

# Micro urbanisation in Norway

## Examples

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- Micro urbanisation as a term can be used to describe a village's strategic development where public actors, business and inhabitants work together to introduce urban qualities to increase the attractiveness of the village.
- The cases show diverse and abundant activity to make the centre more attractive and vibrant by co-locating various functions, building more houses and creating urban outdoor spaces. Town halls, schools, cultural centres or sports facilities are often important meeting places and co-locate many types of activities.
- The cases show that the efforts of the municipalities are crucial for local development, both when it comes to ways of working and the appropriate measures for micro urbanisation.
- Participation in R&D projects and experiences from other municipalities is important for getting a local knowledge base in place and for choosing the right actions.
- What constitutes micro-urbanization and the right type of measure depends on the local context. The condition for this to happen is that the centre is invested in and prioritised for development.

This is a case study of micro-urbanisation in selected villages in rural areas in Norway, based on the following definition of the term micro urbanisation:

*Micro-urbanisation is strategic local development with focus on the village centre, where public actors, business and the inhabitants work together with the aim of increasing the attractiveness of a village (200-2000 inhabitants). Micro-urbanisation can be linked to physical characteristics of the place such as co-location of workplaces, housing, public services, amenities, community centres and public meeting places in a condensed local centre. It can also be linked to non-physical characteristics such as cooperation between actors, creating activities in the centre and other elements that make a village an attractive place to work, live or visit.*

With the help of mapping functions, interviews and document studies, we have mapped 10 Norwegian villages in rural areas, that is, one per county. The result is a case study that shows the development of the centres of the villages. The villages were initially chosen based on input from different sources including the counties. Table S1 shows an overview of the villages we have investigated. It turned out that nine of the ten villages we selected have a local development that could be examined as micro urbanisation. When we interviewed the tenth

municipality, it became clear that this municipality is not a good example of micro urbanisation, and it was therefore omitted from the collection of examples in chapter 4.

*Table S1: The case villages.*

County	Village	Municipality
Troms and Finnmark	Skjervøy	Skjervøy
Nordland	Hemnesberget	Hemnes
Trøndelag	Årnes	Åfjord
Møre and Romsdal	Bruhagen	Averøy
Vestland	Mo	Modalen
Rogaland	Undheim	Time
Agder	Myra	Vegårshei
Vestfold and Telemark	Kviteseidbyen	Kviteseid
Viken	Trøym (Hemsedal)	Hemsedal
Innlandet	Alvdal (Steia)	Alvdal

The nine villages described in the collection of examples all have a role as a municipal centre in their region. The case results of the mapping and investigations are portrayed according to the same template, with a description in which each municipality's measures and ways of working are presented based on document studies of plans, as well as interviews.

According to what is described in the interviews, much of the local development was, and is, linked to individual projects. Several of these are linked to participation in R&D projects. Gradually, experiences from projects and participation in R&D have led to greater attention around the centre of the village. Based on local experiences, municipal strategies and plans for the central areas of the villages have been adopted in several places. Several municipalities have experienced that this does not happen by itself, and that there have been different reactions to the initiatives. There have often been discussions about whether investment in the centre weakens the surrounding rural areas, but where investment in the centre has persisted, there has been greater understanding of that a strong centre also strengthens the surrounding areas. Among other things, the conflicts have been resolved by political and administrative management choosing to take a stand. The biggest conflicts seem to be linked to individual projects and not to the local development itself.

The findings show that the municipalities see local development as an important part of social development. They see micro urbanisation as a useful term to describe what happens when small places adopt urban measures in a smaller context. In the interviews, the municipality emphasises the development of central functions such as trade and services, joint use of buildings, development of parks and developing green surroundings in the centre of the village. Several have town halls or cultural centres that allow for flexible and non-traditional use. Most municipalities have decided that the municipal centre is a priority, but there have also been discussions about priorities locally between the centre and the periphery. The challenges the places have are linked to trade and services that are established outside the city centre, and costs of building both housing and industry according to market-based principles. Several of the municipalities have their own employees who work with local development, or with starting large and small projects. Some of the municipalities also have financing schemes to help initiate projects.

We find that the following conditions must be present to achieve micro urbanisation:

- that the village is defined as the municipal centre, and preferably confirmed in the regional plan

- that there is a municipal decision on developing the centre of the village
- that there are, or are being developed, municipal strategies and plans that legitimise and contribute to the desired development
- that processes are mainly municipally initiated

We believe it is decisive that the village is defined as the municipal main centre by the municipality, and preferably confirmed in a regional plan. The interviewees believed that it is important to prioritise the municipal centre in plans and strategies. It requires a clear political and administrative commitment and leadership to develop in the centre. This is reinforced if the municipality itself invests in the centre and takes the lead with investments. Close cooperation, good communication, clear signals, as well as following up plans and objectives strengthen the trust, security and investment willingness of local actors. Based on the cases, we have concluded that the following factors can contribute positively to micro urbanisation:

- that key actors outside the municipality also contribute
- that the municipality participates in R&D projects, and other projects developing local knowledge
- that municipalities use management tools
- that human resources are set aside to work with local development in the municipality

In order to achieve micro urbanisation, there are different ways of working that can be used and different measures that can be implemented, either alone or in combination with each other, see table S2.

*Table S2: Ways of working and measures for micro-urbanisation.*

Ways of working	Measures
Engage and connect to businesses, volunteers and residents	Mixing functions and activities in municipal buildings
Participation in projects providing increased knowledge and funding	The shop as integral to local centre development
Provide earmarked personnel resources	Creating public spaces for increased activity in the centre (at all times of the day)
	More variety in the housing offer
	Beautification and densification through aesthetics and architecture
	Green structures and pedestrian paths in the city centre

Based on our findings, we think micro urbanisation is an interesting term to use for local development in Norwegian (municipal) centres, and we think it could be interesting to investigate how coordinating ways of working and measures in a policy package based on a policy package methodology could have been used in villages in rural areas of this size. The government is working with introducing rural development agreements this type of settlements in their government platform, and it could be interesting to link the rural development agreements to the concept of micro urbanisation.

So far, we have looked at what micro urbanisation can be. Several of the municipalities think that it is an interesting term to use for local development. It is still too early to say anything about the effect of micro urbanisation. It should therefore be investigated how to measure the effects of micro-urbanisation, including what and how to measure the effects. It should also be considered which data and data sources can be used for such purposes, and how, based on this, municipalities can become able to put together an indicator set that shows development over time. This requires that one goes more in-depth about how the size of the settlement, economic situation and geographical location affect what can be achieved through micro urbanisation.