Tøyen Innovation Village
A World-Class Innovation District for Oslo

September 2015
Charles Armstrong & Will Mercer, The Trampery
In May 2015 The Trampery put forward a concept for developing Tøyen as a new innovation district for Oslo. In August 2015 we were commissioned by the City of Oslo, Entra and IKT Norge to undertake a feasibility study. We were asked to provide specific recommendations for creating an initial seed facility, an approach for longer-term strategic development and a plan to create opportunities for the local community. We hope this report will stimulate discussion and lay the ground for tangible actions. If everyone comes together we believe something remarkable can be achieved.

Charles Armstrong & Will Mercer
21 September 2015
Our research and recommendations have been directed to meet the following objectives:

» Assess Tøyen’s potential as an innovation district
» Define a “seed” project as the first step of a wider programme
» Understand the needs the local community & how to meet them
» Identify & address strategic gaps in Oslo’s innovation ecosystem
» Involve Oslo’s established stakeholders in the project
The study comprised the following elements:

» Interviews with key figures in Oslo innovation ecosystem
» Interviews with key figures in Tøyen community
» Assessment of available property in Tøyen
» Exploratory talks with potential stakeholders & partners
» Cost analysis of the Oslo office market
» Architectural plan developed with A-Lab Architects
» Financial modelling & feasibility assessment
Interviewees: Startup Ecosystem

» Anders Mjåset, Mesh
» Sigri Sevaldsen, Coworking 657
» Rolf Assev, Start Up Lab
» Rune Øien, Norsentio
» Lars Johan Bjørkevoll, Xeneta
» Ida Faldbakken, MashUP
» Geir Sand Nilsen, 100tim.es and Tøyen Start Up camp
» Thomas Berglund, Business Angel and Serial Entrepreneur
» Sean Percival, 500 Startups
» Susanne Hannestad, Fintech Mundi
» Stina Liland Nysæther, Start Up Norway
» Benjamin Summers, Alliance
Interviewees: Industry, Community & Government

- Lars Kongshaug, Oracle
- Frank Randel Helgesen, Entra
- Sonja Horn, Entra
- Tom Fredrik Lehrmann, DNB
- Bård Stranheim, Innovasjon Norge
- Hannema Sønstegaard, Oslo Kommune Tøyen
- Sarah Prosser, Oslo Kommune Toyen
- Nicolai Gullowsen, Oslo Kommune Tøyen
- Tonje Tornes, Tøyen Løftet
- Fredrik Winther, Oslo Business Region
- Ida Faldbakken, Mash Up Norway
- Fredrik Syversen, IKT Norge
Despite the low level of startup activity and facilities in Tøyen, the majority of entrepreneurs we spoke to would consider locating there if suitable facilities were available and the cost was reasonable. Many people commented that a “critical mass” of support and activity was needed before the proposition would be attractive. The quality of Tøyen’s transport connections and natural environment were widely recognised as benefits. The high level of media attention the neighbourhood has received in the past year and particularly during the election has helped to raise awareness and stimulate discussion.
Oslo has a thriving and well-supported startup ecosystem, including an impressive spread of world-class coworking operators. However, the provision for growth-stage businesses is much weaker. We believe this should be a priority for Tøyen. Alongside facilities for growth-stage businesses, emerging initiatives to grow the angel investor community should be engaged as a source of capital and expertise. Attracting senior corporate figures will also be valuable in sharing business acumen and generating partnering opportunities.

“As a start up, Innovation Norway will help you. Then you grow and there is a black hole, where there are no investors. If you can get through this and make money, there are hundreds of investors that want you” Susanne Hannestad, CEO, Fintech Mundí
One of the most serious gaps in Oslo’s support for growth-stage businesses is the absence of a large-scale accelerator programme. Accelerators provide intensive training to help growing businesses sharpen strategy and overcome scaling hurdles. This has been proven to increase success rates and international expansion. This should be a central element for a new facility in Tøyen.
Around the world large corporations are realising that the best way to deliver successful innovation is to move it out of the main office and place it alongside entrepreneurs and startups. Several of Norway’s largest businesses are interested in developing projects like this, and a number of initiatives are being developed to support them. We recommend a new facility in Tøyen should provide high-class facilities for corporate innovation.

“We need to strengthen Corporate involvement in smaller business/startups in Norway in order to ensure development of successful businesses and industries” Tom Fredrik Lehrmann, DNB
All too often when new kinds of business start setting up in a neighbourhood the result is “gentrification” and the displacement of the existing community. We believe Tøyen should take a different path. We recommend establishing a programme bringing entrepreneurs and creative professionals into local schools, supported by a carefully designed ladder of workshops, hands-on experience, internships and work placements. The programme should be delivered by local organisations and the community must be strongly engaged in its design and implementation.

