

Localization of SDGs: Norwegian experiences

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1. Introduction: The challenge of incorporating SDGs in institutional and legal frameworks

UN member states have increasingly recognized the role of sub-national entities in achieving sustainable development, including high relevance in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals ('SDGs'). Local government in particular is regarded as key to successful SDG implementation and so much so that for the first time an explicit 'urban' SDG (SDG 11) was also granted. Moreover, a recent UN report on local and regional state level roles in human rights also regards these levels as 'in a much better position than central government to deal with matters that require local knowledge and regulation on the basis of local needs and priorities.'¹ Though laudable aims, several initial challenges for the SDGs have been more generally identified. These include operational issues: namely, the limited specification of actor and inter-governmental roles and responsibility, particularly the undeveloped role for local authorities; and also whether adequate knowledge transfer takes place to the local level and whether agreement on urban indicators takes place.² Another fundamental and overarching concern is the voluntary nature of state reporting and therefore where the impetus for accountability is to be found. The SDGs, in other words, are not prescriptive. Though there is a general sense that targeted laws, policies, mobilisation of financial resources, cooperation, capacity building and technology transfer are key at all levels of government, including local government, there are gaps in how their substantive aspirations are to be achieved.³

The report provides experiences of Norway's efforts to implement the SDGs at the local government level in order to show both the challenges but also some partial successes in implementation. As the previous mapping report by the authors pointed out, when it comes to human rights discourse and practice, this is framed at a municipal level in Norway instead as 'social inclusion', without any specific references to International Human Rights Law.⁴ Rather than seeking aspects that weren't apparent at local level, this report focuses instead on the SDG process itself, though with emphasis placed on associated principles of the rights-based

¹ UN General Assembly, HRC thirtieth session: 'Role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights' (2016)– Final report of HRC Advisory Committee/ A/HRC/30/49 [8].

² (e.g. Simon et al, 2019).

³ (Aust and Du Plessis, 2019)

⁴ Mapping of cases from Norwegian context of SDGs and human rights at the local level (NCHR), first report, April 2020.

approach, although it is significant to note that they are not referred to this as such in documents reviewed and interviews undertaken.

Above all, however, SDG implementation is situated alongside and within the pivotal role of inter-governmental, institutional and legal frameworks. Norway has been a global frontrunner and strong advocate for the SDGs at the international level. Since the 2030 Agenda was formally adopted in 2015, Norway has consistently promoted the SDGs in international and multilateral fora and has taken on an ambitious advocacy role especially within policy areas such as health, education, gender, climate change and environment.⁵ Prime Minister Erna Solberg's long standing tenure as co-chair for the UN Secretary General's Advocacy Group for SDGs further demonstrates Norway's committed approach to raising awareness and fostering engagement for SDG implementation at a global level. Given the universality implicit to the SDGs as a joint global responsibility,⁶ it is important to look at the extent to which the Norwegian government is providing concrete measures on how the SDGs shall be implemented at national level and through enabling inter-governmental cooperation. Compared to other Nordic countries such as Sweden, Finland and Denmark that have developed comprehensive national action plans and follow-up systems, Norway is arguably less ambitious and less comprehensive in domesticating the SDGs for a country that seeks to be a leader and trailblazer for the SDGs at the international level.⁷

This chapter will therefore take a closer look at how and where the SDGs are incorporated at the domestic level. The first section deals with locating the SDGs in national, regional and local institutional and legal frameworks pertaining to Norway's implementation. Key legislation and policy frameworks are identified -not least the Planning and Building Act (2008)- which simultaneously constrain and enable SDG implementation. Two brief examples are given of regional approaches, in Viken County, and Oslo City-Region, through which to illustrate the mixed extent of SDG-use as a basis for planning activities. The second section then provides insights from two notable selected examples of where SDGs appear to have programmatic influence but also are determined by social, institutional and political structures in these explicit area-based interventions (Pådriv initiative in Hovin, and the Grorudallen regeneration, both in Oslo).

⁵ Committee, The OECD Development Assistance, (2019)

⁶ See Agenda 2030 (UN).

⁷ Sandberg, (2020)

1.1 The Planning and Building Act (2008)

The Planning and Building Act (2008) is the main legislative framework pertaining to national, regional, and municipal planning. It stipulates requirements for technical standards, design, administrative procedures, and lays down rules for integrated physical, social, cultural, and economic planning. The PBA is characterized as a procedural law, in that it prescribes rules, procedures and key considerations for the course of planning, without saying much about what the final result of planning should be⁸. Furthermore, the law regulates the relationship and seeks to balance between national, municipal, and private interests.

According to the PBA, all municipalities shall have an overall municipal master plan; that is, a long-term, comprehensive development plan for the territory under the jurisdiction of the respective local authority. The plan shall cover all aspects of local development with a view to coordinating physical, economic, social and cultural activities within the area⁹. The master plan is comprised by three parts. First, a social element that determines long-term challenges, goals and strategies of the municipality. The social element shall serve as the basis for the municipality's activities¹⁰. Second, the master plan must have a legally binding land-use element which states the main aspects of land allocation and provides frameworks and conditions for how projects and land-use can be used and implemented. Third, the implementation element must indicate how the master plan shall be followed up¹¹. The implementation element has in practice been replaced by a statutory municipal financial plan laid down in the Local Government Act.

The substance of PBA has continuously evolved over the last 50 years to address new issues and concerns. The original Planning and building Act of 1965 was a result of increased urban migration trends after the end of World War 2, and primarily involved provisions and rules for land-use and physical infrastructure¹². As issues related to environmental management became more prevalent, in addition to a growing emphasis on local authority's responsibility to provide social and welfare services for the population, the PBA was amended in 1985¹³. The introduction of PBA (1985) saw the main objective for local planning shift away from issues related to land-use and physical infrastructure to producing social and welfare services. Consequently, other sectors within local government entered the Norwegian planning system, making the planning system much more comprehensive. The PBA (1985) also introduced

⁸ Hofstad & Hanssen, (2014) p. 5

⁹ Nystad, (2010 p.17

¹⁰ Plan- og bygningsloven, (2008) § 11-1

¹¹ Plan- og bygningsloven (2008) § 11-4

¹² Kleven, (2004) p. 17

¹³ *ibid.*

principles of public participation (section 5-1) in the planning process, and provided new legislation to protect and safeguard the interests of vulnerable populations such as children, elderly, and physically disabled (section 3-1)¹⁴. As the planning system evolved to become more wide-scoped and inclusive, with more and more actors and organized interests involved, ideas about cooperation and coordination became new objectives within local planning¹⁵.

While the PBA of 1985 expanded the instrumental role of local planning and introduced new legalization relating to environmental and social challenges, the proliferation and focus on these issues continued to grow in the late 1980s and 1990s¹⁶. For example, environmental concerns received more attention in the aftermath of the Brundtland Commission (1987). An increasing awareness of PBA's power to influence people's lives resulted in a Planning Commission being established in 1998 to propose amendments on how the Act could become a better tool to serve important public interests¹⁷. The Planning commission proposed that planning should be more democratic while under local political control, more comprehensive with enhanced coordination and cooperation between all actors, and more predictable and effective in nature¹⁸. However, the Commission's main ambition was that planning should promote sustainable development by ensuring a long-term perspective on physical, environmental, economic, social and cultural development. The Commission submitted its report in 2003, and the amended version was adopted in 2008.

1.1.2 The Sustainable development aspect of PBA (2008)

The most notable change in PBA (2008) compared to the Act of 1986 is the implementation of sustainable development as a core purpose of the law¹⁹. The Act represents a clear ambition of securing social development and safeguarding the public interest and wellbeing. According to the purpose of Act, laid out in Section 1-1, "the act shall promote sustainable development in the best interests of individuals, society, and future generations". Consequently, the PBA of 2008 to seek to alter an already established balance between various levels of government and public and private actors, for the benefit of future generations²⁰.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Hanssen & Aarsæther, (2018) p. 4

¹⁶ Kleven, (2004) p. 16

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 16

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Hanssen & Aarsæther, (2018) p. 2

²⁰ Berghei, (2019)

In 2018, 10 years after the PBA (2008) was adopted, the act was again evaluated. The evaluation, named EVAPLAN 2008, is the result of an inter-disciplinary study and partnership, involving over 20 researchers, including lawyers, political scientists, engineers, architects, municipal planners, and other social scientists representing 6 research institutions across Norway and 5 international universities²¹. The research project lasted for 4 years, and resulted in two books being published in 2019. The magnitude and size of this research project shows just how complex the PBA is, and how important it is for Norwegian society as a whole. It sets the boundaries for everyday life, the development of physical areas, and Norway’s ability to meet the SDGs are also affected by the legislative instrument²². In fact, journalist Cathrine Sandnes recently described PBA as the “local democracy’s Magna Carta”²³ and in view of the significance, some of the main findings and suggestions from EVAPLAN 2008 will be presented below in the table.

