

## ARCHITECTS, WAR, AND THE GOVERNANCE OF SOCIO-SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN LOCALITIES.

### A Study of Alvar Aalto's Kokemäenjoki River Valley Regional Plan as a Project of the Regulation of Space

The notion of the possibility to govern social circumstances is in a state of crisis. Planning has met with sharp criticism in several countries – including Finland, a Scandinavian welfare state. This is evident in the discussions and reforms surrounding the legitimacy of urban planning and the land use regulation that have been taking place since the beginning of the 1990s. Initially, however, the norms and practices of planning were developed precisely for the purpose of controlling crises. The reforms surrounding the governance of land use were initiated during a period in which Finland's national continuity was threatened and the challenges to control were most obviously visible – namely, during the years of the Winter War and national reconstruction. Generally speaking, during the early years of the young republic, the innovations of governance were intertwined with nationalism.

Sociologically, many of these forms must be read as belonging to the category of non-coercive, positive, “productive forms” of power – in other words, to the category of “governmental” forms of power, concepts basing in the studies of Michel Foucault, Peter Miller, Nikolas Rose and Paul Rabinow. Those concepts offer the central focus for this thesis in analyzing the first Finnish regional planning project: the Kokemäenjoki River Valley Regional Plan<sup>1</sup>.

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- 1 The central concepts of this study are (in English and in Finnish):  
Rationalities of the program for regulating space in Kokemäenjokilaakso:
  - rationality of self-regulation – itsesäätelyn rationaliteetti
  - creation of appropriate socio-spatial relationships in localities – tarkoituksenmukaisten yhdyskuntasuhteiden rationaliteetti
  - the development of an effective means of regulating space – tehokkaan tilansäätelyn rationaliteetti
  - the rationality of self responsibility – itsevastuun rationaliteettiforest industries – metsäteollisuus  
Regulation of space, spatial regulation – tilansäätely  
Locality – yhdyskunta  
Locality development – yhdyskuntakehitys  
Official discourse – virallinen puhunta  
Regional discourse, discourse on regionality – aluepuhunta  
Social functions – yhteiskunnalliset toiminnot

In this study governmental practices mean, as Nikolas Rose says, “deliberate attempts to shape conduct in certain ways in relation to certain objectives”.<sup>2</sup>

This study describes how the spatial relations of social activities became a problem in need of a solution and an object of problematization of the local regulation of space in Finland – a process in which the architect Alvar Aalto played an important part. It was in the project of creating a regional plan for the Pori region at the beginning of the 1940s that the spatial relations within areas larger than individual municipalities or towns were first understood as needing regulation. Before long regional planning became a form of welfare politics.

The main questions in this thesis are: How did the spatial relationships of social functions – traffic, work, housing, recreation – become a problem requiring a specific solution? How did it become the problematic of the regional regulation of space, and how did it occur especially through the actions of Alvar Aalto?

Finland was regarded as a part of the agrarian periphery of Europe in the 1940s. The foreign trade of this young independent national economy was based mainly upon the forest industry and the exportation of agricultural produce. Governance acquired new forms in the field of land use in conjunction with the Kokemäenjoki River Valley regional planning project. The project was conceived soon after Finland had signed the Moscow Peace Treaty with the Soviet Union in the spring of 1940, after the brief Winter War. This treaty was the first of the two during that century. It caused 420,000 people, 10 percent of the whole Finnish population, to lose their homes. At that time the Pori Chamber of Commerce and eight municipalities in the Pori region jointly developed the regional planning project between 1940 and 1942 in the interest of the common good and in an attempt to ensure the future survival of the region.

In the long run, the Kokemäenjoki River Valley Regional Plan was to become a pioneering venture in the planning of Finnish land use during the early 1940s. It became a contemporary solution to the problem of local planning, a shining example of the modern regulation of space and standardized planning technology. This new form of regional planning became popular and got followers amongst the municipalities from the end of the 1940s in many parts of Finland, first in the industrial district of Kotka – in the River Valley of Kymi – and in the district of Helsinki.

