



Good Museums – Better Local Communities

Report from Arts and Culture Norway's Museum Conference 2024

Kirstine Møller

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Arts and Culture Norway

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Preface

This publication is a report from Arts and Culture Norway's Museum Conference 2024. It contains summaries of the presentations and discussions from the conference. The report is written by Kirstine Møller, a [cultural consultant, curator and researcher](#).

Arts and Culture Norway (Norwegian: Kulturdirektoratet) is the main governmental operator for the implementation of Norwegian cultural policy. It functions as an advisory body to the central government and public sector in cultural affairs. Arts and Culture Norway hosts an annual museum conference targeting the cultural sector, particularly museums and governmental management agencies.

Arts and Culture Norway's Museum Conference 2024: *Good Museums – Better Local Communities* took place on 31 October–1 November 2024 in Bodø, Norway. The conference aimed to address how museums can play a pivotal role in building stronger, more inclusive communities amid societal challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and social upheavals. With a focus on local and global collaboration, the conference explored innovative methods and ideas for museums to contribute to sustainable and resilient societies.

Representatives from the indigenous Sámi peoples and all five national minorities in Norway (Kvens/Norwegian Finns, Jews, Forest Finns, Roma, and Romani people/Taters), as well as museums working with these groups, were invited to speak at the conference. They showcased how lived experiences and professional knowledge interact. The representative from the Jewish Museum in Trondheim had to cancel their appearance due to increased threat levels in Norway at the time.

Museums have a societal mission to develop and convey knowledge about how humans understand and interact with their environment. This mission, characterised by significant academic freedom, also presents challenges in defining relevance and importance from a societal perspective. It is an ongoing task requiring analysis and reflection.

While political directives regarding the societal role of museums remain broad, the overarching goal is clear: Museums must transition from hegemonic and exclusive frameworks to embrace democratic and inclusive practices. This transformation involves addressing elements such as themes, tools, and audience engagement. The responsibility for implementation rests on the museums themselves.

The conference explored the societal role of museums through diverse perspectives and selected themes. It fostered deeper insights into how museums can shape and contribute to their local and broader communities.

Torbjørn Urfjell

Head of Department

Places, Heritage, and Diversity

Arts and Culture Norway

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Programme for the Conference

Website with links is available [here](#). The summary of each post includes a link with the relevant timestamp from the recording of the conference.

Thursday, October 31

Conferencier: Torbjørn Urfjell

11:00–11:10: Opening of the Conference

[Welcome](#) by Kristin Danielsen

11:10–12:05: Session 1: What Can Museums Do to Build a Better Future?

Keynote by Tony Butler

Reflections by Eva Dagny Johansen

Q&A with audience

12:50–14:40: Session 2: Urban Heritage and Cultural Diversity

Keynote by Hanna Schreiber

Presentations by Marianne A. Olsen, Rudolf Svensen, and Hege Hauge Tofte

Q&A with audience

14:40–16:10: Session 3: Does Tourism Create Good Local Communities?

Introduction by Hanne Lykkja

Panel discussion featuring Dorthe Eide, Dag Raaberg, and Ingvil Eilertsen Grimstad

Q&A with audience

Summary of day 1 by Lennart Fjell

Friday, November 1

09:05–09:20: Update from Arts and Culture Norway by Inga-Lill Sundset, Head of Section, Cultural Heritage and Museums, Arts and Culture Norway

09:20–10:40: Session 4: The Role of Museums in Society – What Are We Really Talking About?

Keynote by Sturla Stålsett

Panel discussion featuring Kaisa Maliniemi, Sissel Ann Mikkelsen, Annelise Bothner-By, Mari Østhaug Møystad, and Hans Philip Einarsen (moderator).

Q&A with audience.

11:05–12:20: Session 5: Reaching the Youth – Passing Down Knowledge to the Next Generation

Presentations by Heidi Richardson, Hind Helene Harira, Balder Hasvoll, and Nina Vestby. Q&A with audience.

Speakers

Tony Butler is Executive Director of [Derby Museums Trust](#) in England. He is the founder of the [Happy Museum Project](#).

Annelise Bothner-By is Senior Curator at the [Intercultural Museum in Oslo Museum](#). The Intercultural Museum hosts diverse exhibitions on current social topics, arts, and culture.