Table One: *EVAPLAN 2008 evaluation of the Planning and Buildings Act*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Act provides a framework that enjoys a high degree of legitimacy with clear boundaries for all key actors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As mentioned above, a shift has been seen over the last decades where social considerations and challenges, including climate change, biodiversity, social inequality, universal accessibility, and public health have emerged in the public and political discourse. Despite a clear ambition to address these challenges within municipal and regional plans, the law’s legally-binding aspect is primarily connected to spatial and land-use planning. The evaluation therefore suggests that the provisions regarding social planning should include more conclusive and precise “shall” formulations with regards to the planning strategy’s social content.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the municipal role as community and social developer has widened, and as the national government expects a variety of development-related goals to be included in municipal planning, local governments have more and more specific considerations to take into account. This has led to an increased need for strategy in planning. The PBA (2008) does call for increased focus on strategy, but case-studies show that local government’s often initiate business and development projects that

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Winther, (2018) p. 1

²³ *ibid.*

are not connected to the planning system. This leads to weakened coordination across sectors, where different departments pull in different directions.

- According to PBA, planning shall actively address and counteract social inequality in health and housing. However, the law does not provide local governments with the necessary tools to achieve goals related to social sustainability, especially with regards to housing. According to EVAPLAN, the majority of local administrations in Norway largely focus on the environmental aspect of housing development compared to the social aspects of sustainable housing, which are generally viewed as “vague” and “unclear”. Consequently, if government’s want to address the lack of affordable housing and the resulting social exclusion, the PBA does not offer much assistance. Even though PBA’s current regulations offer local governments the right to determine certain aspects of housing and property development, such as size, volume, façade, roofing etc., the Act does not include provisions or regulations on how housing should be financed or who should be able to live there. The law does give governments a small space to maneuver, in that it provides local government with a “right of first refusal” in certain property development projects, where governments can go in and buy property at market price. However, with limited funds available, governments are often forced to buy their share of property in locations that are less expensive. This trend creates an un-even population composition, where particular social groups are pushed into poorer areas, which contributes to socio-economic inequality. EVAPLAN, therefore, suggests that regulations should be included to give governments a clear right to determine the application and utilization form of certain amount of all property and housing development projects. Similar regulations are found in other Nordic countries. For example, In Denmark the Planning Act of 2015 gives local authorities the right to decide the allocation of 25 % of all property development projects.

- Lastly, the evaluation concludes that the legal framework fails to sufficiently secure climate and biodiversity considerations in spatial planning. Further, the findings indicate that the law fails to provide a good-enough system for understanding the accumulated effects that spatial and land-use projects have with regards to gas emissions, cultural values, and biodiversity. The stated purpose of promoting sustainable development in the best interest of future generations suggests that the PBA is in need of more provisions and tools that helps secure environmental challenges in relation to spatial planning.

In terms of the relevance of the PBA for the SDGs, despite the weaknesses found it can act as a potentially good framework for local SDG implementation²⁴. In summary, the act provides a framework for weighing different interests, gathering knowledge, and for making the necessary prioritizations with a high degree of participation and involvement from a wide spectrum of actors. With this as the foundation, several municipalities have been able to create positive synergies between the different SDGs. There is a general understanding and belief within local administrations that the Norwegian planning system is suitable for enabling a coordinated, inter-sectoral and holistic response to SDG implementation.²⁵ Nevertheless, the PBA could become an even better tool if certain amendments are made. As argued by several scholars²⁶, there is a need to further integrate and unite the social element with the land-use element. This will contribute to making sure that the legally-binding land-use prioritizations are in line with long-term challenges, goals and challenges laid out in the social element. Up to this point, the majority of local administrations have only included the SDGs in their social element, while the land-use element often doesn't get updated and revised²⁷. However, if the SDGs are to become more than just a slogan, the goals need to be further integrated in all aspects of planning, including regulation plans, financial plans, and yearly budgets. This will be essential to make sure that the SDG strategies and prioritizations presented in the social element actually get materialized and end up in concrete measures and actions.

1.2 National expectations regarding regional and municipal planning 2019-2023 and the SDGs

Following the Planning and Building Act's section 6-1, the government shall draw up a document setting out national expectations regarding municipal planning every four years. According to PBA, these expectations "shall be followed up in planning pursuant to this act, and shall serve as the basis for the central government's participation". The national expectations provide an overview of goals, tasks, and national priorities that shall guide municipalities in their planning processes. In other words, local planning must be carried out within national goals and guidelines. Laid out in the preface of current national expectations document, "the 17 sustainable development goals, which Norway has endorsed, shall provide the main direction for Norway's policy to address the greatest challenges of our time... it is

²⁴ Nordland Research Institute, (2020) p. 134

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 135

²⁶ Berghei, (2019)

²⁷ Hanssen & Aarsæther, (2018) p. 6

therefore important that the sustainable development goals are incorporated as part of the basis for social and land-use planning”²⁸. While the document attaches importance to promoting joint efforts and cooperation between the central government and local authorities in meeting the SDGs, the government has increased local autonomy when it comes to how municipalities incorporate the SDGs within their territorial boundaries²⁹. This has given local authorities leeway in defining their own political priorities within the larger global SDG framework, providing them with the chance to contextualize the goals for themselves to fit the respective physical, social, and cultural conditions across Norway. To what extent therefore do local governments follow the national priorities of implementing the SDGs in local plans?

One influential assessment provides a report determining how far Norwegian municipalities have come in localizing the SDGs in their municipal planning. In conclusion, the report paints a bleak picture of how Norwegian municipalities have progressed in implementing the SDGs. While a few municipalities and counties have come far in implementing comprehensive processes to localize the 2030 Agenda, the report shows that most municipalities are still in the starting-phase³⁰. Especially smaller municipalities are finding it difficult to dissect the complexity and overcome the barriers connected to the localization process. According to the report, these barriers are mostly connected to time constraints, resources, weak administrative capacity, and a lack of knowledge. Further, the majority of respondents from municipal administrations point to a lack of guidance material on how to approach the SDGs. While there is a vast degree of international literature and material available that aim to assist with local implementation, respondents from small municipalities find it time consuming and challenging to analyze this information on their own³¹. As a result, local governments are in need of material that is easily accessible and made relevant for Norwegian municipal challenges. The vast majority of respondents also ask for a clearer voice from the national government and a more coordinated political approach that systematically considers the SDGs in the context of Norway³². Consequently, the majority of Norway’s 365 municipalities are in need of tools, pathways, and support when it comes to using the SDGs as a management tool for setting priorities and developing policies to address concrete challenges. The report thus call for the national government to contribute in developing competence based on good examples and lessons learned that can be shared with regional governments. Despite

²⁹ National expectations regarding regional and municipal planning 2019-2023 (2019) p. 15

³⁰ Nordland Research Institute, (2020) p. 6

³¹ *ibid.* p. 97

³² *ibid.* p. 101

an increased focus on SDGs in municipal planning as a result of the guidelines laid out in the national expectations, these are often just briefly mentioned and not followed up in underlying plans and strategies.

1.3 National Action Plan for SDG implementation (2021)

The national government's lack of concrete measures on how the SDGs shall be implemented in Norway has led to much criticism from Norwegian civil society organizations. An open letter calling for change was published in *Bistandsaktuelt* in May 2019³³. The letter was signed by over 30 organizations and called on the national government to develop a national action plan for SDG implementation with national indicators to measure the effects. The Storting (Parliament) has also pressured the government to provide "a detailed plan for how Norway will implement the SDGs nationally"³⁴. After these repeated calls for change, the government committed to develop a National Action Plan for the SDGs which will be ready in 2021. This National Action Plan will contextualize and tailor the SDG to fit with Norwegian circumstances and challenges, and is being designed in close cooperation with civil society actors³⁵. In addition, the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization recently stated that a comprehensive set of national indicators are going to be developed to match and supplement the new National Action Plan³⁶.