Municipal co-operation was quite an innovative concept in the regulation of space in Finland at the beginning of the 1940s. The involvement of an architect in the planning of rural regions was a new idea. The regional planning project directed the interests of municipal administration and industry toward the

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Socio-spatial relationships of localities – yhdyskuntasuhteet  
Political programmes – poliittiset toimintaohjelmat  
Rationality – rationaliteetti  
“Company community” and communal policies of the forest industries – metsäteollisuuden  
yhtiöyhteisöllisyys ja yhdyskuntapolitiikka  
2 Rose 1999, 4.

regional regulation of space. Furthermore, the project was closely connected with Alvar Aalto's modernizing design and innovative co-operative relations. The town of Pori and the seven rural municipalities surrounding it – Harjavalta, Kokemäki, Kullaa, Nakkila, Noormarkku, the Pori Rural Commune and Ulvila – were involved in the project. Architect Alvar Aalto was hired as the project's designer. He had already worked in tight co-operation with Harry Gullichsen, who was both the manager of A. Ahlström & Co. and the chairman of the Pori Chamber of Commerce.

In this study, the Kokemäenjoki River Valley regional planning project is seen from the perspective of Michel Foucault's notion of "governmentality" as a political program which was aimed at the promotion of the common good and the improvement of future living conditions. This study describes what kind of a governance program for space and social relations the project was. The main emphasis is on the wartime regulation of space as both a specific action plan, "political programme", and a new example of one of the special nation-wide processes of the governmental exercise of power and social modernization that took place in the early 1940s.

This study is the first historical and sociological analysis of the modern programmes, rationalities, technologies, norms and forms of the Finnish regulation of space. The data includes documents from 16 historical archives, a project map and an account of the plan, contemporary literature from the 1930s and the 1940s, and historical research literature. By analyzing the rationalities, the specific forms of the project, we get to know specific norms set for the new Finnish planning practice. The first rationality tells us, whose affair the regional planning tool was – in other words, who could govern with it. The second rationality tells us, what the target of the new form of regional regulation was: what or who is governed. The last rationality expressed what the governing in the regional planning meant – by what means the project would be made true.<sup>3</sup>

There are no concrete models for studying these forms of power, these technologies of the "productive exercise of power". A preliminary conceptualization of the historical sequence of events and the central forms of interaction within the planning project is outlined in the author's earlier study entitled "In the Best Manner and with Foresight, (Parhaalla tavalla ja kaukonäköisesti)", which deals with the interests of the actors who carried out the Kokemäenjoki River Valley Plan, as well as in the articles dealing with the central subject matter. This study also illustrates the connection between the project and the national interests of the participating groups.

The study begins with an analysis of the rationalities and practices, norms and forms of the new regional planning program. The research analyses the following specific questions: What were the improved space relations of social

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Gordon 1991, 3. "Political rationalities render reality into the domain of thought, seek to translate thought into the domain of reality and to establish in the world of persons and things a possible space for acting upon those entities of which they dream and scheme." (Miller & Rose 1990, 169.)

functions in Kokemäenjoki River Valley, outlined in the planning map, like? Who were affected by the new planning tasks in the region? What would be the influence of this innovative planning? How did the planners, particularly Alvar Aalto, view the prevalent spatial relations in the Kokemäenjoki River Valley? And in what way was it necessary to reform the established practices of the regulation of space?

Second, this study analyzes the conditions and central contexts of regional planning. The analysis focuses on the social and political goals and strategies that the new, voluntary space regulation project was connected with in the wartime state-centered Finland of the 1940s. The goals and strategies of socially active groups during the first decades of independence are also analyzed.

The third research task is to find out how both the new cooperation system of space regulation and the technology of control were formed in the interaction between the participants of regional planning. How was regional planning able to succeed in the Pori region, when rural municipalities and their representative – the Association of Rural Communes (Maalaiskuntien Liitto) – frequently criticized the forms of space regulation in the rural regions of Finland?

## 1 The outcomes of the new planning program

Initially, the planning project was about local planning solutions. It was aimed at the rational – useful and harmonizing – organization of the spatial relations of social functions in the Pori region. After the 1950s, the plan improved traffic connections within the region and from the region to the rest of the country. As a regional planning solution realized through co-operation between municipalities, the Kokemäenjoki River Valley plan was the first of its kind in Finland.

