The diverse Norwegian lime mortars

Research project

Increasing the knowledge of mortars at medieval stone churches

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The project

3 years (2025-2027)

Partners

- Restoration Workshop of Nidaros Cathedral (owner)
- Fabrica Kulturminnetjenester AS (scientific coordinator)
- SEIR Materialieanalyse AS
- Geological Survey of Norway

Reference group

• 10 institutions/users of mortar information (practitioners, church owners, authorities)

Financing

 Norwegian Church Preservation Fund (Kirkebevaringsfondet)



The aims: Collect information. Spread knowledge!

Build infrastructure

- Public archive of mortar samples, thin sections and analytical reports
- Open database for mortar analyses
- Thesaurus for description of mortars
- Guidelines for sample collection
- Vision: Mandatory for future mortar analyses

Cultural history

- Technology of burning, mixing and application
- Transportation and trade networks for lime

Survey and crafts

- Condition survey. How do different mortars degrade?
- Restoration work. Which mortars might be compatible for repair?
- Micro lime burning. What raw materials to burn?



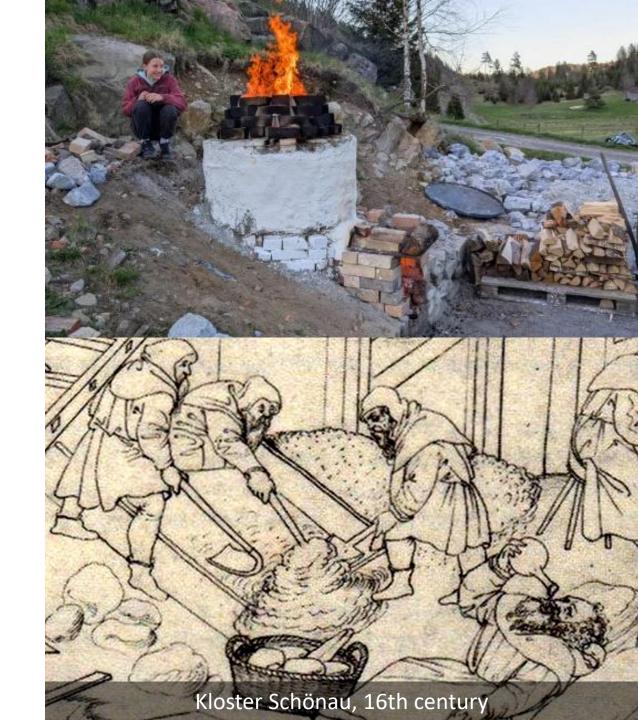
The crafts perspective: Which limes to burn? How to mix and apply?

Increased focus on micro limeburning

- Now burning easily available raw materials (often rather pure)
- More selective procurement?

Hotmix under establishment as Best Practice

- Encompasses variety of traditions
- How in medieval Norway?



