FROM CONTEMPLATION TO ACTION
FROM REFLECTION TO LEARNING

NORSK KULTURFORUM
We believe reflection leads to change. We acknowledge that we must dare to accept other perspectives. The value of being personally challenged should not be underrated but highly rated. We must work with those who are willing and able. Local enthusiasts, those who know the soul of a place, should be included and followed-up.
Over the course of the last few years, Norsk Kulturforum has systematically worked at placing culture on the agenda of community development and planning. Under the title ‘Cultural Planning’, and in cooperation with the Sogn and Fjordane County Council, we have gained experience from our own pilot project; developed a network with our Nordic partners and spread information through meetings and conferences.

Cultural planning is about involving inhabitants, business owners, the government, volunteers and private interests in local and community development. It concerns a broad and inclusive mapping and emphasis on local resources and distinctiveness. The objective is a common cross-sectorial vision for the development of local communities, where the local cultural resources, both material and immaterial are key factors.

From the time of presenting her methods and points of view through working with Cultural planning at the Norsk kulturforum's national conference in Drammen 2011, Lia Ghilardi, director of Noema, has had a central role in this process of advocating for such cross sector approach to local development.

In 2012, Norsk Kulturforum established a working relationship with the Sogn og Fjordane County Council to test ideas and methods for Cultural planning in Norwegian communities through a common pilot project. In the autumn of 2011, the project’s ideas were presented at the regional cultural conference, where all the municipalities were invited to show interest in participating. The Sogn og Fjordane Council were responsible for the choosing of, and signing of agreements with the various municipalities, and received funding from the Ministry of Local government and Modernization for projects during 2013–2014.

In addition, Lia Ghilardi introduced us to the Swedish network ‘Cultural Planning Laboratory’ with whom, since late 2011, we have had a close relationship and learned a significant amount. We have participated in many conferences and meetings, benefitting from their experience, which dates back to 2007.

Through this Swedish network, we have acquired contacts and met like-minded people from both Finland and Denmark, as well as Sweden. As part of the Sogn og Fjordane pilot project, we travelled on study trips to England and Sweden. On both trips, Lia Ghilardi was not only the main lecturer and mentor, but also our contact person and collaborator throughout the entire project period. She also continued to follow-up thereafter.
In this publication, we aim to highlight our points of view, themes, challenges and experiences from our work with Cultural planning. Naturally, the pilot project in Sogn og Fjordane takes centre stage. Sissel Aarseth from the county cultural department has been the project leader in Sogn og Fjordane.

Åse Vigdis Festervoll, general secretary of Norsk Kulturforum compiled this publication, with input and commentaries by Sissel Aarseth. The illustrations build upon the work with pilot municipalities and summarize discussions and methods of approach throughout.

There are several ways to approach community development and community planning and many people, locally, nationally and internationally work on projects similar to these mentioned here.¹

The fact that culture in the broadest sense has a central place and role, both as a sector and in general as a tool to describe what a place is made of and how local communities live is what, perhaps, distinguishes our work from others.

Local cultural characteristics and identity are important and the process whereby people meet and are included is as important as the main objective. The focus is on the possibility for participation, ownership, real impact and cooperation.

Norsk Kulturforum’s work with Cultural Planning is today a key tool in our general work, with experiences applied and imparted in projects, processes and situations where this would be natural.

¹ More information: Lia Ghilardi, Noema, Kryss, NIBR (City and regional research institute), NIKU (The Norwegian institute for Cultural Heritage), TØI (The institute for Transport Economy), Cultural Planning Laboratory (Sweden), Sibbo kommune (Finland), Sogn og Fjordane fylkeskommune (Norway).
WITH CULTURE AS A BUILDING BLOCK

Internationally, Norway rates highly in all its objectives for social capital. This means that we have a good local community where trust, networking and inclusion works well. Under these circumstances, social activities and meeting places are important.

**Culture is a common entity.** Culture is creativity, where contemplation has its place and change happens in a continuing process. How can we use this beneficially within our own community?