Kristin Danielsen is Director of Arts and Culture Norway.

Dorthe Eide is Professor at [Nord University Business School](#). She specialises in tourism and experiences, focusing on topics such as innovation, value co-creation, sustainability, world heritage, and indigenous experiences. Eide addresses these topics from different levels, including experience offerings, users, organisations, and local communities.

Hans Philip Einarsen is Director of [Randsfjordmuseet](#) [Randsfjord Museum], a consolidated museum with arenas in Akershus and Innlandet.

Lennart Fjell is Head of the [Coastal Museum in Øygarden](#), a part of Museum Vest in Western Norway.

Ingvil Eilertsen Grimstad is Senior Curator at [Vitimusea](#) (The Viti Foundation), a consolidated museum located in Sunnmøre, in the western part of Norway.

Hind Helene Harira is Head of Department at [Setesdalsmuseet](#) [Setesdal Museum], a part of Aust-Agder museum og arkiv [Aust-Agder Museum and Archive]. Setesdalsmuseet works especially to disseminate [the practice of traditional music and dance in Setesdal](#) (2019) on UNESCO's [ICH List](#) to younger generations.

Balder Hasvoll is Advisor at [Romano Kher](#). Romano Kher is a Roma culture and resource centre in Oslo. It is run by Norwegian Roma and Kirkens Bymisjon (Church City Mission).

Eva Dagny Johansen is Senior Curator at [Alta Museum](#) – World Heritage Rock Art Centre, in Northern Norway.

Hanne Lykkja is a [resource geographer](#), project leader, and business owner who specialises in visitor management, among other things.

Kaisa Maliniemi is Director of [Nord-Troms Museum](#) in Northern Norway. The area is known for the intersection between the Kven, Sámi, and Norwegian people.

Sissel Ann Mikkelsen is [Coordinator for the six Sámi Museums in Norway](#), [Saemien Sijte / Arran](#).

Mari Østhaug Møystad is Senior Curator at Glomdalsmuseet (Glomdal Museum), a part of [Anno Museum](#) in Elverum. The museum works especially with the dissemination of Romani history in Norway.

Marianne A. Olsen is Director at [Perspektivet Museum](#), a city museum in Tromsø, the largest urban area in Northern Norway. Perspektivet Museum offers stories from Tromsø, but also from other parts of the world.

Dag Raaberg is Director at Norsk Skogfinsk Museum ([Museum for Forest Finn Culture in Norway](#)) at Finnskogen. It is a cultural history museum dedicated to Forest Finn culture in Southern Norway.

Heidi Richardson is Research Coordinator at Hardanger and Voss Museum. [Hardanger Maritime Centre](#) is part of Hardanger and Voss Museum. The Maritime Centre is preserving and promoting traditional maritime crafts through hands-on education and community engagement. Among other things, the centre works to disseminate [the Nordic clinker boat traditions](#) (2021) on UNESCO's [ICH List](#) to younger generations.

Hanna Schreiber is [Professor](#) at the University of Warsaw in Poland. [Schreiber](#) is the UNESCO Chair on Intangible Heritage in Public and Global Governance.

Sturla Stålsett is [Professor](#) of Diaconia, Religion, and Society at MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society in Oslo.

Inga-Lill Sundset is Head of Section, Cultural Heritage and Museums at Arts and Culture Norway.

Rudolf Svensen is Department Director for the Natural History Department at [Stavanger Museum](#), part of Museum Stavanger.

Hege Hauge Tofte is Director at [Østfoldmuseene](#) [Museums of Østfold] in eastern Norway. The consolidated museum has arenas in urban areas in southern Norway.

Torbjørn Urfell is Head of Department, Places, Heritage and Diversity at Arts and Culture Norway.

Nina Vestby is a freelance community artist, craftivist, and educator. [Vestby](#) works especially with transcultural youths through her embroidery project *EUTOPIA – where the heart matters*.

Opening Speech

The [opening speech](#) by **Kristin Danielsen**, Director of Arts and Culture Norway, highlighted the critical role of museums as cultural and societal anchors. This is especially important in contemporary times marked by global challenges such as wars, pandemics, and the climate crisis. Danielsen emphasised museums' dual role as custodians of collective memory and as innovators fostering societal connections and resilience. She noted the significant governmental investment in Norway's museum infrastructure, with allocations for 16 new cultural building projects. This reflects a national commitment to art and culture.