Second, during the 1940s, municipal decision-makers around the country began to regard the Pori regional plan as an example of the universal way in which the modern regulation of space could be effectively organized in any region. Regional planning promised to provide a solution to the problem of organizing the spatial relations of social functions in a way that would meet the functional, welfare and progress needs of each individual region, thereby increasing the functionality of the socio-spatial relations in localities.

Third, over the course of the 1940s, regional planning came to represent nationality, as well as an important new method of the regulation of space amongst professionals and government officials. Before long it began to be viewed as the standard procedure in the regional and modern regulation of space, on a par with the methods that were prevalent in Finland at the beginning of the 20th century. The new planning technique applied by the architect provided continuity in the practices of the regulation of space. They were applied in Finland in the planning of large towns and in the housing and social policies of the forest companies. This approach, however, was now being used on a regional level. A clientele comprised of regional municipalities was a new element in the technology of the regulation of space.

This new approach to planning can be characterized as a continuation of the forms of both the voluntary and official regulation of space, which had already been established by the beginning of the 1940s. Thus, the work that was done in the Pori region was not about counter-planning, nor was it a question of the development of a utopia. Rather, in the pioneering case of the Kokemäenjoki River Valley, the realization of the planned solution was intertwined with the pre-existing means of spatial regulation – namely, the national practice of planning according to the planning legislation of the 1930s concerning building activities in certain rural regions.

## 2 The rationalities of the program

The new technology of regional planning was created as part of a political program which was characterized as representative of the official, regional and national needs. The regional planning technology was intended to further the central rationalities of the programme. They were self-regulation, the creation of appropriate socio-spatial relationships and the development of an effective means of spatial regulation in localities.

This new planning practice was solely the task of the municipalities in the Kokemäenjoki River Valley region. The goal of self-regulation was to guarantee the region a prosperous future. The industrial policy measures were viewed with an especially high level of expectation. It was also assumed that the increased activity would enhance the common good of the nation. The commencement of the planning co-operation was a strategic move toward both the replenishment of the losses endured during the Winter War and the promotion of welfare in the small economic region of Pori and its surrounding municipalities following the signing of the Moscow Peace Treaty in 1940.

As Alvar Aalto in particular argued, in order to be considered rational, the regulation of space had to support and promote continuous socio-spatial development of localities within the Kokemäenjoki River Valley. The social functions in the region existed in a tight spatial interaction over the administrative borders of municipalities, and the region would play a leading role in the socio-spatial development on the national level.

Regional planning had to take into account the fact that the countryside and urban regions were merging and that a new form of locality was beginning to emerge: a “locality level higher than the concept of the town”. The task of planning was to create spatial relationships between social functions that would enhance the connections between the localities in the region, as well as the interaction between the region and the rest of the country, administrative boundaries notwithstanding. These new relationships, however, were not to interfere with the economic and cultural unity, but instead were intended to ensure continuity within the region. Thus, the regional planning program also had another inherent rationality in addition to self-regulation – namely, the integration of spatial relations.

The regional planning project was dominated, mainly because of Alvar Aalto's influence, by a view of society that emphasized the importance of mutual functional dependencies as the basis of social integration. The view became widespread during the 1930s. Correspondingly, the notion of the development of a practice of the regulation of space emerged that would support the functional connections between social functions and entire localities.

Taking into account functional, spatial and regional dependencies was a precondition for harmonious communal and social development. The time had come for the planners to detach themselves from both the outdated arrangements that were based upon the division between towns and rural areas, as well as the town-centered view of planning. The rationality behind efficient spatial regulation also had to be applied in practice.

In the other two regional planning projects of the 1940s, in Kymenlaakso and in the Helsinki region, the type of locality system that was being sought was much less explicitly outlined than it had been in the Kokemäenjoki River Valley project. The gathering of information regarding the trends in locality and communal relations of localities was not as obvious an aspect of the planning practices in those projects as it was in the practice and planning solution outlined by Alvar Aalto in the Pori region. The practice of emphasizing the dependencies between social functions in spatial relations in the region and in the country as a whole indirectly supported the widely held view of the 1930s that the success of the economy and foreign trade industries was the core of the national common prosperity in Finland.

