



# Citizen Lab

Campus Kristiansund Internship Program



Kristiansund  
kommune



Møre og Romsdal  
fylkeskommune

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## Abstract

City authorities around the world are working tirelessly to ensure that their citizens are involved in their day-to-day administration. Getting citizens to partake in decision making can be difficult due to the approach which is being used and the technical working languages making it difficult for people to comprehend. The citizen lab approach is an evolving concept where local people are involved in making decisions and solving problems in ways that are easy and understandable to them. Such a co-creation approach makes it easy for local people to relate to the issues from their perspective and have simple solutions that will not appear to be rocket science in nature.

The Kristiansund Kommune in collaboration with Campus Kristiansund seeks to adopt the citizen lab approach to engage the indigenes, the private and public companies in addressing local challenges. Literature has shown that effective citizen engagement lead to good policy outcomes, trust and good management of resources. With this backdrop, the citizen lab approach is expected to provide citizens the opportunity to create their own knowledge and leverage on local resources to address issues.

In designing the concept of the lab and its focus area, a focus group workshop was organized to map the interests and sustainability related issues that lab could address. Private, public, and local people attended this workshop to highlight the sustainability issues the city can focus on in the near future. The widely held issues were hovering

around social sustainability. They included the promotion of quality health, upcycling, career development and future urban development.

The lab with the help of the Newton room, the digital twin center, Varde, Bjørnadal Architecture studios, DMS health care, the Kristiansund Kommune, Campus and volunteer organizations in the city would collaborate to curb the challenges. The approach adopted in designing the lab will ensure that the issues identified reflects the real problems in the city and ensure the lab becomes effective.

An Opplyst event has started currently which will allow the citizens to meet with experts in diverse fields of urban development to deliberate on social issues and how to address them. This is an informal meeting, usually over coffee, and expected to encourage knowledge sharing and co-creation. It will help pilot how the local people will embrace the citizen lab concept. The lessons learnt from the Opplyst-events would shape the development and implementation of the citizen lab concept. To ensure the success of the citizen lab, it is being recommended that funding options should be explored to have the project running when the campus is opened in October 2024.

## 1.1 introduction

The citizen Lab is an emerging concept that municipalities across the world are adopting to engage their locals in identifying their issues and addressing them. Kristiansund Kommune, a leading front in the sustainability drive, is seeking to adopt such a concept to drive development. Kristiansund Kommune is spearheading this lab in conjunction with Campus Kristiansund, the companies in the Municipality as well as the citizens. The lab will serve as a means of interaction between the citizens, companies in the municipality and the Kommune. These players will have similar grounds to discuss sustainability issues in the city and seek lasting solution. In the preliminary stages of developing the citizen lab, a focus group workshop was conducted to gain insights from the locals on what the content should be. This approach is to ensure that the lab is designed to reflect the issues confronting the city and to put it in the right perspective. Participants of the

workshop showed keen interest in the lab and revealed the importance of such a development.

Despite the importance of citizen lab which has been highlighted in various literature, the participants of the focus group revealed that a citizen lab in Kristiansund lab would foster trust where the citizens would feel to be both seen and heard. It was also disclosed that a citizen lab in Kristiansund would ensure an increased cooperation between the citizens, private and the public sector at large. It will also serve as a junction where opinions from people of diverse backgrounds have a point of convergence. Among many benefits highlighted by participants, the significant issues were around the themes of community engagement, knowledge creation and sharing, value creation, transparency, and identification of community needs.

The goal of this project is to pilot how a citizen lab could work in Kristiansund and propose appropriate recommendations to facilitate its establishment and operation. As part of the piloting, an Opplyst event was hosted at Kulturfabrikken to discuss architecture, nature, and urban development examples across the world and how Kristiansund could use local knowledge in these areas.

## 1.2 Objectives

The overall goal of the project is to pilot the implementation of a citizen lab in Kristiansund. Specifically, the project sought to achieve the following.

- Mapping out relevant stakeholders for a citizen lab
- Organizing a focus group discussion for citizen lab stakeholders
- Developing a concept and operations for the lab
- Hosting an Opplyst event
- Further recommendations for citizen lab

## 1.3 Methods

To achieve the goal and objectives of the project, this section spells out the methods that were used in undertaking this project. The project began with a series of preliminary meetings with project owners to understand the scope of the project. As the lab seeks to be a collaboration between the private, public and the citizens, stakeholders were mapped out from private sector, public and civil society organization in Kristiansund. These stakeholders will work together to create the needed local knowledge for the development of the city. A focus group discussion was organized for the stakeholders to discuss the pertinent issues in the city and how the citizen lab could help curb them. With the aid of the ideas shared at the focus group discussion, a concept and an operational strategy was developed for the lab.

