



Kronoberg County: Thinking Culturally, Acting Creatively

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Kronoberg Strategy - Charting The Process

January 2005 - Two weeks after **Storm Gudrun**

Workshop with the 'Cultural Strategy' group and Open Forum (including some politicians)

State of Play:

- A Cultural Strategy for the County (led by the County Development Department) in draft form (effectively an Arts Strategy)
- The need for a new Tourism Strategy (especially after The Storm)
- Regional Development Board compiling a strategy document
- Little co-operation between municipalities
- Invest in Smaland Agency repositioning the County on the competitiveness map



Aspirations...aspirations!

Deeply rooted in history...



turned towards
the future

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The Image: The Romance of nature



Autumn in Småland

"Bold brush strokes depict nature in warm red and golden-yellow tones. The air is crisp..."

Life is good here. Let autumn be a time of enjoyment. Dinner for two at a country house. A weekend at a spa warms the soul. A round of golf will do the body good. The footbridge over the swamp in the nature reserve leads to adventure with the feeling of autumnal freedom for ever."

Småland - a wonderful place to live!

Yes, but for whom?

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The reality

Kronoberg County - Now renamed Södra Småland

- Forests and lakes, nature and landscape
- 8 administrative municipalities (small in population with good quality of life)
- A history of entrepreneurship
- A new University (1999 - now the second largest academic institution in Southern Sweden with 15,000 students from 50 nationalities)
- One airport in Växjö (and another in Jönköping)
- Lammhult: 15,000 square metres of design furniture (the Kingdom of Furniture)
- Södra (leading Swedish forest management company)
- Heavy Vehicles production cluster
- Glasriket (the Kingdom of Crystal with 11 glassworks with leading designers)
- Växjö the first city in Sweden to use biomass for district heating in 1980
- Videum Science Park in Växjö (a ground-braking centre of excellence for IT)
- Växjö region more than 500 IT companies (InternetCity)

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But also...

The Home of IKEA!!!



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Kronoberg, a County with two faces:



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CULTURE - The missing link?

Kronoberg cultural policy context:

- No national or regional cultural strategies (but arts plans)
- Little notion of culture as tool for economic and social development
- Little notion of **partnership building**, nor of **collaboration between culture/arts departments and planning, or regeneration.**

But:

Awareness by Regional Development Board of need for a VISION
Welfare and community development issues important (but no method, or policy framework for cross-sector work)

Conclusion: **Culture can be a catalyst for a joined-up approach to local development and place-making.**

The Importance of Culture

I argued that:

Culture can have an impact at many different levels of local development.

Culture is associated with a high **quality of life**. For this reason, place marketing strategies tend to focus on their cultural offer, on the presence of artists and creative people and cultural industries in general.

By helping to create positive images the cultural sector has a direct impact on inward investment.

The Importance of Culture

Cultural activities, both traditional and new create 'meaning' as they are concerned with expression, celebration and achievement.

They embody the identity and values of a place.

They express local distinctiveness and can engender social cohesion.

The Importance of Culture

Culture's role in tourism is key - with nature it is the primary reason a visitor comes to an area. Tourism offers are now increasingly focused on what is unique in a place. Tourism is one of the main sources of economic growth for some countries.

Cultural tourism average 6% to 8% of GDP in some EU countries.

World Tourism Organisation forecasts 1.6 billion people will travel as tourists by 2020.

700 million registered in 2004.

The Importance of Culture

The cultural industries are claimed to be the fourth or fifth fastest growing sector in the world's developed economy after financial services, information technology, pharmaceuticals, bio-engineering and tourism. In global cities such as London or New York, Cis employ over 500,000 people. In both these cities, investment in culture is seen as a key goal of their global strategies.

The Importance of Culture

Cultural activity is also increasingly used as a key catalyst in **urban regeneration** projects. Examples may be:

- The re-use of ex industrial buildings for creative entrepreneurs and cultural activity
- The reclamation of open spaces for festivals and events
- The creation of cultural precincts and quarters

The Importance of Culture

Strong evidence of the links between participation in cultural activity, including sports, and **social capital** in communities.

This is where the case for linking **culture and citizenship** is made.

That's when the politicians really started to listen...