“For many young people in Toyen, there is a lack of opportunity. They have a limited choice where the only jobs are from local authorities with no room to progress. There are few opportunities in the area to develop their skills and inspire them to achieve more.” Tonje Tornes, active Tøyen resident
Because of Norway’s small population size it’s particularly important to develop strong links between pockets of entrepreneurial activity across the country. We recommend a new facility in Tøyen should help to strengthen these links so it can benefit the whole Norwegian ecosystem.
Based on our research and analysis we believe Oslo has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a new innovation district in Tøyen. The geographical location is excellent. There are fast transport connections across the city, to the central station and to the airports. The area’s parks provide attractive lifestyle and environment benefits. Having Oslo’s most ethnically diverse population provides a fertile environment for innovation, just like East London. The proximity to Grunerløkka makes it easy for independent cafes, shops and streetlife to spread across the boundary. Realising the opportunity, and ensuring the local community benefits fully, will require a careful and painstaking masterplan, implemented over a decade or more.
Core recommendations

1. **Signal Tøyen** Develop a world-class facility and a new landmark for Oslo innovation in the heart of Tøyen. This will provide the focal point for regenerating the entire neighbourhood. “Signal Tøyen” should include an accelerator programme, corporate innovation labs, angel investor networks and growth-stage businesses.

2. **Tøyen Innovation Panel** Form a small strategic body bringing together key stakeholders to coordinate long-term development of the innovation district.

3. **Tøyen Community Programme** Launch a comprehensive programme opening up opportunities for Tøyen’s young people in technology and the creative industries.
The first step in developing a new innovation district is creating a facility which addresses a clear set of priority needs and creates a “critical mass” of activity in Tøyen. This facility should provide a visible symbol of Tøyen’s future, something that changes perceptions across the city and inspires people in the local community. As Tøyen evolves this facility should function as its central hub. We recommend an initial development encompassing the rooftop, 11th and 10th floors of the tower at Hagegata 22 plus the ground floor auditorium at Hagegata 23. This will provide a facility with a total floor area of 3,000 square metres and scope for expansion. Reflecting the facility’s role as a beacon we suggest the brand name “Signal Tøyen”.
Signal Tøyen
Proposed location

Rooftop hot tubs & bar
Signal Club for members
Accelerator programme
Corporate innovation labs
Growth-stage studios
Open plan desking

Flexible auditorium for talks, screenings, hackathons, etc
Home for community events
Signal Club A boldly designed lounge with catering facilities and spectacular views over Oslo, including a roof terrace with hot tubs. A new social venue and drop-in workspace for Tøyen where Oslo’s entrepreneurs can mix with corporate executives, angel investors and government figures.

500 Startups accelerator One of the world’s top startup accelerators will base its Nordic programme at Signal. This will bring the brightest startups from across the Nordic region to Tøyen and provide an anchor for the facility.

Growth-stage Studios Two studios for Oslo’s most talented growth-stage businesses.

Corporate Innovation Labs Two self-contained suites to house corporate innovation projects.
Entra has a responsibility to its shareholders to generate a healthy yield from its property holdings over the long term. In Tøyen we believe the best way to achieve this is a carefully balanced multi-tier business model that sets different pricing for different types of tenant. Low rates should be offered to growth-stage businesses, local entrepreneurs and an accelerator programme to create a “honey pot” of talent and energy. Higher rates should be charged for corporate innovation labs, executive memberships and angel investors who will benefit from proximity to talented startups.
It’s likely that Signal Tøyen will rapidly become one of the most high-profile innovation facilities in the Nordic region. Over time it will establish itself as the central hub of Oslo’s innovation district. Careful thought must therefore be given to its management. The most obvious option is to engage one of Oslo’s established co-working businesses. However having consulted on this option we believe that giving any one of the established players such a dominant role in Tøyen would threaten the balance of the wider Oslo ecosystem. Therefore we recommend appointing a neutral body to take this responsibility, at the same time as offering established co-working operators attractive ways to become part the project.
Signal Tøyen will be able to function as a self-contained facility with the rooftop, two floors and an auditorium. However additional floors are available now and more will become available over the coming years. We recommend a strategic approach to tenanting floors as they become available. Using the Signal facility as a hub for the building, the remaining floors should be offered to established co-working operators, high-yielding corporate innovation labs and sector-specific incubators. Curating the evolving mix of tenants will be a vital ongoing process.
To achieve its ambitions Signal must set out to be one of the most impressively-designed innovation environments in the world. It should serve as a showcase of contemporary Norwegian workspace design. This need not mean a massively expensive refurbishment project. The existing air handling and infrastructure are of excellent quality and need not be replaced. There is no need for large structural interventions, expect for the option of installing a spiral staircase to improve connections between floors. The refurbishment approach should focus on decorative elements and space utilisation to achieve the desired results. An initial concept developed by The Trampery and A-Lab Architects is provided in the following pages.
To create a creative working environment the plan is organized by an open and circular model.

The slabs have been opened up with a circular stair that connects the floors and leads up the roof terrace. This also invites the light into the building in a vertical line.

In case of expansion you can easily connect floor by floor downwards with the same system.
Different types of seating and various workspaces are placed in the open landscape.

