



The ‘actually existing’ cultural policy and culture-led strategies of rural places and small towns



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ABSTRACT

Questions regarding the relevance of culture-based development strategies are even more relevant to ask when such strategies are applied to rural places and small towns. In urban contexts, the number of citizens and the volume and variety of the cultural sector, other industries and services are important success criteria. In small Norwegian rural municipalities, these factors are even more critical because the Norwegian rural context is characterized by low population density and low variety and volume in industries and services. Rural places and small towns are, to a large extent, neglected in the culture-led development studies, and likewise, culture is largely neglected in rural development studies. A degree of attention is given to the increasing commodification of rural places and the economic sustainability and cultural influence of cultural and creative industries in rural areas but less to the construction of cultural development policies. In this study, the emergence of cultural policy and culture-led strategies in four small rural communities in southern Norway is analyzed in a topological perspective on mobility, scale and the significance of local history and embeddedness. The primary findings are that although policy construction is influenced by the flow of neo-liberal consumer-based cultural policies, it appears that the cultural policies of small rural communities are more embedded in heritage and tradition based on ideas of participation, mobilization and social coherence.

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1. Introduction

Research on culture-led development strategies has primarily examined regeneration of large cities and metropolitan areas, and to a lesser degree rural places and small towns (Bell and Jayne, 2006, 2010; Lorentzen and van Heur, 2012; Miles, 2006). In recent decades, urban development policy has experienced an increased focus on culture-based development in a number of cities around the world. The explanation can be found in different trends, namely culture and cultural industries as alternatives to traditional industry and industrial development (Bianchini, 1993; Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Harvey, 2000), culturalization of the economy as a new cultural economy (Amin and Thrift, 2007; Lash and Urry, 1994; Scott, 2000), and/or increased competition between cities and regions due to globalization (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Harvey, 2000). These trends are evident in the way that the quality and attractiveness of the city as both a dwelling place and a cultural sphere have gained new meaning in urban development

strategies (Lysgård, 2012, 2013).

Similar changes can be observed in rural development (Almås et al., 2008; Borch and Førde, 2010; Ward and Brown, 2009; Woods, 2005, 2011). While the urban narrative primarily concerns industrial restructuring towards the post-industrial city, the rural narrative is more about restructuring due to a shift in the economy from agriculture and manufacturing to a more service-centered economy (Fløysand and Jakobsen, 2007; Marsden, 1999, 2009), and a shift from a production-oriented culture to a more consumption-based focus on rural living (Lysgård and Cruickshank, 2013). Culture-led strategies has been less focused in rural policy research, although cultural heritage, tourism, cultural industries, and creativity are now evolving as development strategies even in rural areas (Bell and Jayne, 2010).

In an urban context, the numbers of citizens and the volume and variety in the cultural sector and in other industries and services are important success criteria. There is a need to investigate these issues also in a rural context, not in terms of volume and variety but as the relations between places, people and creativity that are characteristic of the rural context (Bell and Jayne, 2010). In small rural communities in Norway these factors are critical because the

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Norwegian rural context is characterized by low population density, low variety and volume in industries and services, an activity-based non-commercial cultural sector with low consumption, and municipalities with small administrative bodies compared to the larger urban municipalities.

According to Bell and Jayne (2010), rural places and small towns are largely neglected in studies of culture-led development. Academic research to date has considered the role of culture in rural development policies mainly by focusing on the role of arts and crafts, cultural festivals, and the meaning of symbolic, cultural, and creative economies to rural development. Part of the literature focuses on the prevailing conditions and impacts of creative or cultural industries in rural areas as an alternative local industrial strategy (Gibson, 2010). The authors question how proximity, remoteness and marginality have an effect on the economic sustainability of creative industries both within and serving rural areas (Conradson and Pawson, 2009; Andersen, 2010; Gibson et al., 2010; Mayes, 2010). Another important body of literature focuses on the increased commodification of rural places and the further discussion on the attractiveness and competitiveness of rural places as entrepreneurial hotspots and tourist destinations (Borch and Førde, 2010; Fløysand and Jakobsen, 2007; Harvey et al., 2012; Markusen, 2007; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010; Therkildsen et al., 2009; Waitt and Gibson, 2013). This research has been important in order to understand the relevance of creative industries and the narrative of the “creative countryside” in contrast to the dominating “creative city” narrative (Bell and Jayne, 2010). However, common to these two research trends has been their main focus on the economic sustainability of creative or cultural production and consumption. Less attention has been given to the broader construction of cultural policies in rural places and small towns, and specifically the cultural policy that encompasses cultural identity, social cohesion, civic participation, learning, and general well-being as well as creative and cultural industries.

For decades and in different ways, Norwegian municipalities have been engaged in culture and cultural politics, either through investments in infrastructure (e.g., museums, libraries, cinemas, and cultural centers) or by providing services for cultural activities (e.g., sports, *kulturskole*,¹ activities for children, artistic performances, choirs, school bands, and festivals). Industrial development based on experiences and local culture (including nature) was not unheard of either prior to the relatively recent introduction of the term cultural industries (Pratt, 2005). Furthermore, this development is not merely an urban phenomenon; for example, only the largest urban municipalities in Norway spend more on culture per capita than the smallest rural municipalities (Storstad, 2010). Measured in volume of cultural amenities and participation in and/or use of cultural activities, the four highest ranking municipalities are rural municipalities or small towns, although the most institutionalized and consumer-based cultural amenities are located in the larger cities (Kleppe and Leikvoll, 2014). In addition, the budgets for cultural purposes are growing faster in rural municipalities than in larger urban municipalities.

There is increasing awareness of the importance of culture and cultural industries in Norwegian rural development strategies.² Several rural places and small towns have adopted elements of culture-led development strategies known from urban contexts, focusing on place marketing and branding, cultural industries, regeneration of former production sites into arenas for

consumption, tourism, festivals, and even spectacular or flagship developments.

Numerous studies have examined the construction of culture-led policies in urban contexts, especially in large cities. However, less is known about the construction of such policies in small towns and rural places (Lorentzen and van Heur, 2012). The questions addressed in the present paper are: How are cultural policy and culture-led development strategies constructed in rural places and small towns? How are culture-led policies mainly constructed in large metropolitan areas adapted for rural places and small towns in Norway—in other words, how well do these ideas travel through time, space and scale? To answer these questions, we need to know more about how cultural policy in rural communities and small towns emerges as a result of a mixture of global policy discourses on the move, local history and tradition, and the present local political context.