Need for new Cultural Policy Tools

There is a need for new policy tools capable of linking:

- Culture and local development
- Cultural resources and local quality of life (quality of place not enough)
- Production and consumption (the production chain)
- Local distinctiveness with diversity (the old, the new, and the 'other')
- Culture, governance and citizenship

Need for new Urban Cultural Policy Tools

These need to be joined up to other aspects of local policy and rooted in the local context. In particular, they need to:

- Move away from the notion of culture as 'just the arts'
- Challenge current assumptions about what should be funded
- Focus on the local 'distinctive' resources and dynamics
- Be 'organic' and based on local needs and aspirations
- Adopt a culturally sensitive approach to place making
- Be transparent and creative in using consultation tools
- Be delivered through team-work and partnerships

We Call it Cultural Planning

This is not the planning of culture but the planning and use of local cultural resources for community and place development.

How do we do it?

- Mapping and Auditing the Resources of a place
- Strategy building
- Monitoring and evaluating results

Cultural Planning

Characteristics:

- **Community needs assessment**
- **Clear understanding of local communities' different components**
- **Community involvement (through various forms of consultation and participation)**
- **A process rather than a product**
- **Joined up thinking across different departments of local/regional/national government**
- **Partnership building**

Cultural Mapping- How and Why?

A pre-condition for identifying, harnessing and then exploiting potential is to conduct a wide-ranging mapping of possibilities based on exploring the distinctive cultural assets of a place.

How a place is shaped, how it feels like, how it projects itself is based on its local culture. Such broad spectrum mapping of the local culture can provide vital information to the policy makers about the best way to respond more effectively to local needs while maximizing opportunities.



Cultural Resources



Cultural Mapping- How and Why?



Backing and connecting those resources with cross-departmental or cross-sector collaboration, is also an important part of any cultural plan.

This links with the second key ingredient of Cultural Planning:

Strategy Building

Potential resources need to be placed in time-dated framework where catalyst actions that can create an impact are identified.



Cultural Mapping- How and Why?

Mapping needs to encompass the symbolic, the environmental, the social, the educational, the cultural and the political spheres.

Mapping can be an opportunity for the local community to participate in the process of policy making by freely expressing needs and expectations. This is why the mapping technique can, ultimately, also assist in tackling issues of cultural discrimination and exclusion.



Cultural Mapping- How and Why?

The task of mapping can be performed by using a variety of tools ranging from the use of the creative skills of artists, to the anthropological, ethnographic research, and the application forms of participatory action derived from the urban design discipline.

What is important is that the process of unveiling the resources of a place is a transparent, democratically accountable and participatory act.

Finally, but crucially, mapping has to be finalised to the development of a strategy and must not be an empty academic exercise otherwise the risk is to raise expectations, which, if not followed by action, could alienate those who most stand to gain from the mapping.

Cultural Mapping in Kronoberg

Key guiding principles and creative outcomes

Listen to people

(e.g. audio-guide by young people with the Interactive Institute, or networks of young Internet SMEs)

Challenge assumptions (e.g. *'culture has no place here, we are entrepreneurs'*; or landscape and heritage, more than just guide books)

Think more creatively about the County's resources (e.g. links between story-telling, literature, animation; blogging and story telling contemporary style and links with diversity)

Connect initiatives (Cultural Strategy Partnership and representation on the Regional Development Board, the new role of the university)

Turn weakness into strength (The Storm Centre, the peopling of Kronoberg)

Extreme Weather? The Storm Centre

A **new building** situated somewhere outside one of Kronoberg towns, with a strong interaction with the forest.

Bold in its architectural features, built by using entirely sustainable materials and local glass and wood products.

Aimed at both attracting visitors and educating young people (and other users) to weather patterns and extremes, but also a place for recording personal experiences of the storm.

The Storm Centre

Four spaces:

The Experience room

This could be a 3D room where people can enter and *experience* the storm. Noise, rain, wind could be recreated with projections and sensations so that the visitor would feel as close to the real thing as possible.

The Memory room

This could be an interactive room where a series of computers are placed for visitors to use as a tool for learning or recording their own experiences. The whole point of the memory space should be that of **interactivity** whereby visitors could add their memories of storms they have witnessed.

The Media room

This is the part of the Centre dedicated to the research and education about extreme weather. Here visitors could look into archives, access data, information and publications on the topic. The room could also contain information about policy related to forestry. Here too there should be an element of interactivity whereby for example those interested in studying wood materials could input data about strength of winds and resistance to damage etc.

A Studio theatre

This could be a space for small scale conferences, performance, film projections and music concerts related to the topic.