This is a positive development as the Norwegian frameworks for measuring and follow-up has been criticized for being relatively weak³⁷. Up to this point, domestic reporting and follow-up on SDG implementation have been linked to the national budget process. Since the SDGs were formally adopted in 2015, respective ministries within the Norwegian government have shared the responsibility for following up on the 17 goals, and each ministry has reported on the status of domestic implementation in their respective budget proposals. The different responses are summarized in the national budget white paper which is presented to the Storting annually. It is arguable that the approach of linking SDG follow-up to the annual budget process fosters increased cross-governmental awareness and a whole-of-government mechanism that creates a wide sense of ownership for the SDGs across the whole government.³⁸ Nevertheless, CSO's have criticized this follow-up approach for being vague. Without a National Action Plan

³³ *Bistandsaktuelt*, (2019)

³⁴ Stortinget, Innst. 440 S (2017)

³⁵ Regjeringen, (2020)

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *Bistandsaktuelt* (2019)

³⁸ Halonen, et al., (2017) p. 40

with concretized goals for national context, ministries have often reported on already ongoing activities, translating these into the “shape” of the SDGs³⁹. Another challenge to this approach is that it can pose challenges when it comes to implementing a holistic approach that sees goals in connection to each other. When goals are housed in different ministries, it can be more difficult to see the interlinkages across all goals and the holistic character of the 2030 Agenda can fade.

The remainder of this section briefly addresses two contrasting examples of how far planning for the SDGs has come in Viken county and Oslo City Region, respectively.

2. Viken County

According to the report presented by Nordland Research Institute, the municipalities that has come furthest in implementing the SDGs are those where the SDGs are politically rooted at the highest administrative level of government, and where the SDGs have been mainstreamed across all sectors and through all government activities⁴⁰. This appear to be true in the case of Viken.

Viken region became operative on 1 January 2020 after the merger of the counties of Akershus, Buskerud, and Østfold. The newly established Viken region consists of 51 municipalities and has become Norway’s most populous county. After the decision to merge was made official in early 2018, a joint board of political representatives decided that the SDGs should form the basis of all development in the new county. Viken’s main motivation for incorporating the SDGs as the foundational framework is connected to the national “Reform of local Government 2020” which drastically reduced the number of municipalities and counties in Norway. The reform gives local government more power, and it is Viken’s hope to play a larger role as bridge-builders between national policy sectors and the diverse needs of the local population.

As the decision to incorporate the SDGs was made early in the regional planning process, Viken was given time and space to mainstream the SDGs into the day-to-day dialogue and culture of the new organization. In order to further cement the SDGs as a basis for the development, a new planning and steering system for the county administration was introduced. In this system, the SDGs operate not only as guiding principles, but as a management tool that links the SDGs to all sectors of the organization. As such, the incorporation of the SDGs within the planning and steering system has deeply connected the goals to the internal culture building

³⁹ Bistandsaktuelt (2019)

⁴⁰ Nordland Research Institute, (2020)

process. The administration has regularly provided trainings and workshops to employees, politicians and managers across the whole organization to develop relevant competencies within the staff. This process has strengthened the organization's role as a community developer. The inclusion of the SDGs in Viken's new holistic planning and steering system has also made it possible to link overarching strategic goals with financial plans, annual budgets, and operational planning.

2.1 SDGs as basis for planning work

In addition to driving the planning and steering system for Viken's administration, The SDGs has also formed the basis for Viken's regional planning strategy. The planning strategy is the county's overarching management tool for societal development. According to the Plan and Building Act, section 7-1 states that "The regional planning strategy shall give an account of important regional development trends and challenges, assess long-term development potentials and determine which issues are to be addressed through further regional planning". Further, as stated in the Norwegian Public Health Act "the county shall have sufficient overview of the population's health in the county and the positive and negative factors that may influence this". Consequently, Viken decided to take on a knowledge-based approach to the regional planning strategy process, developing a comprehensive study of the county's current development trends, as well as its challenges and opportunities. In order to provide account of regional trends and challenges, Viken has gathered and analyzed data-sets using the SDGs as the overarching framework.

The 17 goals and the 169 targets forms the basis for the report and provides status for each goal on global, national, and regional levels. The data-sets have primarily been delivered by Statistics Norway (SSB, the national statistical institute), with additional input from other relevant sources such as the Norwegian Institute of Public Health and the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs. The data and indicators that relate to Viken's development trends is available in Viken's Statistics Bank. This online tool is continuously updated with more data as it is developed and made available. This knowledge base has been essential to Viken's planning, and has provided the county with a solid data foundation that will contribute to delivering targeted development responses and policies. The development of Viken's Knowledge Base and Statistics Bank has also contributed in identifying data gaps at local and regional levels, and has served as a supportive tool for other municipalities in Viken.

The findings presented in the “knowledge base” report have served as the foundation for the prioritized actions and targets laid out in Viken’s Planning Strategy. As mentioned above, the planning strategy is the county’s overarching management tool for societal development. While the knowledge base take on a goal-by-goal approach where each SDG is observed in isolation, the planning strategy has adopted a different methodology to SDG implementation. This methodology was first presented in the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report “The Future is Now”. The report, which is based on science and practice of sustainable development implementation, argues that the 2030 Agenda cannot be achieved unless we recognize and take advantage of the interlinkages between SDG goals and targets. Thus, the most efficient way to make progress towards SDG implementation is by acknowledging the positive synergies between the SDGs and the need for a holistic and systemic approach that ameliorates the negative trade-offs while maximizing co-benefits. The proposed system transformation approach identifies six key entry-points for transformation. These six entry-points cut across all 17 SDGs and offer the most potential in terms achieving the desired change. In addition to highlighting entry-points for transformation, the method also identifies four “levers” which can be deployed through each entry point. The four levers will advance collaborative action when properly engaged. All in all, the method laid out in the UN report offer a process for advancing cross-disciplinary partnerships and collaboration between actors in government, business, civil society, academia and science.

The implementation process described above has been central to Viken’s Planning Strategy. However, it has been slightly modified and further developed to fit Viken’s challenges and opportunities. The six central entry-points where focused and cross-disciplinary partnerships can accelerate progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda has been translated into and identified as 1) Quality of life, welfare, and equal possibilities 2) Sustainable and just economic systems 3) Sustainable land use, food production, and healthy nutrition 4) Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy transition 5) Holistic urban and city development 6) Climate, eco-systems, and biodiversity. These common entry points shall stimulate advancement in cooperation across different government levels and sectors (national, regional, and municipal) and counteract the traditional silo-approach where sectoral decision making has been prevalent.⁴¹

⁴¹ Furthermore, in accordance with the UN methodology, Viken has defined 4 categories of levers (means of implementation). These have been identified as 1) Government, judicial, and regulatory 2) Economy and finance 3) Individual and collective action 4) Research, innovation, and development, and has helped identify and

While the most common approach to SDG implementation in Norwegian municipalities has been more targeted in nature, focusing mainly on the implementation of a few relevant goals depending on local contexts, Viken's approach to SDG implementation is promising and an effective way of looking at the SDGs from a more holistic perspective. The SDGs can act as a framework that provide shared objectives and a common language to all municipalities. But making sure that approaches and implementation strategies are aligned across municipal borders will be important to advance collaboration and make sure that the response is at its most effective. Viken represents a complex territorial governance system with 51 municipalities and 51 local state authorities. This system is characterized by several overlapping structures, collaboration agreements, and networks that promotes different sustainable development approaches. For example, the municipalities of Bærum and Asker, which is part of Viken, is also collaborating and taking part in the ongoing work of the U4SSC Implementation Programme, which use a set of international key performance indicators (KPIs) to evaluate and monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs. While it is encouraging that municipalities are taking part in international SDG networks and developing localized indicators to monitor progress, aligning methodologies and coordinating implementation strategies across different levels of local governments will make sure that everyone is pulling in the same direction. This will minimize institutional fragmentation and promote a more coordinated response to achieving the SDGs that will be better in the long term. Viken therefore stands out somewhat in contrast to Oslo.

3. The City of Oslo

The municipal master plan "Our City – Our Future towards 2040" is the City of Oslo's core steering document. The plan was officially adopted in 2019 and covers Oslo's main visions and long-term goals, which is to create "a greener, warmer and more creative city with room for everyone"⁴². The document presents a description of where Oslo is today, before presenting goals, targets and strategies that will contribute to realizing the overall vision. The main goals

systematize Viken's available resources when it comes to cooperation and co-creation to achieve the SDGs. Based on the insights presented in the Knowledge Base document, as well with wide participation from the greater Viken society, the Planning strategy has identified challenges and opportunities related to the six entry-points, and specific targets and goals have been developed under each category. For each entry-point with its specific goals and targets, the planning strategy identifies pathways for how the goals can be achieved through cross-disciplinary cooperation.

⁴² Oslo Kommune, (2018)

related to achieving this vision is that Oslo, first and foremost, shall become a zero-emission city and a frontrunner within climate and environmental policies. Second, the municipality shall work hard to reduce social inequality and make sure that everyone can participate in all arenas of society. Lastly, facilitating for increased housing development and business development are important thematic focus areas in Oslo's key steering document.