The next section (Section 2) presents the main ideas of culture-led development as they have emerged in urban studies. Section 3 elaborates on a theoretical framework for how the intersecting dimensions of mobile policies and local discursive-material construction may be conceptualized through policy mobility, a topological concept of space and time, and a discursive-material perspective on the “actually existing” cultural policies and culture-led strategies “on-the-ground.” In Section 4, I argue that the cultural political economy (CPE) approach has the potential to analyze the emergence of local cultural policies in rural places and small towns. Four cases of Norwegian small towns and rural places are presented in Section 5 and discussed in a discursive-material framework, and in Section 6 the emergence of actual cultural policy is analyzed by focusing on the topology of time and scale, the “actually existing” policy as discursive-material practices, and the power relations forming the policy. In the concluding section (Section 7), with regard to the knowledge generated through the studies of large cities in the culture-led development literature, I argue that while these cities focus heavily on a consumer-based logic of experience spectator and consumer-based culture, small towns and rural places place either more or most emphasis on culture as an arena for participation and mobilization, in which the social and democratic dimensions are at the forefront.

2. The global discourse on culture-led policies

The global discourse on culture-led development observed in the urban studies literature points to three different development strategies (Lysgård, 2012; Mommaas, 2004; Sacco et al., 2014). The first strategy focuses on sociocultural processes and emphasizes the internal processes of a city. The aim is to use culture to revitalize a city's public social life and to create a sense of coherence, pride, and common identity among its citizens (Lysgård, 2012). A typical example is the stimulation of cultural diversity and cultural democracy by opening up cultural arenas of the city and both enabling access for all citizens (Mommaas, 2004) and strengthening social cohesion and participation in urban life (Sacco et al., 2014).

The second strategy aims to foster rapid and substantial growth (city boosterism) by focusing on the attractiveness of a place. Culture is generally emphasized as a medium for attracting tourists, investors, entrepreneurs, and highly trained workforces. Culture should enhance place attractiveness and strengthen the potential for consumption through the provision of different cultural and entertainment offers, social meeting places, cultural festivals, spectacular architecture, and artistic monuments. One way of doing this is through the regeneration of old production sites into post-industrial consumption sites, while another is place branding and marketing (Mommaas, 2004). Sacco et al. (2014) relate these strategies to the creative class perspective (Florida, 2002, 2005) on

¹ Municipal school of music and performing art. Established as a public cultural service in all Norwegian municipalities during the sixties, seventies and eighties.

² Several descriptions and reports from projects in rural places and small towns in Norway can be found via the web portal distriktssenteret.no.

place attractiveness toward high-skilled labor, knowledge-based entrepreneurship, innovation, and high-tech investments. Tourism is a substantial part of this place attraction strategy too (Judd and Fainstein, 1999).

The third strategy focuses on the entrepreneurship, production and circulation of commercial cultural products. The production, distribution, and sale of cultural products are thus perceived as a new and central form of value creation, which itself has the potential for growth and employment (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). This is done either by stimulating an entrepreneurial approach to cultural production or by using culture to stimulate innovation and creativity in a more general sense (Mommaas, 2004) and thereby strengthening the local competitive assets (Sacco et al., 2014). This strategy focuses primarily on entrepreneurship, industrial development, and employment, and less on the spatial form of places and sociocultural forms of urban life (Lysgård, 2012).

The application of the three strategies and the reasoning and rationale behind the culture-led development strategy should be assessed according to the specific context in which they appear. If the cultural policy rationale in small towns and rural places differs from, and is based on different reasoning than that in large cities, we need to ask how well the global culture-led policy discourse, with its origin in urban cases, is relevant to rural places and small towns. In order to do that it might be helpful to ask *why* we develop cultural policies in both urban and rural municipalities in the first place (i.e., we should question the rationale behind cultural policy).

According to McGuigan (2004), the rationale of cultural policy can be understood through three ideological discourses. One discourse emphasizes the role of the state or government as the guarantor for a general social standard and the quality of society. In this discourse, the rationale for cultural policy is to strengthen the social condition of society. In other words, culture has a curative role in strengthening social standards or, in McGuigan's words, "to reengineer the soul" (McGuigan, 2004, 36).

The second discourse emphasizes the fact that cultural policy is also a part of a commercial market and has increasingly been transformed or marketized. In this discourse, cultural policy is linked to a market economy objective, whereby the cultural field serves to support social capitalism, which is founded on the purchase and sale of products and services. McGuigan's (2004) third discourse concerns the role of cultural policy in developing a democratic civil society at the intersection between the state and the market. The rationale behind cultural policy is thus to ensure the development of conditions for a democratic society: "Generally, social and cultural critique is dependent upon some preferred notion of a public sphere or civil discourse that is oriented towards mutual understanding as a critical measure of democratic blockage and as a practical check on systemic abuse of democracy" (McGuigan, 2004, 53).

McGuigan's (2004) analysis does not allow for a discourse in which cultural policy is about the culture's self-interest or autonomy. Similar to most other policy fields, cultural policy's reasoning is too instrumental for such purposes. This insight raises a number of questions concerning what cultural policy should contain, its purpose, and who it should serve. Additionally, with regard to small town and rural places, it raises the question of whether the discursive reasoning in these contexts is the same as the reasoning found in what has become the global (and urban) narrative of culture-led policy.

3. The re-construction of cultural policy—mobility, topology and scale

Small towns and rural places are affected by the mobility of global discourses on culture-led policies. Policies on local levels are

not constructed as purely local narratives but are increasingly produced as part of a network, in which ideas flow through space and are reprocessed as grounded and territorial narratives in place (McCann and Ward, 2011). Hence, the growing literature on policy mobility has some important issues to consider when for analyzing the construction of local narratives of cultural policies.

The policy mobility literature departs from a critique of research on policy transfer, especially within political science, which is criticized for missing the fact that policies are also translated in the process of reconstruction on local levels (González, 2011; McCann, 2011; McCann and Ward, 2011; Peck and Theodore, 2001, 2012). It has therefore been argued that it is important to analyze the local reconstruction of policy as processes involving the dimensions of both relationality and territoriality (McCann and Ward, 2010). Policies are always located, and it is of crucial importance to differentiate between the global form of mobile policy discourses (Prince, 2010) constructed and maintained by traveling technocrats and politicians, and the situated "actually existing" and "variegated" policies, assembled and reconstructed in local places and municipalities (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Brenner et al., 2010; Clarke, 2012; Larner and Laurie, 2010).

