NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING
OF TOWNS AND COUNTRYSIDE

L'AMENAGEMENT SUR LE PLAN NATIONAL ET
REGIONAL DES VILLES ET DE LA CAMPAGNE

NORWAY
Pre-war Conditions

The new developments in national and regional planning which took place in Europe and U.S.A. between the wars, on the whole failed to interest the Norwegian central administration. Problems were generally dealt with on traditional town planning lines, though efforts of broader scope may be found, e.g., in the master plan for Oslo and its surroundings. Even such plans were, however, of a local character.

Present Tasks

After the war a change has taken place. The need for regional planning has been stated by several authorities within the central administration. As a preliminary result the Ministry for Social Affairs and the Directorate of Work have decided to enter upon a regional investigation into the economic conditions and possibilities of the shire of Nordland. The purpose is to prepare an economic reorganisation of the shire in case of a depression and severe unemployment.

Further the Housing Directorate is working at the preliminaries of regional planning for Finnmark in connection with the reconstruction of the devastated areas. This work is performed by the town planning department of the Housing Directorate (B.S.R.). A committee of six members representing several Ministries and planning institutions has been appointed to assist in the planning.

As the work is still in a preparatory stage and no fully-developed institution for regional planning has been established it is too early to give a lengthy account of results or how the work is organised.

A very promising sign of the growing interest in planning is the establishment of local study-groups and planning societies who have started investigations in their own districts. Their efforts have not as yet been co-ordinated, and the B.S.R. has therefore called a meeting to organise the co-operation of these local groups.

Future Organisation

In the opinion of the B.S.R. regional planning in Norway should be directed by a board consisting of representatives from the most important planning authorities of the central administration. This board should supervise and co-ordinate all work of a national and regional character which is being carried out by the different Ministries and their local representatives. Naturally the board should also take the initiative in starting new investigations and projects. In a similar way there should be appointed local boards in the different regions to secure a close co-operation between the representatives of the State and the local authorities. The actual planning should be undertaken by a central department with full knowledge of
all relevant work that is being done and all existing material at its disposal. It could also act as an information bureau. In each region planning activity should be organised as team-work by representatives of the local planning authorities assisted by the necessary experts.

This form of organisation is dictated by the Norwegian administrative structure and the special circumstances as regards population, communications and geographical conditions.

**Future Tasks**

The problem of decentralisation of towns and industrial centres which plays such a conspicuous part for instance in English planning does not exist in Norway, which is a sparsely-populated country (about 320,000 km² and a little more than 3 million inhabitants). In many places the task is centralisation rather than decentralisation. Further, the resources of the country are not fully utilised and communications insufficiently developed. The foremost problems are therefore the rationalisation and further development of industry, fisheries, agriculture and forestry. What is needed is a planning of a sociological character, like the T.V.A. project in the U.S.A. It will be of special importance to make agriculture and forestry more profitable and thus counteract the threatening tendency of depopulation in the countryside.

**A Fascinating Problem**

It will be seen that Norway has hardly anything to teach foreign planning experts as regards organisation or planning results. We have, however, one important thing to offer the world: an interesting reconstruction problem and the rare opportunity for sociologists and regional planners of building a community from the bottom comparatively unrestrained by its historical development and present structure! The problem referred to is the reconstruction of North Troms and Finnmark.

On their retreat from Finland during the winter 1944-45, the Germans razed completely a territory of the same size as Switzerland with a population of about 75,000. In the other parts of the northern counties damages ranged from 60 to 90 per cent. Everything built by human hands was destroyed, not only houses, but roads, bridges, quays, telephone and electric power cables, etc. Even large forests which cannot be restored for generations were razed to the ground. This German thoroughness in destruction naturally means a corresponding freedom for the planner. The chief restrictions on his activity are the natural resources of the district.