In late 2019, the city council was tasked to conduct a follow-up report on how Oslo's masterplan, activities and strategies correspond with the SDGs. In fact, Oslo's master plan has no explicit mention of the SDGs. Despite this lack of direct reference to the 17 goals, the follow-up report concludes that the content found in the SDGs are fully unified and integrated in Oslo's master plan⁴³. While suggesting that municipal plans, activities, and strategies cover the majority of SDG targets, the report acknowledges the need for enhancing collaboration and coordination with different local stakeholders. Oslo's societal challenges are complex, and many of the goals laid out in the master plan are multi-sectoral and "wicked" in nature. Thus, it is welcoming to see that the local government of Oslo recognizes the need for more deliberate collaboration with various local stakeholder and interest groups and an increased focus on SDG 17⁴⁴. With regards to the city's urban development strategy, the municipal master plan also states "by facilitating civil society participation and co-creation between the municipality and local actors, we will achieve a broader sense of ownership to the processes and better results than the municipality can achieve on its own".

The new "planning strategy for the municipality of Oslo 2020-2023", which was officially adopted In November 2020, also sheds additional light on Oslo work with SDG implementation. While the planning strategy states that the previous municipal master plan from 2019 will continue to act as the local government's core steering document, the strategy reiterate how the city's goals and strategies are in line with the content laid out in the SDGs. Further the planning strategy states that all upcoming strategies, thematic plans, and action plans in the municipality shall present how they contribute to realizing the SDGs. Lastly, the new planning strategy also present how the municipality is currently working on developing a new measuring tool with statistical indicators that will provide information on how efforts, initiatives and projects contribute to sustainable development and if they have had the desired effect. The set of indicators are developed in cooperation with Statistics Norway and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, and the main goal is to collect all

⁴³ Byrådssak 352/19 (2019)

⁴⁴ Oslo Kommune, (2018) p. 75

relevant statistic so that environmental, social, and economic development can be seen in connection.

Though a somewhat mixed reception within Oslo, it is to a more decentralised level that the report turns to in Section 2, and towards more specific programmatic and practical action within two cases of area based urban development initiatives.

Section 2

Case 1

4. Pådriv

Pådriv (“front-runner”) is a collaborative partnership network that works for quicker and better solutions to sustainable development in Hovinbyen, Oslo. Pådriv was founded in 2017 and consists of 40 equal partners (businesses, organizations, government sectors) and over 270 individual citizens with different backgrounds and skills. All local actors, no matter how small or how big, are free to join the initiative, either as a partner or a “pådriver”, as long as they share a willingness to participate and contribute to realizing the SDGs. Pådriv is, thus, nominally open for all actors who wants to engage in shaping sustainable urban development in Oslo. At the outset of the mapping process, it was decided to adopt the EU definition for Civil Society Organizations. The EU definition states that CSOs “include all non-state and not-for-profit structures through which people organize to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic”⁴⁵.

Pådriv was founded on the notion that the realization of the ambitious goals laid out in the 2030 Agenda will depend on increased cooperation between local governments, the private sector, and civil society across various levels⁴⁶. Consequently, Pådriv acknowledges that the scope of action largely depends on effective collaboration between different stakeholders and local actors. The need for urgency is emphasized in “Strategy document for 2018-2021” and it further states that the main aim is to effectively turn the rhetoric of the 2030 Agenda in to practical action; through the creation of projects and solutions that are socially inclusive, environmentally friendly and economically feasible⁴⁷.

4.1 How are the SDGs anchored in Pådriv?

Pådriv has taken on a SDG approach similar to that of the Stockholm Resilience Centre. The “wedding cake” model challenges the traditional interpretation of the SDGs; namely that ecological, social, and economy are separate systems. Instead, the approach presents a holistic interpretation that showcase how economic and social prosperity is dependent on the biosphere and the general health of the planet in which we operate. The model embraces the interlinkages between the different dimensions of sustainable development, and calls for transformative

⁴⁵ European Commission, (2012) p. 3

⁴⁶ Pådriv, (2019) p. 3

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 3

action that create synergies and co-benefits across the different aspects of sustainable development. Goal 17 (Partnerships) serves as the linchpin that holds all “cake-layers” together, suggesting that the success of the 2030 Agenda depends on powerful partnerships and cooperation between governments, the private sector and civil society across different sectors⁴⁸.

While Pådriiv has stated that they have a holistic approach and works for the realization of all SDGs⁴⁹, Pådriiv’s strategy document for 2018-2021 also suggests that some goals are more relevant than others. As stated in the official strategy, Pådriiv is, as they say, “especially focused on contributing to solving **SDG 17** – Partnerships for the goals and **SDG 11** – Sustainable cities and communities”⁵⁰. Target 17.17 points to the need for encouraging and promoting effective partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. However, while research has shown that achieving the SDGs will not be possible without the involvement of local actors, and there has been a positive scale-up in public-private partnerships both at local and international levels to solve complex “wicked issues”, the effectiveness of these partnerships is often limited due to weak institutional designs⁵¹. Pådriiv seeks to address this by changing the rules that have traditionally governed such collaborative partnerships that are often hierarchical in nature, dominated by the public sectors involved, and characterized by a lack of trust between the actors⁵². As for measuring and monitoring progress in SDG implementation, Pådriiv has adopted the “Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities”, a toolkit that offers a multi-purpose decision making tool for promoting sustainable urban development. How, then, does Pådriiv seek to translate these norms into specific practices?

4.2 The “Pådriiv” approach: co-creation as infrastructure

The Pådriiv methodology was created in order to make it easier for cities and local communities to establish efficient platforms for collaborative processes and equal partnerships between local stakeholders in sustainable urban development. The methodology is based on practical experience from development, the establishment of Pådriiv in Oslo, as well as other similar initiatives and documented international research and practice. The methodology is a living framework that is continuously being updated by Pådriiv’s network leadership, and is being financed by The Norwegian State Housing Bank, the city of Oslo, and Viken. The methodology

⁴⁸ Stockholm Resilience Centre, (2017)

⁴⁹ Berman & Hansen, *webinar: “infrastructure for sustainable city development”* (2020)

⁵⁰ Pådriiv, (2019) p. 5

⁵¹ Marx, (2019) p. 4

⁵² Ansell & Gash, (2007)

is structured around Dr. Kotter's "8-Step Process for Leading Change" which is a continuum from inception to coalition building and institutional change.⁵³

The emergence of Pådriv must be seen in relation to the changing nature of public management. This is captured in the so-called shift from "government to governance", where the traditional hierarchical model of governing has been replaced with more collaborative forms of

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- ⁵³ Step 1 in the Pådriv method involves "promoting a need for change". In this phase, the initiators must create a sense of urgency and promote the need to increase the sustainability in an area. Further, the initiators must find relevant actors and opportunities for partnerships and create common goals before the partnerships can be established.
 - Step 2 is "Building a guiding coalition". An open and equal partnership depends on having a core of people with personal drive who can initiate, lead and coordinate the work carried out.
 - Step 3 involves "Forming a strategic vision" with clear goals and action plans for the first year of operation.
 - Step 4 calls for the "mobilization of volunteers". In this phase, the network of partners must invite, motivate and connect with civil society with the hope of allying with a large number of energetic and industrious people called "Pådrivere". This army of volunteers will should different backgrounds and skills and be able to work in a coordinated and goal-oriented way in order to solve challenges and increase the sustainability in a given area. Large-scale sustainable change can only occur when individuals cooperate and rally around a common challenge.
 - Step 5 comprises of "removing barriers in order to generate real impact". In this step, the network must identify and remove barriers that hinder effective collaboration processes across silos, disciplines, industries, and organizations. Only through removing barriers such as inefficient processes and hierarchies can the partnership have a real effect.
 - Step 6 is "Generate short-term success and wins" involves identifying and developing projects and initiatives that can produce positive short-term as well as long-term results. The importance put on "short-term" is connected to the importance of stimulating volunteers and involved actors to keep going, as well as encouraging new actors to enter the partnership network.
 - Step 7 involves "sustaining acceleration". This means building on the momentum from the short-term successes and continue to increase the pace of change towards sustainable development in the area. This includes a continuous improvement of systems, structures and guidelines to make sure rate of change and quality of project remains on a high level.
 - The last step is to "institute change". Solving complex societal challenges through cooperation must be institutionalized in order to ensure that continuous and systematic change towards better solutions and more sustainable societies are established as a lasting practice and way of working.

governance⁵⁴. Thus, the processes of public decision-making have become more open for engaging with other actors to solve issues of societal importance. Such a shift is witnessed in the City of Oslo, and is connected to its highly ambitious aims of becoming the environmental capital of the world and a city that is inclusive, diverse and with room for everyone⁵⁵. The city of Oslo has recognised the level of complexity connected to reaching these goals, as well as 2030 Agenda as a whole, and has stated that the city wants to be a laboratory for innovative solutions and cooperation⁵⁶.