Danielsen underscored the importance of integrating culture into broader societal priorities, such as emergency preparedness. She advocated for stronger coordination between cultural institutions and national resilience frameworks. She lauded recent governmental recognition of culture's role in community-building and preparedness, citing dialogues with key policymakers as progress toward embedding culture in Norway's emergency response strategies.

The speech also celebrated the societal value of museums as inclusive spaces for dialogue and community cohesion. Danielsen emphasised their place alongside libraries and festivals as the most engaged cultural offerings in Norway. She encouraged attendees to embrace the conference as a platform for exploring how museums can further develop their potential to strengthen local communities and create future-facing cultural practices.

Session 1: Museums and Community-Building for a Better Future

Keywords: inclusive communities, sustainability, intangible cultural heritage, participatory approaches, Indigenous knowledge systems, identity.

*Tony Butler: Relevance, rethinking and reinvigoration
– Towards a new Civic Museum.
How museums can build resilient communities*

In his [keynote](#), Tony Butler emphasises the transformative power of museums as inclusive civic spaces. Highlighting his work with the [Happy Museum Project](#), he presents examples of museums addressing social inequality and environmental challenges through empathy and participatory approaches.

Tony Butler explores the evolving role of museums as platforms for civic engagement, resilience, and social well-being in the context of contemporary societal challenges. Using historical and modern examples, Butler underscores how museums have transitioned from exclusive repositories of cultural artifacts to inclusive spaces fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and community connections. He highlights the importance of empathy and participatory approaches. Butler shares successful interventions like training programs for underserved populations, community-led exhibition design, and initiatives addressing climate change and social inequality.

Drawing from his experiences in Derby, Butler illustrates how museums can adapt by prioritizing social and environmental well-being. He leverages methodologies like empathy mapping and co-design. He emphasises the necessity of bridging social and cultural gaps through inclusive programming, audience engagement, and addressing colonial legacies. By involving diverse stakeholders in decision-making and redefining museum governance, as seen in global examples like Indigenous partnerships in Finland and New Zealand, museums can become democratic spaces of shared knowledge.

Butler concludes by asserting that museums must embrace their civic responsibilities in a fragmented world. By fostering dialogue, addressing inequalities, and focusing on collective well-being, museums can be powerful agents of positive change, bridging divisions and building a just future.

Eva Dagny Johansen: *Yesterday was today is tomorrow*¹

In her [reflection](#), Eva Dagny Johansen examines the evolving role of museums as agents of cultural preservation, community engagement, and societal transformation, particularly through the lens of Indigenous knowledge systems and heritage restoration. Drawing from practices at the Alta Museum, Johansen underscores the significance of integrating local narratives and Indigenous methodologies to address historical inequities and promote inclusivity.

Alta Museum's efforts to restore and repatriate Sámi cultural heritage reveal the persistent colonial and asymmetric power structures embedded within museological practices. Through partnerships with local communities, the museum has reimagined its role. It facilitates the revival of Sámi cultural practices such as *duodji*, traditional handicrafts, and fosters dialogue about historical and contemporary challenges. These include the impact of industries like aquaculture on traditional fishing grounds and local ecosystems.

Johansen highlights the transformative potential of museums in fostering local agency, knowledge-sharing, and sustainability through interdisciplinary collaborations. Examples include community-driven projects like the revitalization of the Sámi board game *Sáhkku*, which integrates tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and research initiatives mapping the deep connections between people and their landscapes. Such efforts underscore the importance of grounding museum practices in ethical, participatory methodologies that honor the diverse values and knowledge systems of the communities they serve.

In conclusion, Johansen argues for museums to adopt a more reflexive and collaborative role in society. By facilitating the reactivation of local narratives and values, museums not only fulfil their ethical responsibilities but also contribute to ongoing negotiations of identity, cultural heritage, and sustainable development. The work underscores the critical need for museums to strengthen their relationships with local communities, rethink their epistemological and ethical frameworks, and embrace their role as dynamic spaces for dialogue, reflection, and transformation in a rapidly changing world.