Policies and policy ideas do not travel by themselves but must be perceived as the result of concrete practices by agents exercising power (Larner and Laurie, 2010; McCann, 2011; Ward, 2006). At the local level, planners, civil society groups, policy consultants, and business actors participate actively in the reconstruction of policy. On the global scene, we also find "traveling" policy consultants sharing their knowledge and presenting success stories from elsewhere as an important influence and an informational infrastructure spreading ideas through education and training, professional supra-local organizations and, not least, through popular media (McCann, 2004, 2011; González, 2011).

Peck and Theodore (2010) summarize the policy mobility approach in five points. First, policy formation must be perceived as a process of construction that is "deeply structured by enduring power relations and shifting ideological alignments" (p. 169). There are not only ready and made-up policies floating around waiting to be picked and used. Second, those who make policies are influenced by their present knowledge, context, and ability to learn "as embodied members of epistemic, expert, and practice communities" (p. 170). All of these actors exercise power in the process of re-constructing embedded policies. Third, policies do not travel as complete discursive narratives, but as "bits and pieces" taken up by policy constructors, "not as replicas but as policies already-in-transformation" (p. 170). Fourth, the policy-making is a dynamic process whereby policies mutate and morph as a "complex process of nonlinear reproduction" (p. 170). Fifth, this process renders it crucial to understand the spatiality of the process in the "multi-directional forms of cross-scalar and interlocal policy mobility" (p. 170).

A major point made in the policy mobility literature is to regard policy construction as embedded and situated processes. However, despite this premise the research may be criticized for having maintained a strong focus on the flow of policies in an urge to methodologically "follow the policy" (Peck and Theodore, 2012). The attention has mainly been on the movement of policy, while the reconstruction of the "actually existing" policies in places and communities is been less in focus. This literature to a limited degree addresses the empirical question about the spatiality and discursiveness of these processes from a situated perspective, and is quite modest in suggesting how, in terms of methodological and analytical approaches, the process of reconstruction actually happens "on-the-ground."

This study primarily focuses on the reconstruction of cultural

policy in rural places and small towns in Norway. This raises a methodological and analytical challenge to address questions about how mobile policies influence local policy production, what is the significance of local history and path-dependence, how the local processes of reconstructing policies take place, and how this process is materialized and institutionalized in a place.

In common with Prince (2010) and McCann and Ward (2011, 2012), I find the idea of interpreting the process of policy construction as an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; DeLanda, 2006) of discursive elements, practices, material objects, and institutions in a topological spatial dimension intriguing (Allen, 2011; Allen and Cochrane, 2007; Anderson et al., 2012; Escobar, 2007; Marston et al., 2005; McFarlane, 2009; Woodward et al., 2012). The topological spatial dimension of policy construction is useful for two main reasons. First, we need a spatial concept that enables us to conceptualize the cross-scalar and multi-directional dimensions of policy mobility—in other words, to theorize proximity and distance, the present and past, and the flow and fixation in the very same process of policy (re)construction. This implies a concept of topological space in which both space and time are folded and the dimensions of here, there, now, and then are relational, non-metric, and not strictly a geometric territorial or hierarchical dimension. Topological space concerns “the intensive relationships which create the distances between things [...] the social proximities that established over physical distances and the social distances created through physical proximity [...] it disrupts our sense of what is near and what is far by loosening defined times and distances” (Allen, 2011, 290).

The scalar dimension becomes important in this topological space. On one side, it is necessary to understand scale in a topological sense in order to understand the actual policy mobility. If we were to take seriously the claim that policy travels as “bits and pieces,” we would also have to understand the process of mobility as a contingent and irregular flow of information and communication, wherein distance and proximity are of an arbitrary nature. On the other side, it is important that the discussion about the ontological reflection and dismissal of “scale as level” (Brenner, 2001; Marston et al., 2005) is not confounded with the more empirical questions of “scale as size” and “scale as relation” (Leitner and Miller, 2007). There is no doubt that the reconstruction of cultural policies in rural places and small towns are influenced by ideas elaborated in cities of other sizes (in terms of population numbers, density, activities, and possibly also variety) and are affected by the flow of information between actors working with different regional and/or global scopes, even though they are not completely ordered in hierarchical scalar systems.

The second reason why the topological spatial dimension of policy construction is useful is that, as a spatial concept, it takes care of the complexity of the intermixing of discursive, practice, and material aspects of the embedded and “actually existing” policy. A topological spatial concept overcomes the easy analytical dichotomies of fixity/mobility, global/local, and present/past, and it includes the discursive, the practice, and the material into the same site or situation where the policy is reconstructed and composed. We now need an analytical approach to study the empirical process of “composing” the policy, or more specifically the emergence of local policy.

4. Cultural political economy—a discursive-material approach to policy emergence

One possible alternative that takes care of the policy composition as the co-construction of the discursive, the practiced, and the materialized is the CPE approach (Jessop, 2004; Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008; Jessop and Sum, 2001; Sum and Jessop, 2013).

The CPE approach has three important qualities. First, “it opposes transhistorical analysis, insisting that both history and institutions matter in economic and political dynamics” (Jessop, 2004, p. 160). In the analysis of the rural and small town political discourses, history and path-dependence seem to be very important as inputs into the policy reconstruction. Second, as an important part of the “cultural turn,” the approach also highlights the relations between meanings and practices as an important premise for the analysis of the “really existing” policy (described above). Third, it has a special focus on the mechanisms of policy construction (defined by the three generic evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection, and retention), where the main point is the co-evolution of semiotic and extra-semiotic processes (i.e., the complex relations between meaning and materialization).

Although CPE has an implicit spatio-temporal dimension and recognizes that policies “are constituted and materially reproduced on many sites and scales, in different spatio-temporal contexts and over various spatio-temporal horizons” (Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008, 1158), the analytical concepts for analyzing the policy mobility through scales have neither been heavily debated nor elaborated. Therefore, there is a need to include a more explicit concept of topological space in the discursive-material analysis of local policy reconstruction. If a more sophisticated spatial dimension is integrated in the approach, CPE has the potential to analyze local policy construction because its main focus is on the construction of intersubjective meaning—the semiosis. CPE is therefore able to deliver an analytical approach of a “really existing” local policy as an assemblage of the discursive, social practices, and materialization, produced in time (historical and path-dependency) and space (topological) (Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008; Jones, 2008; Sum and Jessop, 2013).

There are three reasons why I find this approach appealing. First, local politics must be understood as an activity meant to regulate and organize the social life in a place as an interlinkage between the economy, sociocultural relations and privacy, and CPE focuses on how social processes are co-constituted by cultural, political and economic processes (Ribera-Fumaz, 2009). Second, according to Dannestam (2008), Scandinavian local politics have traditionally been primarily concerned with the implementation of national welfare policies and service delivery. With the shift in focus towards more entrepreneurial local policies, it is necessary to capture the transnational dimension of the construction of local policies. Third, through its focus on culture and economy, CPE should be sensitive to the complexity of a renewed cultural economy and culture-led policy in small places (Lorentzen and van Heur, 2012; van Heur, 2012).

