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## Nordic Regional Arguments



### Administrative reform – Arguments and values.

Hallgeir Aalbu, Kai Böhme and Åke Uhlén.  
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- Kai Böhme you were the leader of the project 'Administrative reform – Arguments and values' studying the processes of regional reforms in the Nordic countries. What was the aim of the project and what did you find out?

- A major reform of public sector responsibilities was implemented in Denmark on 1 January 2007 while the other Nordic countries are now also undergoing administrative reform processes. The main subjects of debate are the number of municipalities and regions, as well as their tasks. It is this debate that we have been studying.

- In terms of findings I guess you can say that the most interesting was that the same type of arguments are used quite differently in the countries. Overall they focus mainly on democracy, efficiency, regional development and the reform process itself. Most arguments are actually prophecies about the future. Somewhat simplified you could also say that the arguments used for large regions in one country, can often be the same as those used for small regions in another country.

- Why it is like this? - Mostly because the political will to undertake regional reform in fact are more important than the actual arguments themselves. This forward-looking political logic is rather different from the work undertaken by research-based inquiries where future direction is sought in past experiences.

- What did you find most surprising in the course of studies? - Most was related to the nitty-gritty details and how arguments have been a journaled to fit whatever the line of argument has been. Secondly, one might be surprised to discover that sustainable development hardly features in the debate over regional reforms at all.

- How can the study have relevance for the future? - I think it will be most interesting for the regional debate in Norway and Sweden, by reading the report they can learn from the experiences in Denmark and Finland. Furthermore other countries debating administrative reforms might find the Nordic experience interesting. Luxembourg might be such a case.

- What about follow-ups? - Say ten years from now we should study how the regional reforms have developed, and see which prophecies have turned into realities. That would be interesting.



By Odd Iglebaek

Kai Böhme