had higher education in relevant fields and/or considerable experience-based knowledge. There was a strong connection between Skjåk Municipality and Skjåk Almenning due to them both having the imperative coordination role.

The expressive and material elements of the resistance made it meaningful in the 1990s, mainly because of the fear of losing the ability to govern and manage the mountain areas. Thus, the assembling of local resistance consisted of several arguments:

That what first of all has been ours, now seems to be others'. I feel that other interests are going to take priority …. Others are going to decide. (Informant, Skjåk Almenning, 1995)

If we don't have any responsibility longer, more than wallflower in an audience, then I don't feel anything for it. (Informant, Skjåk Almenning, 1995)

[C]ommercial interests are going to have a share in this. … The reindeer are the main criteria behind the establishment of national park, but the reindeer seem the losing party. If we abandon reindeer hunting, then we have lost the traditional use of the mountain. (Informant, Skjåk Almenning, 1995)

Nature management people with background in that particular expert environment claim that using the Nature Conservation Act is the best way to protect the area. … We claim that this is not the best way to manage the area. It is better to use the Planning and Building Act and make restrictions preferably as anonymous as possible without marketing with pins and books and so on. (Informant, Skjåk Municipality, 1995)

The loss of the traditional meaning of the mountains and devaluation of local knowledge and competence were emphasized as important in the argumentation against the national parks. Thus, the resistance against national park was based on the fact that the daily management of the areas had traditionally been a successfully territorialized task, and the purpose of the argumentation was to strengthen the territorial dimension and to sharpen its boundaries. The resistance was a defence against the national park as a deterritorializing force. This force was seen as a threat against the local community-based governance in general. However, place development was not an explicit topic in the resistance, except for the general fear that the nature protection could prevent future local control over the use of natural resources in the area (i.e. fishing, hunting, and hydroelectric power).

While place development was not an explicit topic in the resistance, place development is an explicit part of the Municipal Master Plan 1991–2002. In this regard, in-migration is viewed as a target, but conservation of nature is not part of place development policy. However, another main target in the plan is environmental conservation and both the natural and environmental resources. Keywords in the Municipal Master Plan 1991–2002 are *cross-sectoral management* and *local participation*. In this regard, the actual nature conservation and

national parks are stated as one of the most important questions to be addressed in Skjåk. According to the plan, Skjåk has to establish a strategy for keeping as much as possible of the management of the actual area local. It is therefore a target to develop the wilderness in order to strengthen tourism, the local agriculture and possibilities for recreation. Additionally, it is a strategy to establish regional collaboration among the municipalities affected by Reinheimen National Park. In this regard, the municipal master plan for the period 1991–2002 represents an expressive element in the local territorialization by sharpening its boundaries.

5.2. Deterritorializing and reterritorializing place development – 2006–2012

The establishment of the national parks, respectively in 2006 and 2009, challenged the local approach. In the period of resistance against conservation and parks, the national authorities were treated as being the opposition party. The parks introduced new structures of government and new agents at the local level (see Section 2). Agents that used to be treated as the opposition were now indirectly present in the local setting.

The development from being a local task towards a polymorphous structure represents an important element in deterritorializing, not only the management of the nature in Skjåk, but also in local place development in general in the period 2006–2012. The break with past routines forced local actors to work and think differently about the local role of the large wilderness areas. A new discourse with a different rhetoric emerged. A former employee in a leading position in the local municipal administration explained in 2015 that the shift that took place as follows:

The mayor expressed that … 'these are areas that our ancestors have taken very good care of for generations and the greater society now sees the importance to protect it for the future'. For us, this means that we will continue to do what we always have done, namely to take care of the areas, and when the situation is like this, it also means possibilities for value creation and economic growth. This reasoning was established after the establishment of the parks. … This is a condition in order to understand what happened next.

