Design for coastal development

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Project description: Design for coastal development

Introduction and background

How can we use design to explore new possibilities for coastal development in the North? And how can digital resources be used to unlock potentials for more attractive and sustainable societies along the Northern coast?

In the autumn of 2023 Kystutviklingssenteret *(The Coastal Development Center)*, Sør-Varanger Utvikling *(SVU / Sør-Varanger Development)* and researcher and students from the Oslo School of Architecture and Design are exploring how design-methods and digital- and societal-innovation can contribute to the future development of coastal societies in Northern Norway.

The project 'Design for coastal development' is a joint initiative centered around Kystutviklingssenteret. Kystutviklingssenteret was established in 2022 as a pilot project, funded by the Norwegian Government and its Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. Behind Kystutviklingssenteret are local actors, including Sør-Varanger Development, which is Sør-Varanger municipality's organization for innovation, transition and development; NTNU - the Norwegian University of Science and Technology; the owners of Nothing Hill, which is turning the former hospital in Kirkenes into an innovation hub; as well as a leading finnish actors within innovation. As a pilot-project, Kystutviklingssenteret is meant to be coordinated with other innovation, transition and development-projects in the region and develop new connections, potentials and direction. When the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development announced the funding for the center in 2022, the press-release said the following:

> *"There is great potential for developing new and green technology for use along the coast and for export, based on the advantages and challenges of coastal communities. The pilot project for a coastal development center is an exciting initiative for development based in Kirkenes (...) We need to try out new approaches and solutions in regional policy. The aim is to make it more attractive and to stimulate citizens to move to vulnerable and strategically important coastal areas in Norway"*
>
> *- Sigbjørn Gjelsvik (Sp) - Minister of Local Governance and Regional development.*

Here, the Minister addresses the importance of connecting technology development to regional, societal innovation. He also argues that this needs to be done through both new approaches and solutions to regional policy, and through developing attractive coastal societes for citizens. The need for new kinds of innovation and development that explores the connection between technology and society is something that is becoming increasingly important, and relevant, in public policy. How to put new technologies to work for societal development is an important challenge for research and innovation in Norway, as well as the Nordics and the EU. In

September 2023 the [Ministry of Education and Research](#) announced [a large, new funding policy for research and innovation on new digital technologies, such as AI](#).

> *"Here we need a broad effort. We must research and develop the technology itself, but it is at least as important to understand the consequences for people and society. This means that we must mobilize for research and innovation in a number of areas. Norway is one of the most digitized countries in the world, and we have a unique starting point for success. But we need more research, more innovation and more expertise to get the new technologies into use"*
>
> - *Sandra Borch (Sp) - Minister for Research and Higher Education*

This research-policy could be seen as connected to an international concern, for example in the EU, for how we can regulate and control technology development to reduce the risks of new technologies becoming harmful for society. But this policy direction also opens up for a more active engagement with how new technologies could be put to work to unlock innovation both for the private and the public sector. Kystutviklingssenteret argues that the digital shift needs to be seen as a unique possibility for developing robust, attractive and decentralized societies all over Norway.

> *"Norway is moving away from being a robust and decentralized state where the entire country is utilized. With the escalating centralization, we are getting a less resilient structure, where in the extreme outcome, we might no longer know what Norway is or what opportunities the country holds. The digital shift opens up the possibility to reverse this trend."*
>
> - *[Kystutviklingssenter.no](#)*

In the 'Design for coastal development' project we want to explore the possible connections between **societal and technological innovation**. We believe that design-methods can contribute to this by offering creative and strategic tools for both short term solutions, and proposals for long term sustainable, societal change.

Framing, briefs and cases

The collaboration between **Kystutviklingssenteret**, **SVU**, **AHO** have two overarching aims for the Autumn of 2023: 1. To be a relevant and fruitful learning arena for the Master's course 'Strategic design for society'; and 2. to be a preliminary project for the development of further collaboration and research linked to Kystutviklingssenteret. Together, partners, researchers and students will be developing concepts and proposals that will contribute to a pre-project that has the potential of laying the groundwork for future projects.