- Small libraries
- Plants
- Different types of seating

Signal Tøyen
Working environment
- Raw concrete
- Furu (Norwegian wood)
- White painted
- Black painted
- Glass
Signal Tøyen Rooftop

- Roof terrace
- Bar
- Hot tubs
- Changing areas
- Vertical searchlights (establishing the building as a “beacon” visible across Oslo)
Signal Tøyen
11th Floor

Signal Club for members
Corporate Innovation Labs
Open plan desking
Boardroom
Meeting Room
Kitchen
Signal Tøyen
10th Floor

Accelerator facility
Growth-stage Studios
Meeting rooms
Signal Tøyen
Social interaction

Spiral staircase
(strengthening social interaction between floors)
Signal Tøyen Auditorium

150 seated
250 standing
Bar
Storage
Tøyen Innovation Panel
Purpose & structure

A small strategic body should be formed to coordinate the long-term development of Tøyen as an innovation district and delivering opportunities for the local community. The Panel should be structured as a social enterprise, able to operate as a business but delivering social objectives. Its first responsibility should be to oversee the successful delivery of Signal Tøyen. The Panel should be led by a full-time Director with a board comprising five stakeholder representatives:

» Oslo Municipality lead public authority
» Entra lead property owner
» Tøyen resident ensuring community representation
» IKT Norge industry umbrella body
» The Trampery specialist consultant (if required)
The Panel will have five areas of responsibility:

» Potential lease-holder and operator of Signal Tøyen
» Development of strategic plan for Tøyen Innovation Village
» Commissioning organisation for Tøyen Community Programme
» Media representation for Tøyen Innovation Village and other initiatives
» Convening ongoing consultations and events bringing together the entire stakeholder community
The Tøyen Community Programme will provide a ladder for young people in the neighbourhood. It will offer many their first ever exposure to career opportunities in technology and the creative industries, then provide steps of increasing depth and engagement leading to work placements and mentoring. Specific provision should be made for refugee communities. The 500 Startups accelerator programme has committed to offer specific support for refugee entrepreneurs.
Awareness visits will bring entrepreneurs and creative professionals into local Tøyen schools to talk about what they do, how they got there and answer students’ questions. Each visit will end with an invitation to come along to an upcoming Encounter Evening.

» Target: 12 Awareness Visits each year
Informal monthly evening events hosted at Signal Tøyen where young people can meet professionals working in technology and the creative industries. Community organisations will be present to answer questions about available support and career options. Each event will include an invitation to attend a Hands-On Workshop.

» Target: 6 Encounter Evenings each year
» Target: Total of 120 young people participating each year
» Target: Include all ethnic groups and equal gender balance
A rolling series of in-depth workshops, each focused on a specific creative industry or technology field. Each workshop will provide an overview of roles involved in its respective industry with contributions from a professional working in that field. A separate strand will cater to aspiring entrepreneurs providing an overview of all the issues involved in starting a new business.

» Target: 12 Hands-On Workshops each year
» Target: Sessions focused on software, web design, furniture design, fashion, music, video and other sectors
» Target: Total of 60 young people participating each year
Three desks at Signal Tøyen should be reserved for entrepreneurs and teams coming through the Community Programme. They will receive hands-on support and training plus the inspiration, support and contacts that come from being located alongside some of Oslo’s most talented businesses.

» Target: 3 entrepreneurs supported each year
Participants who have attended a Hands-On Workshop and wish to gain more insight into a particular sector will be offered a one week placement with a member business outside term time. For participants who have completed or left education a longer placement may also be appropriate.

» Target: 20 work placements each year
For participants who complete a Placement and decide to pursue a career in a chosen field the Community Programme will endeavour to link them with someone from that business as a mentor. The initial commitment will be 3 monthly meetings of one hour each.

» Target: 20 Mentoring relationships each year
This concludes our report. We have not always recommended the simplest or most obvious solutions. However in each case we have sought to put forward the options most likely to achieve the long-term objectives. Creating a new innovation district is not going to be a simple task. In conclusion we’d like to thank everyone who gave their time so generously during the research process and to the City of Oslo, Entra and IKT Norge for their vision in commissioning the report.
If you have any comments on our recommendations we’d be delighted to hear them via this email address:

toyenreport@thetrampery.com
The Trampery works with partners to develop buildings and neighbourhoods that foster innovation and strong communities. It was founded by Charles Armstrong, the sociologist and entrepreneur who helped form London’s Tech City innovation cluster. Since 2009 The Trampery has developed seven acclaimed facilities in London including Shoreditch’s first startup workspace, the UK’s first accelerator for fashion labels, the UK’s first incubator for digital arts and the UK’s first incubator for travel and tourism. Alongside its workspaces The Trampery is currently working on a members club for designers and architects, a substantial live-work development for startups and a global headquarters for a large legal practice. Partners include the Barbican, Publicis Worldwide, Oslo Business Region and the London College of Fashion. The Trampery’s Patron is HRH the Duke of York.