We often seek something new, but experience reveals that we should start with what we have, that which we are proud of and that which identifies and distinguishes us from each other.

When faced with the task of making or regenerating places or cities, or simply when developing a cultural policy for a place, it is important to have a long-term and holistic perspective of community development.

Things take time, frequently a very long time. However, if we use time effectively, it can lead to unforeseen results. The community is that which we find and create together. Therefore, we cannot always know what we want or where we are heading. Exploit this to obtain new ideas and discover many possible solutions!

- Invite to open dialogue meetings where most people are seen and heard.
- Count on wide support and cooperation in all processes where possible.
- Greet others and each other with a positive attitude, friendly cooperation and respect for each other’s knowledge and expertise.
- Give stakeholders ownership, insight and power of influence.
- Work with involvement and support.
- Use your own resources in the municipality and local community, thereby building over time, local expertise.
- Pay attention to the manner in which documentation is collected, organized and stored. Ensure that new information can always be connected to existing knowledge.
- Build and make knowledge available over time.

Municipalities are different and unique. Working methods and approach can be learned across municipal borders, but resolutions must be found within local frameworks and resources.
CULTURAL PLANNING AND CULTURAL MAPPING AS A METHOD IN NORWEGIAN COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Norsk Kulturforum’s work with Cultural planning bases its methods and approach on that which is known in English as Cultural planning and Cultural mapping, or even more precisely as “planning culturally”. Through working with Cultural planning and Cultural mapping, these methods and approach contribute to making the process as important as the main objective. This is a holistic way to work, not just being an instrument in the project.

The reason to start such process can be a concrete problem, ongoing planning and strategies, or a higher wish for more and better knowledge about one’s local community or region. Work starts with what we may call a diagnosis; what characterizes the problem we are trying to solve, the community we wish to develop, what frameworks are in place and what possibilities we envisage.

Involving the citizens, business owners, the government, volunteers and private interests in the development of their community is emphasised. Approach and methods are wide-ranging and inclusive in mapping and making accessible local distinctiveness and resourcefulness.

The objective is a common cross-sectorial vision for the development of one’s local community, built upon its characteristics and strengths, where focus is on the local cultural resources, both material and immaterial.

Often in Norway, culture is interpreted as a term to describe the cultural sector’s areas of responsibility and activity. However, in our context, it should have a broader interpretation, describing a place’s characteristics, its history, sustenance, and manner of working or other features.

It concerns local identity, that which we can do and know, feel the ownership of, and what distinguishes us from others. In this connection, all the municipality’s sectors and areas of responsibility fit in naturally.

IT IS ALL ABOUT:
• Having a cross-sectorial and holistic perspective with knowledge and respect across all sectors and areas of responsibility.
• We in community planning should create platforms for holistic development, environmentally, economically, socially and culturally.
• Giving the cultural sector a natural position in community development, in line with all the other sectors.
• Giving the cultural workforce recognition as an equal party.

Culture is central and important in building a community. Trust, social networks, inclusiveness, community, mastery, joy and happiness are words often used to describe positive experiences and interpersonal processes. Used by many sectors, these notions are the core concepts of cultural life and cultural activity.

What the good life means to each individual and what road leads there will vary from person to person. Nevertheless, on this road, community, equality, dignity, respect and self-respect must travel with us. Cultural activities and cultural experiences are substantial elements along this path, both as a goal and as means.

Internationally, Norway rates highly in all its objectives for social capital. This means that we have a good local community where trust, networking and inclusion works well.
A well-developed cultural and organized life is important to creating and maintaining meeting places for building networks and trust.

This is likewise the basis for development of a well-functioning democratic society. Using these characteristics, networks and knowledge is central to working in Cultural planning.

Over the last few years, increased focus has been directed at creative industries, public health and local development, in connection with employment and the economy. We therefore need not only a good cultural life but also cultural planning that is sectoral, where hard numbers and facts are connected to sociocultural elements such as quality of life, public health, democracy, justice, diversity, material and immaterial cultures. Art and culture are the raw ingredients for a wide range of activities.