Framing

The 'Design for coastal development' project is framed within the larger context of [Norway's commitments to the UN SDGs](), the national policy on [innovation in the public sector](), the policy for [digital transformation](), and the principles of citizen-centered design. In connection to these, the project have identified four strategic challenges frame our design explorations:

1. *How can we design for sustainable and attractive societies?*
2. *How can we design technologies for better everyday life?*
3. *How can we design for meeting places and social infrastructures?*
4. *How can we design for citizenship and trust?*

These interconnected challenges frame the project and will be addressed in different ways across all the concepts and proposals that we develop.

Briefs

To give the project a specific focus we have developed a **primary brief** that focuses on outcomes and outputs, and a **secondary brief** that focuses on methods and approaches:

Primary brief: Digital coastal development
How can digital resources, services and products contribute to developing the coast in ways that create value for both residents and society? How can we, though design, develop examples of how the meeting point between "technology and people" can lead to societal innovation?

Secondary brief: Strategic design for coastal societies
How can strategic design and digital methods, such as co-creation, creative exploration and iterative prototyping, contribute to innovation for coastal communities in the north? How can design be used to uncover and highlight new opportunities for short-term and long-term societal value?

Cases and directions

We will design concepts, proposals and prototypes that respond to these briefs by taking three specific cases or directions as our starting-points:

1. **The coast as a knowledge society**
   Could the coast be an arena for new kinds of decentralized research and education? How can we design for knowledge hubs and networks of expertise? How can we design for a knowledge culture? What could be the user-experience of a coastal knowledge society?

2. **The coast as an arena for exploring new industries and new kinds of jobs**
   Could the coast be a starting-point for new kinds of sustainable industries? Could the coast offer new kinds of jobs and new ways of working? What could innovation and entrepreneurship mean in the context of the northern coast? What could be the user-experience of this kind of coastal society?

3. **The coast as an attractive, everyday society**
   How can we design for an attractive, sustainable and enjoyable everyday life along the coast? What makes coastal communities attractive for citizens? How could we develop decentralized social and cultural infrastructure with the use of digital resources? How could we facilitate community developers and design for belonging and community? How do we get young people to establish themselves in coastal communities? What is the user experience of an attractive everyday coastal society?

Context and fieldwork

The context for this project is the coast in the north. Our starting point is Øst-Finnmark, but our goal is to develop concepts and proposals that would work for the broader coastal region. We start the project with a week of field-work in Sør-Varanger, where Kystutviklingssenteret and SVU is based. We will use Sør-Varanger to learn and get inspired about both local and regional issues, and will be in contact with a network of different actors remotely after we return to Oslo.

Process

The project will run over a 10 week period and consist of the four phases:

- **What is?** Field work, observation and visualization of insights
- **What if?** Development of ideas, concepts and scenarios
- **But how?** Design of proposals and prototypes
- **So what?** Reflections and analysis of short and long term societal value

The project will be concluded with a closing seminar in the beginning of December 2023.

Deliveries and outcomes

Throughout the project we will be to produce a series of different deliverables, such as:

- **A portfolio of insight.** Visualized findings from fieldwork and interviews.
- **Idea catalogs.** A series of ideas and concepts for new services and solutions.
- **Design proposals and prototypes.** A collection of scenarios and concrete proposals for interventions.

- **A strategic report**, a 'Playbook', which puts the design exploration and prototyping in a larger strategic, societal context.
- **Documentation.** Data, mappings, photos and material for communication and further project development.

'Design for coastal development' we will be part of a possibility-study for Kystutviklingssenteret. The work we do as students and researchers will hopefully contribute to for example applications for future research and innovation funding. This means that the work we do this autumn has a real possibility for future, strategic impact, and that we need to take this into account in how the projects are developed and documented.