



Spirited Services for Dale

Epicenter | Periphery - amplifying local energy flows

Produced by roomservices in collaboration with Karl Palmås, Tina Giannopoulos, Anze Zadel, IAT/Institute of General Theory and Nordic Artists Centre Dale/NKD.

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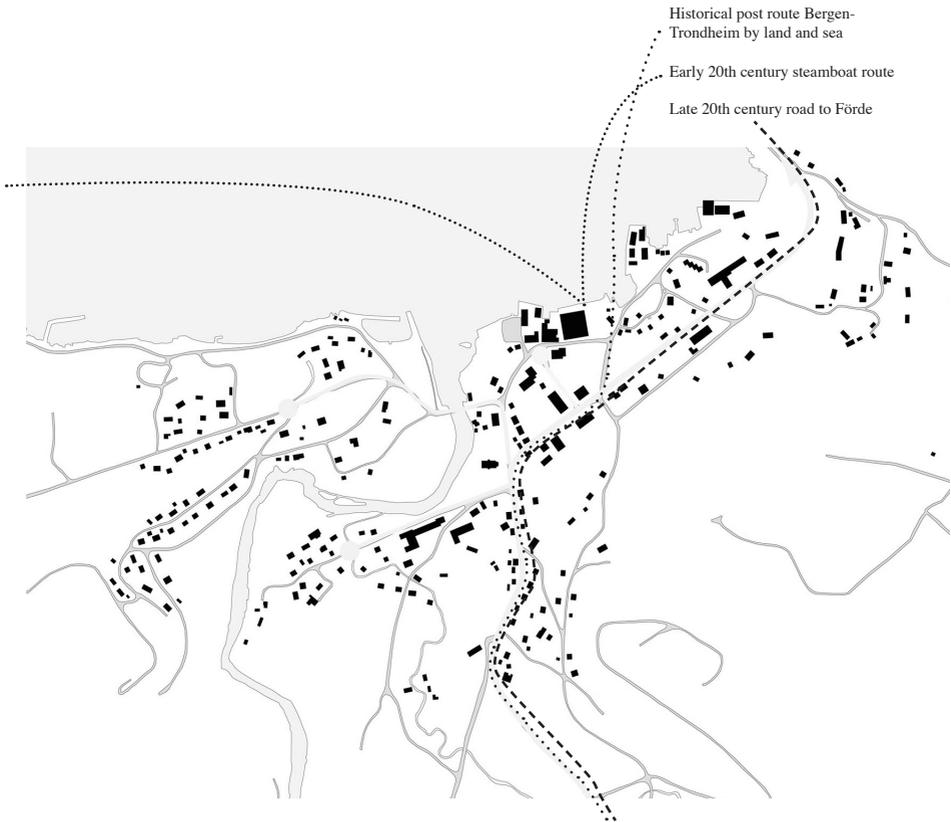
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Epicenter | Periphery - amplifying local energy flows

How can rural communities reveal, mobilize and intensify local creativity?

How can rural areas recircuit local initiatives into sustainable cultural projects?

Start by making the periphery your epicenter.



Epicenter Periphery took place in Dale i Sunnfjord, about three hours trip north of Bergen on the west coast of Norway. The community, which is squeezed between the mountains and the fjord, consists of about 1500 inhabitants and the whole Fjaler municipality consists of about five thousand. Until the 1980s the main route of access to Dale was by sea and the boat to Bergen. But after the construction of the winding road to Førde, the closest town about an hour drive to the east, the local services of Dale have been struggling. Over the last years, the old local industries are diminishing and businesses move to Førde.

Nevertheless, there are several beacons of hope. A Red Cross United World College opened in the next valley, drawing students from all over the world. A successful software company is housed in one of the old shoe factory buildings, and a design center has opened down on the waterfront. Also an artist center is located in Dale, the Nordic Artist Center (NKD), which was host to the Epicenter-Periphery project.

But perhaps most importantly; within the Fjaler Municipality there are over two hundred active and registered communities of interests and hobbies. Also, the "Dugnad", the tradition of community work, is very strong. Dale may be placed off-center, but it is a hive buzzing with energy. Can this energy and hobby interest among the inhabitants be a force of gravitation and a generator of shared wealth, just like early industrialism was?

Epicenter Periphery was an artistic research project with a systems ecology perspective, which tried to redefine the parameters by which we understand the relation between urban and rural, middle and margin, epicenter and periphery. The aim was to map and understand the dynamics of an off-center location in a new way and prototype scenarios and interventions made to plug into and intensify local creative flows, social initiatives and energy sources.

As periphery being defined and redefined through the constitution of the center, its identity is destined to be framed by a series of limitations. These are usually seen as heavy traditions, conventional thinking, non-dynamic environments, homogeneous and bordered spaces. The epicenter is, on the contrary, where everything seem to happen and where all nodes meet and in a state of flow. The center is the attractor point and magnet for all different sectors, where all feed from the synergies of a critical mass; people, ideas, money, culture and energy. But is this dichotomy really so strict and defined? What are the connections between center and periphery, and how can these interfaces be further explored and renegotiated? Which are the small scale and local tactics that create vibrant collisions, multiplies input into rural amplifiers and centripetal creative cycles for massing development densities?

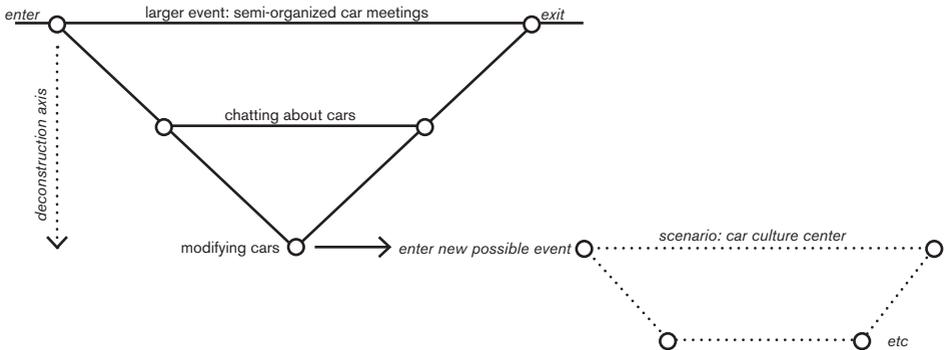
Epicenter Periphery facilitated a hands-on discussion platform centered around the survival strategies of the periphery. The project consisted of a two week research and development period where parameters and mapping techniques were explored to reveal the local energy flows and hidden assets of Dale. The project also practically investigated how interventions in these mapped flows can change the conditions of the rural, local, and peripheral. The aim of this type of research is to better understand how small scale interventions can reveal, mobilize and amplify hidden structures and currents in a small peripheral community.

These small change interventions can trigger and multiply existing forces and motivate social orchestration for pooling and intersecting the existing flows in a community. Such approach would embrace existing creativity rather than feeling a need to “fly in” new resources, experts and artists. Tools for such local interventions can be anything from local or complementary currencies, innovation protocols, open source interfaces, architectural practices, intervention processes, social entrepreneurship, co-production incubators and NGO initiatives. This type of actions, combined with local initiatives and a perspective of social practice, can be an engine for transformation in rural communities and make the attractiveness of the city lessen.

The periphery is not a dead end. It has a creative allure of its own.



A series of observations, studies and interviews were made in the area.



Epicenter Periphery used a “designerly” transformative methodology focusing on the processual evolution of events which could tap into already existing local initiatives. As roomservices had a history of several projects in Dale, much of the background research was already done (cf projects “adventures in local history” and “radio free Dale”).

The design process used contacts and interviews with many of the over 200 local idealistic communities and these contacts facilitated further observations, mappings, and scenario-building discussions.

To better understand the potentials of eruptive events the discussions often included visual representation of processes and possible capacities of local initiatives. With the mapping of initiative and events discussions could focus on how to recircuit and energize everyday occurrences into more sustainable cultural expressions and creative activities.

Three main approaches were taken during the workshop:

Flows of energy: How do we understand and map with better accuracy and imagination what is happening in-between, people, institutions, and events in a small milieu, and how can we practically tap into these flows of affects to modulate and intensify them? What can be the interventions for boosting local initiatives and energy sources into sustainable activities without institutionalizing them?

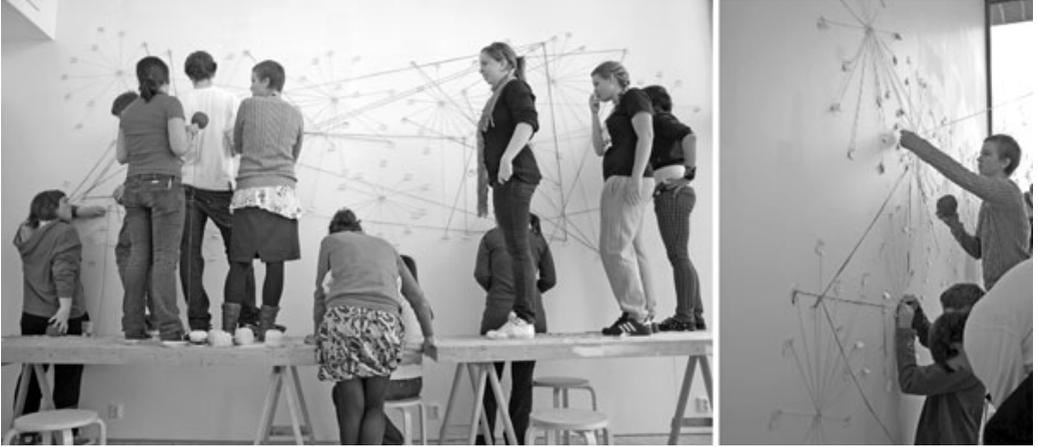
Lines of energy: How can we amplify the channels of communication and organization of local synergies? We usually think that a new event, building, community center, or festival will trigger larger movements by converging existing lines and inviting outside ones, but how can we bend everyday small flows and their communication channels to connect into larger creative turbulences?

Nodes of energy: What are the places through which the local energies flow, and how do we locate them? What can be done structurally and architecturally to make these functions better through small scale interventions?