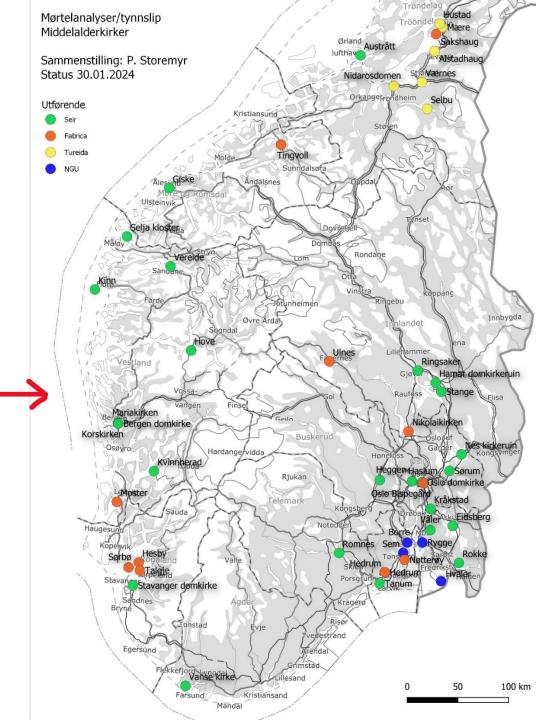
The work methods

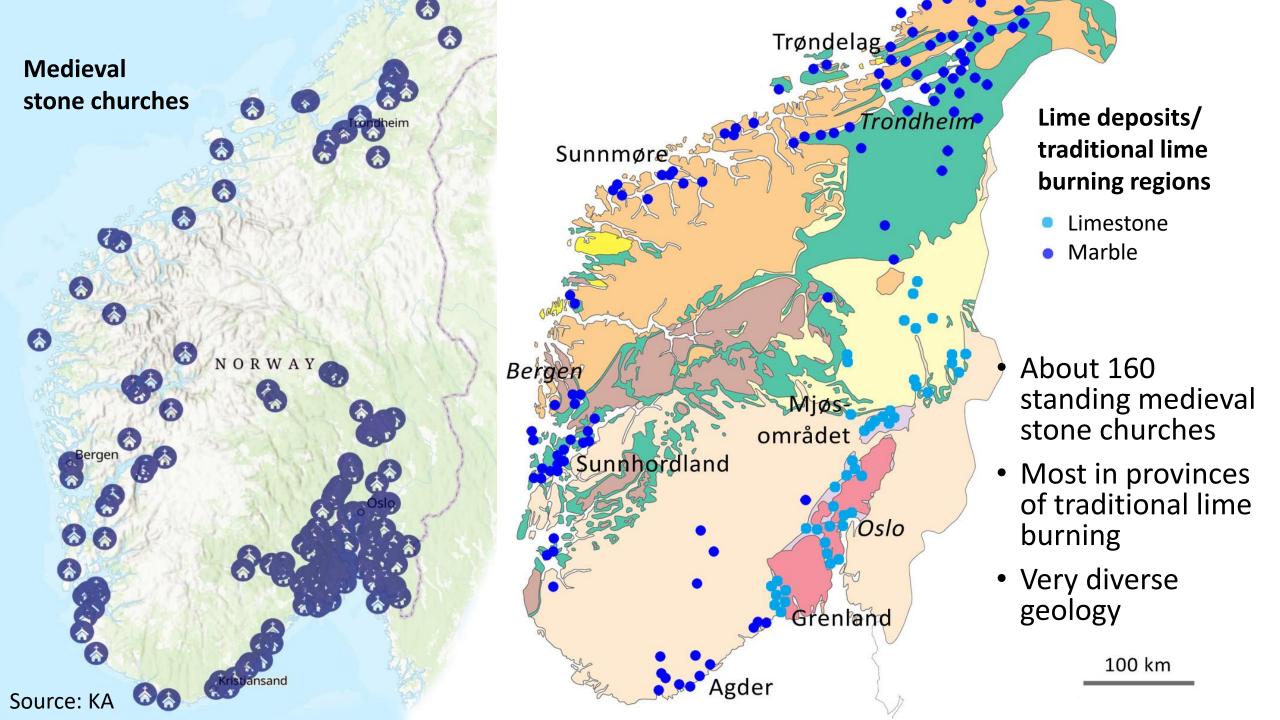
Hundreds of medieval mortar types and thousands of repair mortars

Focus on medieval mortars:

- Systematic inventory of samples and data from analyses already done
- New case studies in select regions
- Inspiration: Systematic work in Scotland

Project core: Microscopy and database





Norwegian deposits used for historical lime burning

Marble • Limestone • Lime-rich schist (• Shell)

Non-metamorphic • Contact • Regional metamorphic

Calcitic (Ca-rich) ↔ Dolomitic (Mg-content)

Pure ↔ «Dirty»

Open structure ↔ Dense structure

= Very diverse raw materials



Quality of mortars

A key parameter:

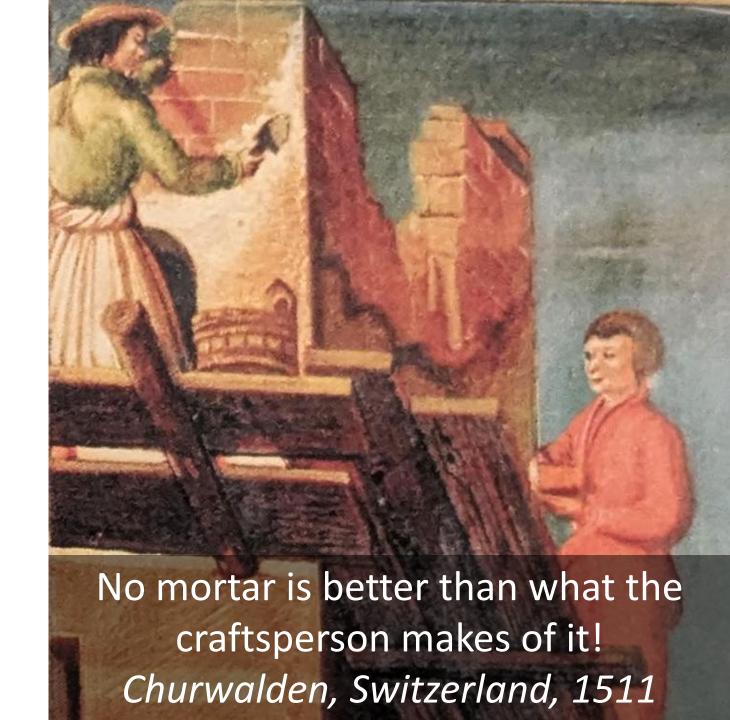
Raw materials

Also strongly dependent by diversity in craft traditions:

- Burning
- Mixing
- Application

Degradation affected by:

- Mortar properties
- Architectural context
- Maintenance and repair
- Climate





Project core: The database (testing almost finished)

Historiske kalkmørtler i middelalderske steinkirker

Database med prøver og analyser av kalkmørtler.