Despite the tendency for increased governmental will to increasingly and actively involve local actors in different areas of policy making in Norway, an efficient platform for collaborative processes to take place in an effective way has been absent. This has resulted in a vast majority of collaborative partnerships and networks failing to proactively address complex sustainable development challenges and produce meaningful public outcomes⁵⁷. However, Pådriiv has managed to create an infrastructure that eliminates the underlying conditions that often discourage effective collaborative partnerships. It regards this as de-coupled from hierarchical structure and markets, and that systematically produce co-created solutions to sustainable urban development⁵⁸.

First, Pådriiv provides an infrastructure that seeks to eliminate power imbalances between different stakeholders⁵⁹. Power imbalances are known to be a common issue in collaborative governance and often leads to manipulation by the stronger actors. When power and resource imbalances are existing in partnerships, the risk of producing distrust and decreased commitment is high. Pådriiv has managed to eliminate this condition by creating a “neutral arena” for collaboration between government sectors and local actors⁶⁰. Pådriiv, as an association with a designated network-leadership, has taken on the role as facilitator in this arena. As facilitator, Pådriiv actively organize interactions between different stakeholders and provides space for partners to discuss concrete problems that are of mutual interest and dependence⁶¹. This space opens for informal social interaction between actors that generally don’t interact, and facilitates dialogue concerning local challenges. The fact that all partners in

⁵⁴ Berman & Hansen, *webinar: "infrastructure for sustainable city development"* (2020)

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Oslo Kommune, (2016)

⁵⁷ Berman & Hansen, *webinar: "infrastructure for sustainable city development"* (2020)

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Ballestad, (2020) p. 7

⁶⁰ Berman & Hansen, *webinar: "infrastructure for sustainable city development"* (2020)

⁶¹ Ballestad, (2020) p. 15

Pådriv are equal has apparently contributed to building high levels of trust among the actors involved. Trust is believed to be key for Pådriv's success in delivering projects⁶². The principle of equality between partners is a critical aspect in Pådriv's culture, and an important factor to endeavour that makes the neutral arena stays neutral. As a way to abolish asymmetric power relations, Pådriv has taken on a "policing role" in order to equalize these power differences, lifting up smaller actors and making sure their voices are heard⁶³. The fact that Pådriv is an independent and privately owned actor with no agenda apart from realizing the sustainable development goals has further contributed to fostering neutrality⁶⁴.

In addition to playing the role as facilitator, Pådriv also act as catalyst in the sense that it actively pushes actors to produce and implement projects and solutions. In other words, Pådriv is extremely action-oriented; making sure that the right kind of actors are brought together, invites new actors to the table, and constructs a sense of urgency to encourage participation. This type of leadership role is strongly emphasized within the Pådriv leadership and is seen as an essential aspect for pushing transformation towards the SDGs⁶⁵. As mentioned by an informant, Pådriv seeks to be as effective as possible by directly speaking with politicians in charge, and by avoiding the traditional hierarchical structures and proceedings that are time consuming and often brings delay⁶⁶.

4.3. Pådriv as location-oriented

Pådriv has taken on a place-based approach that focuses on the urban transformation of Hovinbyen. Hovinbyen is Oslo's largest urban development and innovation area and is going to go through a total reconstruction and transformation over the next 20 years⁶⁷. Hovinbyen comprises 11 km² and is today characterized by abandoned industrial areas and warehouse facilities, divided residential areas, and weak infrastructure. These characteristics, in addition to its close proximity to central road systems, has turned Hovinbyen into a fragmented fringe that is unconnected to the city centre, with low property prices and growing social barriers⁶⁸. As Oslo's anticipated growth is one of the highest in Europe, Hovinbyen's proximity to Oslo city centre makes Hovinbyen a natural focus area for development and extension of the city centre. The "Strategic plan for Hovinbyen" was approved by the city council in 2018, and aims to turn Hovinbyen into an attractive, socially inclusive, and tightly connected part of the city with room

⁶² Berman & Hansen, *webinar: "infrastructure for sustainable city development"* (2020)

⁶³ Ballestad, (2020) p. 34

⁶⁴ Berman, *Personal interview* (2020)

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Ballestad, (2020) p. 46

⁶⁷ Oslo Kommune, (2018) p. 38

⁶⁸ UrbAct, (2018) p. 4

for up to 40,000 new homes and 50,000-100,000 new jobs⁶⁹. The importance of collaboration is a key point in the strategy, and it also stresses that Hovinbyen shall be a laboratory for testing innovative and sustainable solutions to urban development.

Working with SDG realization within a confined and concrete area such as Hovinbyen is a crucial premise for Pådriiv. As mentioned, “If we were working with sustainable cities in general, we believe there would be a lot of talk with little action. However, by focusing on a specific geographical space, it has been easier to mobilize local actors and generate and push out real projects”⁷⁰.

5. Municipal and governmental collaboration with Pådriiv

Today, the municipality of Oslo is very engaged in Pådriiv, and actively use the framework as a tool for increased cooperation with local actors and civil society⁷¹. However, this was not always the case. When Pådriiv was first established in 2016, municipal sectors and officials were uncertain and hesitant to become involved. This doubt was related to concerns of how such a neutral and equal arena would interfere with the traditional role of municipal authority in urban development. Further, government sectors were used to playing the role of “organizer” of cooperation platforms, and unsure of how this “change of balance” would affect traditional governmental processes⁷². The new city government platform established in 2019, consisting of The Labour Party, the Green Party and the Socialist Left Party, shared Pådriiv’s ambitions and really wanted to cooperate. However, as mentioned by Marie Loe Halvorsen, Political advisor for urban development in Oslo, “the political leadership has to be careful in favouring certain actors. We have to be careful with respect to public procurement laws, and the fact that we are not supposed to interfere too much with the work of local district administrations... In fact, we received strong advice not to engage with Pådriiv at the start”⁷³.

It is important for Pådriiv to emphasize that their goal is not to replace or redesign the traditional governmental role in urban development⁷⁴. Rather, Pådriiv is supposed to act as a supplementary toolbox that the government can use to achieve real and lasting change. After continued contact between Pådriiv and public officials, higher levels of trust started to grow and the city government began to see the value of what Pådriiv had to offer⁷⁵. The City Government

⁶⁹ Plan- og bygningsetaten, (2018) p. 15

⁷⁰ Berman, *Personal interview* (2020)

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² Ballestad, (2020)

⁷³ Halvorsen, *Pådriiv Yearly Partnership meeting (video)* (2020)

⁷⁴ Berman & Hansen, *webinar: "infrastructure for sustainable city development"* (2020)

⁷⁵ Berman, *Personal interview* (2020)

also spent time trying to understand the rulebook, figuring out how they could navigate in this new cooperation platform⁷⁶. The fact that Pådriv's agenda is in-line with political goals and aims, and that the government welcomes private-public partnerships, has also made it easier for public administrations to engage.

At this point, the City District of Bjerke and the Department for Business Development and Public Ownership have signed partnership agreements with Pådriv. Pådriv also have close relationships with other branches of government, including the Department of Climate and the Department of Planning and Building Services. In addition to using Pådriv as a tool for cooperation and co-creation with local actors, the municipality sees Pådriv as a neutral space for increased dialogue across government levels and sectors. This was mentioned by a government employee; "As we have difficulties in meeting ourselves on the inside, Pådriv provides an arena where government sectors can interact on the outside"⁷⁷. Thus, Pådriv provides an external meeting point where public officials can talk freely in an informal setting, discuss, and build new networks. Using Pådriv as a meeting point for government sectors is believed to be an important step in reshaping the organizational structure of the government to advance increased inter-sectorial cooperation within the municipality of Oslo⁷⁸.

While several branches of government are actively involved in Pådriv, there is still room for more support, both in terms of political anchoring and funding, from higher political and administrative levels in the city government. The fact that Pådriv is independent, and not under governmental control and ownership, is a challenge in this regard⁷⁹. The discrepancies in obtaining sufficient support from higher levels of government can be partly explained by the complexity of the city government, with its hierarchical structure and fractured sectoral organization. While cooperation and increased partnerships are important goals for the municipality, there is still a lack of understanding of how such processes can take place. This uncertainty creates barriers for political recognition and endorsement from administrations at higher levels in government. However, Pådriv is currently working hard to gain political support by actively talking to politicians and inviting them to workshops⁸⁰. Further, public employees that are highly committed to Pådriv are channelling information and knowledge of

⁷⁶ Halvorsen, Pådriv *Partnership meeting (video)* (2020)

⁷⁷ Ballestad, (2020) p. 33

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Berman, *Personal interview* (2020)

Pådriv's success back to the municipal organization, which helps spread the word of its potential public value⁸¹.