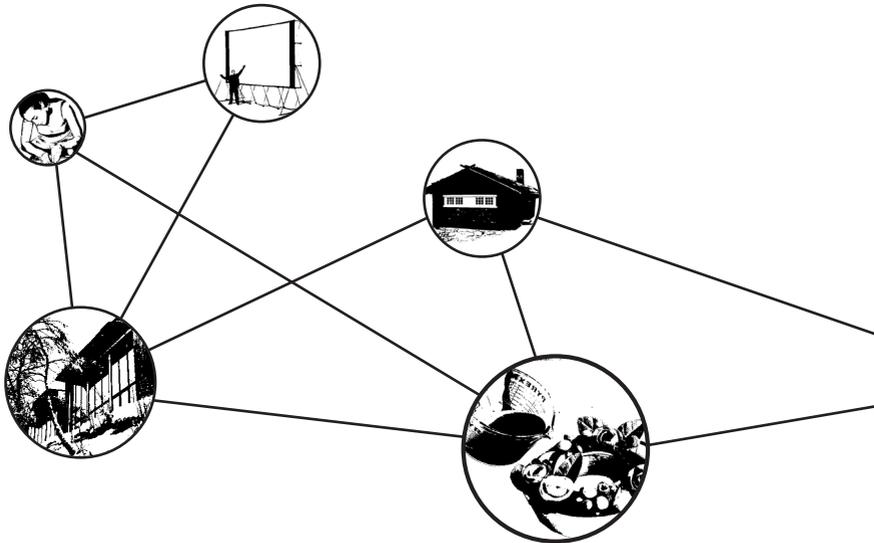
How can we trace, map, intervene and intensify activities in a local milieu?



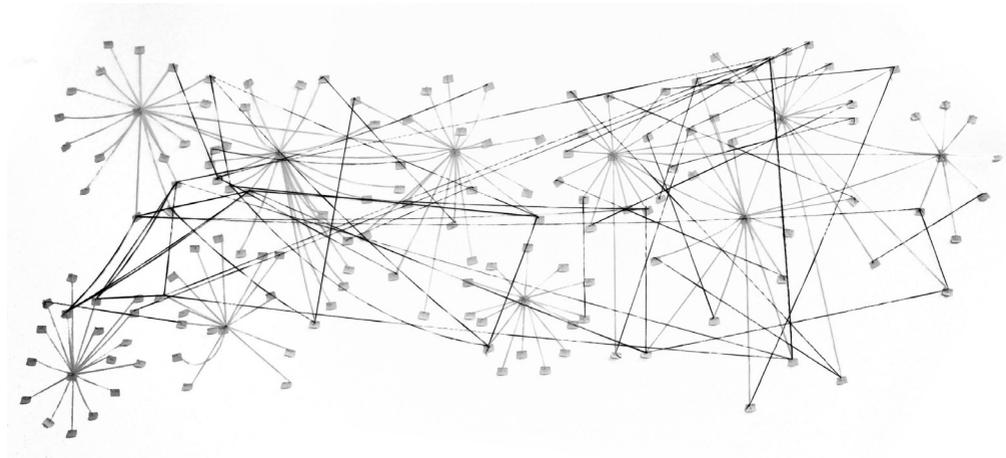
The scenarios were presented to the community and developed further. At the end of the project an exhibition was made at the local library where the process and scenarios were shown.



Young students made sociograms to show how they socialized and used the local facilities.



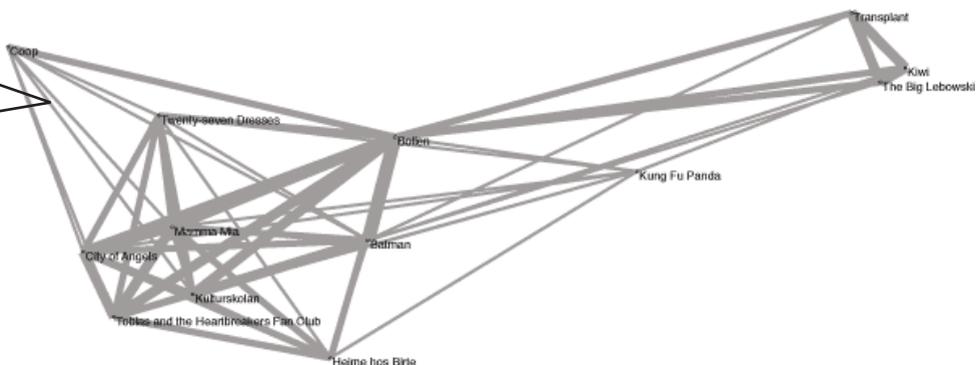
At the concluding discussion participants also expressed opinions about the uninteresting themes and activities in the community and why such activities lacked energy and attractiveness.



Sociogram of the students' common interests, traced with yarn on the wall.

One of the workshop methods was to construct sociograms showing the activities, interests and social networks within the community. A mixed group of local students were invited to create an analogue social network. Based on a set of common questions, the sociograms exposed common interests and themes among the participants. The data of the sociograms was translated into a network map which was used to overlay the social intensity of attractions and affects. By recircuiting some of these interests into other fields they could be used to "power up" the everyday events and also expose neglected parts of the community for further investigations.

How can we reveal hidden assets and initiatives within the community?

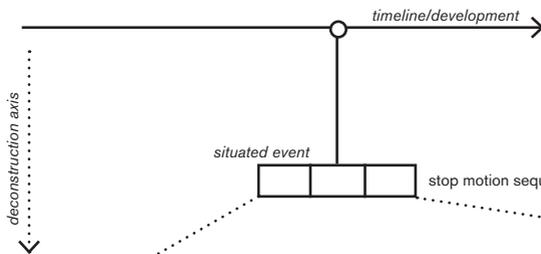


Analysis of sociogram data in mapping software Pajek revealing the intensities of different interests.

Within the research we emphasised the superabundance of energy within a community, but assumed no limitation of interests, activities and energy among participants: Any community can do anything - we just need to understand how the actors use time and coordinate social activities. We need to see the eruption of such events in dynamic flow.

As a part of the research, a palette of observational techniques were used, where time-lapse photography proved very useful to expose the evolution of events in physical space. The time-compressed videos also became fruitful points of departure for discussions on how the everyday contains untapped potentialities. The everyday is full of such flows of energy, but as with a stream, we don't fully realize its potential use for energy until we put a power generator into it.

flow of energy/events



mid day energy dip

cool kids cut class

schools end for the day

shuttles arrive

car kids loiter





Several stop motion cameras were set up to record the flow of a normal day. The compressed moves were used to show how the flow of people and activities varied at different times in shops, bus stops, benches, and street corners. Further “nosing around”, following leads and making short interviews built “thicker” data.

How can we visualize the eruption of events to recircuit their energies?

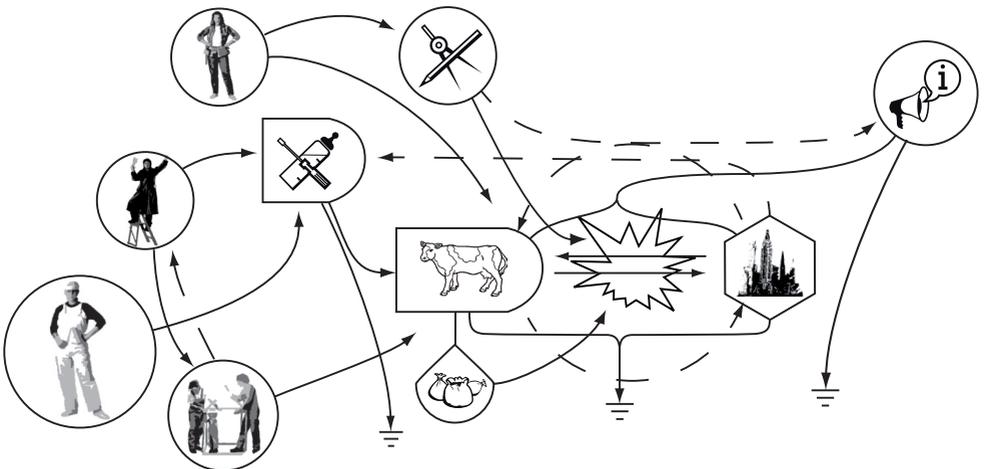
car kids loiter again

car kids loiter again...



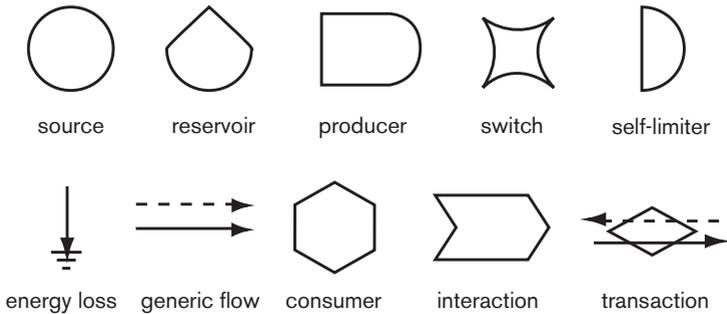
Visualized network analysis and a series of flow charts were used to map the dynamics, interaction and exchanges of Dale. As a point of departure roomservices used the ideas of systems ecologist Howard T Odum to draw the connections and interactions between local actors, services, nodes and resources. Odum's ecology mapping techniques of tracing "energy", or embodied energy, puts matter and energy into the same system, and we also added social interactions to the equation as to also try to trace affects.

How can we map local services to visualize the social "energy grid"?



One of the tasks during the workshop was to explore different systems with which to map social ecologies, to see how services and skills could be recircuited, amplified, cultivated, exchanged and intensified.