Aside developing a plan on how to implement a citizen lab, an Opplyst event was also organized to pilot the lab. The event had over 50 attendees participate in an informal workshop at Kulturfabrikken to discuss how nature, architecture, and urban planning influences local knowledge.

## 1.4 Results and Analysis

### 1.4.1 Concept

Despite the importance of citizen lab which has been highlighted in various literature, the participants of the focus group revealed that a citizen lab in Kristiansund lab would foster trust where the citizens would feel to be both seen and heard. It was also disclosed that a citizen lab in Kristiansund would ensure an increased cooperation between the citizens, private and the public sector at large. It will also serve as a junction where opinions from people of diverse backgrounds have a point of conversion. Among many benefits highlighted by participants, the significant issues were around the themes of community engagement, knowledge creation and sharing, value creation, transparency, and identification of community needs.

## 1.4.2 Focus of Lab

The lab has a broad focus on sustainability but with the help of the focus group workshop, it was streamlined to the specific themes that will leverage on the available resources from both the private and public sector. The key themes identified from the workshop spanned social, economic and environmental sustainability. Under the social theme, issues like; volunteerism, vocational education opportunity through the Newton room, having a bridge between classroom and the professional world, architectural and urban development, health development, effective governance and administrative, citizen engagement, career development and art and cultural development. Private and Public sector workers will be working together to achieve social sustainability related issues.

## 1.4.3 Lab Players

The lab is a collaboration between the private, public and citizen groups. The campus, kommune and the fylkeskommune, DMS, schools and Kulturanken (Ada) are the main public agencies involved while other private institutions include; Bjørnådal arkitektstudio, Varde, Digital twin company, Newton MØRE. Volunteer groups will serve as the main mouthpiece for the citizens.

These players that will collaborate with each other and share knowledge in addressing pertinent social issues would serve the following functions in the lab network.

- Newton Møre: Making technology fun and easier to comprehend.
- DMS: Help in providing knowledge to address health related issues in the city. Promoting good and quality health care in Kristiansund.
- Bjørnådal arkitektstudio: Assist in providing architectural and urban planning perspectives to urban problems. Helping both government and citizens in creating a more sustainable community.
- Varde: Helping in shaping career in the vocational field. Helping locals with passion for vocational related skills. Also provide knowledge on circularity

## 1.4.4 Means of Engagement

For the lab to be patronized by the local people, it must be visible. Visibility is very important in engaging users of the Lab. The question of visibility raises several concerns about how publicity is to be given to the lab. Traditional university campus is known to be a venue for teaching and learning, associating the citizen lab to a campus places a touch of academic sentiments around the Lab. The Lab should be communicated in a way that the public will not see it as an academic place. Instead, the academic veil must be taken off and made welcoming to everyone. The lab should have a physical meeting place which is comfortable enough to host people. It should also make room for feedback either through online resources or physically.

## 1.4.5 Opplyst

As a part of Citizen Lab pre-activities, we were invited to co-host an evening of the concept "Opplyst", initiated by Signe Sefland from Campus Kristiansund. The purpose of Opplyst-evenings is to share knowledge and discuss matters of interest to the local population in a relaxed environment, as an alternative to the more formal workshop or conference.

Our event took place at Kulturfabrikken on May 14th, and the evening was centred around architecture and urban development in Kristiansund. A central question of discussion was how to create a city that is both attractive, sustainable, and simply wonderful to live in. Aiming to inspire through world-wide examples and knowledge, we had the honor to share the stage with Hans-Petter Bjørnådal from Bjørnådal Arkitektstudio in Kristiansund, Menno Cramer from the Netherlands who holds a PhD in neuroscience and architecture, and the acknowledged Finnish architect Marco Casagrande. From our side, Kwadwo, Andrés, Mo and Nadia contributed with PechaKucha-style presentations covering examples from their home regions; Culturally inclusive planning examples from West Africa, inspirational city planning examples from South America, and examples of circular cities in the Netherlands. We concluded the evening by engaging with the audience to discuss whether some of the insights presented could be applicable to explore in Kristiansund.



## 1.5 Recommendation and Conclusion

As seen in other parts of the world, these kinds of projects prove to be very effective forms of engagement that attract citizens from all kinds of backgrounds, making it a powerful tool to hear their opinions and recommendations.

Therefore, Kristiansund would greatly benefit from the actual set up and delivery of such project. To ensure a better user experience, this project requires resources such as a project coordinator that will be in charge to follow-up the social media accounts and coordinate all events. All events will require funding scale them when possible and to make them appeal to the general public.