The former employee argued that a new generation of actors (i.e. persons in Skjåk Municipality administration, politicians and people connected to Skjåk Almenning) with other experiences from other places and sectors, and with other contacts had played an important role in the years after the establishment of the parks in order to make the shift possible. The individuals made dialogues possible between representatives of the traditional agricultural sector and Skjåk Almenning on the one side, and what can be called an academic approach to future place development, on the other side. However, the empirical material does not support the suggestion that academic institutions or representatives had an independent interest in the change, but academic institutions have long had a high standing in Skjåk Municipality in general and within the agricultural sector in particular. In common with Allen (2008), it can be said that there was a pragmatic exercise in power in which a mix of purposes and chance practices were appreciated. It was a matter of getting things done with a particular purpose in mind, and by activation of moral and political energies. In this particular context, the purpose was related to population growth and putting the negatives right.

Several strategic decisions were taken in the wake of the establishment of the parks. In the Municipal Master Plan for the period 2011–2020, an explicit area of focus is 'Conservation and use'. Skjåk Municipality's goal was to established 30 FTEs (full-time equivalents) related to the field of 'conservation and use' by 2015 and 50 FTEs by 2020. An additional goal was to establish an annual national park festival by 2015. The municipality also intended to prepare for outdoor activities such as fishing. However, nature conservation is expressed as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is stated that the protected areas represent advantages for the municipality, and on the other hand it is stated that the fact that large areas of the municipality are conserved poses a challenge. Nevertheless, in addition to being a new material element in the local assemblage, the municipality plan has an expressive role and represents enforcement towards deterritorialization of nature management and recognizes an emergent complexity. The plan does not defend the status quo but is instead concrete on change, while at the same time the strategy is to 'keep updated about the conservation management in the mountain region and work for local management' (Municipal Master Plan for the period 2011–2020, p. 16). This ambivalence is in itself an expression of an emerging complexity within the field of nature management and place development. In this regard, from a local perspective, complexity means place development and nature conservation are *in the making* and incorporate different interests. This situation is more about emergence than about stability (Boelens and de Roo, 2014). Therefore, the Municipal Master Plan 2011–2020 suggests several projects to change the way of thinking and act towards place development in the wake of nature conservation. Additionally, one of the motivations behind the projects is to reverse the trend of population decrease.

Two projects are of particular interest, namely 'Skjåk 79 – a pure experience!' and 'The Skjåk Project'. The first project is part of an area of commitment, namely *identity and reputation*. 'Skjåk 79 – a pure experience' is a slogan and alludes to the fact that 79% of the municipality is conserved. This is a new way of perceiving the conservation and national parks in Skjåk. In 2011, the project received support from the Ministry of Local and Regional Affairs (now the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation). In the original application to the Ministry, Skjåk stated that 79% conservation 'can be interpreted as a restriction on economic growth and development, but in Skjåk this is turned into something positive and represents unique opportunities'. The project is based on a strategic development analysis commissioned by Skjåk Municipality in 2010 and undertaken by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC). The report is based on several sources, among them interviews with representatives of 32 local businesses. According to the report, 'almost every informant mentioned that it is a benefit that the municipality is situated right in the middle of national parks' (p. 29). In 2012, 'Skjåk 79 – a pure experience!' became part of a larger project named Development in Skjåk Municipality.

The second project, The Skjåk Project, is connected to the national parks and nature conservation. Its concrete goals about the establishment of 30 FTE's by 2015 and 50 FTE's by 2020 relate to the field of 'conservation and use' and are intend to be operationalized in order to increase the population. The Skjåk Project is part of the larger project Development in Skjåk Municipality and it is expected that together with other projects it will contribute to an increasing population: 2400 inhabitants in 2015 and 2690 inhabitants in 2020. In addition to the FTEs, The Skjåk Project includes several actions, such as building more second homes, infrastructure, marked paths, and ski tracks in order to make Skjåk a better place in which to live and to facilitate Skjåk as a tourist destination. The challenge behind the project is defined as 'How to turn what can be experienced as restrictions and demands into something positive – into possibilities!' (The Skjåk Project, Project plan). The possibilities mentioned in the project plan include the following: that 'The nature is conserved because it is valuable', 'It is necessary to develop alternative governmental regimes concerning protected nature. We have good arguments towards the environmental authorities in order to gain support in this development', and 'Skjåk common land is a large and exceptional property'. In order to turn nature conservation into an advantage for place development in Skjåk, the project plan argues that it is important to 'collaborate with the conservation authorities with developing democratic, local and region-based models for management' and 'We must engage the State and regional authorities in order to finance the project "Conservation and place development" through a long-term agreement'.