The discursive-material analysis has five mechanisms (Sum and Jessop, 2013). First, variations of “economic imaginaries” signify the selected political and ideological discourses involved in the production of local policies, namely the variety of ideas and ideological underpinnings of “discursive and material biases of specific epistememes and economic paradigms” (Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008, 1158). Following Ribera-Fumaz (2009), I understand CPE as not limited to studying either the “cultural constitution of political economy, or [...] the political economy of culture [...] culture cannot be reduced to the economic and vice versa. Social processes are co-constituted by cultural, political and economic processes” (Ribera-Fumaz, 2009, 457). Here, the discourses of culture (McGuigan, 2004) become the regulating mechanism of culture-led policies. I therefore name this mechanism the variation of “cultural-economic imaginaries.” This raises the question of which discourses of cultural policy, culture-led development and local development policy in general are present in the production of cultural policies of rural places and small towns, and how have they become introduced? In asking this question we will be able to cover

both the cross-scalar mobility of policy ideas and the more path-dependent historical and traditional local production of ideological “imaginaries.”

The second mechanism in the discursive-material analysis is the selection of particular discourses. What are the dominating and privileged discourses and how is the existence of the different elements argued? These discourses or discursive elements are used in the local process “for interpreting events, legitimizing actions, and (perhaps self-reflexively) representing social phenomena” (Jessop, 2004, 164). This mechanism enables us to reveal how the actual reconstruction of policies is a mixture of policy fragments on the move and locally embedded tradition and path-dependency.

With the discursive-material analysis's third mechanism, the retention of some resonant discourses is articulated in strategies, the following initiatives, and eventually the reconstruction of policy. This is how the selected discourses are reprocessed as “actually existing” local policies; in other words, this is how these policies are internalized in our everyday discourses about place development and integrated in political decisions, how they are institutionalized through rules, regulations and practices, and how they are objectified through supposed changes in the built environment. It is through this mechanism that the new or reconstructed local policy is actively formulated through a combination of ideas in the nexus between global forms and local specificity.

As the fourth mechanism, the policy is reinforced “insofar as procedural devices exist that privilege these discourses and practices and also filter out contrary discourses and practices” (Jessop, 2004, p. 165); the new policy discourse is institutionalized and materialized as the difference between what is appropriate or inappropriate within the local discourse. The focus will then be on which structures, artifacts, projects, organizations, institutions, regulations, and media are used to reinforce the local cultural policy and which power relations work against the “naturalization” of discursive ideas (Jones, 2008).

The fifth mechanism of the discursive-material analysis is where strategic agents perform selective recruitment, inculcation, and retention of social agents who fit maximally with the requirements of the policy (i.e., certain actors deliberately produce policy discourses, and different types of local actors are affected by and included in the new policy scheme). On one side, this includes transnational actors as politicians and technocrats, and on the other side it includes local actors producing, consuming and adapting to the local policy in different forms (González, 2011; Lerner and Laurie, 2010; McCann, 2011; Ward, 2006).

5. Cultural policy in four Norwegian small towns and rural places

In this section, I investigate the cultural policy of four municipalities in the southernmost region of Norway: Southern Norway or Agder: Valle, Bykle, Kvinesdal, and Flekkefjord. The neighboring municipalities of Valle and Bykle can be characterized as mainly rural, with low population densities (in 2014 Valle had a population of 1293 and Bykle had 948³), and without town centers or built-up areas of any significant size. Both municipalities are located in a mountain area and partly function as tourist areas or resorts, especially for winter tourism and second-homes, and partly as centers of small industries, livestock farming and forestry. Valle and Bykle also benefit significantly from the income from hydroelectric power plants. Traditional (local) cultural heritage has a strong role in these municipalities.

Kvinesdal and Flekkefjord are neighboring municipalities located near the coast and have a larger number of inhabitants, with more defined town center structures (in 2014 Kvinesdal had a population of 5891 and Flekkefjord had 9013 (see footnote³)) but are still quite small municipalities and towns in a European context. Kvinesdal is dominated by a processing plant that is an important cornerstone company in the area. In addition, the municipality is characterized by small industries and quite a large proportion of its labor force commutes to surrounding municipalities. Despite its quite modest size, Flekkefjord Municipality has an urban image and is dominated by retail and small-scale manufacturing industries. The town has a long tradition of trade, manufacturing and services (public and private) that have formed its identity, as well as its function as a small-scale regional center for the surrounding municipalities.

The empirical material of this study is composed of: focus group interviews with stakeholders from the public sector, private businesses and cultural workers; the results of analyses of public planning documents and documentation of cultural projects and processes, tourism brochures, place-marketing material, and newspaper articles; and individual interviews with stakeholders and project leaders of what was identified as signature projects of the local cultural policy.

The main cultural-political imagination of the cultural policy of all four municipalities was strongly connected with the ideas of *participation, mobilization, place qualities, and social well-being*:

Let's make cultural activities interesting and relevant. Cultural services should be in daily use [...] and strengthen the identity of the citizens [...] they should reflect the life we are living, but also the values and traditions we stand on. We have to respect and stimulate diversity of interests. And we must be willing to cooperate and learn from each other. (Culture Plan for Flekkefjord Municipality 1999–2008)⁴

Cultural policy seems to be path-dependent in the sense that the main task is to provide inhabitants with basic cultural services and provide good opportunities for participation in cultural activities, as has been the traditional way of enacting cultural policies. This task is connected to the idea of developing social capital through meetings in social situations. Culture is perceived as a means to make the social arenas of places or towns accessible for all groups (inhabitants and visitors), and accessibility and openness become aspects of the culture of places and place identity in themselves. Participation, mobilization and presence (i.e., gatherings) in cultural activities are perceived as indicators of lively and vital places and culture; i.e., cultural activity becomes an opportunity to develop social capital. Cultural activity is presented as a strategy for developing intellectual, cultural and social skills where learning and competence building are a fundamental goal for the cultural activity. This imagination is connected to the culture's ability to create both learning and education; it is an inherent civilization-development perspective that is consistent with McGuigan's (2004) ideas of a democratic civil society discourse.