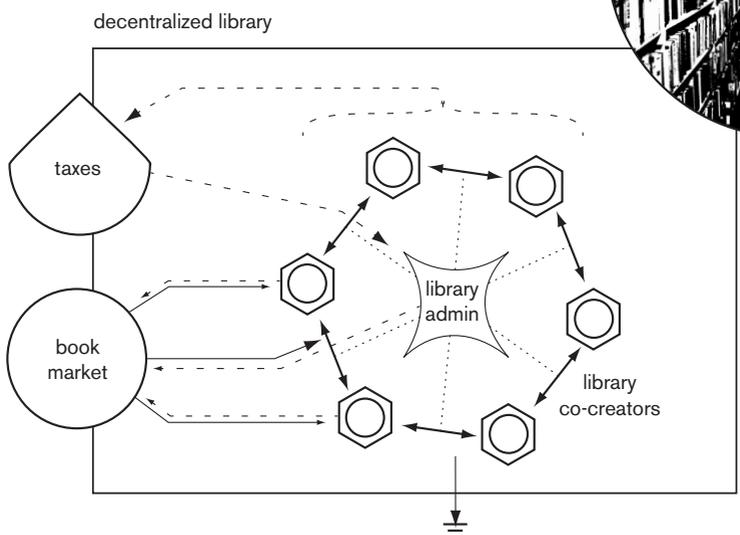
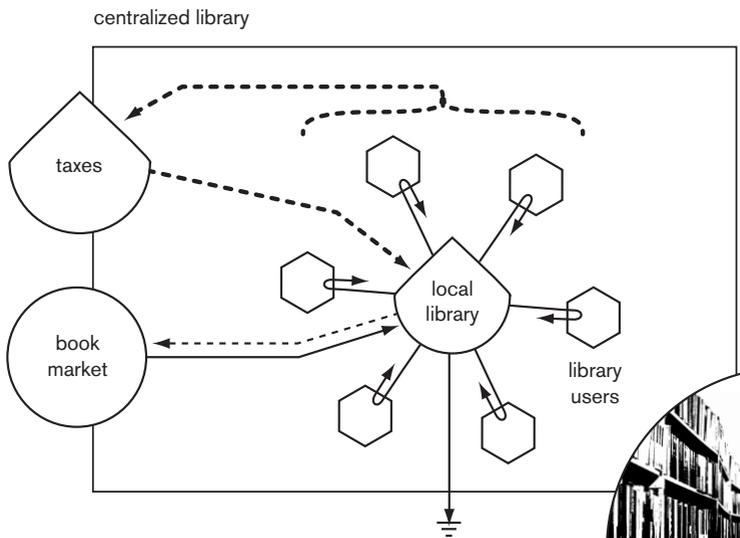
Mini key to *Energese*



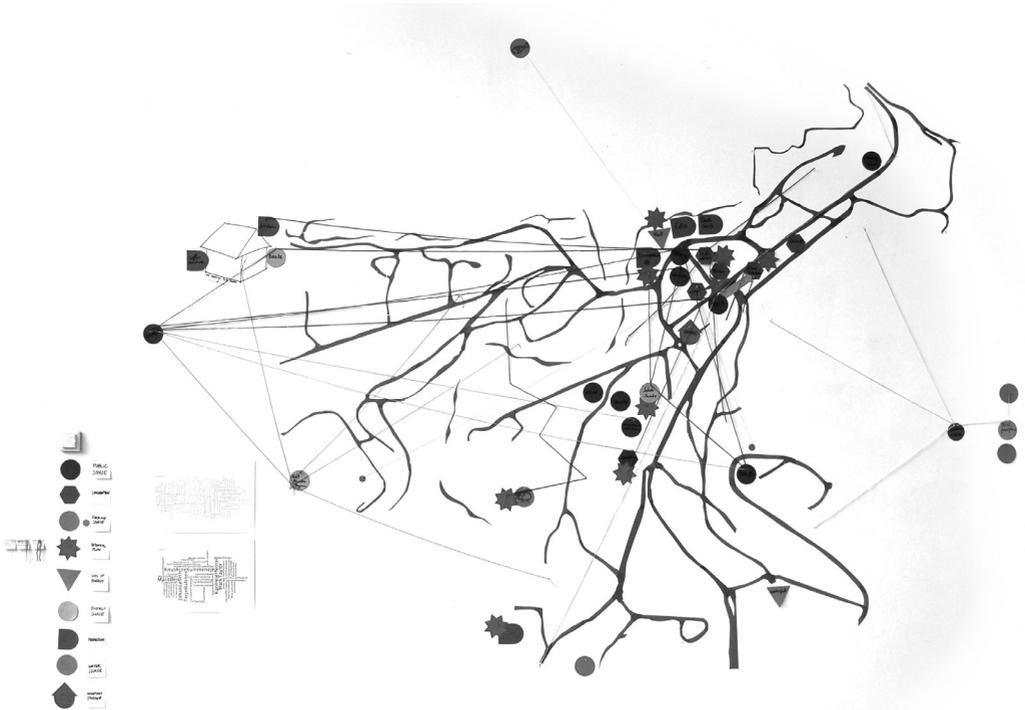
How can we draw circuits of social ecologies to know where to best intervene in systems?

A hybrid energy mapping system was developed, following the “ecolanguage” of Lee Arnold (originating from Odum’s system, often nicknamed “energese”). With this approach, energy, matter, communication and money can be visualized as flows of intertwined actions and events, with equal importance to each force. Arnold’s and Odum’s symbolic diagrams proved very helpful to better understand intentionality, dynamics and how a community operated far from equilibrium.

Different methods of mapping also proved to be strong tools to visualize and also to think even further possibilities, from what was before considered impossible.



One of the diagrams exposed the difference between a classic centralized local library, as the one in Dale, and the dynamics of a distributed library. The distributed library was one of the discussed scenarios, by which a central server mobilizes unused book stocks at individuals' homes and include them in a shared distributed library. Some of your books at home can be catalogued to become part of the library.



A sketched energy map of the networked system ecologies of Dale. This map exposed interest groups, hobby workshops, popular places, community leaders and initiators, rehearsal studios as well as commercial and public services, roads and places of specific interest. This made up the community's social and physical "energy grid" through which the flows of matter and energy is pulsating.

Through interviews, observations and fieldwork the local services and resources were mapped and arranged in an energy system. This map formed the basis for the scenario discussions on how small interventions can amplify local initiatives and creative new services. Interests such as sports, cooking, crafts and mechanics were transposed into other scenarios and settings, revealing new public potentials.

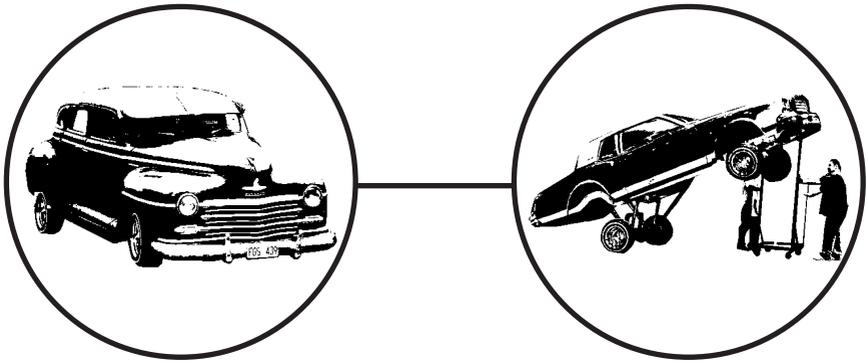
Local initiatives and interests exist at all places, but normally designers have only learned to see typical urban phenomena and archetypical media events. Rural interests, situations and potentials are often unseen or even ignored.

Starting from the people and amplifying local pursuits creates engaged communities and new shared publics. The sense of place grows from there. With a widened repertoire of scenarios of public experiences and initiatives of involvement the rural can be a serious place of creative change, not only a tax subsidized out-back of recreation and urban romanticism hosting the Waldenish summer cottage.

Platforms for exchange and cultivation of skills determines the health of a community. Processes of wide participation can facilitate and help develop vague interests into pro-am activities; hobbies refined to professional standards.

To facilitate such processes a new House of Culture does not need to be built. Rather a shift of focus could be needed. Use the money for orchestrating new platforms for exchange, wider citizen engagement, and injecting more energy into already germinated interests.



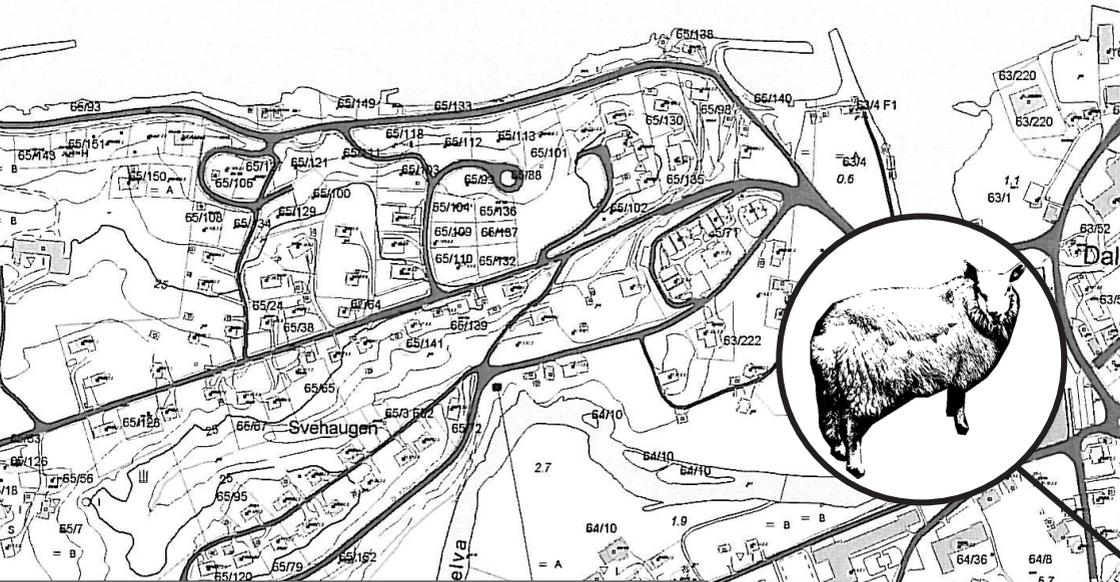


How can we recircuit community hobbies into sustainable cultural activities?

Home birds in their domestic cocoons, *Hobby horses* in their workshops, *Community spirits* at the neighbourhood meeting, even the *Loitering teens* at the local supermarket - they all emanate energy and share an excess of interests. We just haven't been able to trace these energies. Let's experiment with new methods and design tools to build new publics and encourage new social practices.

At the following pages we present some of the scenarios developed at the workshops in Dale, hope you enjoy them and that they can inspire to new actions.

Welcome to Dale, your new epicenter.