¹ Original title: *Ikte lei done lea ihttin*.

Session 2: Urban Heritage and Cultural Diversity

Keywords: insights on intangible heritage in cities, integration of nature and culture in urban communities, and well-being.

Hanna Schreiber: *Experiences and Challenges of Warsaw and Kraków Intangible Cultural Heritage Teams and City Museums*

In her [keynote](#), Hanna Schreiber explores the intersection of living heritage, urbanization, and museum practices through case studies in Warsaw and Kraków, Poland. Drawing from the UNESCO 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the latest inclusion of intangible cultural heritage in the definition of museums², she highlights the evolving role of museums as social agents. These agents address urban challenges such as inequality, social exclusion, and climate change.

Key themes include urbanization's impact on cultural heritage, with 68 percent of the global population projected to reside in urban areas by 2050. She also examines the reasons for disparities in urban and rural heritage representation on the UNESCO list. The talk delves into the methodologies and challenges of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage within the dynamic urban landscapes of Warsaw and Krakow. It emphasises the role of community engagement, intersectoral collaboration, and educational initiatives.

Warsaw's reconstruction after World War II serves as a testament to cultural resilience, blending revived traditions with modern practices. Krakow, by contrast, benefits from its intact historical continuity, fostering a rich intergenerational transmission of traditions. This is exemplified by the Nativity Scene (*szopka*) tradition, which was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List in 2018. Both cities have developed innovative governance structures, including establishing [municipal living heritage teams](#) as advisory bodies to the mayors of these cities. This was done in Warsaw in February 2020 and in Kraków in December 2023, to integrate heritage preservation into broader urban planning and policy frameworks.

Schreiber highlights the importance of inclusive practices, cross-sectoral cooperation, and the role of city museums in mediating between past and present cultural dynamics. Concluding with lessons from trial-and-error processes in Warsaw and Krakow, Schreiber advocates for a holistic, participatory approach to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts.

2 ICOM. (n.d.). *Museum Definition*. Last accessed 01.04.2024 from <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>

Marianne A. Olsen: *How does the museum work to make people in Tromsø feel at home in the city?*³

In her presentation, Marianne A. Olsen explores the dynamic and evolving nature of cultural heritage. She emphasises its creation and recreation by individuals and communities within a place. Through a series of projects in Tromsø, Norway, this study illustrates the role of museums in fostering a sense of belonging by intertwining past, present, and future narratives. It highlights the importance of inclusivity and adaptability in storytelling, particularly in urban contexts where dominant narratives can overshadow diverse voices.

A key example is the “Palapeli” pop-up exhibition (2022), which spotlighted the underrepresented histories of the national minorities, the Kven people and Norwegian Jews, in Tromsø through urban interventions. The project, guided by minority representatives, not only expanded the city’s collective memory but also raised challenges regarding the sustainability of such ephemeral initiatives. Efforts to integrate this knowledge into lasting educational tools and museum practices are ongoing.

Finally, Olsen addresses contemporary challenges, particularly Tromsø’s transformation from a city to a global tourist destination. It raises critical questions about the impacts of tourism on local identity, place attachment, and the Sámi cultural presence. By adopting flexible and inclusive practices, Olsen concludes that museums can act as mediators, ensuring cultural heritage remains relevant, participatory, and reflective of diverse urban communities.

Rudolf Svensen: *Natural resource management in the city?*⁴

In his [presentation](#), Rudolf Svensen advocates for reconnecting humanity with nature. He addresses the growing disconnection from natural environments in urban settings. Drawing from initiatives led by the Natural History Museum, Svensen illustrates efforts to foster knowledge and enthusiasm about nature among children, adults, and communities through experiential learning and collaborative projects.

Key initiatives include biodiversity education programs, such as school projects using simple tools to explore insect ecosystems. High school collaborations to study seabird populations, like seagulls, whose ecological importance is often misunderstood, are also emphasised. Svensen highlights the role of citizen science in monitoring species. This is exemplified by insect weighing and bird ringing activities that provide critical data for understanding population trends and environmental impacts.

By integrating scientific research, education, and community collaboration, Svensen argues for a deeper connection to nature. This promotes ecological awareness, sustainability, and stewardship. The approach aims to bridge the gap between urban living and natural ecosystems. It fosters a cultural shift toward environmental responsibility by demonstrating the power of participatory approaches to conservation.