The global discourse on culture-led development policy is only partly visible in the cultural-economic imagination of the studied four municipalities, and much less than expected, given that the policy producers have been very exposed to these ideas. The idea of attractiveness and the importance of branding places, municipalities, and towns as attractive, high-quality places for living by developing positive reputations has some resonance in the local

³ Source: Statistics Norway <http://www.ssb.no/190435/folkemengd-og-areal-etter-kommune-sa-57> (accessed January 1, 2014).

⁴ All quotes from interviews, newspapers, and planning documents have been translated from Norwegian by the author.

policies. This approach is partly perceived as a strategy for marketing and competition, especially concerning tourism and consumption, which will have an effect on the overall economy of the municipalities.

However, what is really interesting is that the main explanation for focusing on attractiveness, branding and reputation concerns, in order of importance, the identity and well-being of inhabitants who are already there, out-migrators who return home after completing their university studies or work experience, and the attractiveness of place for in-migrators moving into the municipalities for the first time:

Our main strategy is to emphasize the desire to live [*bolyst*] here and our own attractiveness [...] Kvinesdal Municipality will build and develop a reputation as a good and attractive municipality to live in [...] we will profile and market Kvinesdal [...] for our own citizens, businesses, entrepreneurs, tourists, potential in-migrants and public services. (Municipal Plan for reputation and visibility, Kvinesdal Municipality, 2012)

The idea of competing with adjacent municipalities over large investments and large-scale employment is almost absent from the imaginations presented in the plans and interviews. The main target of the branding strategy therefore has little to do with the “boosting” strategies known from the studies conducted in large cities and metropolitan areas (Lysgård, 2012), but is instead mainly connected to ideas about identity, belonging, well-being, and contentment.

The idea of cultural industries and culture as important elements in tourism strategies has some resonance in the local strategies. However, interestingly, these ideas are more part of the industrial strategies than connected to the cultural policy as such. Within tourism, there is a focus on culture as a resource for tourist attractions, but even more important resources are nature and nature experiences through sport activities (especially skiing), mountain hiking, and summer holidays on the coast. There seems to be a difference in how the local municipalities and the inter-municipal regional assemblages⁵ focus the “hyped” concept of cultural industries from the culture-led development discourse. While the intermunicipal assemblages actively use the terminology of the cultural industry and creative class literature found in the traveling discourse on culture-led strategies, the local municipalities seem to be more embedded in the path-dependency of cultural policies as tools in the construction of the welfare state, identity, belonging, and well-being of its citizens, which might be a reflection of who the writers and producers of these strategies actually are. The actors responsible for producing intermunicipal policy documents focus on policy trends and flows mediated by consultants, technocrats and transnational political actors (as well as social scientists), but there seems to be a more embedded and down-to-earth attitude in the municipal strategies that are more focused on heritage, tradition, local participation, mobilization, well-being, and contentment than on competition and fast economic growth.

The strategic ideas selected to represent cultural policy can be summarized in two dominating ideas. One idea concerns the role of culture as an important element in the overall strategy of making the towns and municipalities good places in which to live—they

provide a sense of well-being and contentment. The other idea concerns culture as an important element in a branding strategy for making the places attractive. This is partly directed towards tourists, but mainly towards the municipalities' inhabitants.

The above-described strategies are incorporated, objectified and institutionalized (i.e., retained) in at least three ways. First, there is a main focus on cultural services (e.g., *kulturskole*; see footnote 1, sport arenas, and libraries) and financial support for civic clubs and organizations for cultural activities (e.g., music, theater, and sports), especially those designated for participation and mobilization. Second, there are specific plans for building infrastructure, such as sport facilities, community meeting places and community houses, *kulturhus* for performance and participation in cultural activities, and physical places. Third, there is institutionalization of the strategies in the form of projects for place-making, attractiveness as place-branding, and initiatives for stimulating vitality, liveliness, activities, and social gatherings in the communities:

The original idea, that is still relevant, was the common understanding that we have to work together to create a lively town ... originally the idea was related to the local trade association ... but now it has become an umbrella project for place development in a broader perspective. (Interview, Project leader, “Smaabyen” project, Flekkefjord Municipality)

The strategies also incorporate the stimulation of production and consumption of cultural products (cultural industries), but this is only a part of a total package of place development and is far from the main objective that is concerned with the quality of living, well-being and contentment of the citizens.

The *reinforcement* and *selective* recruitment, inculcation, and retention of social agents who fit into the policy regime developed especially through three steps. The first step is the actual participation. Because there is a strong focus on developing arenas, meeting places, activities, clubs, and organizations for participation and mobilization, the citizens actually become accountable for the strategy and legitimize it through their actual choice of active participation. Instead of making the inhabitants passive spectators and consumers of cultural products and performances, they are made responsible citizens as members of the democratic community through their participation in cultural activities and social arenas:

All citizens shall have access to leisure and culture activities independent of their functional ability and the services shall be stimulating physically, mentally and socially ... Bykle shall be characterized by a rich and diverse cultural life that leads to good living conditions. (Municipal Plan, Bykle Municipality, 2010–2022)

The second step is the opportunity to be involved in the debate about priorities in the municipal cultural policy. It is difficult to find traces of any heated public debates about the cultural policy per se, but in connection to specific projects, such as investing in specific sports arenas or culture houses, discussions regarding priorities are quite vivid in newspapers and other media and arenas:

The new culture centre has its price in crowns [Norwegian currency], but also its price for the citizens if it is realized. Such a budget drain would demolish public services dramatically in the years to come ... No, the municipality has to show moderation. (Reader's letter, *Avisen Agder*, September 18, 2008)

Through such debates, the objectives in the cultural policies are

⁵ All of the municipalities are involved in intermunicipal cooperation together with neighboring municipalities organized as a non-judicial level between the municipalities and the county. Kvinesdal and Flekkefjord are part of the Listerrådet regional assemblage, while Bykle and Valle are part of Setesdalen regional assemblage.

debated and consequently become a part of the political process focusing on the real values of living in the four municipalities. The third step is the further and subsequent institutionalization. It seems that when a strategy is implemented successfully through a project organization, the initiative continues into a phase of institutionalization that further reinforces the strategy. For example, the decision to invest in a *kulturhus* in Flekkefjord was followed by a continued project to discuss what type of activities should take place in the house and how they should be organized or whether the place-making project should be both extended through increased number of involved actors and thematic areas and made more permanent. After a while, these initiatives apparently became cornerstones in the embedded local cultural policy.