Pilot Project in Sogn og Fjordane

During 2013, 2014, and based upon these previously mentioned methods and approach, a collaboration on a pilot project in Sogn og Fjordane was completed, where we tested out Cultural planning and Cultural mapping. The basic principle was to give the cultural sector a more natural position in the development of their local community, find new approaches and forms of collaboration for working with the municipality’s masterplan and political strategies for culture and community development.

All the municipalities in Sogn og Fjordane received an offer to partake in testing methods and approaches taken from Cultural planning and Cultural mapping, in the form of a start-up conference. Six municipalities showed interest over a two-year period. Four of these participated throughout the entire process. The municipalities were funded and supported by the Ministry of Local government and Modernization. Four municipalities completed the project: Eid, Gulen, Naustdal and Solund. The municipalities each had different methods, approach and reasons to participate, but common to them all was the need to view with a fresh perspective ongoing and new challenges, processes and measures.

The municipalities used their local communities as a starting point and worked with:
• The implementation of the community’s role in municipal planning.
• Partial planning for concrete actions.
• Improved opportunities and ideas for local development.

Joint meetings, with knowledge dissemination and professional input, combined with presentations and discussions connected to each individual project and each individual municipality took place throughout the entire project period. Especially highlighted was the need for holistic and sectorial approaches. Through individual meetings, the municipalities were followed-up.

CURRENT TOPICS:
When we plan by sectors, dividing lines and borders that prevent sectorial solutions are established. A holistic approach demands wider and new points of view.

• When we request other sector’s expertise and information from the same professionals the answers can easily be disjointed and incomplete.
• Competition between the municipalities and regions can result in uniformity when topics are about who first came out with the new measures.
• How can new initiatives be based on the actual qualities of a locality? What makes the population proud? What would they move to and what would they not leave?
• What is local development? How do we view development work? Who has the power to define it? What are the approaches towards different priority areas? Are we talking about local community development, local development, industrial development, or perhaps about a tourism project?
• Aesthetics, art, cultural inheritance, nature, etc. are important for any society. A strong identity makes a local community interesting for the inhabitants, visitors and tourists.
• Involvement, joint effort and ownership of projects and processes build up an identity. This is knowledge of and for the cultural sector today.
• Compared to the present, how should we secure the increased knowledge and competence in the cultural sector, in strategies and planning processes for holistic community development? Does the cultural sector have good experience and maybe its own language for this? What knowledge does the cultural sector possess, and what knowledge is lacking, in order to be an active player in community development and planning in its own community?
Approach, challenges and findings

What distinguishes this project from other work and other approaches?

The most fundamental distinction depends upon the circumstances. It is not about new art and cultural policies or new forms of community planning, but about a more open and wider approach, ownership and involvement.

WE HAVE GOOD CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT WHEN:

- Politicians are committed and have an ownership over processes and measures.
- All sectors are invited and involved.
- Inhabitants are invited and involved.
- Businesses and centrally interested parties are invited and involved.
- Dialogue takes place at open meetings where everyone can have their say.
- Input and initiatives are systematized, made available and communicated.
- Everyone can follow the processes as they occur and observe visible results.
- We focus on the processes in which participation, commitment and desire to contribute are allowed and demanded.

Positive attitudes towards cooperation are important. It is about open and comprehensive approaches to challenges, initiatives, processes and projects.

It takes time, often longer than we imagine.

THESE ARE IMPORTANT APPROACHES:

- It is extremely important to take a long-term perspective on work and strategies for continuous monitoring. Awareness of methodologies and processes demand time for afterthought and reflection. Experience shows that the cultural sector’s expertise must be included in the overall process from the start. The tools are the same as used in other planning and development, but have a different weighting of the topics, with earlier and more open approaches, broader perspectives and greater inclusion.

- The creative subjects have a central role in the project. Experience shows that it is important to include cultural actors, contractors, promoters and other creative resources in communities.

- The cross-sectorial action is in itself challenging and dissemination within and across activities, measures and players can be difficult. It is important to export the processes, so that the people involved gain ownership, whilst simultaneously the more formal processes run their course in the municipality. It is important that politicians and bureaucrats also have beneficial ownership of the processes.