3 Original title: *Korleis arbeider museet for at folk i Tromsø skal føle seg heime i byen?*

4 Original title: *Naturforvaltning i byen?*

Hege Hauge Tofte: *What opportunities and challenges do the Østfold Museums see in their work to highlight the diversity of living traditions in Østfold?*⁵

Museums hold a unique potential to foster safer and more inclusive cities by serving as sustainable cultural institutions, as presented by Hege Hauge Tofte. In her [reflection](#), Tofte presented the Østfold Museums' innovative approaches to community engagement through active placemaking, cultural preservation, and inclusive dialogue. Guided by a vision of hope for the future, the museum fosters belonging and security by creating platforms for diverse voices to be heard. Initiatives such as youth-led exhibitions, cultural workshops, and collaborative projects with local amateur theaters highlight the museum's efforts to bridge intergenerational and cultural divides.

Programs like *Young Critics* and *Wolf Dialogues* exemplify the institution's commitment to nurturing critical thinking and debate among youth on issues ranging from freedom of expression to environmental ethics. Through these interactions, the museum facilitates democratic participation and strengthens community cohesion. However, challenges such as financial sustainability, collaboration barriers, and the need for institutional relevance emphasise the complexity of this mission. By addressing these challenges and embracing its role as more than a repository of the past, the Østfold Museums demonstrate how museums can actively contribute to shaping inclusive, vibrant urban futures.

Q&A session

The [Q&A session](#) following the three presentations examined how museums can function as inclusive community hubs while balancing operational and financial sustainability. Key themes included volunteer engagement, partnerships with community and specialist groups, accessibility, and the interplay between local and tourist audiences.

Discussions addressed the role of volunteers, emphasizing non-monetary compensation such as networking and recognition. The value of partnerships with niche groups to leverage specialised expertise was also highlighted. Panelists explored balancing local community engagement with sustainable tourism practices. They discussed promoting lesser-known heritage sites to prevent overcrowding and enrich cultural experiences.

Accessibility was a central focus. Comparisons to libraries highlighted the potential of free admission to lower barriers for marginalised groups. International perspectives on entry fees revealed varied practices. Free admission was seen as a step toward inclusivity but was constrained by financial realities in regions like Norway. The impact of class divisions on museum access was also discussed, advocating for reduced pricing to enhance public participation.

The session concluded with a call for innovative strategies, collaboration, and community engagement. These efforts aim to position museums as vital, inclusive cultural spaces while ensuring financial sustainability.

⁵ Original title: Kva moglegheiter og utfordringar ser Østfoldmuseene i arbeid med å synleggjere mangfaldet av levande tradisjonar i Østfold?

Session 3: Tourism and Sustainable Local Communities

Keywords: present arguments on how tourism can support or challenge local sustainability, with an emphasis on the role of museums as facilitators of responsible tourism

Hanne Lykkja: *Presentation leading to panel discussion*

Hanne Lykkja, in her [presentation](#), examines the role of local and regional [visitor management](#) in achieving sustainable tourism. This involves balancing community well-being, environmental protection, and cultural enrichment. Drawing on examples from World Heritage sites in Norway and pilot initiatives, the discussion highlights the importance of community involvement, natural and cultural preservation, and fostering a sense of place.

Key themes include the integration of visitor management frameworks with local input. They address the imbalance of marketing-driven strategies through democratic processes and leverage the cultural sector's role in connecting heritage to responsible tourism practices. Practical challenges, such as overcrowding and environmental strain, are paired with innovative solutions like design thinking and behavioural data to create sustainable strategies.

Lykkja highlights the need for high-value, low-impact tourism models that emphasise meaningful interactions, extended stays, and community engagement. Museums and cultural institutions are positioned as pivotal in providing interactive experiences that enrich visitor understanding while promoting local narratives. By aligning visitor expectations with local needs and fostering collaboration across sectors, tourism can become a tool for cultural sustainability and lasting community benefit.

Panel discussion

[Panel discussion](#) with panelists Dorthe Eide, Dag Raaberg, and Ingvil Eilertsen Grimstad.