6. The topological emergence of locally embedded cultural policy

Locally embedded, “actually existing” cultural policy is in a continuous process of reconstruction, and assembles as new form of local policy in three ways. First, on the one side there is an assemblage of policy ideas as a function between tradition and path-dependency, and on the other side there are the mobile policy fragments that are adopted and translated to fit into the local context and the reprocessed ideas of an idealized future that is always part of policy construction (i.e., there is a topology of time and space). Second, there is an assemblage of discursive and material practices because the policy as “actually existing” policies only becomes valid when the ideational and material work together. Third, relations of power work to realize the policies as “naturalized,” “objectified,” or “institutionalized” policies through the respective processes of recruitment, inculcation, and retention of social agents.

6.1. The topology of time and space

As mentioned above, the dominating discourses of cultural policy in rural places and small towns in Norway are mostly reasoned out of a social well-being and/or participative mobilization motive, namely the discourses on strengthening the social condition of society and ensuring the development of conditions for a democratic society (McGuigan, 2004):

Culture and voluntary work ... Interaction and cooperation between voluntary work and the public sector shall develop further activities and cultural services in a way that the inhabitants of the municipality will get the opportunity for contentment, development, and participation or involvement. (Kvinesdal 2022: Long-term municipal plan, Kvinesdal Municipality, 2010)

The motives of social well-being and mobilization have a long tradition in local cultural policy, in which culture is largely perceived as a means to build communities through the involvement and participation of all citizens. This is partly coupled with a quite strong focus on cultural heritage, art, crafts, and participative folk art (e.g., folk-music and dance music, dance arrangements, handicrafts, and local amateur theater) that contrasts and contests the idea of “fine art” and the connected spectator-artist dichotomy through enhancing general accessibility to and participation in cultural activities.

The emergence of cultural policy is therefore embedded in tradition, local practice and path-dependency in several different ways that do not necessarily need to be local in their origins and influences. One type of influence is the pre-welfare-state perspective on place and community development. From their position as

agrarian communities and/or trading posts, the rural places and small towns developed as sociocultural communities with a similar need to grow social capital as in the larger cities. While larger cities had a more class-based focus on establishing professional institutions, such as theater, music halls, art galleries, and museums where the bourgeois class could see and be seen in a social play enhancing their social capital through cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1998), rural places and small towns also had a similar focus on establishing institutionalized cultural arenas in which music, dance, local amateur theater and events as well as religious institutions were established as social venues and meeting points. However, the focus was more on folk culture or popular culture, participation and communitarianism than on fine art and the role of the spectator's ability to develop a social position. This focus was strongly interrelated with the growth of different types of voluntary and/or non-governmental organizations and associations in the mid-1800s. Different forms of civil society movements based on voluntarism and collectivism grew out of the need of the rising national awakening of the Norwegian nation to develop both social and democratic institutions along with national identity. Voluntary organizations and associations became important tools in this process, with the intention of developing social integration and democratization (Wollebæk et al., 2000). The need for a national identity also led to the formation of local marching bands, amateur choirs, theater groups, and local sport associations that together with religious, political and/or idealistic associations became the pillars of local cultural activity as the arena of production of social capital in Norwegian rural places and small towns (Vestheim, 1995).

Another type of influence in the local cultural policy is the more recent welfare-state perspective of the 1960s and 1970s, in which ideas about accessibility and participation were built into both national and local policy by establishing a broad activity-based cultural concept wherein learning and social justice became the keystones of cultural policy (Duelund, 2003). Having access to culture and cultural institutions was a social good in itself and at the same time a strategy for attaining justice and equality in the society. In Norway, this was evident, for example, in the establishment of public music and art schools, regional art academies, and regional theatres. Culture had a social and democratic purpose that was considered appropriate to develop through public strategies, such as the extensive use of subsidies (Lysgård, 2012). This led to a focus on the establishment of permanent cultural institutions, such as public libraries and music and art schools, not only in the large cities, but also in all municipalities in Norway. A continued focus on the cultural associations also followed this policy, with extensive weight on financial support through local government budgets.

A third type of influence comes from the more recent focus on creativity and cultural industries that are significant aspects of the global culture-led discourse. Two fields of knowledge have been of special importance for planning and policy formation: the understanding of the potential of culture as an economic driving force (Scott, 2000), and the understanding of how the changes in working life have drawn attention to the importance of competence and creativity (Florida, 2002). Culture and creativity have appeared almost as a mantra in urban development worldwide since the mid-1990s (Peck, 2005; Stevenson, 2004).

Several ideas from the global discourse on culture-led development are present in the cultural policy of the rural places and small towns too, such as the focus on the commercial aspects of cultural production and culture-based tourism, along with a more nature-based focus on activity tourism, as well as branding and enhancing the attractiveness of places. However, as mentioned above, this approach is of less importance compared with the

position of the more communitarian social and democratic motives inherent in the place and community development perspective:

We have had a rich cultural life in our municipality for years. It is a base, an anchor, which is something that the [citizens] are concerned about ... an active cultural life ... the municipality is founded on significant voluntary community work [*dugnad*]. It is commonality, belonging, identity, it is all the good things that create a good place to live and contentment. That is how we are thinking in relation to the municipal development plan. (Focus group interview, politician, Kvinesdal Municipality, male)

In Bykle Municipality, there has been an interesting split discourse between cultural policy focusing on heritage, accessibility, participation, and mobilization and the industrial policy focusing on commercialized tourism in the ski resort Hovden. The tourism strategy in Hovden is industrial politics with a strict commercial focus, whereas cultural policy in Bykle Municipality as a whole is more about heritage, participation, local mobilization and social capital. Tracing exactly where these ideas come from is a very difficult task because the real origin and source of influence are seldom reflected upon by the actors involved in the policy construction. However, following direct questioning, certain ideas can be traced to specific events, such as conferences and seminars, traveling consultants, artists, other places in the world, national policy implementation, and even education and competence building:

Interviewer: Where have you picked up the ideas about place branding?

Interviewee: In 2001 I was awarded a master's degree in management at BI [Norwegian business school] ... my thesis was about the "personality" of Kvinesdal. I made a study among school pupils and teachers, [of] what could be described as Kvinesdal, which was the hallmark of Kvinesdal. And, that was what led to the conclusion, "*Vill, Vennelig, Vågal*" [friendly, beautiful, daring] ... and then came [the consultant from KS (Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities)] and we worked systematically with this in the municipal plan process. (Interview, civil servant, Kvinesdal Municipality, male)

With regard to the selection and retention of discourses through the construction of the "actually existing" policies in the studied rural places and small towns, we can observe a mixture and ensemble of elements that can be traced either to other places and scales or to other times and situations, and even as a future perspective on the role of cultural policy in the future vision of the place. The ideas that are included in the cultural policy are mobile in a topological sense and travel both in time and in space in a non-linear and non-hierarchical way. In this sense, the local cultural policy of these places and towns is an assemblage of ideas and concepts gathered from and influenced by historical events, local tradition, national policy, and selected "bits and fragments" of the global culture-led discourse. However, the dominating discourse of cultural policy in rural places and small towns is based on the rationale of the social and democratic motivation concerning accessibility, social justice, participation, mobilization, and learning.