6. Pådriv's impact on social sustainability: SDG 11

There has been a stronger motivation from the City of Oslo to cooperate with Pådriv in areas of environmental sustainability compared to social sustainability⁸². The focus on environment and climate related innovation and co creation can possibly be explained by the ambitious targets laid out in the new Climate Strategy for Oslo towards 2030, adopted by the city council in May 2020. As mentioned above, the Department of Climate has been very engaged with Pådriv. In fact, the department, which was first established in 2016, actively us Pådriv as a policy tool to come up with new and innovative projects⁸³.

According to Pådriv, there are not as many government forces pulling in the direction of social sustainability. For example, when asked if Pådriv is in dialogue with the Section for Diversity and Integration, one of the driving forces for the work on social inclusion and reducing inequality in Oslo, Pådriv was under the impression that the Section view urban and city development as something “too big” that belongs to other sectors⁸⁴. While Pådriv is in contact with departments that focus on enhancing the empowerment of vulnerable citizens, there seems to be a lack of understanding with respect to the connections between urban development and social sustainability. Nevertheless, Pådriv view social sustainability as a critical factor for the sustainable transformation of Hovinbyen, and has selected social sustainability as a strategic direction and focus area for 2021⁸⁵. One of the reasons for enhancing their efforts on SDG11 as creating “inclusive, just and resilient societies” is that government sectors are uncertain of what social sustainability imply in the context of urban development, and where this responsibility belongs within the government⁸⁶. As mentioned by Pådriv, “Our target is creating multi-functional, diverse, and inclusive city areas... Social infrastructure is about facilitating for increased social interactions and interpersonal relations, which again can

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ Ballestad, (2020) p.

⁸⁴ Berman, *Personal interview* (2020)

⁸⁵ Pådriv, “*Annual meeting 2020*” (video)

⁸⁶ Pådriv, (2020)

contribute to create new social networks... this can be especially difficult in new development areas, because who is responsible for the development of social infrastructure?”⁸⁷.

A challenge appearing with regards to Oslo’s urban transformation of Hovinbyen is that of “temporary usage”. According to Oslo’s Strategic Plan for Hovinbyen, the urban transformation of Hovinbyen has a time scale of up to 50 years. This leads to old factories and buildings being left unused for long periods of time, waiting to be demolished or reconstructed. Since there are no laws regulating “temporary use” in urban planning, Pådriv has decided to take on this responsibility⁸⁸. Pådriv often points to Økern Centre, an old shopping mall in Hovinbyen, as an example. The reconstruction of Økern centre and the surrounding area is planned to be ready in 2035. However, what is going to be done in the meantime? People are still living in this area as it is further deteriorating. The challenge of temporary usage in Hovinbyen is closely related to social sustainability, and is viewed as key task for Pådriv to address. Two projects worth noting in this regard are Vollebekk Factories and also housing inclusion.

6.1 Socially inclusive urban development?

Vollebekk Factories is located in a large abandoned industrial area that will be transformed into a new residential area. As the building process will not start before 2023, Pådriv, in collaboration with the City district of Bjerke and OBOS, started working on a concept on how this area could be used to strengthen the local community of Hovinbyen in the meantime. Vollebekk Factories officially launched at the beginning of 2018, and is a neighbourhood incubator project that houses 30 local businesses, social innovators, green entrepreneurs, musicians and artists stemming from the area. In addition to providing office spaces and production facilities for local entrepreneurs at very low rent, Vollebekk Factories also offers a meeting place for the rest of the local community living in the area. The facilities are actively being used by schools and kindergartens, and organizations are free to use the space for arranging activities for vulnerable people living in the area. As mentioned by the director for development in the city district of Bjerke, “Loneliness is a problem in our district and something that has a negative impact on society as a whole. Having good friends and a network around is important for our health and quality of life”⁸⁹. As the area surrounding Vollebekk is

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Ballestad, (2020) p. 35

⁸⁹ Skretting, (2019)

characterized by a fragmented community with a lack of jobs, and a high percentage of citizens with a rudimentary understanding of Norwegian, it has been important for the city district of Bjerke to provide meeting places where the local community can establish networks, find a sense of belonging, and create an attachment to the neighbourhood⁹⁰. An evaluation on the project's success is currently being finalized and will be available within the next few months.

As mentioned earlier, Hovinbyen has potential for 40.000 new homes and 50.000 – 100.000 new jobs. However, a central question for Pådriv is who is going to live in the new and transformed Hovinbyen?

Local governments have strong planning authority in Norway, and, as mentioned, the PBA 2008 is the main legislative framework pertaining to municipal planning. The law prescribes rules, procedures, and considerations that seeks to guide and regulate the relationship between government and private actors in physical, social, cultural and economic planning and building. Further, the law has a clear intention of promoting sustainable development, safeguard the public interest and wellbeing, and actively address and counteract social inequality in health and housing⁹¹. However, research suggest that the law fail in providing local governments with the necessary tools to influence housing development⁹². Urban development and housing in Oslo is navigated by market economy dynamics, which result in high property prices, uneven distributional access to housing, and increased segregation. In order to explore new ways for enabling a diverse and inclusive housing market in Hovinbyen, Pådriv has set up an arena where government, research institutions, and developers will meet in a neutral arena to discuss and push out pilot projects that seeks to tackle the lack of affordable housing and find strategies for accommodating all families of all income levels in Hovinbyen⁹³.

In comparison to Pådriv which can be seen as bottom-up approach, we turn to another that can be regarded as more top-down oriented approach that aims to improve physical and

⁹⁰ UrbAct, (2018)

⁹¹ The Planning and Building ACT (2008) § 1-1, 3-4,

⁹² Hansen & Aarsæther, "EVAPLAN 2008" (2018)

⁹³ Pådriv, "Arena for bolig mangfold" (2020); The arena is having its first official workshop in November 2020. Academia is closely connected to this arena. In fact, NIBR-OsloMet, in collaboration with NMBU, the University of Tromsø, the Royal Institute of Technology, Asplan Viak, and Pådriv is currently involved in a research project that seeks to investigate how the Norwegian planning system can be used in a more strategic way to realize the political aims of more inclusive housing markets, and enable municipalities to implement more comprehensive housing market policies⁹³.

social conditions, tackle many of the same issues within a confined area that characterized by complex and multifaceted social issues.

Case 2

7. The Groruddalen regeneration programme

As mentioned earlier in this rapport, the City of Oslo acknowledges the need for including, coordinating and cooperating with other sectors, departments, local stakeholders and the population in order to realize the SDGs. This is clearly stated in the municipal master plan and the new “Planning strategy for the City of Oslo 2020-2023”. While being a more active partner and engaging in private initiatives such as Pådriiv is relatively new for the municipality, the local government of Oslo have since 2007 initiated development programmes that are in line with the general shift from institutional “government” approaches to more contemporary “governance”- oriented ways of collaborative planning and urban development⁹⁴.

Groruddalen is situated in the north-eastern fringes of Oslo and is seen as a deprived area with growing social inequality and urban segregation. Furthermore, statistics from Groruddalen reveal a pattern of low education and income levels compared to the rest of Oslo, as well as a population that suffers from low labour market participation and generally weak living conditions and high dependence on social welfare programs⁹⁵. In order to address the complex issues and factors that has contributed to the negative trend witnessed in Groruddalen, the national government and the municipality of Oslo initiated the Groruddalen Regeneration Programme 2016-2026. The 10-year programme differs from traditional government-led policies and programmes in that it represents a contemporary framework that involves cooperation between national government, public agencies, city districts and local stakeholders. Most importantly, the framework allows for, and emphasizes, the importance of local decision-making, citizen participation and new partnerships to solve complex challenges⁹⁶. The main goal of the Groruddalen programme is to improve sustainable urban development in the area⁹⁷. More specifically, according to the strategic plan, the overall goal is to create lasting improvements to public services in Groruddalen, produce sustainable local environments with well-functioning public services, and promote efforts that will lead to economic independency

⁹⁴ (Lund, (2014) s.15

⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 22

⁹⁶ Oslo Kommune, (2018) p. 10

⁹⁷ Oslo Kommune , (2020) p. 5

for the population, as well as higher levels of active participation and social inclusion in the community. In order to reach the main goal, the regeneration programme is divided into three sub-programs with underlying sub-goals. The first subprogram focus on “local environments”, and seeks to promote efforts for ensuring that the citizens of Groruddalen have the necessary tools to become active and participatory members of the larger Oslo society. Secondly, the sub-program for “childhood development and education” sets out the goal of providing children and youth with safe, stable and inclusive environments to grow up in and promote policies that aim to ensure that a higher percentage of youth completes upper secondary education. The last subprogram focus on “employment”, and aims to tackle the unemployment gap witnessed in Groruddalen by improving employment qualification programs and collaborating with the private sector in order to find better labour market opportunities. The regeneration programme has been implemented through a structure in which public authorities are in charge of the goals and visions while materializing them in projects, and action is left to the local districts and other public bodies.

