

Summary of the workshop to be held in Kotel municipality in May 2023

Introduction

Norges Vel (or the Royal Norwegian Society for Development) was established in 1809 as a response to hunger and lack of food in Norway. Norway was at that time a colony under Denmark, at the same time as a war was going on in Europa. From the early start, food production, education and self sufficiency have been central elements in our work and where we work for supporting and developing sustainable and vibrant local communities in Norway and abroad. Key is also that the values developed in the local communities shall be kept there and be of benefit for the people living there. Local production, local resources and local culture are essential elements in our work and where our ambitions in cooperation with businesses, entrepreneurs, local governments and similar, are to stimulate and contribute to creation of value chains and economically sustainable jobs based on local knowledge and resources.

The aim of the workshop

The aim of this workshop (May 2023) is to introduce you to the concept of an Economusee – a tool for preserving tangible and immaterial cultural heritages which in the end will be materialised in an Economusee-model in Kotel municipality. We will look into the business element/ business plan and present some examples from the Economusee-network, and also discuss potential products relevant for a Economusee in Kotel municipality. Finally, we will go through some steps in the process of developing and getting an Economusee in place.

The concept started in Canada, in Quebec, and is now spread to 8 countries with around 100 recognised Economusees. The Economusees are “homes” for both tangible and immaterial cultural heritages like wool products, cider, music, woodwork, national costumes, knitting and more. Where the traditional museums are more focusing on preserving and presenting their selections to the audience who often pay a fee when entering the exhibition hall, the Economusee concept aims to showcase traditional crafts that are still practised today, thereby helping to define local and national identity. It shows local traditions and products as well as the place of their creation with a goal to promote and conduct sale.

Preservation can be done in several ways, but where the Economusee model will combine preservation with development and business. It is possible to preserve and take care of old knowledge and products at the same time as the products can be re-designed in a more modern style without losing the knowledge on how it is originally made and also keep the value of the artisan work.

An Economusee will design their products and activities so that the products can be developed but still based on old skills and knowledge. In this way “old” products can be made “modern” and by this also relevant today. - So relevant and interesting so that tourists and visitors would like to buy the products, to hear the songs, to use the shoes, - not only once, but several times. In this way, it will transmit knowledge and know-how during the artisan-visitor interaction. The preservation, the presentation, the story telling and the context in which the products are made accessible for the audience, will stimulate and strengthen their interest in the history behind the songs and music instruments, the boat or the furniture or what cultural expression that are in focus of exactly this Economusee. Recruiting new artisans to traditional craft is also an important goal for Economusees.

Preservation of our own culture heritage like songs or traditional craft is important for our self-confidence and for our understanding of where we come from. Sometimes this knowledge can make us proud at the same time as we better understand differences and similarities in our local community, our country or even wider.

The economic part of the Economusee concept – business development

Preservation and development through use, production and sale of tangible and immaterial cultural heritages items are key in the Economusee-model. Important goals for Economusees are to increase the income and preserve and increase jobs. To be able to develop a realistic business plan for your defined cultural heritage which you would like to preserve and develop, you need to be able to respond to, and explain a set of questions like:

How to make preservation and development of cultural heritage items/ material or immaterial into a business?

What is your product or your business idea and how can you justify it? Why will or should visitors be interested in your products and production and willing to pay to visit?

In this part of the workshop, we will in brief go through the most important elements in a business plan (a one page plan): the business idea, your values, the product (s), potential customer, cooperating partners, business partner and sales partners.

The Economusee concept represents more than a product. The concept put weight to different aspects and is designed so it will appeal to different feelings and senses among its audience/ its customer. It is therefore important to be able to “design an experience” which we would like our costumer to go through or to experience when they visit the Economusee. This design will be presented in the workshop and where the participants will be challenged to draw a curve illustrating a potential good experience for their customer.

Economusee – a physical place:

The Economusee concept is regulating some physical element for the purpose of establishing a professional tourist attraction for the presentation, preservation, development and sale of our cultural heritage.

Six elements have been defined as essential, but where these can be constructed in different ways. Each Economusee should have an entrance, reception or a welcoming area to be able to welcome the visitors in a way which make them feel well and which might reflect the product and where the cultural heritage is in focus.

Then a workshop or a place for Artisans at work should be included so the visitors can experience how work is carried out in real life. This combined with a traditional exhibition place will help the tourists/visitors to understand the production, the use of tools, raw materials etc. Documentation of the cultural heritage must be explained in a documentation area through a library, videos, boards, pictures, or similar. This so the customers/visitors can search for more information, get more knowledge when they visit and can observe, feel, smell, hear the cultural heritage, and learn more about the origin and history of the craft. The Economusee should also show how they bring their cultural heritage into the future through a contemporary exhibition area

Finally we have the shop or the gallery where the visitors can buy products or experiences with a good feeling. In an Economusee you are selling more than a product. You are selling and promoting a multi-facetted adventure.

That is also why it is very important to know or to identify your customer. If you can describe your dream customer, you can then design the most suitable and targeted adventure or experience and design the storytelling around your product.

You could then also design a dramaturgic timeline, a good experience which will give your customer/visitors a nice time and a great experience which they gladly will pay for, and which they will promote and recommend to others.

In our work with the Economusee concept we often reflect and try to draw a dramaturgic timeline. We also believe in some universal human values which help creating a base on which the preservation and development of cultural heritage can be anchored.

Finally, to make your products, your cultural heritage appeal to your customer, make them interested in learning more, create a good atmosphere, stimulate and inspire them so they learn the value of why to preserve and take part in this cultural treasure and for you to see how this treasure can be developed while still keep its characteristics.

Working methodology in the workshop in May:

To be able to internalise and accommodate with the Economusee concept, it is important to work with actual cases and ideas. The workshop will therefore be organised with short thematic introductions and background before the participants are to use the knowledge and input given and relate this to their business ideas or plans for cultural products/ expressions or similar which they would like to see under the umbrella of an Economusee concept.