The completely changed attitude towards the national parks, and

towards the natural and rural landscape in itself, implies different politics and an expanding landscape of agents. To a certain degree, this is a development towards what Healey (2015) calls *progressive localism* and *progressive place-focused governance*. The process in Skjåk has elements that foster recognition of complex relations, multisided discussions of issues and try to resist factional stereotypes, 'us' versus 'them' polarities, and hierarchical paternalism. This is the core in the local deterritorializing initiative and is expressed clearly in The Skjåk Project. However, this new direction can be read as an endogenous contradiction (i.e. the shift expresses different local strands towards the national parks). It is also clear that the project addresses exogenous tensions (i.e. tensions between local interests and national environmental authorities). Nevertheless, The Skjåk Project is an expression of faith in precisely these tensions and contradictions. Through its deterritorializing move, this strategy opens up for a higher degree of complexity of place-making and faith in the connectivity between agents across scales, 'towards understanding the properties of interaction of systems as more than the sum of their parts' (Thrift, 1999, p. 33). The strategy regards the place in general and the mountain area in particular in a larger relational space. Again, the adopted project is an exercise in power in which different types of resources such as contacts, skills, and finance are drawn together (Allen, 2008).

From a planning perspective, this move is close to what Boelens and de Roo (2014, p. 2) call innovative plans that 'consider and extend themselves to address fuzzy and situationally perceived manifestations acknowledged as a communal burden or opportunity'. The national parks represent a burden *and* opportunities for place development. The opportunities are embedded in the added value of external relations (i.e. a communicative rational stage) (de Roo, 2010). The perspective in the Skjåk project is an example of adaptive planning through co-evolvement (Boelens et al. 2014). It starts from the context (i.e. its actors potential and actual) and the local challenges (i.e. decline in population) and responds to changes (i.e. the national parks). However, despite the strong emphasis on the co-operative and on the dynamic intentions and needs, some ultimate goals seem to be the most important challenge, such as changing the population decrease.

Rural development theory and politics have moved towards an emphasis on neo-endogenous perspectives (i.e. endogenous and exogenous dynamics) (Bosworth et al., 2015; Normann and Vasström, 2012; Shucksmith, 2010). Depending on context, deterritorializing place development can be an important premise for such development. The strategic shift in Skjåk illustrates a form of policy that has faith in the endogenous and exogenous dynamics. The Skjåk Project tries to facilitate such dynamics by developing relations of exteriority (DeLanda, 2006) in order to strengthen local developing capacities (Bosworth et al., 2015). One of the best examples of such development is the establishment of a competence and resource centre for environmental management. This centre is located in the building of Skjåk Almenning and accords with the aims in the new model of management, namely to build junctions of competence. Norwegian Nature Inspectorate (SNO), Breheimen National Park's administrator, Mjøsen Forest, and Allmeningen (the Norwegian association for community-owned common land) are all working together and co-located with Skjåk Almenning in the competence centre. The policy for place development in Skjåk tries to go beyond the binary scalar concepts present in the struggle against nature conservation. However, this is not only a result of local decisions, but also part of a new state-driven management policy that highlights protection through use as part of a governance structure (Mose and Weixlbaum, 2007). A summary of the most important local projects in the wake of the national parks in Skjåk is presented in Table 1.