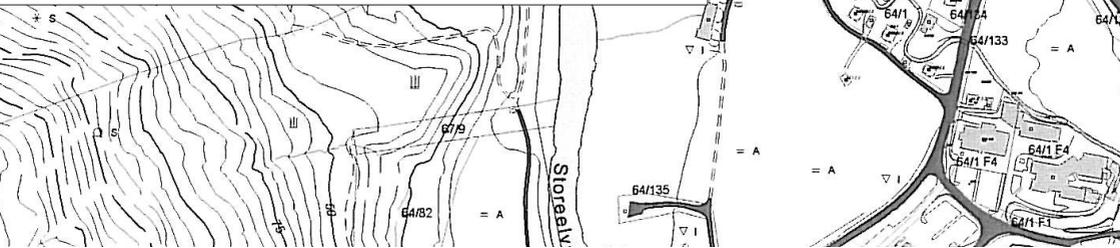


Dale Local Loyalty Card

Why only get points when you fly away from Dale? Here you will get bonus points for every local product you buy. For example, among the products that are bought in Dale; Norwegian products count as one point, Western Norway products 5 points, Fjaler Products 15 points. Enjoy your cow milk coming from the next farm!

main actor: local producers

potential contributors: the local stores, with the help of supermarket chains like COOP or Kiwi





Skogaliå

Dalsåsen

Furekammene

63/183

63/4

63/242

63/251

63/169

63/257

63/235

63/236

63/27

63/18

63/12

63/290

62/57

63/6

63/249

63/248

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63/227

63/4

63/194

63/82

63/14

62/18

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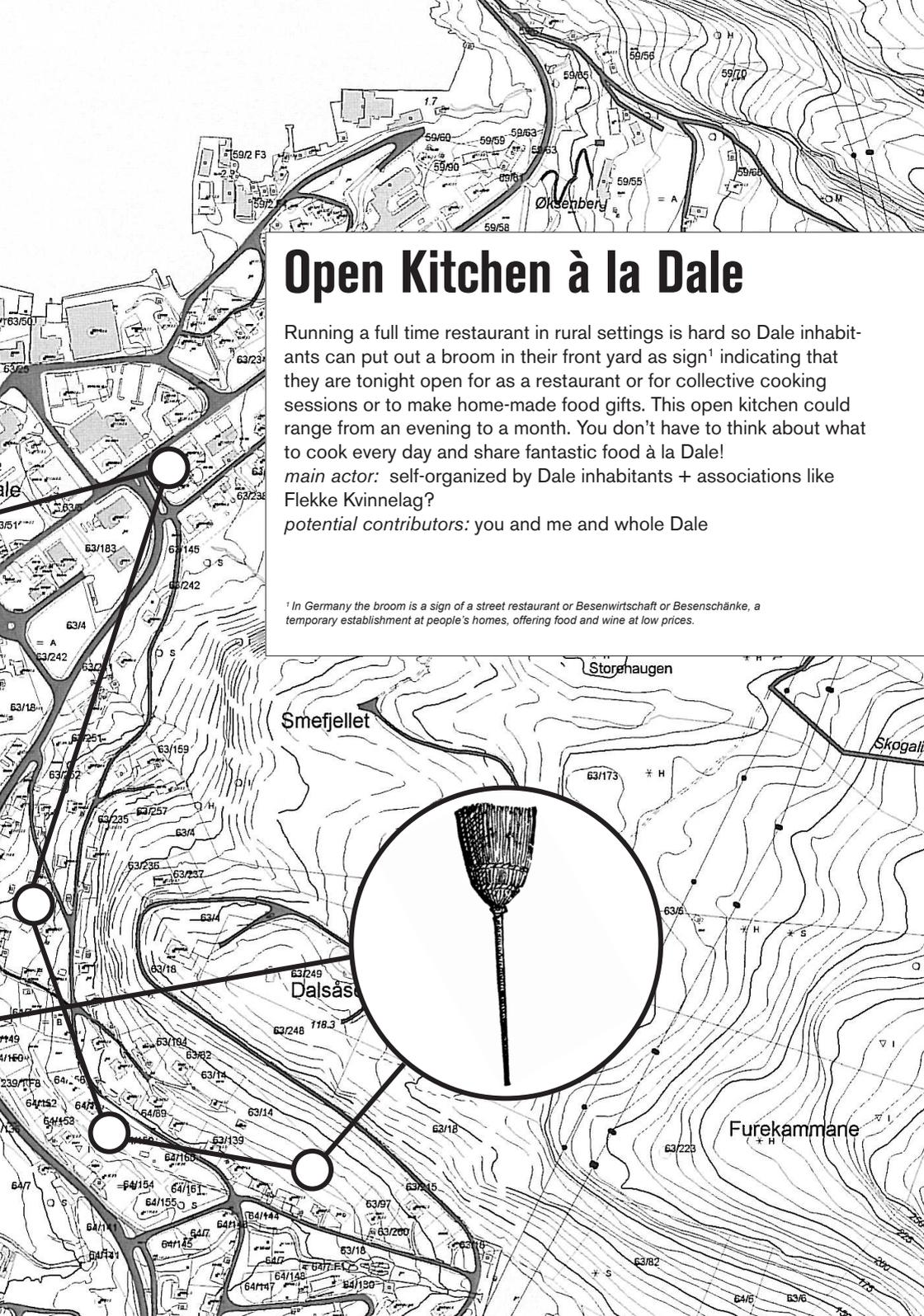
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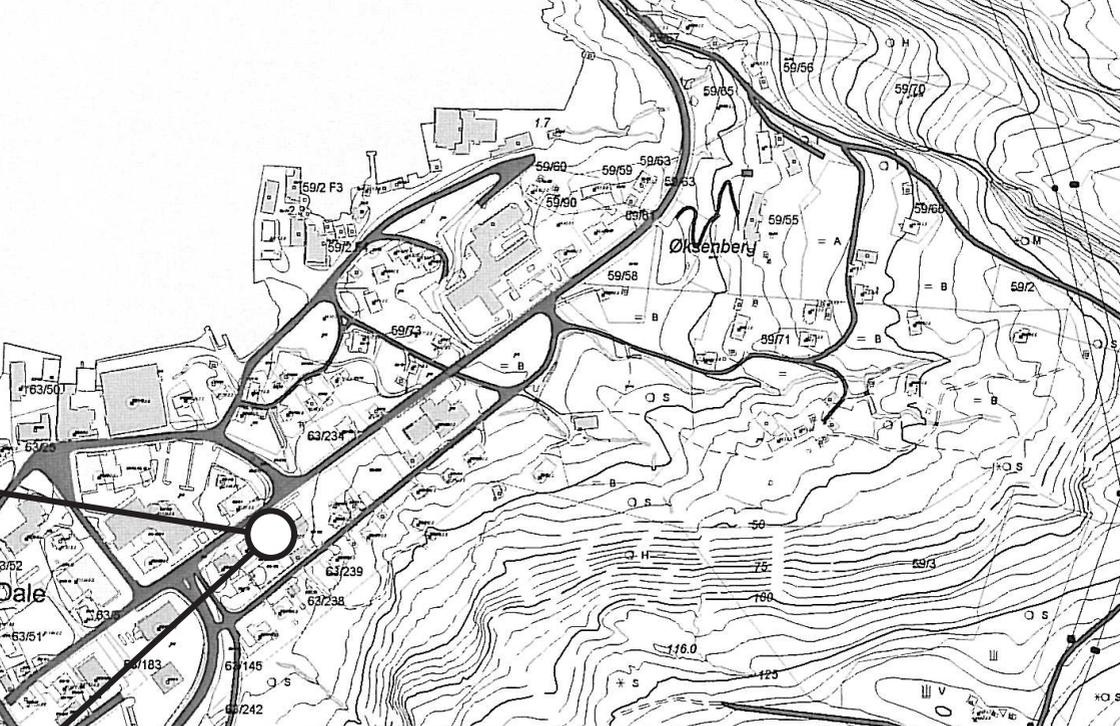
Open Kitchen à la Dale

Running a full time restaurant in rural settings is hard so Dale inhabitants can put out a broom in their front yard as sign¹ indicating that they are tonight open for as a restaurant or for collective cooking sessions or to make home-made food gifts. This open kitchen could range from an evening to a month. You don't have to think about what to cook every day and share fantastic food à la Dale!

main actor: self-organized by Dale inhabitants + associations like Flekke Kvinnelag?

potential contributors: you and me and whole Dale

¹ In Germany the broom is a sign of a street restaurant or Besenwirtschaft or Besenschänke, a temporary establishment at people's homes, offering food and wine at low prices.

