

Cultural Implementation Programme – a new tool for cultural planning

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Introduction

As a pilot project, a Cultural Implementation Programme (CIP)ⁱ was developed as a new instrument for cultural planning in Norway in parallel and integrated with the zoning planning process for the Bjorvika waterfront urban transformation and development project in Oslo. The main ambition was to ensure that culture would be taken into consideration at an early stage in the planning and building cycle.

This paper describes the Bjorvika planning project and the purpose and contents of the CIP.

Historical Context

Central Oslo is situated around three bays at the inner reach of the Oslo Fjord. The easternmost of these bays, Bjorvika, is the historically most significant. It was here, at the east side of the bay, Oslo was founded around year 1000. Oslo became the Episcopal residence around 1100. At this time the city generally contained wooden houses but also some more monumental buildings in stone. Today, this part of Oslo is an important cultural heritage area, nicknamed the Nordic Pompeii.

Around year 1350, the Black Death cut the population in half. At the same time, several city fires marked an era of decline leading up to a great city fire in 1624. At this time, Norway was under Denmark, and the Danish King Christian IV founded a new town – Christiania – based on a typical renaissance grid pattern at the west side of the Bjorvika bay. This represented the end of the medieval town Oslo.

Significant urban growth did not take place before the early 1800s. Christiania became the capital of a new national state in 1814, and industrialisation commencing around 1840 created substantial population growth and construction of modern infrastructure, port and railway. From 1835 to 1890 the population of Christiania increased from 18.000 to 151.000, which is the highest growth in the history of the city.

Oslo - the capital was re-baptised Oslo in 1925 - achieved its dominant economic role during the early 1900s largely because of transport infrastructure. The railway network of Norway was developed around what is today called Oslo Central Station and which today marks a significant barrier and delimitation of the planning area. The road network and sea transport were also rapidly developed. In the 1900s, Oslo was the most important port city of Norway.

Around 1960, a new highway system was constructed between the city and the Fjord, and the railway system was further developed. The port area changed character as well due to the fact that the port functions became modernised and mechanised. From being an integrated part of the city's daily life, today the port area is better described as a low intensity industrial and warehouse area cut off from the rest of the city.

By the middle of the 1970s, the medieval town Oslo had almost been rendered invisible by the railway and highway construction while the renaissance town Christiania had been cut off

from the Fjord by the port and the highway system. Thus, the city had lost contact with the Fjord by a triple barrier of railways, highways and cargo ship terminals.



The Bjorvika area in central Oslo (source: PBE, Oslo).

The Bjorvika Planning Area

The Bjorvika planning area is approx. 1.000.000 sq.m. including approx. 300.000 sq.m. sea area. The current land uses are port functions and traffic areas including railway, highways and roads. A park called the Medieval Park that has been established in the area of the medieval town Oslo containing a small lake where the shoreline of that period has been reconstructed, is also included in the planning area. The site where the new National Opera is currently under construction is geographically also within the planning area, but is regulated by a separate zoning plan.

The Bjorvika planning area is a part of the larger Fjord City planning area which consists of most of Oslo's waterfront. Oslo City Council passed a resolution to initiate planning for development of the Fjord City area when it was decided to move the container ship terminals to a new regional port. Bjorvika constitutes the largest part of the Fjord City, and is also probably Norway's most centrally located real estate due to its location adjacent to Norway's largest multi-modal transport node, Oslo Central Station.

The planning area is extremely complex and complicated. One reason is the infrastructure including railways and highways criss-crossing the area. Another reason is that most of the area consists of fluvial deposits, polluted sediments, industrial pollution and port related landfills that has gradually expanded during the last 400 years. Finally, parts of the area contain valuable archaeological remains and have a high cultural heritage value. The fact that the property was owned partially by the National Government, the City of Oslo, the

Harbour Authorities and several private actors, added complexity to an already complex situation.



Bjorvika today. The double dotted line indicates the new suspended tunnel that is a precondition for development of the area (source: PBE, Oslo).

The Planning Context

Planning initiatives aiming at removing the barriers between the city and the Fjord started already in 1982 with the competition “The City and the Fjord: Oslo looks to the year 2000”. In January 2000, the City Council of Oslo decided upon the Fjord city strategy, a long term strategy for relocation of the harbour terminals, and urban development of the waterfront areas with dwellings, commercial, recreation and culture.

The 1999 decision of the Norwegian Government to construct the new National Opera in Bjorvika served in many ways as a catalyst to intensify the planning efforts for the Bjorvika area and also for the efforts to remove the highway system which is a basic precondition for development of the area. A separate zoning plan constitutes the legal basis for construction of a large, expensive and technically advanced suspended motorway tunnel under the Oslo Fjord. This tunnel will be connected to existing tunnels completing the main road network through Oslo. This zoning plan has been developed in coordination with the Bjorvika plan, and the construction will be completed in 2011.

The Bjorvika plan has been developed in cooperation between the City of Oslo, the national government and private property owners. A Planning Council for Bjorvika was created with the sole purpose of developing the zoning plan. The Planning Council consisted of eight organisations: the Municipal Planning and Building Authority, the Oslo Real Estate and Urban Renewal Office, the Oslo Port Authority, the Norwegian Road Authority, a conglomerate of private property owners and developers and the Norwegian Directorate for Public Construction and Property.