**Natural Resources and Present Conditions**

The devastated areas are situated between latitude 69° and 71° and are the outpost of civilisation in the north. Along the west coast the mean January temperature is 10-20° C. higher than is normal in these latitudes. In the internal districts of Finnmark in latitude 69°, about 300 km. north of the Polar Circle, temperatures of 34° + 2° C. have been measured. Temperatures of about 30° C. occur nearly every year in these parts. At the coast the maximum temperature is naturally lower, but 20-25° C. is common even there. There is midnight sun two months a year, but the summer is
extremely short; winter comes early and is as a rule severe in the internal parts. The snow has seldom melted till the month of May and often returns in September. On the other hand the ports are open the whole year.

The light and warmth of the summer make agriculture possible. Most common is the growing of hay, potatoes and vegetables, and the hay-crops are often quite as large as in the southern part of the country. In some places there also forests of considerable size, in central Finnmark even a pinewood north of latitude 70°.

About 70 per cent. of the pre-war population were dependent on the fisheries for their livelihood (including those occupied with transport and in the fishing industry). The Finnmark fisheries are among the richest in the country. Before the war they represented up to 125,000 tons of fish at a value of 13 million kroner, or approximately 15 per cent. of the total Norwegian fisheries. A special feature of great importance is that Finnmark has rich fishing during the whole year in distinction from the other Norwegian fisheries which are limited to a very short season. In addition to the sea fisheries, salmon fishing in the rivers is also of importance.

Farming as an independent occupation is chiefly found at the heads of the fjords and in the lower parts of the valleys. But for the most part agriculture in Finnmark is a supplement of fishing. Most fishermen have a lot of ground which can feed one to six cows and often some sheep. A considerable portion of the inhabitants of the coast still live in natural economy on this basis.

The Reconstruction

The conditions of life are hard. An unsuccessful fishery or bad crops which can easily occur are a catastrophe when the normal standard of living is so low. However, the population love their country and would never dream of living anywhere else. This became especially clear after the liberation.

On their retreat, the Germans had enforced an evacuation of 50,000 persons, two-thirds of the population in Finnmark and North Troms, to southern Norway. The rest succeeded in hiding and supported a wretched life till the liberation. Then the evacuated population began to pour northward, back to their damaged homes to start life anew. Their homesickness was so strong that it was impossible to stop or regulate the current. Instead, the authorities were obliged to undertake a large-scale provisory reconstruction to provide accommodation for these thousands before the winter came. In addition to that it was necessary to build quays, outhouses, etc., to enable them to subsist.

Permanent reconstruction commenced summer, 1946, and on a larger scale, summer, 1947. It will certainly prove a heavy economic burden. The excessive building costs and the long and expensive transports mean that the population will be encumbered with heavy debts which will certainly make life difficult in the future. It is partly up to the planners to lay an economic foundation which makes life bearable to this tough race.

Future Planning in Finnmark

As previously mentioned the regional investigations have just started, and only the rough outlines of the problems are known.
Fishing and agriculture will certainly remain the most important trades. Already before the war the fishing trade developed towards greater stability, as the possibilities in Finmark of all-year fishing were increasingly turned to account by the introduction of decked boats. Earlier the fisheries were limited to the short seasons when shoals were near land, and only small boats were used.

The further preparation of the fish is, however, done by obsolete methods. A decisive change will now be brought about in this field, as the State will build a number of modern canning and freezing plants. This will mean a higher quality of products, greater possibilities of sale and consequently increased stability in the fishing trade.

A secondary consequence will be a greater centralisation of the fishing trade. Earlier, small plants were spread among the innumerable fishing stations along the coast. Larger plants will entail a concentration of the population, a definite advantage in these sparsely-populated parts.

This rationalisation of the fishing trade will probably initiate a development away from natural economy based on a combination of fishing and farming. A part of the population will instead be occupied in the fishing industry of the new centres. In their turn these centres will become a market for farming products, especially milk and vegetables and thus make farming for sale a possibility and a necessity.

