

# The repurposed funeral chapels of Norway

Former funeral chapel in Vår Frelasers gravlund, Oslo.



An ongoing, mixed-methods research project explores the history, architecture and current situation of funeral chapels in Norway.

The funeral chapel is a building type developed in joint effort by local authorities and the Norwegian church from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. As a representative of both religious and public built heritage, it illustrates several aspects of late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century funeral practices, as well as urban planning and historic architecture.

The project has documented roughly 330 funeral chapels that have been built throughout Norway up until the early 2000s. Most of them were built during the interwar period in churchyards next to existing parish churches.

Over time, changed funerary customs and a diversification in the religious landscape have rendered a significant part of this historic building stock redundant.

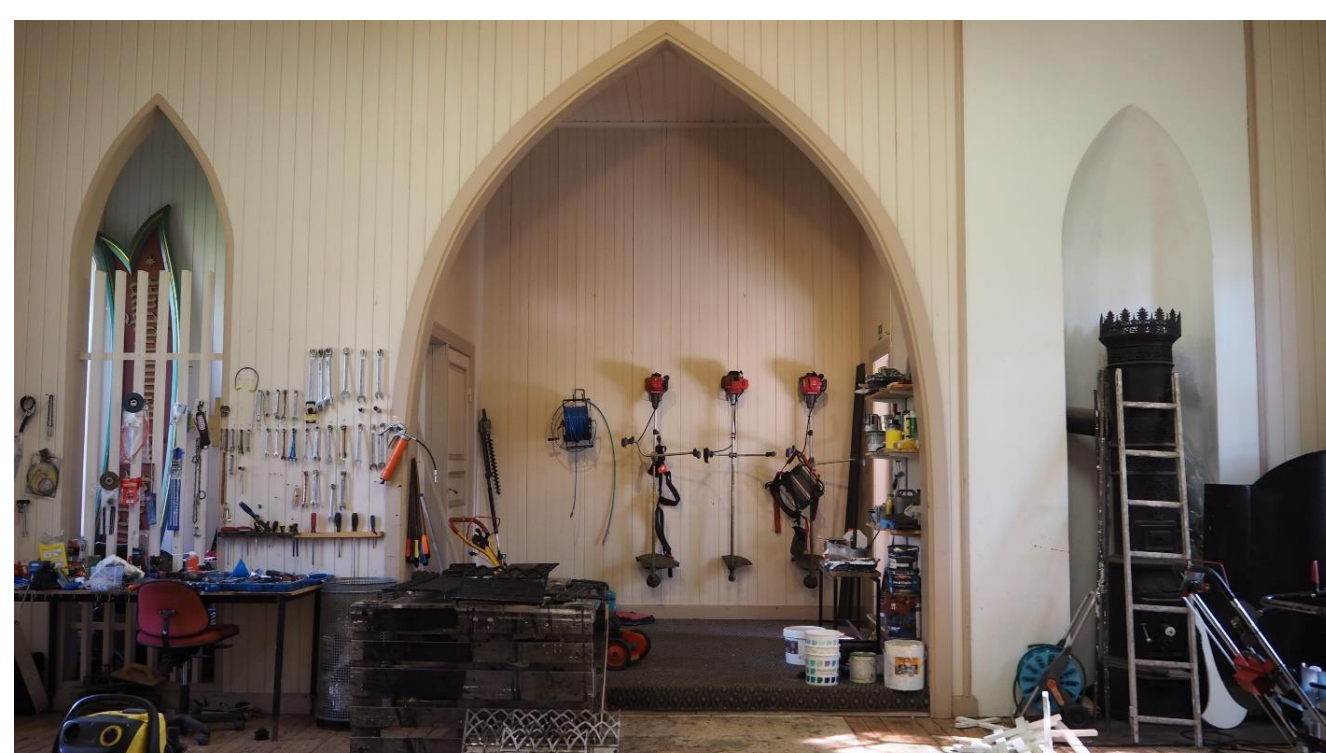
The adaptive reuse of these historically significant buildings can serve as a social, cultural, and spiritual resource for local communities. While many chapels are superfluous today, at least 20% have been adapted to new uses, both sacred and secular.

Re-purposing strategies include a wide range of examples turning the funeral chapels into office spaces, assembly rooms, as well as cultural venues for concerts and lectures. Facilitating the funeral chapels for such new supplementary purposes is proved especially practical as it entails relatively small expenses, while it relieves existing churches from adaptation or the addition of new installments.

Some urban funeral chapels have been let out to members of other religious organizations and faiths. Others are taken into use as storage rooms, workshops, or warehouses on interim basis.

*How do such repurposed sacred spaces sit within the contemporary religious landscape of Europe? What is the situation of funeral chapels in your country?*

Repurposed funeral chapels in Ådal, Brandbu and Arendal.



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