7.1 Groruddalen area-based strategy approach

The Groruddalen action programme represents an area-based strategy that focuses on a vulnerable geographical location where physical, social and structural challenges threatens the qualities that makes an area inclusive, sustainable and good place to live and grow up in. Addressing the issues and triggering the desired change in places where multiple problems overlap require new, innovative and flexible ways of working. Building on previous experiences with area-based strategies in vulnerable areas has provided the municipality with a solid foundation for how to best work with complex and multi-faceted structural issues that require a multi-sectoral approach. This has been used to create a methodology were local decision making, new partnerships and decentralization are important factors. The methodology involves how the city of Oslo can enter knowledge-based and multi-sectoral partnerships in vulnerable areas, through cooperation and collaboration with the local population and private and public actors. The methodology is being updated continuously in order to strengthen the municipality’s ability to work holistically with a wide spectre of local actors⁹⁸.

The first step in the Oslo area based approach is to produce a deep knowledge-base that can serve as basis for targeted efforts in vulnerable areas. This knowledge will determine

⁹⁸ Oslo Kommune, (2018) p. 7

specific needs and challenges within specific vulnerable areas and provide the foundation for the deliverance of targeted responses and policies. In terms of gathering knowledge in Groruddalen, there has been placed much emphasis on developing statistics and demographic and socio-economic data that covers differences in living conditions, income, health, employment trends, and housing compared to other city districts. In addition to using statistics as part of the knowledge base, other methods such as locational analyses and extensive mapping exercises have been applied to provide a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities in Groruddalen⁹⁹. The mapping exercises that have been developed through the Groruddalen action programme seeks to find information that is not easily gathered through statistics or data, and usually involves physical and structural conditions. For example, the physical mapping exercises in Groruddalen has looked closer at the physical infrastructure of the area, including buildings, road-systems, green-areas, physical standards, housing development potential, and so on. Structural mapping exercises, on the other hand, can entail quality of public service delivery systems, school locations, business development structures, housing affordability, and existing plans for the area. Also, involving the population and taking good use of citizen's own understanding of their local environment is mentioned as a critical source that must be fully utilized in order to get a holistic picture of the situation at hand. Lastly, getting an overview of local actors and resources that can serve as a driving force for future development in the area is crucial.

7.1.1 Public participation

The obstacles and challenges that characterize Groruddalen can be explained by the variety of complex local needs. As the local population are closest to the challenges and have insight on potential barriers that hinders development, citizens can provide public authorities with valuable information that will lead to better decisions and more efficient outcomes. Further, public participation increases people's sense of ownership as improvements can take place as a result of their direct influence and efforts. The Groruddalen action programme methodology recommend the use of different activities, processes and techniques to ensure a high degree of civic engagement. This includes traditional participation processes such as workshops, public sessions and hearings, but also more active outreach and informal dialogue methods to ensure broad participation from all groups in society. Outreach and informal dialogue methods can take place at schools, in neighbourhoods, through use of social media, and door to door visits.

⁹⁹ Lund, (2014) p. 41

Mobilising the community, and enabling citizens to become decision-makers in local policy and active contributors with regards to solutions is viewed as a central part of Oslo's formula to improve vulnerable communities¹⁰⁰.

The methodology further states that effective participation will not succeed unless local authorities involves the community in decision-making across all stages of planning and implementation. In order to increase participation, the local government has worked in order to encourage and strengthen the engagement of civil society organizations and to encourage an environment in which they can operate. Groruddalen has been characterized as a community with fragile social relations and a weak sense of collective ownership to the area. In order to facilitate for effective participation, the methodology calls for an increased focus on local capability building to strengthen/boost the “the power of the place” and actively support the establishment and operation of civil society organizations. When citizens are encouraged to mobilize in associations and organizations, it increases the community's ability, desire and capacity to act and involve themselves with issues of great local importance. Further, a high level of social organization will lead to a more vibrant community, better quality of life, more local initiatives, and also strengthen the relationship between citizens and public authorities.

7.1.2 Partnerships and cooperation

Entering new partnerships and involving a variety of actors is another central element in Oslo's methodology for strengthening vulnerable areas. In the Groruddalen action programme, entering partnerships have been important in order to increase the overall capacity to act and solve challenges that does not traditionally fall within the local government's traditional area of responsibility¹⁰¹. Further, bringing together resources from a wide spectre of different actors is essential in order to collect all pieces of the puzzle. Partnerships and close collaboration with co-operative housing associations, or so called building co-operatives, has been a key in Groruddalen. Housing development in Groruddalen is, in large parts, characterized by high-rise structures that are organized under different building cooperatives. These associations represent a large number of residents and manage large parts of housing stock as well as outdoor areas. Consequently, they represent valuable resources in terms of perspectives, knowledge, and skills that will result in better designed solutions for the community. Pursuing partnership

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Lund, (2014) p. 85

opportunities with other actors such as local businesses, research institutions, NGO's, and schools are also mentioned as being important for the regeneration programme to be successful.

8. What are the outcomes?

The Groruddalen regeneration programme has contributed to raising the living standards and general wellbeing of Groruddalen by pushing out a variety of innovative projects and initiatives. Effective private-public partnerships and inter-sectoral with a high degree of public participation has resulted in new innovative solutions. These include “free core-time” in kindergartens and the implementation of new kindergarten curriculum initiatives with language as the main goal¹⁰². Another initiative is called “fast-pace”, a cooperation project between the municipality of Oslo, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organization, IKEA and XXI. The project represents an 11-month course consisting of language trainings, work trainings and career guidance for immigrants with the overall aim of getting people into full-time employment. Other projects worth noting include “activity houses for youth”, renewal of Liabakken ski-resort with free of charge ski-rental and trainings, and upgrading of outdoor areas, including new playgrounds and other meeting places to promote social inclusion.

The kindergarten and “fast-pace” projects are especially interesting, as both initiatives involved smaller government measures such as door to door visits and more large-scale changes at organizational and system level. This project signifies the added value of inter-sectorial collaboration at government level. Within the Groruddalen regeneration programme, the local level administrations, represented by the city districts, have been able to cooperate more closely with central government agencies. These agencies are responsible for different sector areas that spans throughout the whole city of Oslo, and it is thus difficult and time consuming for them to acquire knowledge of local needs and challenges. The city districts, however, are closer to the community and have access to this knowledge, as well as direct access to the community and local networks. Thus, through effective collaboration between local level administrations and central public agencies, policies can become more effective and targeted to address specific challenges in vulnerable areas. In other words, the Groruddalen programme represents a chance for city districts to act as urban and societal developers to a larger extent than what is usual within Oslo's governmental structures. In this way, the city districts can act as the peoples' representative in larger development initiatives that have an impact on their community and

¹⁰² Oslo Kommune , (2020)

living conditions. As stated by the city district of Bjerke “We like to see ourselves as the community’s lawyer”¹⁰³. This quote showcases the importance and the overall benefit of including city districts in larger planning and development tasks under the auspices of, for example, the Planning and Building Agency. When city districts are involved, the participation processes will be more successful which in turn will assure that the construction and implementation of new public infrastructure takes place in a way that meets local needs. Consequently, the regeneration programme will definitely provide valuable experiences and new insight on good practices of collaboration.

While operating across sectors and involving a wide range of local actors in the process of urban regeneration is the stated intention of the programme, there seems to be institutional constraints. There appear to be deep-rooted patterns of traditional practice that ultimately obstructs the holistic, inter-sectoral and flexible approach that the methodology calls for. This is not to take away from the vast array of initiatives and projects that has been developed in Groruddalen as a result of effective cooperation and citizen participation, and the positive effects they have had on the community as a whole. The problem is, however, that instances of high coordination and broad involvement of different government sectors as well as other local actors are few and far between, and most of urban development in the area bear strong similarities with traditional planning practices¹⁰⁴. This is especially true with regards to the inclusion and participatory aspect of urban planning. The national government has stated that developing new methods for collaboration with a strong focus on citizen participation and citizen co-creation is one of the main ambitions of the programme. However, effective inclusion of citizen’s perspectives in planning and implementation of development projects continues to be infrequent and sporadic with mixed results. There are several reasons for this shortfall.