The third rationality, striving toward the efficient regulation of space, required that the practices of spatial regulation be disengaged from the basic assumptions associated with the official regulation of space – namely, the defining of administrative divisions in the form of new regulations and the town-centered notion of planning. A means of regional planning had to be created that would match the then ongoing social development of the merging countryside and urban areas, the mutual dependencies of localities, as well as the increasingly evident integration of the economy of the entire country. The common good of the region, its economic success in the future and also the preservation of its cultural integration in relation to former ways of life all required suitable socio-spatial relations in localities. This meant applying planning techniques based on architectural knowledge, which was quite common in Finland. These techniques were now being applied in a new way to a small economic region formed by the eight municipalities surrounding Pori. However, the new practice formed by Aalto had respect for specific, national, agrarian values and the economic-cultural continuity of the region; agricultural zones and areas put limits on the new practice of land use rationalization.

This innovative and beneficial planning praxis would encompass both the continuities and changes in the regulation of space. The architect possessed both central planning expertise and authority, as was commonly the case in town planning in Finland, but the client in this case was a collective body

comprised of the municipalities within the target region. This represents the point at which rural Finnish municipalities for the first time became acting subjects in the field of national spatial regulation.

### 3 Group strategies

The progress made by new planning practices may be attributed in part to the goals and aspirations of the social groups partaking in planning in the 1930s and early 1940s with regard to national relations. The central contexts of the project were, firstly, the common 1930s view regarding the prerequisites of social integration in Finland, which emphasized functional dependencies, and secondly, the state-controlled wartime economy of the 1940s as well as the overall uncertainty that was brought about by the war. The new technology of spatial regulation was related to the national strategies used by various social groups during the period in between the Winter War and the Continuation War. Both during the Kokemäenjoki River Valley project and as a technology utilized since the late 1940s, regional planning provided a forum in which various groups were able to further their own specific interests.

First, since employment opportunities were scarce at the beginning of the 1940s, the innovative regulation of space was closely connected with the professional and determined measures taken by the Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA) to broaden the influence of the occupational group to new fields, to the planning of the countryside and industrial building. Another goal was the preservation of their firm position within the field of spatial regulation, as well as their opportunities to build despite the wartime economy.

The new regulation of space was linked to the SAFA programmes – both to the rebuilding programme and to the one sketched by Alvar Aalto, which required that the state, in particular, takes action to systematically improve the rural building conventions. The technology illustrated the efficiency of the architect's tools in the planning of rural regions. The programmes manifested a kind of methodical political planning that was supported by architectural expertise; they attempted to alter the future with “the right knowledge“ and the application of appropriate practices. Simultaneously, they attempted to oppose the influence of party political interests.

The planning technology began to reform architects' planning practices in the late 1940s. It supported the attempt of the occupational group to legitimize its expertise. One of the results of this was that the architectural profession was mandated to plan the uses of space in rural areas. However, this was a result of both the accommodation of the interests of the agricultural groups and state intervention.

The SAFA fitted regional planning into its dualistic strategy during the Continuation War. Especially during the rebuilding project, the occupational group attempted to strengthen its relations with the state and develop ties with the new contractors, the rural municipalities, and, in the case of industrial building process and methods, the forest companies.

As a technology, regional planning was not only a successful professional project. Its methods and strategies also developed new social practices. Thus, they influenced the views on prospective land use planning held by actors in the field of regional planning throughout Finland. They simultaneously influenced the positions of the actors in the field of spatial regulation. Rural municipalities became legitimate and important actors in the field of spatial regulation and building, due in part to regional planning technology. The clientele's system of co-operation compensated for the minimal influence of the rural municipalities in the official regulation of space, which was based on town planning legislation and normative spatial regulation. This was a constant subject of debate between the central officials of the National Building Board on the one hand and rural municipalities, especially the Association of Rural Communes, on the other.