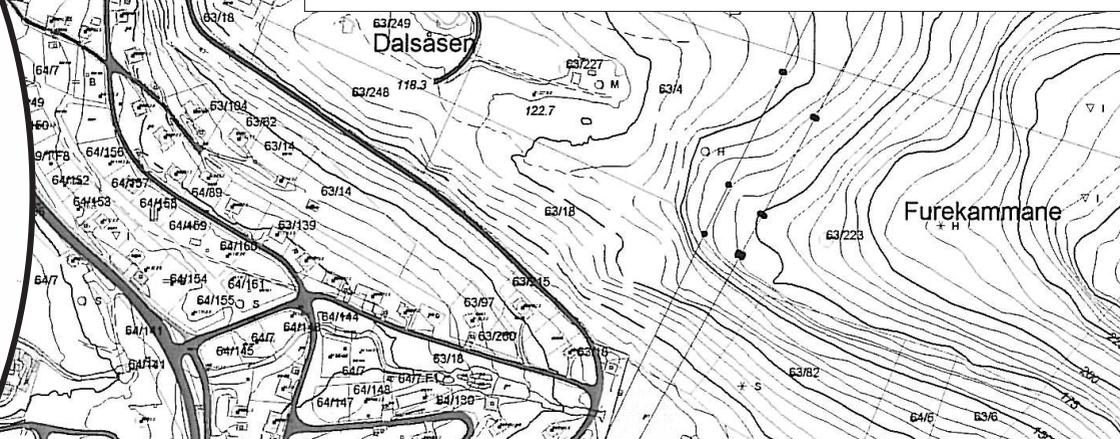


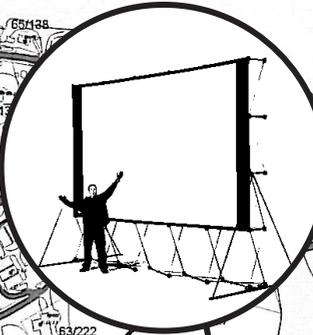
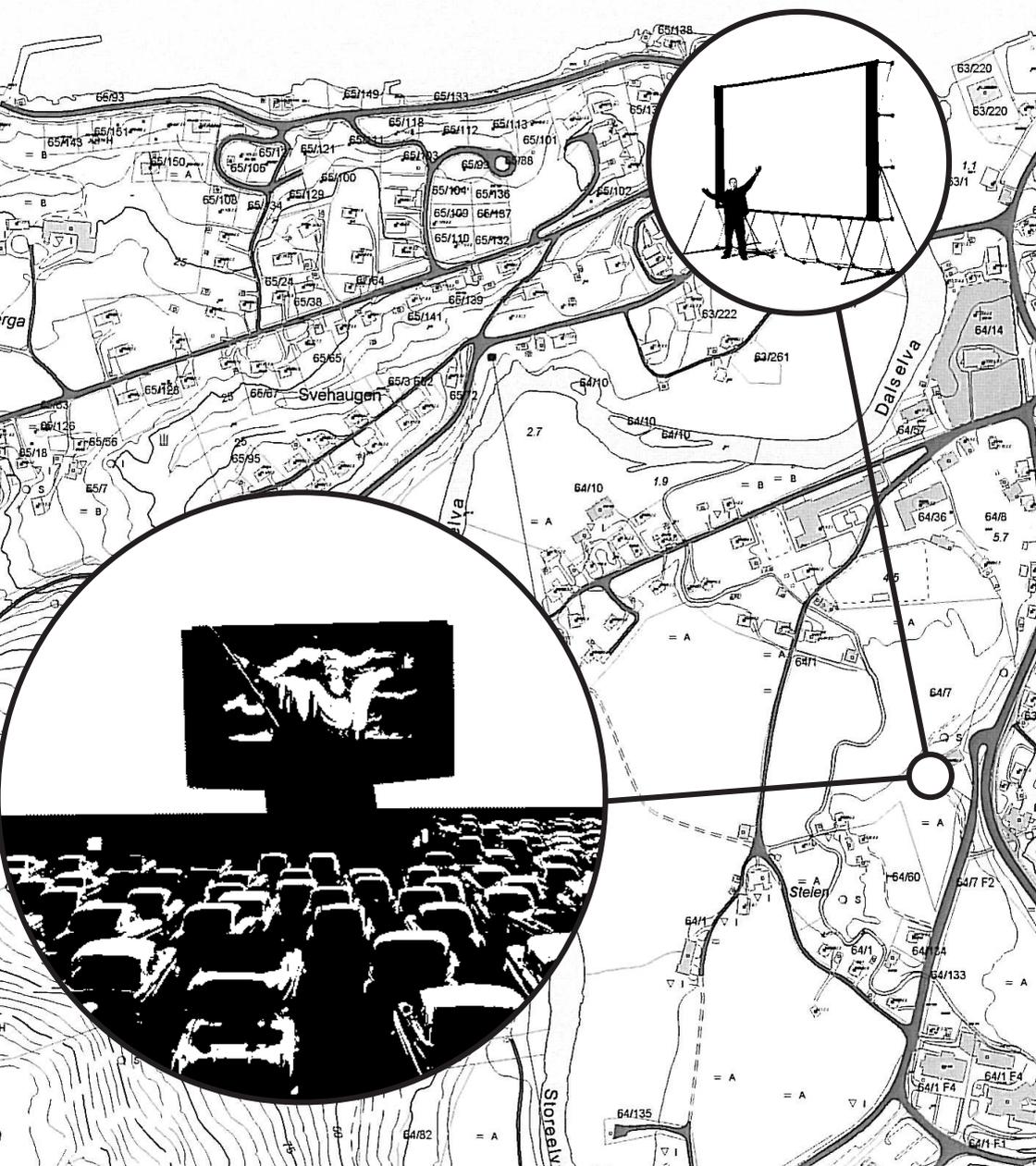
“Dale Lowriders” Car Culture Center

The meeting point Esso Gas station will be transformed into a DIY Car Culture Center where you can modify your car and learn the latest techniques and fashion in car modification options, use tools and installation techniques to pimp, tune or “trick out” your car.

main actor: The local car enthusiasts, young and old.

potential contributors: The gas station, car components shop in Förde, mechanics program at the high school.





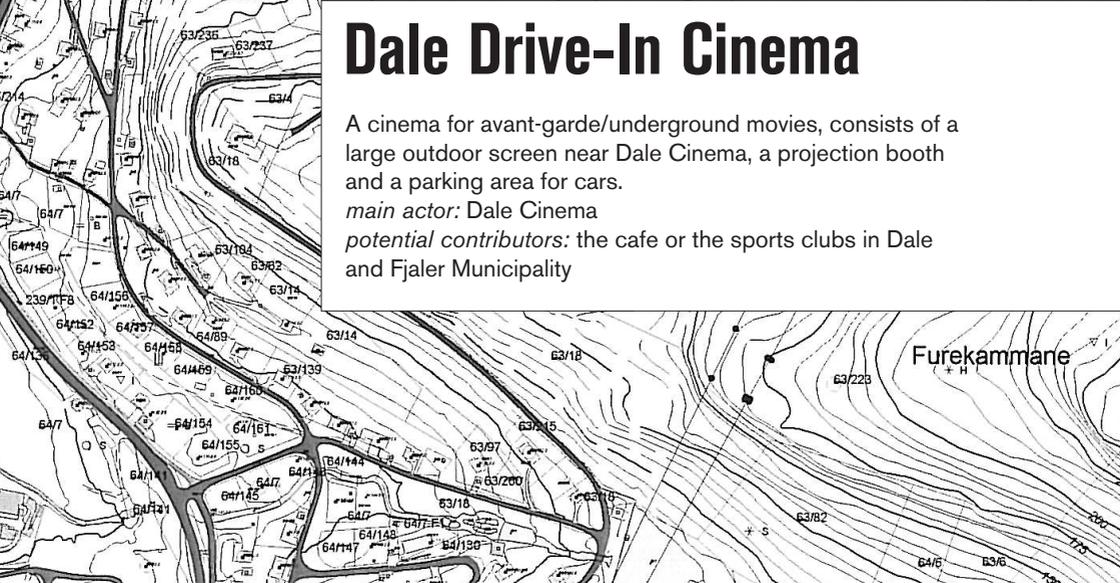


Dale Drive-In Cinema

A cinema for avant-garde/underground movies, consists of a large outdoor screen near Dale Cinema, a projection booth and a parking area for cars.

main actor: Dale Cinema

potential contributors: the cafe or the sports clubs in Dale and Fjaler Municipality





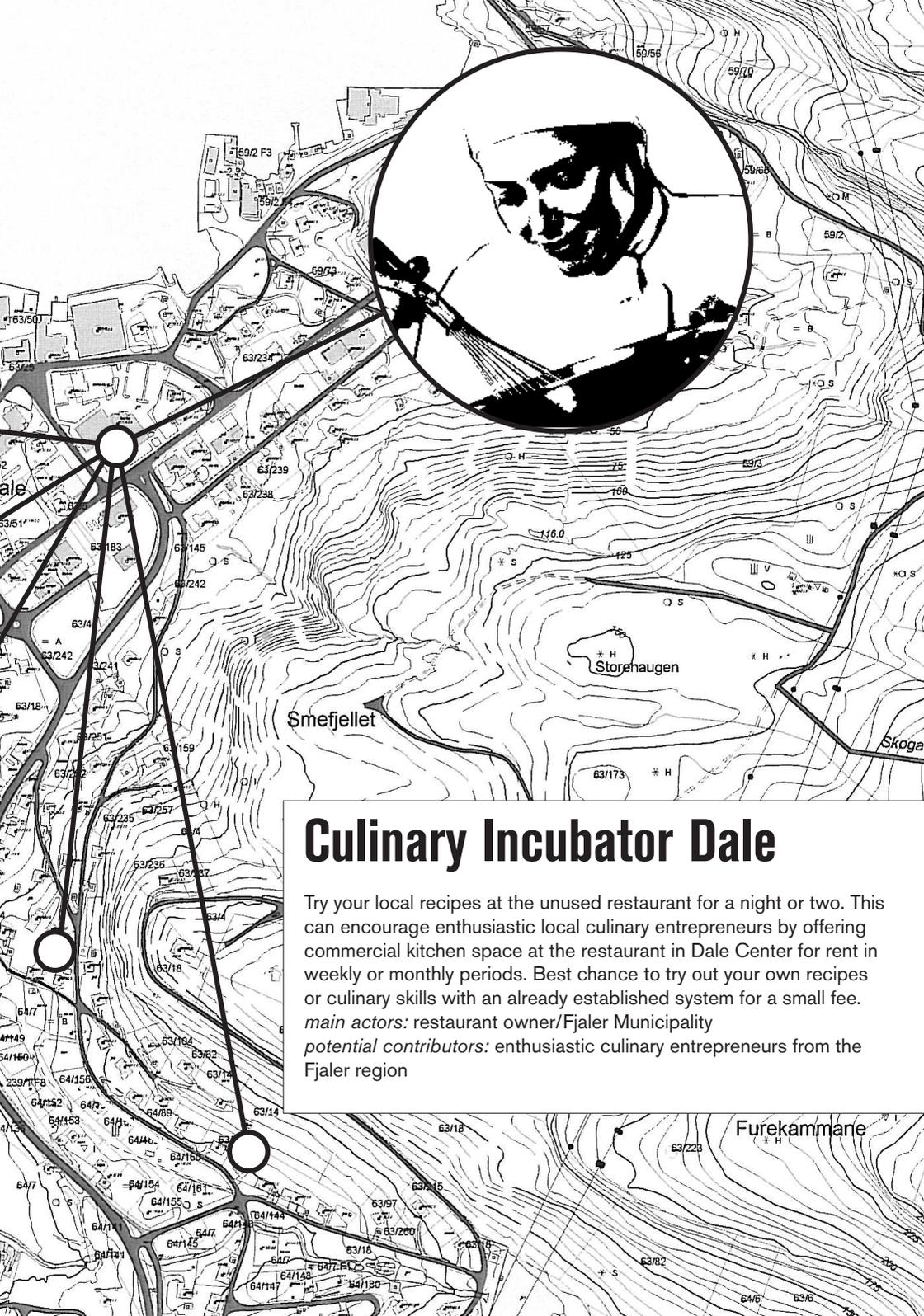
**UWC /
Flekkje**



On demand SMS Shuttle

For those who want to go from Dale to Flekke-United World College for using the facilities such as pool, gym or for cultural events at the auditorium and for those who would like to come from UWC to Dale for cultural and social events.

main actor: Fjaler Municipality and public transport companies
potential contributors: United World College in Flekke