The discussion centres on enhancing cultural tourism in Norway, emphasizing its significant untapped potential alongside the country's renowned nature-based tourism. The panellists highlight the strategic importance of cultural tourism in driving economic and social value, particularly in rural areas, as outlined in the national tourism strategy. They also point to the difference in tourism volume between coastal Norway and inland Norway, and the subsequent contrast of opinions. The need for year-round cultural experiences to boost local economies and enhance regional attractiveness is emphasised.

A key focus is on innovating the perception and engagement of younger generations with cultural institutions like museums, which are often viewed as outdated. Examples, such as the revitalization of cultural practices in Vega, showcase successful strategies in fostering community pride and cultural awareness among youth. Collaborative efforts between academic, cultural, and regional stakeholders underline the importance of creative dissemination and the role of heritage in shaping vibrant tourism and local identity.

Concerns about balancing mass tourism with meaningful cultural experiences surface, with examples highlighting instances of "collision" between locals and tourists. For instance, poetry festivals are disrupted by tourists treating events as photo backdrops. The panelists emphasise aligning sustainability goals with tourism strategies, ensuring that cultural dissemination meets both local and visitor needs. They collectively advocate for stronger representation of museums and cultural institutions in regional planning and policy-making. This is to maximise their impact and align with broader tourism frameworks.

During the [Q&A session](#), specific challenges and opportunities are addressed. Examples include the role of museums as knowledge institutions and community hubs, such as those showcasing Forest Finn heritage. These institutions are uniquely positioned to attract targeted audiences, including individuals exploring ancestral connections. They must balance this with broader tourism needs, like accommodating cruise passengers. Stakeholders underscore the need for active collaboration with municipal and regional entities to integrate museums into tourism planning and destination management.

Lennart Fjell: *Summary of Day 1*

In his [concluding address](#), Lennart Fjell emphasised that we are currently experiencing a paradigm shift and that we find ourselves in an era of transition. Changes are occurring rapidly, necessitating a change of mindset and innovation in our way of thinking.

Fjell underlined that museums play a pivotal role in the movement towards a more sustainable society, equipped with the requisite knowledge and methodologies. While museums already hold a position within local communities, it may be necessary to re-evaluate these roles and the museums' standings. This involves reflecting on how we interact with our local communities. Fjell concluded by stating that change is not simple, but to manage unpredictability, we must maintain a focus on the objective. We must consider what actions should be amplified, which priorities must be set, and what must be relinquished. This discourse needs to be advanced. With clarity on our destination, it becomes easier to stay the course.

Session 4: Museums as Societal Actors

Keywords: museums' role in building resilient, inclusive societies amidst societal changes.

Sturla Stålsett: *On the role of cultural heritage institutions as a social actor locally and globally*⁶

In his [keynote](#), Sturla Stålsett reflects on the evolving societal role of museums in a time marked by profound social, environmental, and political upheavals. Stålsett examines the museum's role as a steward of collective memory and its capacity to foster inclusivity, resistance to dominant narratives, and radical hope in fractured communities. He emphasises the interconnected crises of time, space, and relationships. Stålsett critiques the narrowing of temporal perspectives, the erosion of spatial belonging, and the fragmentation of societal bonds exacerbated by digital isolation and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Drawing on philosophical concepts from thinkers such as Judith Butler, Paul Ricoeur, and Roberto Esposito, Stålsett advocates for a redefinition of community as a shared vulnerability and a "debt to the other." The role of museums is framed as a counterbalance to identity politics and exclusionary practices. They foster a "convivencia" (cohabitation) that embraces diversity and conflict as integral to the human experience. Through ethically conscious curation, museums can present polyphonic narratives that acknowledge marginalised voices and challenge harmonised histories. This enables spaces of opportunity (kairos) for reimagining the present and future.

Highlighting the urgency of radical hope, Stålsett calls for museums to engage in resistance to inevitability, fostering alliances rooted in shared vulnerabilities. By integrating empathy, memory, and justice, museums can facilitate reconciliation, illuminate alternative pathways, and contribute to building inclusive, resilient communities in a time of societal disintegration. Stålsett highlights the potential of museums to serve as agents of transformative dialogue and ethical engagement with the past, present, and future.