6.2. The actually existing cultural policy

The actually existing cultural policy is an assemblage of elements from all three discourses discussed in Section 2, where the ideational and material are linked together in more or less political

strategies (Mommaas, 2004; Lysgård, 2012). Two types of strategies dominate the four cases. One type starts from the intention to strengthen general voluntarism and mobilization, local activity, and participation and learning, skills and competence through the spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic development of individual citizens:

Culture is about making life in the town ... activity after the shops have closed at four o' clock ... then we need something to make activity in the town. (Focus group interview, politician, Flekkefjord Municipality, male)

I hear in many of the discussions that it [culture] is about [and] what it takes to get people to stay here and move here. Yes, then we must have a cultural center or distinctive culture ... so I think that [the] focus in those plans has been more on culture as identity and perception [sensing] than it has been on culture as industry. (Focus group interview, civil servant, Flekkefjord Municipality, female)

These ideas materialize in the actual policy in three different ways. First, they are materialized as infrastructure in the form of meeting places and social arenas (e.g., youth clubs or community centers), arenas for engaging in participative activities (*kulturhus* and sport halls) and/or educational institutions (e.g., cultural schools in all four municipalities or the "Utsikten" electronic art project in Kvinesdal Municipality). Second, they are materialized as projects and initiatives that are intended to create lively, vital and socially vivid community arenas, as town centers that combine retail, social meeting places, street life, restaurants and cafés, and cultural performances and experiences (e.g., the "Smaabyen" project in Flekkefjord Municipality, and the center development plan in Valle Municipality), or as special events as festivals and markets (several in all municipalities). Third, the ideas are materialized as projects and initiatives intended to preserve cultural heritage and traditional values and focus on the identity and place attachment, either as specific branding projects with a strong intention of creating internal pride and belonging (e.g., the "Omdømme" project in Kvinesdal Municipality) or as a cultural heritage project for preserving local food, language/dialect, folk music and traditional handicraft (i.e., in Valle Municipality).

The second type of strategy is the linkage made between a livelihood strategy (employment and value-creation) and cultural production:

Intentional priority [given to] cultural heritage protects the significance of place, contributes to the local community [local milieu] and creates a better foundation for industry and commerce. (Culture Plan for Flekkefjord Municipality, 1999–2008)

In the actual policies these ideas are materialized in two ways. First, as a strategy of attractiveness, whereby culture (as architectural form, image, atmosphere, or cultural performances and artifacts) is the fabric of and gives added value to the place or town as a tourism product or potential dwelling place for in-migrants. Especially, there have been attempts to realize this strategy as part of branding strategies and place marketing (e.g., parts of the "Smaabyen" project in Flekkefjord Municipality, and both the "Omdømme" branding project and the "Utsikten" electronic art project in Kvinesdal Municipality). Second, the ideas form the basis for attempts to develop cultural heritage entrepreneurialism (e.g., "Setesdalsgildet", which offers traditional food in Bykle Municipality, and silversmithing in Valle Municipality). One interesting observation here is that although this is a strategy for making a living in these places, it is mostly a self-support strategy with a

strong affinity to identity and cultural heritage and hardly an industrial commercial strategy for making large profits or creating large-scale employment:

Interviewer [asking about the foundation of a goldsmith and silversmith handicraft vocational school in Valle Municipality]: Did the idea to establish the school come from the national gold and silver industry or from a union?

Interviewee: No, it didn't come from them ... no ... it is a bit like parts of the industry have a very strong driving force in such processes like this. But the silversmith businesses in Setesdal [district] are not a very unified industry ... because this is an old traditional craft here ... it is clear that this is related to Valle and Setesdal's identity. It's cultural heritage. (Interview, former section manager, silversmithing vocational school, Valle Municipality, female)

The boosting strategy known from some of the urban culture-led development projects (Lysgård, 2012) is only found in Bykle Municipality, where the place Hovden is being developed as a modern ski-resort based on industrial and commercial principles. However, it is interesting to note that culture (and hence cultural policy) has a notably small part in this strategy, both because the product is extremely demand-driven (its main resource for the tourism product is based on nature) and because there is a degree of hesitation among business actors to use traditional cultural symbols and cultural heritage since they might give the product a wrong connotation for the main market groups:

I wore a *bunad* [National costume] for some marketing exhibitions in the beginning, just to use local culture in tourism, but the guests didn't respond to that. They wanted nature experiences. (Interview, business actor within tourism, Bykle Municipality, male)

[...] but culture is ... for the crowd, it is not the attractor, but when you first come to the area then it is the spice that makes you say: now I had a bloody good experience. I got to see the genuine. I got to taste the ... authentic ... But as an attractor ... it is not the reason why people come here. (Interview, project leader tourism marketing, Bykle Municipality, male)

The strategy of developing Hovden as a tourist resort has therefore had more to do with traditional industrial policy than with cultural policy or cultural industry and in that sense it is not an example of a culture-led development strategy as described in several urban studies (sited in Lysgård, 2012).

6.3. The power relations of the emergence of local cultural policy

Even though the local cultural policies are topological mixtures of cultural political elements from near and far, past and present, and even future expectations, the real dominating power in the construction of policies must be places within the local communities. Well-formulated policy documents responding to global policy trends, attractively presented on glossy paper, and produced by public planners and communication experts, often only fill up desk drawers and have no meaning in themselves. Policies do not only need to be formulated and presented well or even decided by a majority of political actors to be valid, they also need to be prioritized in budgets, be practiced in everyday actions, and contested in public debate in order to be “actually existing” policies (Brenner and Theodore, 2002).

The main power mechanism is thus legitimation through

practice. This practice is evident in three ways in particular. First, a policy does not become “real” without the ability to mobilize people to participate in the actual construction of the policy. People have to take part in and actively respond to and reproduce the policy measures to give the policy a role and make it part of social life. In the cultural policy of the studied rural places and small towns in Norway, the participation is more about the actual participation in the production of cultural artifacts, performances and activities than about the more distanced spectator or audience view that often is implicit in the economic discourse about cultural development. In the latter, culture is turned into a commodity that is supposed to be bought, consumed and experienced. In all four municipalities, there has been a strong focus on the role of culture in building strong communities through voluntary participation in cultural arenas. In this sense, the use of culture to strengthen social capital and democracy through active participation is the most important expression of power in the construction of local cultural policy.