First, the local population is often invited to participate at the later stages in the planning processes. At this point, major decisions regarding goals and purpose have already been discussed, which drastically diminish the space available for public decision-making and involvement¹⁰⁵. The same can be said for the city districts who, as mentioned above, sit on valuable knowledge and have close connection to people living in the community. As mentioned by the city district of Bjerke, “the terms co-creation and public participation are nice words, but the reality is that we are usually not invited in to most planning processes before

¹⁰³ Bydel Bjerke *personal interview* (2021)

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Smørdal (2019) p. 3

very late on ...at this point, it is often too late to really affect to outcomes of urban development”¹⁰⁶. Furthermore, the city district of Bjerke believes this is a way for the central planning authorities to “check their box for successful public participation”. This is in line with research on participation patterns in Norwegian planning processes, which conclude that most planning processes only use the minimum efforts for participation that is required by law¹⁰⁷. The law regarding public participation in urban planning and development is laid out in the Planning and Building Act. The minimum requirements for participation presented in the Act are (1) the sharing of information and (2) public hearings. Especially in Groruddalen, public hearings have been characterized by small attendance and little individual or collective engagement.

In addition to being identified as an area that scores low on most socio-economic indicators and statistics, Groruddalen is also an area that suffers from a collective sense of powerlessness and a non-western population with little knowledge of democratic processes or experience in terms voicing opinions, articulating needs, and debating in public arenas. The city district of Bjerke has therefore worked hard on strengthening the community’s knowledge of democratic playing rules and encouraged the community to become engaged and active so that they can contribute to the development of their own neighbourhoods. However, as long as the city districts and the local population is kept away from the negotiating table, urban development projects will not be able to tackle the complex issues and deliver sustainable solutions to the best of its ability.

The two frameworks presented in this report represents two very similar approaches to working with sustainable development. Both frameworks aim to create projects and solutions within a confined area that are socially inclusive, environmentally friendly, and economically feasible through a process that involves cooperation between a wide spectre of stakeholders, including government sectors, the private sector, and civil society. However, the two frameworks differ in that “Pådriv” emerged out of the private/civil society sphere, while the “Groruddalen regeneration programme” represents a more traditional top-down approach where the government act as the facilitator and initiator for projects and solutions.

¹⁰⁶ Bydel Bjerke *personal interview* (2021)

¹⁰⁷ Hanssen, (2014)

9. Overall findings and conclusions

SDGs in national frameworks

- Even though Norway has been a global frontrunner and strong advocate for the SDGs at the international level, the Norwegian government has been slow in providing any concrete measures on how the SDGs shall be implemented nationally.
- After repeated pressure from civil society and the Storting, a National Action Plan for the SDGs is currently being developed and will be ready in 2021. This National Action Plan will contextualize and tailor the SDG to fit with Norwegian circumstances and challenges, and is being designed in close cooperation with civil society actors.

SDG localisation in Norwegian municipalities

- *The Planning and Building Act (2008)*, which is the main legislative framework for regional and municipal planning, fails to set clear boundaries and provide legislation pertaining to sustainable development in planning. The stated purpose of the Act is to promote sustainable development in the best interest of future generations. However, this is not enough to force a transformation towards an increased focus on sustainable development in municipal planning. In particular, SDGs tend to be compartmentalised only in the social element and require integration into broader municipal plans and programmes.
- *National expectations regarding regional and municipal planning 2019-2023* states that the SDGs shall provide the main direction for municipalities planning and development. Despite the encouragement, broad guidelines and leeway to work with the SDGs, most municipalities in Norway are finding it difficult to dissect the complexity and overcome barriers connected to localising the goals and implementing them in planning and development. Consequently, municipalities are in need of tools, guidelines and national government support when it comes to using the SDGs as a management tool for setting priorities and developing policies.
- While the majority of Norwegian municipalities are therefore in need of support on how to implement and localise the SDGs, a few municipalities have actively worked with the SDGs over many years and been able to implement them in all governmental plans, across sectors, and in all government activities.
- If the SDGs are to become more than just a slogan, the goals need to be further integrated in all aspects of planning, including regulation plans, financial plans, and yearly

budgets. This will be essential to make sure that the SDG strategies and prioritizations presented in the social element actually get materialized and end up in concrete measures and actions.

- Despite an increased focus on SDGs in municipal planning as a result of the guidelines laid out in the national expectations, these are often just briefly mentioned and not followed up in underlying plans and strategies.
- The municipalities that have come furthest are those where the SDGs are politically rooted at the highest administrative level of government, and where the SDGs have been mainstreamed across all sectors and through all government activities.
- The inclusion of the SDGs, for example, in Viken's new holistic planning and steering system has also made it possible to link overarching strategic goals with financial plans, annual budgets, and operational planning.

The city of Oslo in partnerships to meet the SDGs

- While the city of Oslo has not decided to use the SDGs as foundation for municipal plans, management systems and governance as a few other large municipalities have done, Oslo has stated in their municipal plan that the city's challenges are complex and in need of a holistic response in order to be solved effectively. As such, the municipality continue to state their intention of collaborating with various stakeholders, including businesses and civil society organizations and an increased focus on SDG 17.
- Despite the good intention and the active use of words such as "cooperation", "participation", "co-creation" in municipal plans, the complex structure of Oslo as an organization, its bureaucratic nature, and deep-rooted traditions of working seems to hamper the municipalities ability to effectively involve and cooperate with local actors in urban development in projects where the government is the facilitator and initiator.
- While government frameworks for sustainable urban development such as the Groruddalen regeneration programme have managed to effectively cooperate with many local actors and push out innovative solutions with very positive effects for social sustainability, these projects are few and far between. Cooperation and co-creation is not systematically institutionalized and not established as a natural way of working with urban development in the municipality.

- Based on the interviews during the research process, effective cooperation between government agencies, civil society, and other local actors in sustainable urban development depend on the shared enthusiasm, passion, and attitudes between individual people. To give an example, the city district of Bjerke explained how the previous leader in the Planning and Building Agency was very interested in subjects such as cooperation and public participation. However, after she left her position, cooperation between the city district and the central agency took backsteps. The same can be seen within Pådriiv; namely that the leaders who care about these subjects gets involved and push their department to work in specific ways.
- The city of Oslo's participation in the Pådriiv network has produced good results in terms of private-public cooperation and results. Pådriiv's infrastructure manages to eliminate barriers and bypass structural and institutional hindrances that are more apparent when collaboration is initiated through the government (top-down). The Pådriiv network is not bound by the same bureaucratic and institutional structures that the Groruddalen regeneration programme is, and can therefore operate in an environment freer of institutional constraints. While several government departments and agencies across sectors are involved with Pådriiv, there is still more room for support in terms of funding and political legitimacy from higher political and administrative levels in the city government. The fact that Pådriiv is independent and not under government control seems to be a challenge in this regard.
- Cooperation between different levels of government within the Groruddalen regeneration programme has expanded the role of city districts in urban development, turning them into more active urban developers. This role involves the city districts acting as an agent on behalf of the community's interest and a link between the people and the central government agencies in charge of urban development. However, the quality and effectiveness of the relationship and cooperation between city districts and central government agencies require leadership that see the added value that such inter-sectorial cooperation can offer.
- lack of effective public participation characterizes both frameworks for collaboration. In terms of the Groruddalen programme, effective inclusion of citizens' perspectives in planning and implementation of development projects are infrequent with mixed results. This comes down to central government agency's deficiency in including city districts, who are close to the population and in a good position to facilitate such participatory

processes, in the development process within the city district's territory. There is also a case to be made that Pårdriv also fail to adequately facilitate for public participation and involvement. Based on interviews, The Pårdriv network has an unbalanced membership base where the majority of partners are private businesses, architectural organizations, and social entrepreneurs. There should be a stronger focus on getting smaller local civil society organizations, neighbourhood associations, cultural associations etc. involved in the network.

- Though approached differently as bottom-up and top-down, both Pårdriv and Groruddalen together show the importance of local area based related aspects for the SDG process, with the need for inclusion in that process, but also the influence and imprint of the broader institutional framework for outcomes.

Cross over with Human Rights

- It appears that human rights are relatively 'silent' at the municipal level. This is most likely because they compete with other more well used discourses concerning social exclusion/inclusion. That said, some potential entry points have been identified during the research:
- First, concerns *shifts in governance* that are apparent in Norway. For example, SDG 17 partnership and scrutiny of its qualities could be an entry point for *HR principles* and (local, trans-local)*networks*. SDG 17 might therefore be more closely linked to participation, empowerment, non-discrimination, accountability principles, as a way to gauge effectiveness of these networks.
- Second, *affordable housing and urban development* is a key focus in the work of Pårdriv. Another entry point might therefore be the *Right to Housing* and associated measures such as legally secure tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; adequacy; accessibility; good location and cultural adequacy (UNCESCR, 1991). In relation, there might also be ways to think about land-use in more rights-based ways.
- Third, the apparent disconnection across sectors that the research shows, might also be addressed by promoting the interdependency of rights across these different sectors.

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