- Positive attitude and friendly cooperation builds up through good processes and is important throughout. Contributing for the sake of contributing is often a poor starting point. It is important to take time to meet people to listen to their opinions about, and gather valuable input into ongoing planning. It is important to report plans and results.

- The community is what we find and create together. We do not need to know how it will turn out before we start. It is equally important to know who is included and how. We must place individuals into a larger context where interdisciplinary collaboration, fellowship and cooperation are key.

- It is important to ask, “Who are the inhabitants?” Where are the other voices? How can we create open meeting areas, without adopted opinions, solid organizational structures and interest links?

- It is important to identify opportunities and common interests across all topics, sectors and areas of responsibility to ensure that we get a comprehensive overall sectorial perspective.

- The relationship between purchasing external services while retaining and wishing to increase expertise internally can be difficult. Hired consultants disappear with their knowledge and usually leave just an encompassing document, summarizing findings and recommendations. Knowledge will most likely remain in the municipality if people in the community don’t carry out mapping and development. A lot of knowledge relates itself to experience and experiences that demand knowledge of people and place, and knowledge whether areas of possibility exist, and about ongoing processes and strategies. Experience and local knowledge must not be underestimated.
1. THE BASIC VALUES OF CULTURAL PLANNING

- Distinctiveness
- Sociocultural characteristics

2. THE PLANNING PROCESS

- WHAT WE ARE AND WHAT WE WANT TO BE?

- The ability to change
- The will to change

- Mapping
- Development

- THE CULTURAL SECTOR
  - Contemplation
  - Innovation
  - Creativity

- Implementation
- Systematizing

- THE BASICS
  - Distinctiveness
  - Cultural resources
  - Sociocultural characteristics
• In small communities, those involved have many roles. This can be an advantage for involvement and interaction, but it can also be a hindrance and an obstacle. It is important to find new approaches, open meeting places and a wide range of methods to get more citizens involved, thereby allowing them to be heard. A systematic effort towards involvement and ownership, meaningful stops along the way, and relevant feedback is important.

• One of the biggest challenges relates to how we should and can connect knowledge over time. Experience shows that knowledge gathered advantageously in one process can also be used in other and perhaps subsequent processes. The challenge lies in the way we systematize and store documentation, whether in written documents and maps (municipal atlases, GPS), or in the form of oral communication, images and experiences.

• Good systems for documentation and recording contribute to clarification for the future, both in terms of what we have learned, but also what we can do differently. This will allow new information to connect with existing knowledge.

• When implementing the municipality’s community plans, approaches and perspectives from Cultural planning will provide a good framework. We have to consider not only legal measures, but also cooperation and broader and more flexible and dynamic processes.

**Building knowledge**

It is important to preserve and build knowledge in and around the cultural sector. Many municipalities currently lack academic cultural facilitators and development expertise, and culture is not always included in planning and strategies, even when appropriate. Not even in municipalities that employ cultural staff in their central administration is culture necessarily emphasized.

At the same time, as mentioned above, we know that socio-cultural characteristics are essential for successful social development. There is a large and uncovered need for knowledge about the cultural sector’s frameworks and opportunities in the cultural sector itself, and in other sectors.

The cultural sector needs knowledge of its qualities, and of what place and role it can and should play in the overall community development. Building capacity and knowledge systematically over time, amongst employees both within and without the cultural sector, is a necessity.

In our society, with strong sectorial division, the mutual contacts and cooperation across established sectors are crucial for the above-mentioned methods to serve as a basis for development of a good society.

**THERE IS A NECESSITY FOR KNOWLEDGE WITHIN:**

- Professional expertise
- Managerial expertise
- Development expertise
- Implementation expertise
- Dissemination expertise
- Processing and project expertise

It takes time to build such expertise. Part is learned through courses and studies, but a great deal should be learned through actual practical work, where different interests and challenges are viewed together and where people with different skills collaborate to raise the level of expertise.