Culinary Incubator Dale

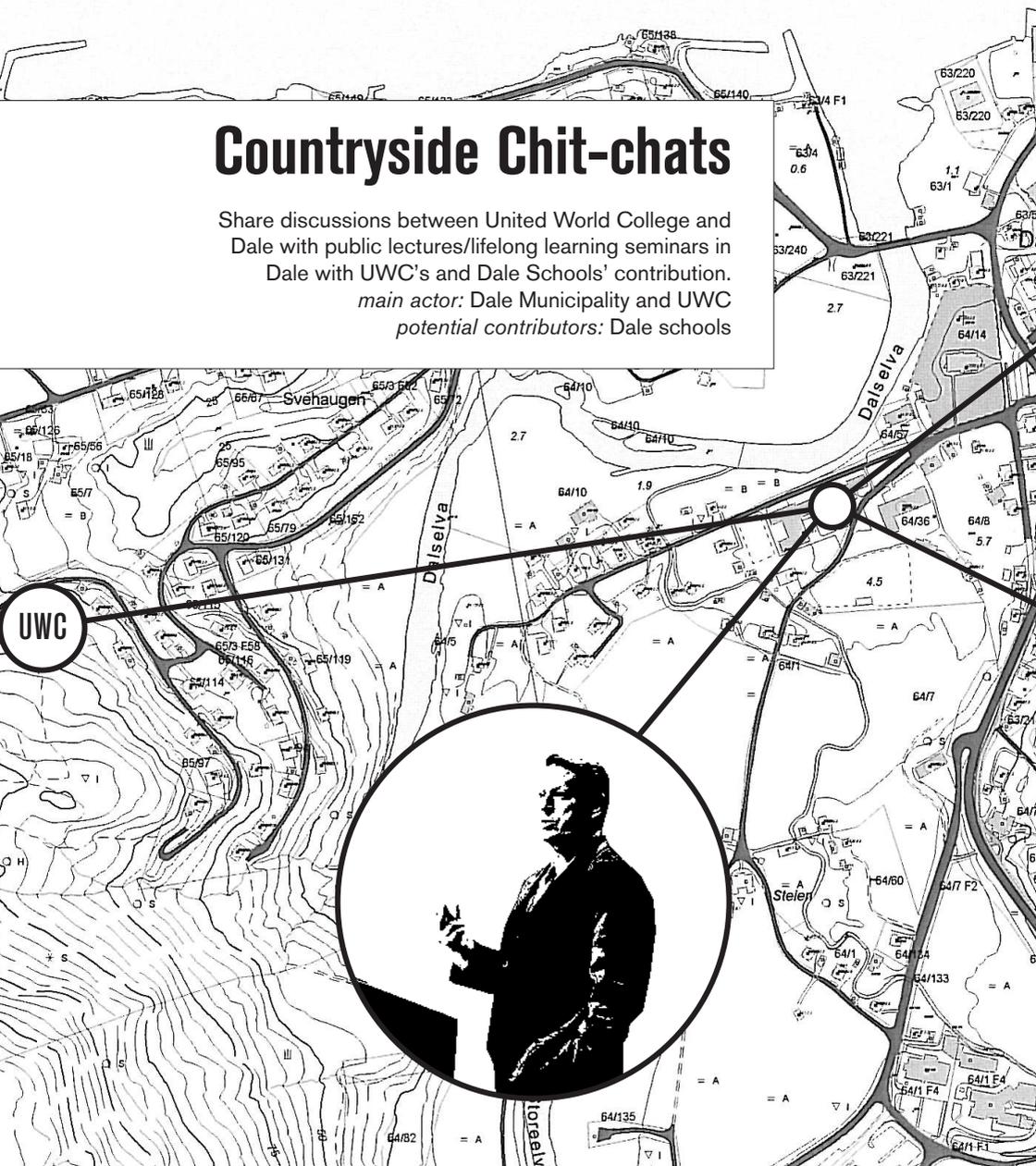
Try your local recipes at the unused restaurant for a night or two. This can encourage enthusiastic local culinary entrepreneurs by offering commercial kitchen space at the restaurant in Dale Center for rent in weekly or monthly periods. Best chance to try out your own recipes or culinary skills with an already established system for a small fee.

main actors: restaurant owner/Fjaler Municipality

potential contributors: enthusiastic culinary entrepreneurs from the Fjaler region

Countryside Chit-chats

Share discussions between United World College and Dale with public lectures/lifelong learning seminars in Dale with UWC's and Dale Schools' contribution.
main actor: Dale Municipality and UWC
potential contributors: Dale schools



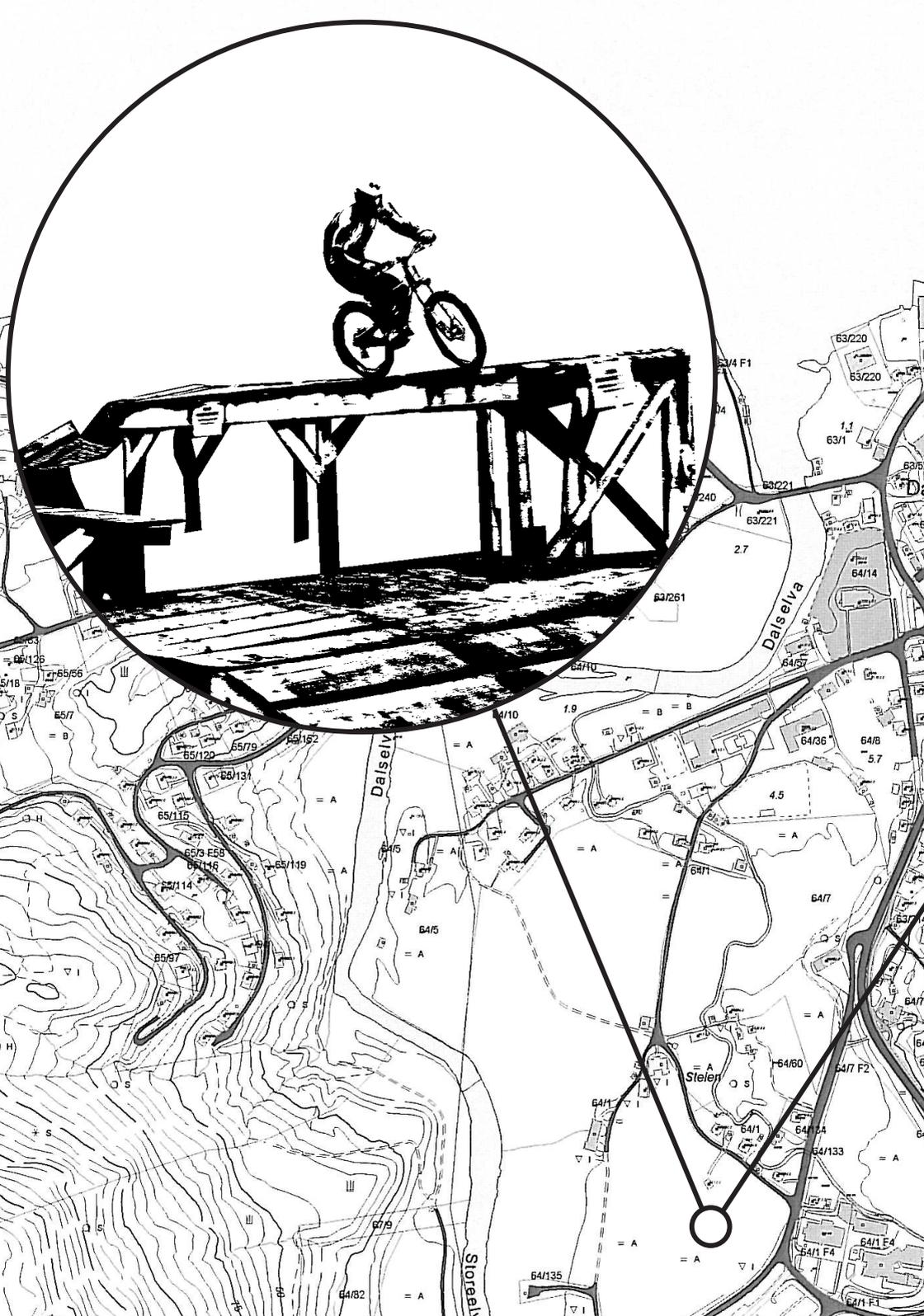


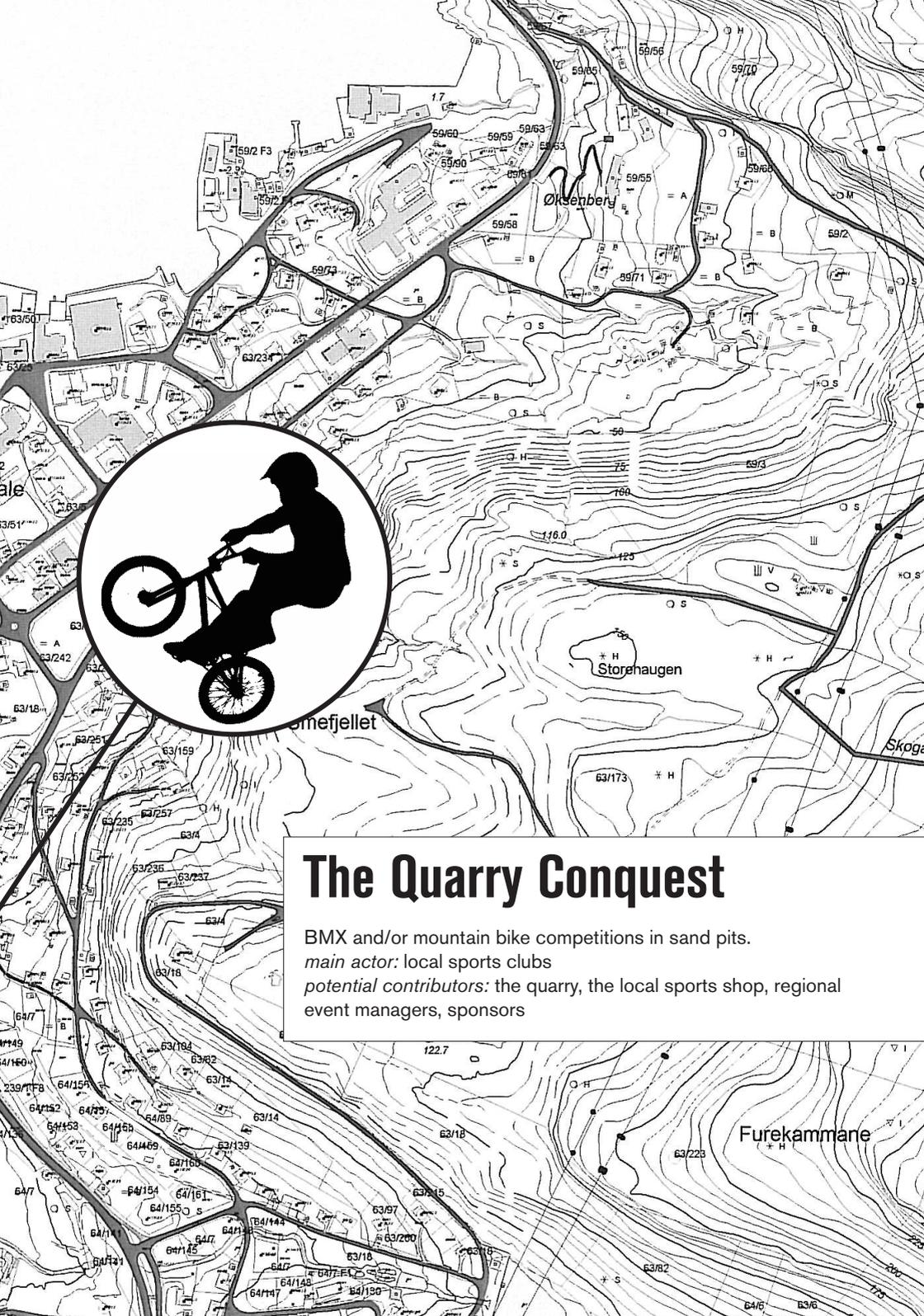
Smeffjellet

Storehaugen

Skoga







The Quarry Conquest

BMX and/or mountain bike competitions in sand pits.