The projects listed in Table 1 are endogenous in the sense that all projects have been initiated in Skjåk, mainly by professional planners in Skjåk Municipality and Skjåk Almenning, as well as by some local enthusiasts. Some projects can be categorized as neo-endogenous since a broader set of extra local actors are important parts of the projects. The

strategic shift in Skjåk towards neo-endogenous strategies implies that planners seek new insights when new relations of exteriority evolve (Boelens and de Roo, 2014). The competence and resource centre for environmental management, which is part of The Skjåk Project, is probably the clearest example of a co-created system whereby relations of exteriority are connected to the local territorialized systems. This new co-created system is developing capacities within the field of nature and environment simultaneously as it supports the overall goal to increase FTEs.

5.3. On the edge of chaos? – 2013–2018

The strategic shift in Skjåk can be viewed as a process that unites the irreconcilable. The active resistance against national parks rooted in local connectivity, belonging, identity, and traditions have been united with global ideas about nature conservation, state initiatives for national parks, other ideas, and other agents, on other scales that used to be defined as local threads. This local turnaround in perspectives can be interpreted as pragmatism or forced adaptation to an actual and new situation – it is a 'practical judgement situated in a specific context' (Healey, 2008). The pragmatism in this particular context is also a question of powerful assemblages in which the interplay of forces makes purposeful things happen (Allen, 2008, 2011).

However, conflicts, tensions and different interests are intrinsic in the plurality of initiatives. In the following, I outline two internal conditions that illustrate the complex nature of the *local* collaboration. The question is whether these conditions are intrinsic deterritorializing forces in this rural community. The first condition can be related to the project that has been called the Nature Opera (Table 1). This project is based on a particular idea to combine several goals. First and foremost, Nature Opera is a physical building with three different purposes: (1) monumental architecture and part of a development strategy of the municipality's centre; (2) to fulfil communal needs, such as a new library and cultural communication; (3) to be an arena for business development, entrepreneurship and a competence centre for nature management following the establishment of the national parks.

The Nature Opera project was part of the application in 2011 to the Ministry of Local and Regional Affairs (now the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation) According to a former actor in the municipality administration (interview in 2016) this application and the municipal master plan for the period 2011–2020 had an idea to satisfy several purposes, but with the common and overriding goal to strengthen the municipality through *attractiveness*, *attention* and *competence* development. However, according to the informant, not all agents involved in the process were particularly interested in the entirety, but rather in the realization of single projects. Nevertheless, the municipal master plan was accepted in 2011. However, there were no plan for following up the overriding goal, and all projects demanded to be prioritized and processed separately. Other discussions entered the scene and other actions were taken. For instance, the centre for competence and nature management was located in the buildings belonging to Skjåk Almenning (as mentioned above). In 2018, the status of Nature Opera was still unsettled.

The second condition that illustrates the complex nature of the *local* collaboration is related to unfilled goals. As already mentioned, the decrease in population has been an issue in local strategies and policy for many years. To stop the decrease and even increase the population has therefore been a motivation factor in general and in different projects, such as Skjåk '79 and The Skjåk Project. However, the decline in population continues and the goal of establishing 30 FTE's by 2015 and 50 FTE's by 2020, related to the field of conservation, is far from being fulfilled (2016). There are different opinions about what role the goal should play in the proceedings of the local policy and strategies. A former employee of the local municipality argued that 'The general development in the society can produce resignation' (interview, 2016). However, the Norwegian broadcasting company, NRK, has reported

Table 1
Selected projects in the wake of establishment of national parks in Skjåk Municipality.