The Bjorvika Plan

According to the Norwegian Planning and Building Act a zoning plan is a detailed plan with associated provisions which regulates the use and protection of land, watercourses, sea areas, buildings and external environment in specific areas in a municipality. A zoning plan shall be prepared for the areas in a municipality where it is decided in the land use part of the municipal master plan that development may take place only in accordance with such a plan. A building permit may not be issued until a zoning plan has been prepared.ⁱⁱ

The Bjorvika plan is a so-called simplified zoning plan which require subsequent more detailed building development plans to be drafted. The Bjorvika plan is largely limited to zoning provisions which determine the different categories of land use and the density of development. Since the planning area is large and complex, and since the area will not be fully developed before after 10 - 15 years, it was decided that the plan would need to be flexible and primarily define the framework for development.

The plan regulates approx. 900.000 sq.m. floor space to be developed. This consists of approx. 400.000 sq.m. for housing which equals approx. 4.000 housing units, approx. 20.000 office spaces and approx. 100.000 sq.m. for cultural infrastructure. Furthermore, the plan designates approx. 230.000 sq.m. for parks and public spaces including a waterfront promenade running through the entire area, and, finally, approx. 150.000 sq.m. traffic area.

Besides the new National Opera (see above), the plan includes important elements like a new National Heritage Museum, a *teleferique*, marinas and an aquarium. Thus, the area would already from the onset contain several important functions and elements to make it culturally varied and interesting. However, it was early in the planning process determined that in order to ensure a strong and unique cultural profile for what will be a new central neighbourhood changing the face of Oslo, new instruments were needed.



Bjorvika as it is visualised when it is fully developed around 2017 (source: PBE, Oslo).

Cultural Planning

Cultural planning in Norway, as in many other countries, has been mostly related to cultural policy planning which is characteristically top-down, discipline based and focusing on hard infrastructure. With this type of cultural planning, cultural development is seen as development of the different cultural sectors and the definition of culture is largely arts based.

In recent years, cultural planning as a multi-faceted and multi-sector approach has emerged. Here cultural resources are used strategically for the integrated development of communities in a culturally sensitive approach to urban and regional planning. 'Culture' and 'cultural resources' are defined broadly, encompassing for example heritage, local traditions, arts, media, crafts, architecture, urban design, recreation, tourism and the cultural representation of places.ⁱⁱⁱ

This new approach is related to the growing understanding of culture as essential for well being, attractive, sustainable and prosperous communities. COMEDIA and Charles Landry's work^v describes the relationship between creativity, innovation and culture and their importance for urban development and re-development. Culture is crucial for sense of place, identity, and civic pride and is also one of the most important elements in city branding efforts. Richard Florida^v identifies cultural diversity as one of the most important factors for urban prosperity and growth. Internationally, there are now many examples where culture has been used successfully as a tool for urban regeneration and development. Of these, Bilbao is one of the most well known.

In Norway, a recent research study^{vi} shows that the cultural industries is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors and represent today approx. 3,5% of the GNP. This is a very conservative estimate, but 3,5% of the GNP is already as much as two times bigger than the agriculture sector and three times more than fisheries.

Thus, in the case of Bjorvika, there were a multitude of good arguments for looking into new instruments for focusing on culture in the planning process. The shortcomings of traditional planning and zoning were early noticed since the focus was entirely on functions, structures and land uses. Issues related to contents, programming and profile are normally not an integrated part of a traditional planning process, and it was thus decided to develop a Cultural Implementation Programme as a pilot project integrated in the statutory zoning planning process.

The Cultural Implementation Programme (CIP)

There were high ambitions attached to the development of the Cultural Implementation Programme. The CIP should contribute to establish Bjorvika as the most attractive meeting point for culture and businesses. It should facilitate using Bjorvika actively in branding Oslo and strengthen Oslo's position in the increasing inter-urban competition. Furthermore, it should establish Bjorvika as a brand with a strong cultural profile in order to add value and create a competitive edge, and finally it should contribute to establishing Bjorvika as a culturally varied and lively neighbourhood for both the inhabitants themselves, visitors and tourists.

More concretely, the objectives of developing the CIP were to:

- Ensure follow-up of cultural ambitions from one planning phase through to the next through to the completed project;
- Secure follow-up and implementation through the Planning and Building Act;

- Concretise ambitions and expectations attached to the cultural dimension of the new neighbourhood;
- Create an instrument that would become a useful tool for both developers and the Oslo Planning Authority, and that would constitute a basis for subsequent planning and development.

The two first bullet points above will in the following sections be commented in more detail.

Environmental implementation programmes, management programmes or follow-up programmes (EP) have been established as an instrument to ensure that environmental concerns, requirements and ambitions are transferred from one phase in the planning and building cycle to the next until the project is completed. An EP normally includes systems and mechanisms for enforcement and follow-up.