6 Original title: *Om kulturarvsinstitusjonenes rolle som samfunnsaktør lokalt og globalt.*

Panel Discussion

[Panel discussion](#) with Kaisa Maliniemi, Sissel Ann Mikkelsen, Annelise Bothner-By, Mari Østhaug Møystad, and Hans Philip Einarsen (moderator).

[This panel discussion](#) examines the evolving roles of museums as active agents of dialogue, reconciliation, and inclusivity within local and national communities. Drawing on diverse contexts – including Sámi, Kven, Romani, and immigrant histories – the panelists explore strategies for transforming museums into inclusive spaces. These spaces address historical injustices and foster community-driven participation.

The panel highlights the importance of inter-institutional networks in recent years, especially in working with conflict and marginalization. There is a need for further development and strengthening of network cooperation. Additionally, several panelists were concerned with how museums can work in relation to [the report](#) from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from June 2023 (see Section 1.6, page 76, for a summary in English).

Key themes include museums' contributions to reconciliation, balancing curatorial authority with community co-creation, and leveraging conflict as a catalyst for meaningful engagement. Discussions also highlight the role of museums in redefining local identity in multicultural settings. They navigate structural challenges such as economic constraints and societal stigmas, and advocate for stronger integration with cultural policy.

Q&A Session

The [Q&A session](#) emphasises museums' dual roles as safe spaces and agents of resistance, the interplay of professionalism and participation, and the importance of fostering resilience and navigating conflicts. Panelists call for sustainable, collaborative approaches to reconciliation, alignment with cultural objectives, and the development of professional networks to enhance institutional capacity. By embracing discomfort, disagreements, and diversity, museums can position themselves as ethical stewards of collective memory and transformative spaces for dialogue, innovation, and social justice.

Session 5: Engaging Youth and Passing Down Knowledge

Keywords: intergenerational knowledge transfer, methods for youth engagement, and examples of best practices in passing down traditions.

Heidi Richardson: *Hardanger Maritime Centre – good experiences to try your hand at*⁷

Heidi Richardson [presents](#) the Hardanger Maritime Centre's work in preserving and promoting traditional maritime crafts through hands-on education and community engagement. By integrating practical activities like boat building, sailing, and forging, the centre fosters interest and skills among schoolchildren, apprentices, and visitors. Apprenticeships play a key role in training young craftsmen in vulnerable trades such as boat building, blacksmithing, and rope-making. This ensures the continuation of traditional techniques and knowledge.

The centre also engages the public through interactive experiences, allowing visitors to try skills like knot tying, toy boat building, and rowing traditional boats. These activities build appreciation for maritime heritage and highlight the importance of preserving traditional crafts. By combining educational outreach, local collaborations, and a global digital presence, the Hardanger Maritime Centre emphasises the enduring relevance of traditional skills in modern society.

Hind Helene Harira: *On the dissemination of the practice of traditional music and dance in Setesdal to younger generations*⁸

Hind Helene Harira [presents](#) the Setesdal Museum's role as a hub for preserving intangible cultural heritage and engaging children and young people in a dispersed rural region. Through collaboration with local schools and community structures, the museum integrates traditional folk music, dance, and crafts into education. This fosters intergenerational knowledge transfer and a shared sense of identity.

Key initiatives include activity-based learning programs, specialised curricula, and the "Culture Patrol", where youth perform and teach cultural traditions as summer jobs, enhancing their skills and confidence. The museum also hosts masterclasses that connect experienced and young practitioners, strengthening ties between generations.

As a professional and organizational anchor, the museum highlights how cultural institutions can sustain living heritage. It does this by bridging local needs and resources, ensuring the continuity of traditions in rural communities.

7 Original title: *Hardanger fartøyvernssenter – gode opplevelingar å bryne seg på.*

8 Original title: *Om å vidareføre setesdalstradisjonen til barn og unge.*

Balder Hasvoll: *What cultural heritage is being safeguarded, and what methods are used in this work? Roma pathfinders and the exhibition “Roma in Norway”*⁹

Balder Hasvoll [presents](#) the role of Romano Kher, the Roma Cultural Centre in Oslo, in preserving and promoting the heritage and history of the Roma minority in Norway. The Roma people are one of five national minorities in Norway. Despite limited exhibition space, the centre focuses on educating adolescents and young adults about Roma history. It emphasises the unique challenges and diversity within Roma communities.