The interest of the forest companies in the new regional regulation of space expressed the Finnish industry's attempt to forge more consistent relationships with the public authorities in terms of the planning-oriented, socio-spatial regulation of localities that was prevalent during the era. It was a sign that the business interest group, particularly the employers in the forest companies, was in the long run prepared to reform the division of labor between themselves and the municipalities and the state as to socio-spatial regulation policy of localities. The fact that this was actually a determined strategic change became quite clear from the 1940s on. Under the strain of uncertain political and economic conditions, the employers in the forest industries were evidently attempting to rationalize their communal relationships by delegating some of the responsibility of the infrastructure to municipalities in order to focus more comprehensively on productive functions. It appears that the combination of the strengthened development of concerns and the existence of the critical post-war rebuilding era emphasized the importance of the increasingly organized local and regional alignments, as opposed to the previous types of social orientations and local ties in the business interest group.

In forming this clientele, with its new and heterogeneous system of interaction, the forest industries in a way surrendered some of the responsibility of communal development to the rural municipalities. In addition to the statutory planning institution and practices and the "company community" and socio-spatial locality policies of the forest industry, a third type of guidance system regarding changes in socio-spatial relationships in localities and the built environment emerged in the Kokemäenjoki River Valley regional plan.

#### 4 Relationships inherent in the governmental exercise of power

A new type of technology regarding the regulation of space was formed in Finland in the 1940s that relied solely upon voluntary regional co-operation; it was based on common goals and on the fact that the system developed into a network of multiple partners within power systems, based on the similarities and differences resulting from the influence of shared expertise. Thus, the fact

that the municipalities, the Chamber of Commerce and certain government officials were co-operating and sharing responsibility with Alvar Aalto bestowed upon them some of the renowned architect's authority in the new planning praxis.

This can be seen in the expected gains and rationality of this new type of planning, and can be viewed as voluntary or as resulting from the fact that the parties shared a field of action in which they were able to locate strategic opportunities to further their goals as a group. This could happen in the name of expected gains and the rationality of the new planning: the parties shared a field of action where they could find strategic opportunities to further their goals as a group. The Kokemäenjoki River Valley planning project was thus conducted in interactive relations determined by governmentalistically oriented exercise of power and based upon the voluntary commitment by the parties involved. The new regional regulation of space became a governmental tool for exercising power from afar on the national level too.

The regional planning technology normalized the relations in the field of regulation of space. It turned the rural regions into an object of governance in new regulation for the sake of the economic and cultural progress of the region and for the national common good. The countryside became a "normal" target of regulation of space, and the municipalities became "normal" clients in the national field of regulation of space. At the same time, this practice enabled the municipalities to determine their own future as well as influence the future of the nation as a whole.

Municipal officials utilized the innovative planning technology in voluntary projects, which began to emerge sporadically throughout the country from the 1940s on. This seems to have been decisively linked to the parallel process, in which the role of municipalities as economic actors began to be increasingly recognized.

Regional planning became a reform movement that unified municipal governments. Simultaneously, its popularity legitimized the role of architects as experts in the spatial regulation of rural regions within the broader, national field of building and the regulation of space. It was precisely the co-operative element in the new regulation of space, combined with the strengthened sense of identity acquired by the municipalities within it, that in part contributed to the eventual displacement of architectural expertise in spatial regulation, experienced most notably during the 1960s.

From the late 1940s on, the official norms of spatial regulation changed and rural regions began to be more comprehensively included in the regulation of building, due to the introduction of new legislation. Rural municipalities also began to be assigned various spatial regulatory tasks, such as building supervision. This entire process of change took place during the extremely demanding era of rebuilding the country, which also included the immigration of refugees from Karelia, as well as the economic strain of reparations made to the Soviet Union. During this time, rural municipalities did their share in terms of providing basic preconditions of economic activity, quite similarly to the

way in which private businesses, industrial enterprises in particular, took part in the efforts while still managing to develop new production methods. It appears that these changes and the popular regional planning practice paved the way for an even stronger legitimization of the role of the municipalities in economic activities on the national level.