**To build one’s own expertise, while acknowledging that of others, is crucial for successful community development in both small and large projects and processes.**

**Conclusion**

Unfortunately, there are no simple and universal approaches and solutions. Each project and each municipality must find their approaches based on their characteristics and resources. There are, nevertheless, many suitable methods for working with social development. These can be learned.

The objective of the pilot project in Sogn og Fjordane was to test approaches and methods to give the cultural sector a natural place in local communities and planning. The project started with good interdisciplinary participation. During the project period, there were some replacements and some left the working group, which influenced the implementation and completion of the project.

A holistic approach is important. Unfortunately, we did
not accomplish that all municipalities had interdisciplinary participation in the pilot project. Participation and implementation were therefore largely dependent on individuals and therefore very vulnerable. The municipalities that had multidisciplinary representation from their administration had a stronger implementation impact than those without. Political foundation and involvement also varied greatly between the municipalities. Experience shows that the municipalities with broad administrative and political support had improved effectiveness and results than the municipalities with only one main contact person.

It is important to say, however, that those who have followed the pilot project completely or partly have also benefited from meetings, seminars, talks and special measures. The salient point is the extent to which the municipality as such has enjoyed the project. This is not necessarily easy to answer when knowledge follows individuals, who may remain in position, get new tasks, or move.

Municipalities are different and will always stand apart. A key question must be whether the project differs from other development measures in the municipality, and whether the methods are very different from those previously used. The answer to this is not as difficult as it looks. The municipalities that showed interest had earlier all worked well with development projects and were open to finding new approaches.

The methods were perhaps unknown to many, but through meeting employees who were looking for what could work in their own municipality, the unknown was quickly adapted to the familiar within their administration. During the project, communal meeting places and discussions on common issues were an important arena where everyone had something to contribute and everyone went home with new knowledge and insights.

The feedback from participants was that public discussion about professional challenges were important to their own work and professional development. Gaining new knowledge, trying out their own experiences, getting others’ comments and meaningful discussions on concrete projects and thoughts, might not have made the work easier, but contributed more perspectives to ongoing processes.

Throughout, participants received positive input from both each other and hired lecturers and training providers on how to base work on experiences and local challenges.

In this context, expertise was gathered in both England and Sweden. Lia Ghilardi was our mentor throughout the process.

We also asked ourselves whether this type of project is relevant to increasing the skills of our own employees. The answer is not that simple. ‘Planning culturally,’ demands that the cultural role as community developer is recognized, and that cultural knowledge, activities and actions are perceived as important in the process of change. It too requires a vested interest in viewing challenges from multiple angles and recognize others’ competence and abilities. It is therefore uncertain whether all the municipalities or all the employees will enjoy such projects.

In Sogn og Fjordane, the objective of strengthening cultural employees’ with regard to knowledge and skills (capabilities) in municipal community planning, and strengthening the role of culture in the formal planning processes and interdisciplinary cooperation, is a greater and more challenging goal than the project allowed. It takes more time before the efforts and goals can be documented. From both our assessments and feedback in Sogn og Fjordane we believe that the participants in the project have enhanced their expertise and capability through increased knowledge of other fields.

**PARTICIPANTS REPORTED RECEIVING:**

- Increased awareness in relation to participation.
- Better understanding of how to implement and use existing resources and structures.
- Awareness of working with processes. The importance to set aside time for preliminary work and understanding that the process itself is emphasized as much as the result.
- Acknowledgement that knowledge dissemination be conducted throughout the process.
- Understanding the importance of securing and supporting a cross professionality in the organization, for better solutions, performance and achievement.
- Understanding that things take time – a very long time.
FROM CONFERENCES
AND LOCAL VISITS.

GULEN.

SEMINAR.

SEMINAR.

GULEN.

SOLUND.

STUDY TOUR TO
SIBBO, FINLAND.

The milkmaid with roses of Kjarton by Kjartan Stettemark, NAUSTDAL.
PHOTO: NAUSTDAL KOMMUNE

ROUND-ABOUT ART.

GAMES OF PLANNING.

GAMES OF PLANNING.
STUDY TOUR TO FOLKSTONE AND LONDON.