Selected projects/action	Endogenous	Neo-endogenous	Extra-local actors	Period	Description
The Skjåk Project	Yes	Yes	Oppland County Council, Inland Norway University of Applied Science, County Governor Oppland, North-Gudbrandsdal region, Nordfjord region	2008–2015	Initiated by Skjåk Municipality, Skjåk Almenning, and Oppland County Council in 2007. The project includes a number of actions and projects related to nature management, experience-based tourism, infrastructure, and the development of real estate. Continued with funding from Norwegian Environment Agency in 2010
Nature conservation as place development	Yes	Yes	Oppland County Council, Inland Norway University of Applied Science, Norwegian Environment Agency, Jotunheimen Tourism, Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (Difi)	2010–2013	A continuation of The Skjåk Project
National park festival	Yes	No	No	2013	Part of Skjåk Municipality's Municipal Master Plan 2011–2020 and The Skjåk Project Creates business development following the establishment of the national park
Skjåk 79 – a pure experience!	Yes	No	Norwegian Environment Agency	2010	Place marketing of the nature conservation areas
Iskjak.no	Yes	No	Link to the national outdoor website UT.no	2011–2014	Part of nature conservation as place development Place marketing and information Digital tour guide. Undertaken by the national digital tour guide 'Outt' (application)
Skjåk Development	Yes	No	No	2011–2014	Municipality-owned corporation to facilitate networks between businesses and public services
Second homes	Yes	No	No	Ongoing	Cabins for sale
Competence- and resource centre for environmental management	Yes	Yes	Norwegian Nature Inspectorate (SNO), Breheimen National Park administrator, Mjøsen Forest, Allmeningen (Norwegian association for community-owned common land)	Ongoing	Part of The Skjåk Project Resource centre for services and development within the field of nature and environment
Fish project	Yes	Yes	Norwegian Environment Agency	Ongoing	Part of the 'Nature conservation as place development' project
Skjåk event	Yes	No	Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA)	2011	Part of The Skjåk Project Implemented in Skjåk development
Nature Opera	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not implemented	Building with different purposes

that several mayors in the rural region including the major of Skjåk Municipality are quite optimistic about population development, and that the mayor of Skjåk believed that the population would remain stable until 2024 (NRK, 2014). Furthermore, a former employee of Skjåk Municipality stated that 'I experienced a realistic optimism in The Skjåk Project' (interview, 2016). However, it has also been argued that 'the demand for rapid results is destructive for this type of work' (former employee of The Skjåk Project, 2016). The same informant explained the logic behind the strong connection between the demand for population increase and general ideas about place development in The Skjåk Project as follows:

It is easier to work well and be optimistic in something that is under development than in an opposite situation. It [the demand for increase in population] was not there because it was the most important. But it [population growth] was part of it as a common ground – if it occurs, then we will succeed in the other things we are doing. It is a result of blooming business development. It is a result of [the fact] that people come and experience what actually happens here and that it is fantastic to be active in Skjåk. Then we will have population growth. (Interview, 2016).

These two conditions illustrate a lack of structure in the practical judgements that are made. At first glance, the common ground, or the overriding idea, does not seems to be stable and strong enough to resist the continuous practical judgements that are made. Thus, the latest municipal master plan (2017–2028) lacks the main intentions and goals regarding population growth and does not promote the national parks and co-evolvement across scale as a strategy for place development. One informant in a leading position in the municipality said that the latest plan 'is more realistic towards the large external forces this rural municipality is facing compared with the previous plan' (interview, 2018). This does not mean that change has stopped. Instead, we are witnessing planning and place development in the context of non-linear change (de Roo, 2018). The question is still whether the power that developed when the local assemblage was deterritorialized will be reduced or in what kind of acting assemblage will the new reterritorializing result. As Allen (2008) states, power from a pragmatic point of view is about the future (i.e. mobilize resources towards purposeful ends). In this regard, power is tenuous, or as Allen states, 'what works best in any given situation cannot be known in advance, only *in practice*' (Allen, 2008, p. 1616). When the purposeful ends in the form of population growth and an increase in FTE's are far from being realized, the legitimacy behind the projects may fade away. A defined becoming that does not occur is thus a threat. However, another solution is possible. The story so far indicates strong ability to make change, to create new ideas and to pass them, formally. Despite the fact that the path that Skjåk Municipality started to take in the 1990s had some intentions in the end, the municipality has demonstrated the ability to act without ultimate goals. After periods of stronger and more visible neo-endogenous development strategy, with new ideas and new agents involved across scale, the municipality has moved into an even more complex web of solutions, relations and time perspectives in the wake of the national parks, which has been called rural restructuring (Woods, 2009). Furthermore, the municipality is in a complex situation, which is currently close to what Urry (2005, p. 1) says 'shows ordering but which remains on "the edge of chaos"'. It is an emergent structure that 'involves a sense of contingent openness and multiple futures, of the unpredictability of outcomes in time-space' (Urry, 2005, p. 3). To make changes on this stage implies to balance on the edge of chaos. The knowledge gained in the process is not 'a matter of getting reality right, but rather a matter of acquiring habits of actions for coping with reality' (Rorty, 1991 cited in Jones, 2008, p. 1607). Nevertheless, there is a tension between defined and undefined becoming in Skjåk. The municipality appreciates the process and the ideas, and what it has managed to achieve, but it also intends to make some material changes such as population growth or at least to ensure stability in the population. It seems that Skjåk Municipality will have to balance on the edge of chaos

