Globalization, Sea Farming and Flexibility in Norwegian Coastal Zone Planning

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INTRODUCTION

Regional and local change is increasingly contingent upon and fuelled by global economic processes. As Hudson states, “The strategies of capital are undoubtedly of great significance in shaping the landscapes of capitalism,” but “…whilst companies seek to shape space to meet their requirements for profitable production, other social forces seek to shape space according to other values and criteria.”¹ The state and its bureaucracies, regional and local government, private organizations, social groups and individuals, may constitute these forces. The convergence of different values and interests on particular spaces and places is the cause of numerous debates and conflicts that in European contexts usually involve public planning. Thus local planning, although limited in its scope and jurisdiction, often “takes place in the context of a global-scale web of relationships,” to which it must adapt.² This applies equally as much to zoning for sea farming in coastal peripheries as it does to the planning of contested spaces in our major cities.

This article is broadly concerned, then, with how Norwegian coastal zone planning at the local level is being influenced by the sea farming industry in its continuous search for competitive advantage in the global market for farmed fish. More specifically it is concerned with flexibility as


Table 1.—Key Figures in Norwegian sea farming, 31 December 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Salmon and rainbow trout</th>
<th>Other fish species</th>
<th>Shellfish and crustaceans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity sold (tonnes)</td>
<td>578,475</td>
<td>4,112</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-hand value (millions €)</td>
<td>1,171</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licences in operation (number)</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct employment (persons)</td>
<td>2,317</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


applied to spatial planning, and to the zoning of Norwegian coastal waters in particular. The justification for this is that the Norwegian fisheries authorities, whose responsibility it is both to regulate and promote the interests of the sea farming industry, contend that coastal zone plans produced by local authorities are not flexible enough to cater for the changing requirements of sea farming—a statement often repeated, but largely unsubstantiated. This raises two questions, one theoretical and the other of a more practical nature: 1) How is the concept of flexibility in planning to be understood? and 2) In what ways may local coastal zone planning in Norway be said to lack flexibility? The article attempts to throw light on these questions and it discusses what implications flexible planning for sea farming might have for integrated coastal management. In order to answer these questions adequately, it is necessary first to sketch briefly the main trends in sea farming and then to outline the planning regime on the Norwegian coast.

**SEA FARMING**

In Norway the farming of salmon and rainbow trout is an industry of particular national, regional and local significance, in terms of exports, upstream and down-stream activities, local employment and incomes. The country is the world’s largest single producer of farmed Atlantic salmon, supplying approximately 50 percent of the world market. In 2003, sales of salmon and rainbow trout totalled c. 578,000 tonnes, at a first-hand value of over €1 billion (Table 1). As yet, the cultivation of marine fish species and shellfish is comparatively modest, but future expansion is expected.

In order to meet international market competition, both the sea farming industry itself and the fisheries authorities are particularly concerned with the exploitation of comparative advantages, such as ideal ecological conditions for growth, clean water and healthy fish. Such concerns and visions of future expansion place local planning authorities under constant pressure to provide better farming localities and more space.