

QUESTIONABLE PRACTICE IN THE PROCESSING OF BUILDING PERMITS IN NORWAY

Jonas Wold, Ola Lædre and Jardar Lohne

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering,
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU),
Trondheim, Norway

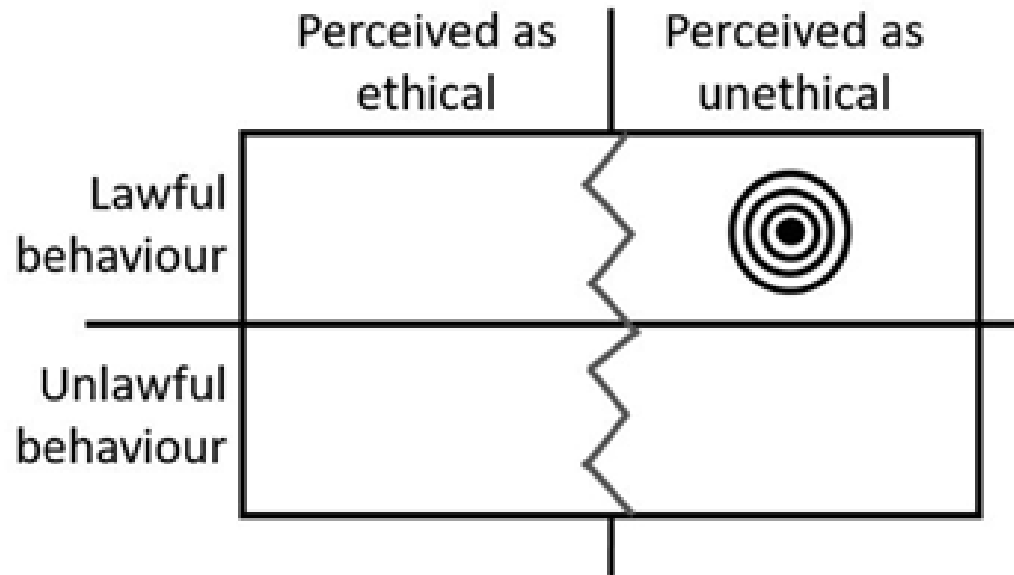
Introduction

Norway is one of the world's least corrupt countries. However:
Public employees responsible for processing building permits are regularly
investigated for questionable practice

...there is a lot of profit at stake for property owners and developers...

Questionable practice

Processing of building permits that are in the violation of the law or considered unethical



Research questions

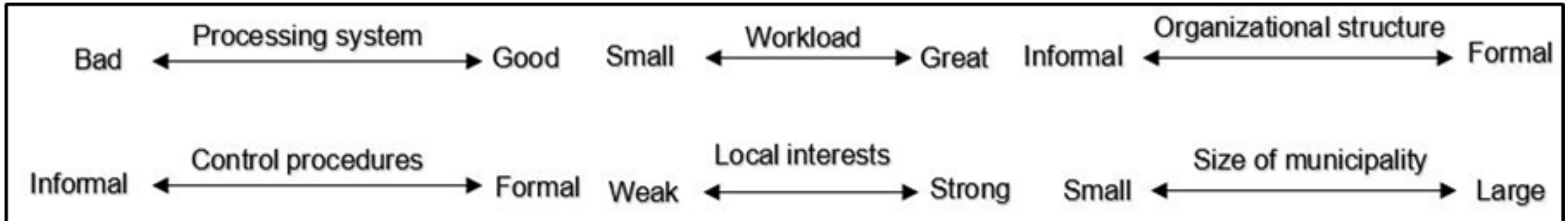
1. What is the opportunity space when processing building permits?
2. Is the opportunity space for questionable practice being exploited?
3. How can one prevent the opportunity space from being exploited?

Research methods

1. Scoping literature review
2. Document study of investigation reports
3. Seven semi-structured interviews (5 municipalities; five case workers and two heads of department)

Results and discussion

Six axes emerged from the literature and document study:



Results and discussion

1. Processing system: Responsibility is delegated to the caseworkers. Older systems are dependent on their ethos.
2. Workload: Short deadlines established by law. 3rd party controllers suffer from limited resources as well.
3. Organizational structure: Small municipalities are transparent. Larger municipalities have rigorous routines. Politicians try to influence case workers
4. Control procedures: Responsibility delegated to case workers. Internal control is based on informal routines. Applications can be forwarded in the queue.
5. Local interests: Local interests can pressure case workers, who want relief.
6. Size of municipality: working and living in the same municipality is challenging. Greater pressure in smaller municipalities.

Conclusions

1. What is the opportunity space when processing building permits?

Case workers can process building permits without a required 3rd party control, and forward applications in the application queue

2. Is the opportunity space for questionable practice being exploited?

“Only by others” (self-discipline and incorporated routines)

3. How can one prevent the opportunity space from being exploited?

Transparent processing system, suspiciously short processing time alert, guidelines for secondary jobs, more caseworker resources