if the implemented projects for change are to be able to proceed.

6. Conclusion

How can local strategies for rural place development work progressively for change even when the structural surroundings seem to work against the local will? The answer to this research question concerning Skjåk Municipality could have been resistance, protest, defence of the status quo, and backward-looking storytelling in order to freeze the local assemblage and to build a grass-roots form of power as a response to a centralized nature conservation management. This could have been the conclusion if the analysis and description in this article concentrated just on the 1990s. Instead, the longitudinal study provided a description and an analysis of dynamics of place development strategies in the wake of national park establishment. The analysis has demonstrated an emergent complexity and the national parks as game changers for rural place development – a place in becoming. The visible new governance structure, the new local rhetoric, the recognition of a conflictual political community, and the encouragement of experimentation all, to a certain degree emancipate the municipality's capacity to act progressively (Healey, 2015).

The case of Skjåk is a story of a rural municipality that is going through a process of increasing complexity in the wake of establishment of two national parks. The national parks have contributed to change the municipality's strategy for the future. It is not only a change on the surface, but also changed local attitudes, local practices for policy-making and strategy development, as well as local discourses for development. A necessary mechanism in this change has been the dynamic of deterritorializing and reterritorializing of the local assemblage. New steps, new orientations, new decisions and new strategies have been taken along the road of change. In Skjåk, the place development has changed in terms of its power of instability. Instability has thus been a condition for change.

The new strategy that evolved in Skjåk can be understood as a reterritorialization: the local processes have increased the homogeneity of local place development as an assemblage in terms of a development of some form of common ground. This has been done in order to make a new path of development. Following the work by Bernstein (1983) and Healey (2008), the common ground can work towards disabling conflicts while at the same time plurality in interests can be recognized. The plurality in the new project in Skjåk can be viewed precisely as deterritorialization. The two national parks deterritorialized the local system, as they became new components that local rural actors had to involve in their strategies. The subsequent projects have been a continuation of the deterritorialization process, with its increase in internal heterogeneity and probably a subsequent reterritorialization. The movement between deterritorialization and reterritorialization is one that produces change (Van Wezemael, 2018). The process in Skjåk opened up the field of rural place development for discussion, new relations building, new ideas, and new rhetoric. It was a process that focused on the communal, the co-operative, and dynamic intentions and needs (Boelens and de Roo, 2014). The new strategy was based on a story about attractiveness, attention and competence, to mention some of the overriding perspectives. New projects were established under this umbrella of ideas in the municipality's master plan.

However, over time, the idea seemed to fade out and a growing scepticism was grounded in the fact that the decrease in population continued despite several initiatives to prevent it. The structural forces that many rural municipalities in Norway and elsewhere are facing seem to overshadow the local will of development that was evident immediately after the establishment of the national parks. In other words, the local threat against the local process of change is actually its own unfulfilled purposeful goals.

Acknowledgments

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