It was decided that the general methodology and structure of environmental programmes should be developed and adjusted and used as a methodological basis for the CIP. The main reasons were to mimic a commonly known and accepted instrument and to ensure structured implementation and follow-up within the statutory framework of the Planning and Building Act.

As noted above, according to the Norwegian Planning and Building Act, a zoning plan is necessary in order to obtain a building permit. A zoning plan contains provisions that are legally binding, and guidelines. The guidelines are not legally binding, but they provide important information to the developer and the Planning Authority related to the ambitions and objectives of the development in question.

The CIP as a whole was defined as a guideline to the zoning plan, and two provisions were added to secure follow-up of the CIP in the subsequent phases of drafting building development plans and applying for building permits. An environmental programme and a design manual had been developed in parallel with the CIP, and were also given the same formal status.

CIP Contents

The CIP contains a range of proposed tools, recommendations and guidelines related to strategic considerations, cultural infrastructure and building design, the construction phase and implementation and follow-up.

Recommendations of a more strategic nature emphasised the importance of developing a vision that would serve as a guiding star for the development of Bjorvika. It was recommended to focus on some of the inherent qualities of the area, which are all related to culture in a broad sense. Bjorvika as a *storyteller* could be developed as a solid conceptual framework due to the heritage value of the area. It was proposed that Bjorvika should tell the story of Oslo from the Viking Ages through to today, should tell the story about what Oslo and Norway can offer today, and that storytelling as an art should be a common denominator of the area.

As mentioned above, Oslo Central Station is the largest multi-modal transport node in Norway, and most people visiting Norway arrive at this station. Thus, Bjorvika as a gateway and a meeting point are also strong concepts that would also be valuable in a branding effort.

Bjorvika Arts and Business (BAB) was established as a result of the CIP. It was recommended to establish BAB as an interim organisation that would be responsible for initiating and facilitating cultural activities during the first part of the construction phase. BAB was established with a board of directors with representatives from politics, culture and

commerce, and a managing director was hired. The salaries and the expenses of BAB were sponsored by the commercial stakeholders in the area who saw this initiative as an important effort for early branding of Bjorvika.

Some large warehouses were for a few months reserved for culture at zero cost before they were demolished. During an intense period almost 20 cultural events took place including opera, concerts and exhibitions. Several thousand people visited Bjorvika, and in the media the name Bjorvika got an increasingly more and more positive connotation. The usage of warehouses for cultural activities after they are abandoned and before demolition has continued, and this summer there are also several exhibitions and cultural events.

Several concrete guidelines pertaining building design were developed. For example, it was decided that in such a large area, it would be important to concentrate cultural activities in certain parts. The concept *culture intensive zone* (CIZ) was thus introduced. A CIZ is defined as containing both the open public space outside a building and the buildings delimiting the open space. The waterfront promenade, some of the most important roads and public squares and parks were designated as CIZs. In the CIZs it is for example recommended to keep a minimum storey height, to ensure maximum programmatic flexibility and to ensure that a certain minimum percentage of cultural infrastructure is developed.

A development cooperation for Bjorvika (BUAS) which has the overall responsibility for development of the entire area, has now been established. According to recommendations in the CIP, BUAS has now the responsibility to follow up the programme. Also according to CIP recommendations, BUAS has hired cultural expertise who is responsible for implementation of the programme and for initiating and facilitating cultural activities in the construction phase. As mentioned above, two zoning plan provisions will also ensure that the CIP is taken into consideration when the building development plans and application for building permit are drafted. It was also recommended to use sales contracts to ensure implementation, but it remains to be seen if this will happen, as the first projects will not be for sale before after a few years.



Apart from the new National Opera that is already under construction, Barcode (MVRDV and DARK) is the first project to be developed in the northern part of Bjorvika (source: PBE, Oslo).

Conclusion

The CIP has generated a lot of interest in Norway. Two smaller towns, Odda in Western Norway and Narvik in the north, have attempted to use parts of the methodology in larger urban redevelopment projects. The Directorate for Public Construction and Property has recently published a manual for developing CIPs in cooperation with several Norwegian ministries including Ministry of Trade and Commerce and Ministry of Culture. Already now, more and more towns and municipalities in Norway are attempting to use culture as a tool for strategic development.

At this point it is too early gauge the effects of the CIP on the future neighbourhood of Bjørvika. The first buildings will be finished around 2007 and the area will not be fully developed before around 2017. However, it is already possible to conclude that the CIP has contributed to increase awareness of the importance of culture and has formalised and also raised the status of culture in the statutory planning and building cycle.

ⁱ *Bærekraft i Bjørvika: kulturoppfølgingsprogram*, approved by Oslo City Council 27 August 2003.

ⁱⁱ Ref. *The Planning and Building Act of 14 June 1985 No. 77* with amendments in force 1 April 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ Baeker, Garret (2002), *Beyond Garrets and Silos: Concepts, Trends and Developments in Cultural Planning*, Municipal Cultural Planning Project, Canada.

^{iv} Ref. for example Landry, Charles (2000), *The Creative City. A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.

^v Florida, Richard (2004), *The Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books.

^{vi} Haraldsen, Tone et al. (2004), *kartlegging av kulturnæringene i Norge*, Lillehammer: Østlandsforskning.