The centre’s work addresses the lack of Roma representation in Norwegian education by highlighting historical injustices, such as the statelessness imposed on Norwegian Roma in the 20th century. The exhibition incorporates personal narratives, like family histories, to connect visitors with these experiences. While it avoids overgeneralizing cultural traditions due to the immense diversity among Roma communities, the centre provides opportunities for young Roma to explore their heritage, including their language and historical contexts.

Through initiatives like training young Roma as exhibition guides and hosting educational sessions with linguists and historians, Romano Kher fosters identity-building and cross-cultural understanding. The centre combines historical education with interactive elements, offering visitors an engaging and meaningful insight into Roma culture and history in Norway.

Nina Vestby: *Eutopia – where the heart matters*

In her [presentation](#), Nina Vestby explores the intersections of art, education, and community through the lens of a participatory embroidery project. This project engages diverse groups in Norway and beyond. Rooted in the philosophy of “learning by doing,” the project fosters connections across generations and cultural divides. It emphasises the importance of sensory engagement in creating democratic spaces for reflection and dialogue.

Drawing on personal experiences as an artist and educator, Vestby examines how participatory art practices, such as embroidery workshops, facilitate storytelling, humour, and intimacy among participants. The project originated in collaboration with anthropologists and has since grown into an internationally recognised initiative. It highlights the transformative potential of hands-on art to build community and resilience, especially in urban and marginalised settings.

Through its partnerships with libraries, youth clubs, and cultural institutions like the Intercultural Museum, the project demonstrates the role of art in fostering inclusivity, mutual understanding, and the sharing of personal and collective narratives. Vestby highlights how creative practices can act as a bridge between diverse experiences, fostering empathy and engagement in both local and global contexts.

9 Original title: *Kva for kulturarv vert vidareført, og kva metodar blir nytta i dette arbeidet? Romske veivisere og utstillingen “Romer i Norge”.*

Q&A Session

The concluding [Q&A session](#) explored strategies for engaging young people in cultural heritage, education, and museum practices. It focused on successes, challenges, and innovative methodologies. Key themes included creating accessible, relevant spaces for youth through programs like the “Culture Patrol” and Tøyen’s library, as well as reaching non-traditional learners outside formal structures. Discussions highlighted empowering young individuals directly, with examples of peer-led programs, such as Romano Kher, where youth guide and mentor others.

Practical, hands-on activities were emphasized as critical for engaging youth who thrive in active, skill-based learning environments. Inclusive and flexible community spaces were recognized for reducing barriers and fostering organic connections. Panelists stressed leveraging peer networks and collaborative learning to build confidence, creativity, and ownership among participants. The session concluded with a call to refine peer-led methodologies, enhance outreach efforts, and strengthen collaboration to connect the next generation with cultural heritage meaningfully.

Initiative by Arts and Culture Norway

[Presented](#) by Inga-Lill Sundset, Head of Section, Cultural Heritage and Museums, Arts and Culture Norway.

Museums play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive, thriving local communities. This is emphasized by contemporary museum policy and the global paradigm shift in cultural heritage practices. Inga-Lill Sundset outlines the framework for stimulating innovation and collaboration in museum work through small-scale “seed funds” and multi-year projects. These funds aim to support initiatives that enhance partnerships across thematic or geographic lines, promote intangible cultural heritage, and engage marginalized groups, children, and youth. The emphasis is on preserving and transmitting skills, knowledge, and practices while fostering collaboration with local and international actors, including Sámi and national minorities.

The scope of community engagement is broadly defined to include regional, national, and international contexts. It spans diverse groups such as folk-dance communities, gaming cultures, and environmental enthusiasts. Applicants are encouraged to explore innovative methods for knowledge-sharing and cooperation that create sustainable outcomes. The upcoming funding call, to be published mid-December 2024, invites proposals for pre-projects and pilot initiatives with a focus on cultural tourism, minority inclusion, and knowledge transfer. Successful projects are expected to conclude by December 2026, with decisions on funding finalized in September 2025. The presentation calls for creative, collaborative approaches that think globally while acting locally, laying the foundation for enduring cultural contributions.

