

# Anteciperande förvaltning

Tjänstemäns makt i kommunala policyprocesser  
om vindkraft

Mats Bengtsson

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### Abstract

It is an established truth that administrators, in all types of political systems, wield power. They are able to influence the formulation and outcome of policy processes and thus also the content of public policy. But the political role of the public administration depends on how administrators exploit the opportunities they have to wield influence and how these opportunities arise and are regulated. In the dissertation, two actual policy processes stretching over a period of about 20 years, are described in order to analyze the exercise of power by local government administrators.

A main conclusion of the study is that local government administrators contribute to the policy process in the three dimensions of power and, as a result, have wide opportunities to influence the outcome of the local government policy processes. They have potential power in the three dimensions of power and opportunities to influence the local authorities' agendas and decisions as well as the context in which agendas are set and decisions made. Furthermore, local politicians do not limit the administrators' discretion or govern them formally or informally, which means the administrators are free to realise their potential power as they think best.

Besides this, "power over" as a perspective does not appear to be applicable to the relationship between administrators and politicians in local government. "Power over" presumes the existence of dissension, rivalries and conflict, and of two agents that are seeking to push through their will in face of opposition from others. The interaction between administrators and politicians is characterised by dissension to a very small extent.

The exercise of power by administrators, the way in which they use their discretion, is generally characterised by an attempt to anticipate the politicians' reactions and adapt to their preferences in the three dimensions of power. The administrators at the two local authorities use their potential influence in different ways and seek to achieve different effects, as they adapt their exercise of power to what is politically desirable. The administrators' primary assumption, when realising their potential influence, would appear to be the probability that their initiatives and proposals will face resistance when they are addressed politically.

There is thus an asymmetric power relationship at the local authorities: the politicians are senior to the administrators. This asymmetry is the result of the administrators' pattern of behaviour. They anticipate the politicians and thus subordinate themselves. The power relationship is characterised by interaction rather than conflict. It is stable over time and is not challenged by the administrators. The administrators help to maintain this asymmetry by avoiding confrontation and thus adapting their exercise of power to the politicians' preferences, as they perceive them. The outcome of the policy process is a result of the politicians' preferences, which the administrators interpret and execute. The administrators thus limit their own actual influence while assuring the indirect power of the politicians over the outcome of the policy process.

### Keywords

Power, influence, discretion, administrator, politician, anticipation, power to, power over, public administration, local government, policy, policy process, case study, democracy, bureaucracy, wind power, Falkenberg, Halmstad, Sweden