The view of the functional dependencies of locality relationships and the need for harmonious spatial relations corresponds with the rationalities acting outside the regulation of space that emphasized the importance of functional dependencies in social life in the 1940s. The striving to increase the level of social integration in Finland and the understanding of the character of productive organizations were also based on this notion. The fact that Finnish society, both in general and in terms of the regulation of space, was seen as an entity that was comprised of reciprocal, functional relations, seems to have been connected with the effort to secure national interests in the 1940s. Thus, in Finland, social modernization became a process in which various needs for change were understood from the viewpoints of social integration and the need for continuity in practices and ways of life.

## 5 The types and forms of modernization

The realm of comprehensiveness and dependencies in planning can be seen in terms of ability to form clear, comprehensive and communicative horizons – to adapt Jürgen Habermas’s notion of “Unübersichtlichkeit”. The prevalent viewpoint in regional planning in the 1940s encompassed historical knowledge combined with utopian elements: it was both possible and necessary to build a better world. In the regional planning of the Kokemäenjoki River Valley, the utopian element was not a utopia in the classic sense, but rather “communicated with history”. It relied on the possibility of advancing the future prospects of each municipality and locality on the basis of regional unity, i. e. through attempts to both locally and nationally meet the challenges posed by the state’s economic policy following the signing of the Moscow Peace Treaty in 1940. It was a reconstructive activity; planning was to focus on the future by creating something new with existing tools – neither in a utopian manner nor from scratch.

The rationality of this new approach can also be seen in the national planning programs of the 1940s that were based on the technologies of the regulation of space. These programmes were envisioned by the leaders of the SAFA, among others. The rationality influenced the development of individual municipal and general plans – namely, those that were given official status in the Building Law of 1958, although their position in the field of Finnish planning did not remain uncontested. The same rationality was also prevalent in the new project that the Housing Reform Association (Asuntoreformiyhdistys) and the Population and Family Welfare Federation (Väestöliitto) developed for the establishment of the garden city of Tapiola in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The technology of spatial regulation developed during the regional planning of the Kokemäenjoki River Valley was important in the post-war relationship between the fields of building and the regulation of space. Its importance was specific: it modernized, or more precisely normalized, the relationship by making the countryside a normal target for regulation of space and by establishing architects as the experts in the field. The change was profound in terms of the forms of national regulation of space, although in many ways its significance was a relative one.

The present study opens a critical perspective on the general interpretations of the forms of regulation of space. First, the fact that the voluntary regional planning project is analyzed here as both part of a political, governmental programme and as a new productive regulatory practice, signals the need to understand the interpretations concerning the reforms in the regulation of space from a viewpoint other than that of the state. In particular, there is no need to interpret the changes in a law-centered manner, from the perspective of legal sovereignty that is above the state government and civil society. The new regional regulation did not play the role of a referee, which was seen as the task of public authorities, and the planning process did not serve the interests of the state government in any other way. Instead, regional planning had a productive influence as a regulative agent, an influence similar to the exercise of power. It was not opposed to the prevailing legislation, but rather was a specific social process, which may or may not have been connected to legislation or the implementation of laws. It also manifested specific purpose-oriented, instrumental and policy-oriented control mechanisms.

Another important point in the interpretation of the new Finnish regional planning of the 1940s is its connection to welfare programmes. This project was voluntary and, as such, obviously not initiated by the state. It was a private and non-legalistic programme, although it cannot be characterized as a counter-program. It was based on the mentality of governance and attempted to develop spatial relations that would secure the interests and potential progress of the region while simultaneously furthering the common good of the nation. Particularly as a result of the rationality of self responsibility, this new form laid the groundwork for the implementation of future socio-political programmes dealing with the welfare state.

The 1950s were the dawn of numerous developments which reformed the rationality of citizenship in Finland and which, to some degree, also constructed and normalized welfare programmes. The models of the nuclear family, the ordinary one-family house, and the “normal paid” labor relation grew from it. The new practice of the regulation of space was thus clearly linked to the process of social modernization that occurred in Finland in the 1940s.

Translated by Vesa Raiskila