

## User participation and universal design, - what can public sector learn from innovation processes in private sector?

There is a great need for innovation in the public sector in Norway. One of the areas with need for innovation is in universal design of buildings and environments. The ideals we strive for is to find solutions that are in line with user groups' needs. A key factor in creating solutions is active participation of public organizations, experts and users.

Innovation in public and private sectors has much in common, but is also different in specific ways. In the poster presentation we wish to present examples from the private sector which has demonstrated great success in user participation and in creating design in line with user needs, and make comparisons with similar processes in public sector. Our goal is to develop a proposal whose purpose is to go deeper into the characteristics of such processes. More specifically, we want to study how development and innovation processes in ship design has parallels or differs from the planning processes in developing the more detailed plans for regulation in the public sector. We suggest the discussion to be based on the following argument:

*Universal design is not taken care of adequately in many planning processes, because little has been done to utilize different user experiences during the planning process. This differs from the maritime sector where the communication and also the cooperation between different groups of stakeholders, customers, suppliers, users and experts are more common. Our contention is that the competition which occur between different solutions in the maritime sector, and which might result in pressure for innovation, does not occur in the same way in public sector.*

Development/design of ships takes place in interactive innovation processes characterized by open communication and with the use of synthetic knowledge from the different groups mentioned above (Isaksen et al 2008). The various stakeholders collaborate to identify good solutions. Pressure to innovate occurs because customers are sophisticated and have great

demands for innovative products and solutions ( Reve and Sasson 2012). This may for instance result in competition between the different suppliers to come up with the most innovative design.

Our knowledge about planning processes in public planning tells us that the involvement of user groups varies in form and content. For example, only 60 % of Norwegian municipalities have municipal councils for the disabled with a focus on planning tasks.

It will therefore be interesting to examine the different planning forms that are used to integrate universal design solutions in planning and the extent to which these appear to be interactive or linear innovation processes. To what extent are users active in the formulation of plans? At which point are they invited into the design of plans and in what way are they contributing? Is their contribution meant to verify that the selected solutions are in line with current standards and regulations, or do they actively contribute in finding solutions on the basis of their experiences of needs?

Innovation pressure is an essential prerequisite for promoting good solutions. Today municipalities are competitors in developing good living conditions and pleasant communities which promote self-expression and social participation for all. It is therefore interesting to ask whether one is open for communication as well as competition for good solutions in designing good places and buildings. Within the maritime industry competition creates creativity and innovation because companies compete for the same bid. For municipalities, the same competition is in the battle for souls. The question is thus to what extent this way of thinking is reflected in planning.

This contribution is to be looked upon as an idea for a research project. It would be interesting to discuss these ideas with researchers from other institutions and maybe also to integrate input from experts with different expertise than we possess ourselves. .

#### Literature:

Reve, Torgeir and Sasson , Amir , 2012: A knowledge based Norway . University Press , Oslo

Isaksen, Arne et al . 2008: Innovation in Norwegian industries - a geographic perspective. Fagbokforlaget , Bergen