main actor: local sports clubs

potential contributors: the quarry, the local sports shop, regional event managers, sponsors



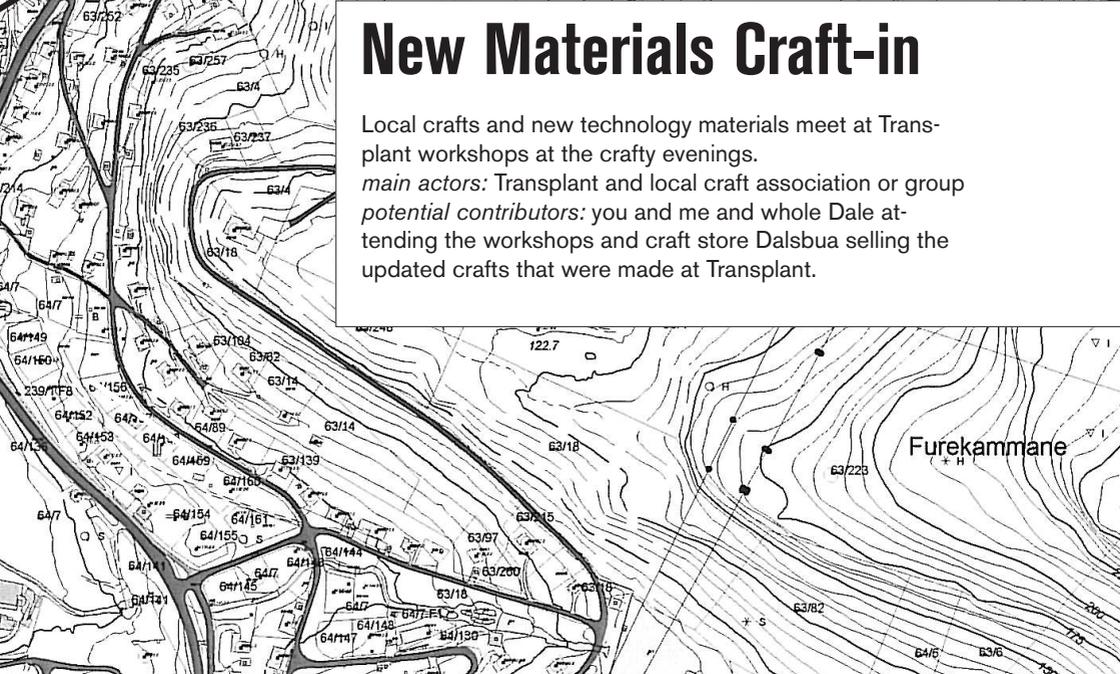


New Materials Craft-in

Local crafts and new technology materials meet at Transplant workshops at the crafty evenings.

main actors: Transplant and local craft association or group

potential contributors: you and me and whole Dale at-
tending the workshops and craft store Dalsbua selling the
updated crafts that were made at Transplant.







SheepShare

Call and get a sheep delivered to your front yard for keeping your grass roof or lawn in shape.
main actor: sheep
potential contributors: sheep owners



UWC

Svehaugen

Dalselva

Dalselva

65/93

65/149

65/133

65/128

65/140

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63/220

53/220

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65/105

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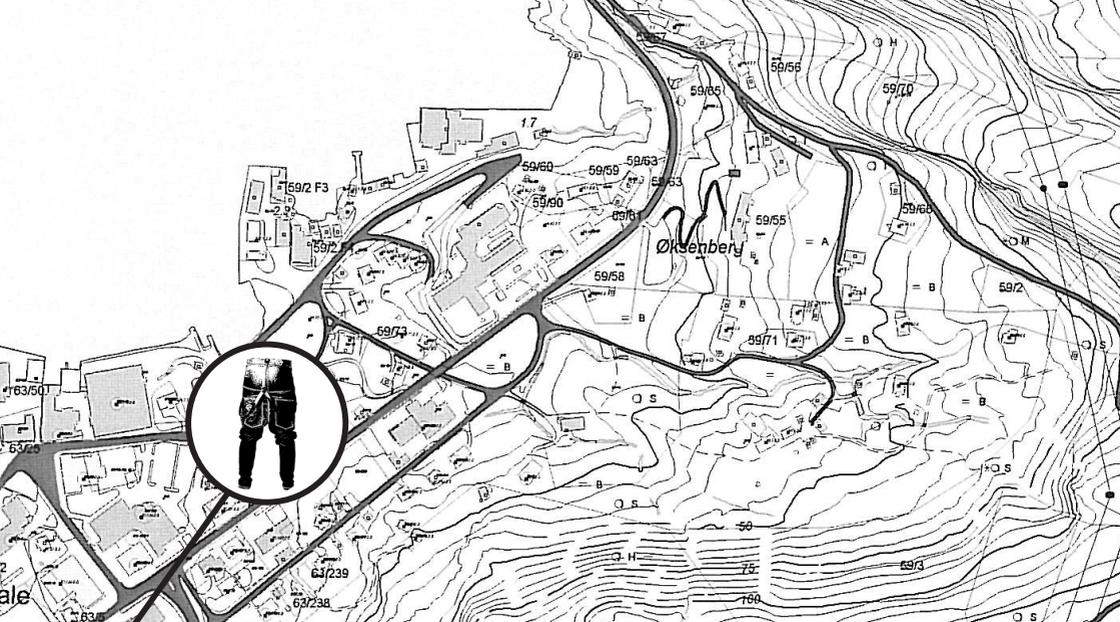
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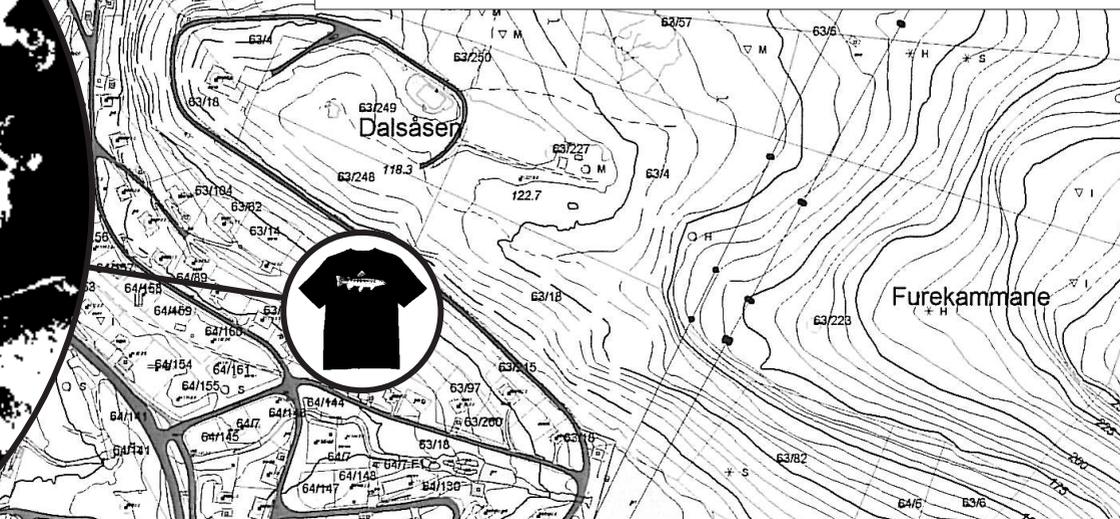
Clothes exchange / Swap-O-Rama-Rama

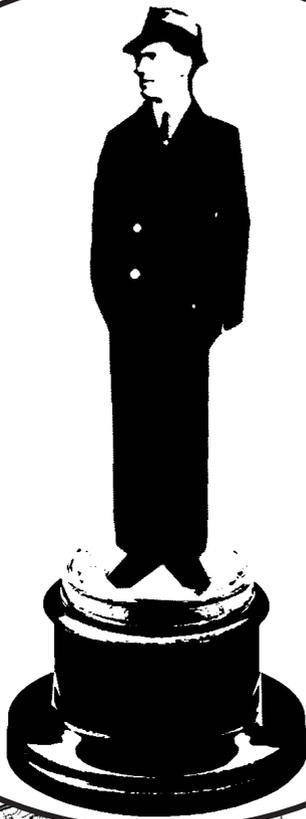
Why not pool the resources of unused clothes and swap or make new fashions out of them. Use the school's sewing machines and give (yours or others') second hand clothes a new chance by upcycling them with new fashion trends.

main actor: self-organized by Dale inhabitants and UWC, in association with Flekke Kvinnelag

potential contributors: you and me and whole Dale

Swap-O-Rama-Rama is an open source concept of public clothes swaps where participants are also offered help to redesign and update their swapped clothes - a perfect way to reuse your old clothes and also update your wardrobe as well as sewing skills (see www.swaporamarama.org).