Second, a policy does not become “real” without a political will to prioritize and implement practices, institutions and materialization of the cultural policy through the municipality budget. In this sense, the power is closely related to the institutionalization and materialization of policy, namely the actual building and establishment of culture houses, culture schools, sport arenas, community centers, festivals, marketing campaigns, financial support of marching bands, amateur choirs and theater groups and local sport associations, and even the regeneration of streets, squares and meeting places in the community centers. In studied rural places and small towns this phenomenon is hardly about building outstanding concert halls, fancy theater buildings, spectacular flagships, huge sea-front regeneration or refurbishment programs, or large-scale international marketing campaigns (Miles and Paddison, 2005), but is more about institutionalizing, materializing and supporting financially the participative arenas with the intention of fostering social capital and democratic mobilization.

Third, a policy does not become “real” without the “naturalization” of the cultural policy discourse. This means that the discourse has to be debated and contested to become real. A policy that is not in an active play about hegemonic interpretations and is constantly contested is not a part of an “actually” existing policy. A good example of this is Valle Municipality's strategic plan for culture and industry for the period 2011–2014, which has hardly been debated or contested since completion of the planning process. The plan is therefore not an active part of the “actual” cultural (or industrial) policy in Valle Municipality.

Through an active debate and contestation of the ideas and suggestions for concrete initiatives, the cultural policy becomes alive through the questioning and acceptance of specific cultural expressions in the tension between traditional heritage and practices, innovations and experimentation, and the general understanding of what is and should be the constituency of place and community—a good place for living. A good indicator for this is found in two different cases. One is an electronic art project in Kvinesdal Municipality, which despite its highly experimental content has become well-accepted and supported among the municipality's citizens. The reason for this can be found in the will of the project leaders to relate their activity and legitimacy always to the locally embedded public and cultural discourse about participation and learning (described above). The project is therefore not labeled as too experimental, as one could imagine, but has good legitimacy as an integrated part of the accepted cultural discursive frame of cultural policy in Kvinesdal Municipality:

Yes, he [an external art consultant] was very competent in what he was doing, but [...] he had some ambitious ideas. But as [the

administrative executive] says, it shall be carried out within the municipality. A completely different reality and [there was] vast political support all the way [...] One can think ahead [...] What happens if the first [art] project one brings in on the table from the world's best [artist] costs 5 million [ca. EUR 600,000] and people don't know that he's the best in the world? We have to see how we then can get it locally rooted so that people think that this is something that the municipality should be doing. (Interview, project leader, electronic art project, Kvinesdal Municipality, female)

Another example of the meaning of discursive power is a more than twenty-year struggle to build a culture house in Flekkefjord town. The main reason that it has taken such a long time has been the financial side, but behind this has been a set of reasons for not prioritizing the new culture house in the budget. One main line of reasoning has been that a culture house would have the connotation of a fine-art discourse and not of a building supposed to support the activity-based cultural concepts that are "naturalized" as the hegemonic cultural policy of the small town:

Now we have this cultural center [*kulturhus*] that should have been built years ago and now it is postponed one year more ... the content of this is so much more than culture. So I have wondered about the concept of cultural center [...] We have tried to explain that there will be library, cultural school, youth club, gallery, café, auditorium and cinema inside this center, but still it is [not yet built], and that puzzles me a bit. What is the reason for this? Can it be how some people understand culture? When we say *kulturhus* to someone, then it is just for the "fine" arts, and then they close down and won't listen any more. I think that's a pity. (Focus group interview, politician, Flekkefjord Municipality, female)

As an attempt to solve this situation, a subproject was launched aimed at developing a plan for what type of cultural activity should take place in the building and what it should be used for when finished:

I think it's about their tactics, because the more there has been talked about content, the more it has calmed down. They [those against the *kulturhus*] imagine a pie in the sky in red velvet where the ladies in fur coats will go. This is not what this is about at all. (Focus group interview, cultural worker, project leader for the activity plan of the *kulturhus*, Flekkefjord Municipality, male)

The role of the citizens themselves should therefore not be underestimated as a means of power in the emergence of local cultural policy in rural places and small towns:

[...] the plan, the administration and politicians are important, but it's where the voluntary associations and clubs are active that the money goes, as well as community associations. If there is no activity among voluntaries they can't get any money. They have influence on the policy formation. (Focus group interview, politician, Flekkefjord Municipality, male)

7. Conclusions

This study may be concluded in three ways. First, empirically this study has shown that for the studied small towns and rural places in the Agder region the local cultural policy has become

almost a basic part of the formation of community and democracy. An important aspect of this policy is condensed in the Norwegian word *dugnad*, which refers to collective voluntary work on a project (Wollebæk et al., 2000), but with the specific connotation of helping one another and taking part in the collective responsibility for the future of the community and place. To understand the emergence of the locally embedded cultural policy of small towns and rural communities, it is therefore necessary to interpret its rationalities in the light of democracy and collectiveness and not as a neoliberal focus on extrovert attractiveness and competitiveness, as is the main guiding principles of the mobile global discourse of culture-led policies.

Second, concerning the formation of actual cultural policy, the policy construction of the studied small towns and rural places has to some degree been influenced by the flow of neoliberal consumer-based cultural policies of cultural industries, place marketing, and visions of spectacular experiences traveling through political (urban) space. However, it seems as the cultural policies of rural places and small towns are more guided by and rooted in path-dependency, heritage, tradition, community practices, and social capital, based on ideas of participation, mobilization and social coherence. Instead of uncritically embracing the "catchy" ideas about attractiveness, competitiveness, place marketing, and creative industries that have been in the forefront of the culture-led urban strategies, small towns and rural places should possibly pay more attention to developing a rationale of cultural policy that places the issues of community building, social coherence, local identity and democracy at the forefront.

Third, the theoretical relevance of the study shows that in order to understand the actual cultural policy of small towns and rural places, it is not sufficient just to observe how the local policy becomes influenced by the flow of global discourses of culture-led strategies with an origin in metropolitan urban areas. The real construction of local policies can only be studied as an exclusively local process—a locally produced assemblage of discursive-material practices and power relations in which ideas and experiences from "everywhere" become reprocessed into the actually existing policy. The ideas and inspirations of the assembled local policy may originate from the past, present and future, as well as from different spaces and scales. In order to take this "foldedness" of space and time into consideration, a topological concept of both space and time is therefore necessary to analyze the actual policy construction of small towns and rural communities.

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