This combination of fishing, fishing industry and agriculture will probably yield a fairly-balanced economic life. It is nevertheless necessary to lay the foundation of a more versatile economy in case of depression in the fishing trade. Industry of several sorts must be founded. Better communications, especially roads, are imperative and also the building of a number of electric power-stations. For the latter, plans are ready.

On the whole, North Troms and Finnmark have rich possibilities which have not as yet been turned to account, and the districts are therefore a promised land for planners, who here find most of their problems concentrated in a nut-shell.
L'aménagement sur le plan régional en Norvège reste encore dans une phase préparatoire. Les tâches les plus importantes, actuellement, sont la reconstruction de Finnmark et North Troms et une analyse constructive du département de Nordland, afin d'en préparer la réorganisation en cas d'une crise économique.

Une tâche importante pour l'aménagement Norvégien en général, sera l'arrêt du dépeuplement menaçant la campagne, en rendant plus profitable l'agriculture et la sylviculture. La rationalisation des pêcheries et de l'industrie et le développement des moyens de communication sont également au premier plan. Le problème de la décentralisation des villes et des centres industriels n'existe guère en Norvège. En maints endroits, une centralisation est souhaitable.

Le problème de l'aménagement en Norvège, qui est le plus intéressant, surtout pour les experts étrangers, est la reconstruction dans le Nord du pays où une superficie une fois et demie celle du Danemark a été dévastée. Tout ce qui avait été bâti par les mains des hommes, a été rasé. Ici, l'aménagement trouve une rare liberté d'action et la possibilité de construction depuis les fondations. Les principaux problèmes d'une analyse structurale sont, ici, réduits à leur plus simple expression.

Les régions dévastées se trouvent entre latitude 69° at 71°, mais des températures d'environ 30° C. ne sont pas rares dans le centre du Finnmark, et sur les côtes le minimum est 10 à 20° plus haut que la normale pour les latitudes. L'été est court, mais l'agriculture est possible et la récolte du foin est souvent importante.

Avant la guerre, 70% de la population dépendait, directement ou indirectement, des pêcheries pour son moyen d'existence. Les pêcheries du Finnmark représentent environ 15% du total pour la Norvège. La possibilité de faire la pêche pendant toute l'année, rendue possible par les bateaux pontés qui viennent d'être introduits, est très importante. Une tâche urgente, pour l'avenir, est de rationaliser le commerce de la pêche par la construction de fabriques de conserves et d'entrepôts frigorifiques modernes, ce qui entraînerait une concentration de la population, et serait un avantage bien déterminé.

L'agriculture en Finnmark a été principalement supplémentaire à la pêche et les familles ont vécu généralement dans une économie naturelle. La rationalisation du commerce de la pêche, et surtout la concentration de la population grâce à la nouvelle industrie de la pêche, rendront possible, et même nécessaire, l'agriculture pour le commerce. Les produits les plus importants seront le lait et les légumes.

En plus de cette combinaison de la pêche, des industries connexes et de l'agriculture, il faut établir une économie plus souple (industries, etc.) et créer, ainsi, des possibilités d'emploi dans le cas d'une crise économique dans le commerce de la pêche. Une amélioration des moyens de communication est absolument essentielle et un nombre de centraux électriques devraient être construits. Pour ceux-ci, les plans sont prêts.
Les institutions de l'aménagement en Norvège ne sont pas encore complétement établies. L'aménagement en Finnmark est entrepris par le bureau de l'aménagement urbain de l'administration de l'habitation. À l'avenir, l'aménagement sera probablement organisé comme suit : L'aménagement sera dirigé par un conseil de délégués des diverses autorités d'aménagement de l'administration centrale. Ce conseil surveillera et coordinera toutes les recherches entreprises par divers Ministères. Des conseils locaux assureront une coopération étroite entre les délégués de l'Etat et les autorités municipales. Les travaux même de l'aménagement seront entrepris par un bureau central ayant pleine connaissance de toutes les données qui seront, ainsi, rendues disponibles.