The Sande awards

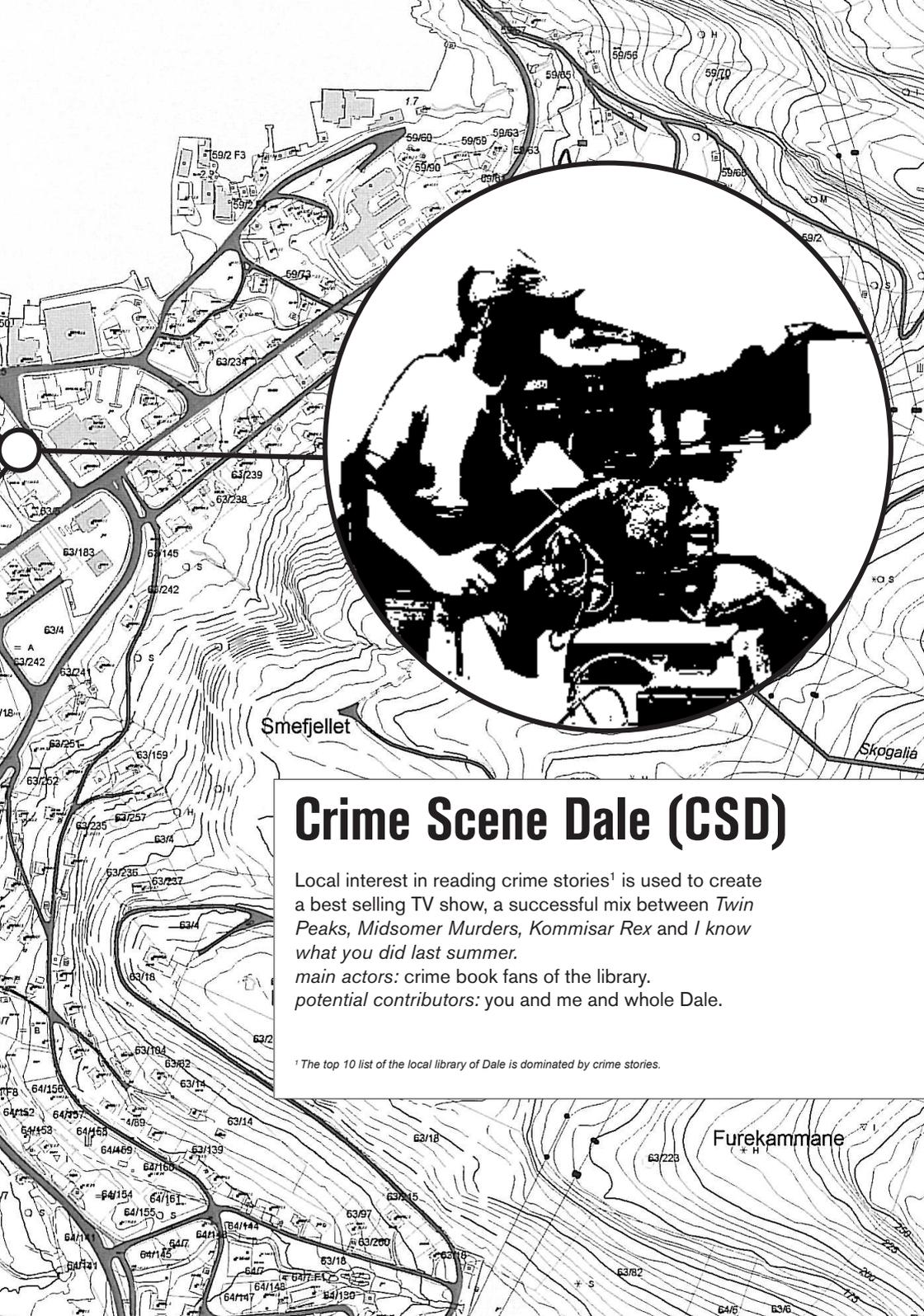
Poetry awards for young poets that are “straightforward” and “foul” and would be having humor bundled with irony by Jakob Sande Foundation and Fjaler /Dale Municipality.
main actor: Jakob Sande Foundation
potential contributors: municipality and local donors, hosting the award ceremony at Transplant with red carpet, local media and paparazzis.

Poet in residency

A poet-in-residency program honoring Dale born poet Jakob Sande. Jakob Sande Foundation supports the day-dreaming poets looking towards the Sunnfjord and organizes day trips to the glaciers and *Norwegian Sunday Hikes*¹ for the poets to get engaged to the nature as Sande did.
main actor: Jakob Sande Foundation and someone with a local “hytte” to lend for a month or two.
potential contributors: Locals guide *Norwegian Sunday Hike* for the daydreaming poets.

¹ Norwegian Sunday Hike represents an afternoon hike for a Norwegian Grandma with normal clothes, while translated to non-Norwegians means a two day struggle with mountaineering equipment and full climbing outfits. (Term developed by IAT-Institute for General Theory)





Smeifjellet

Skogalia

Crime Scene Dale (CSD)

Local interest in reading crime stories¹ is used to create a best selling TV show, a successful mix between *Twin Peaks*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Kommisar Rex* and *I know what you did last summer*.

main actors: crime book fans of the library.

potential contributors: you and me and whole Dale.

¹ The top 10 list of the local library of Dale is dominated by crime stories.

Furekammane



Øksenberg

Smeifjellet

Dalsåsen

Skogalja

Furekammene

NATURSTI



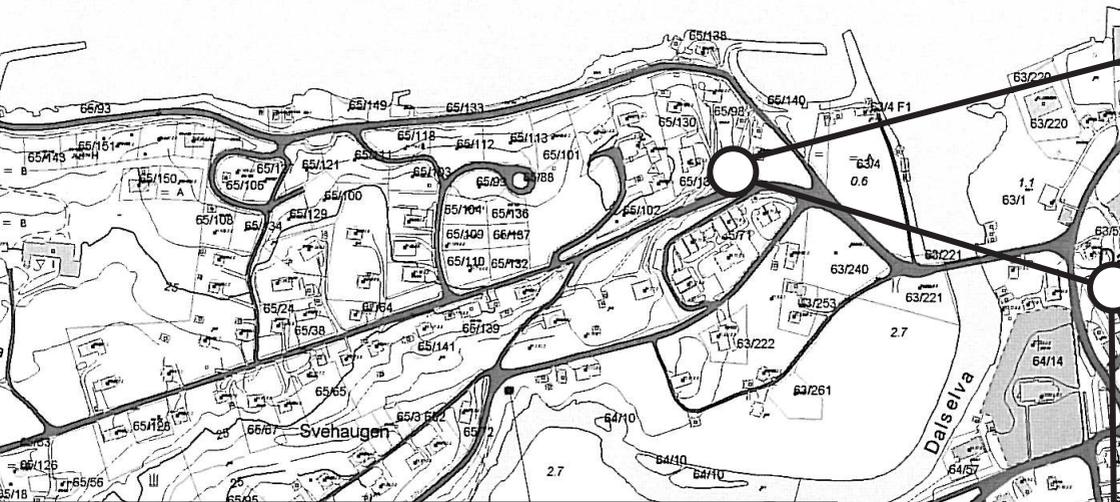
Smeffjellet

Dals

Furekammane



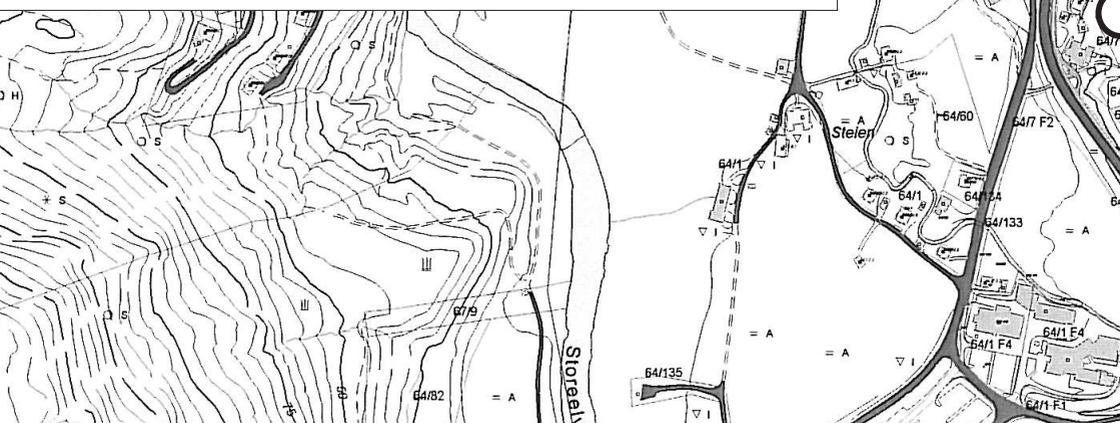
Tourist Hospitality Zone



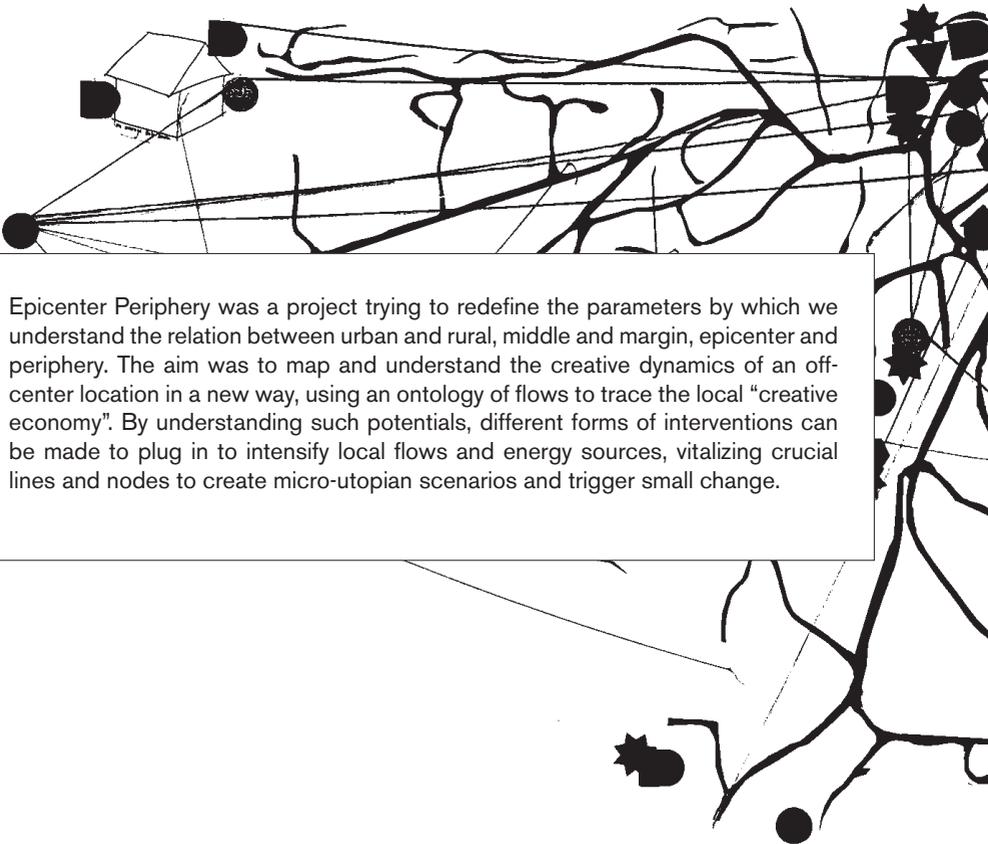
Dale - town of endless refills

Share your coffee or extra sandwiches with your neighbor/foreigners service: Put up your flag/broomstick sign on your front yard to announce temporary service to fill a coffee thermos and/or to make mat pakke.

main actor: you and me and our coffee machines
potential contributors: you and me and whole Dale







Epicenter Periphery was a project trying to redefine the parameters by which we understand the relation between urban and rural, middle and margin, epicenter and periphery. The aim was to map and understand the creative dynamics of an off-center location in a new way, using an ontology of flows to trace the local “creative economy”. By understanding such potentials, different forms of interventions can be made to plug in to intensify local flows and energy sources, vitalizing crucial lines and nodes to create micro-utopian scenarios and trigger small change.