Ulnes

KulturminnelD: 85720-1

Vis prøver / analyser



Tanum kirke Larvik

KulturminneID: 85609-1

Vis prøver / analyser





Tanum kirke Larvik
KulturminnelD: 85609-1

Prøve ID

TA1-Fabrica <u>Vis prøve / analyse</u>

TA2-Fabrica

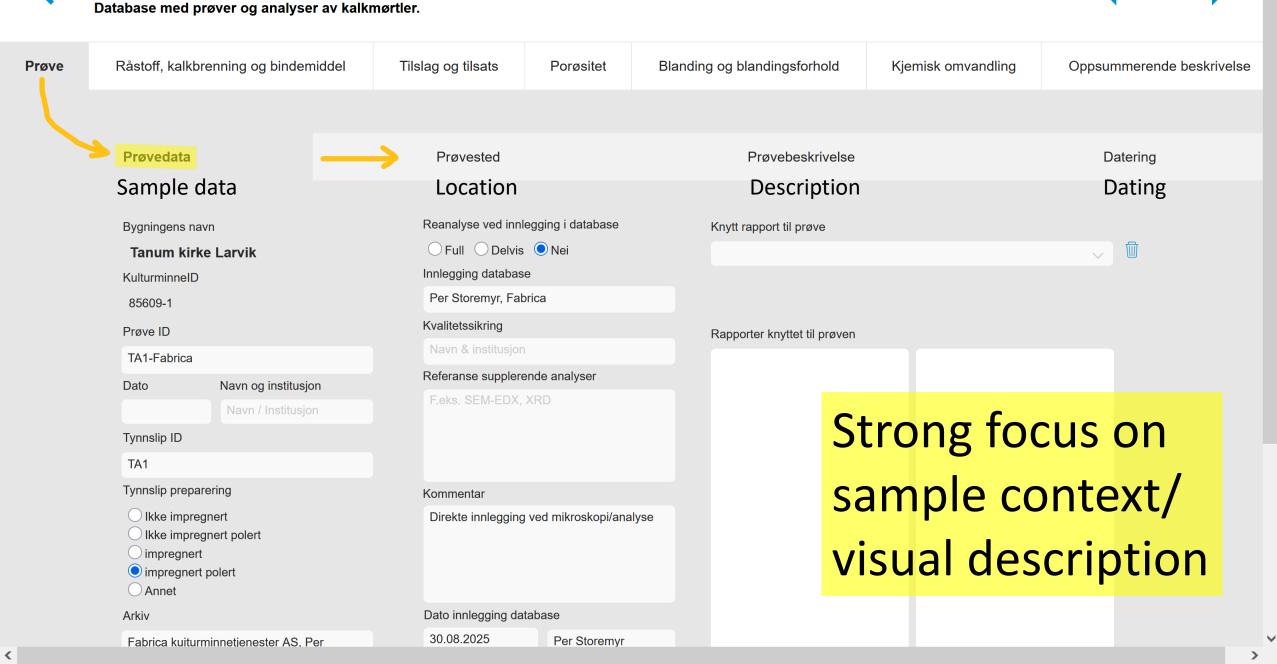
Vis prøve / analyse

+ Legg inn ny prøve/analyse

+ Duplisert markert prøve

Tanum kirke Larvik. Prøve ID: TA1-Fabrica

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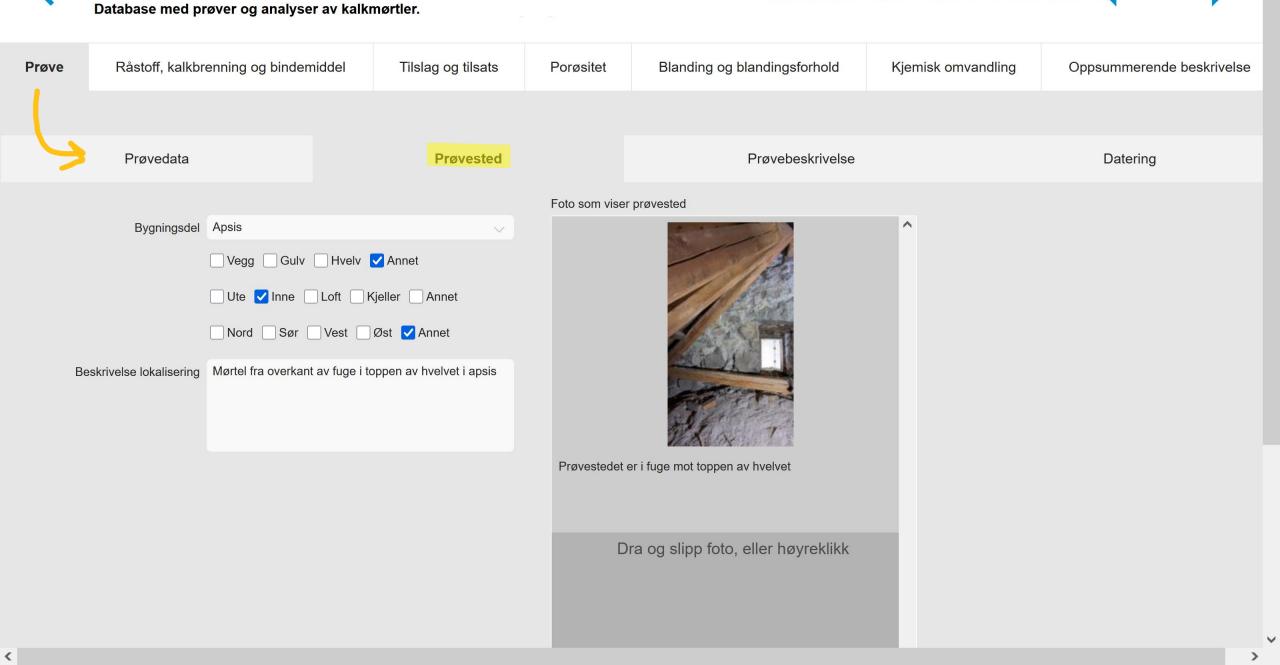


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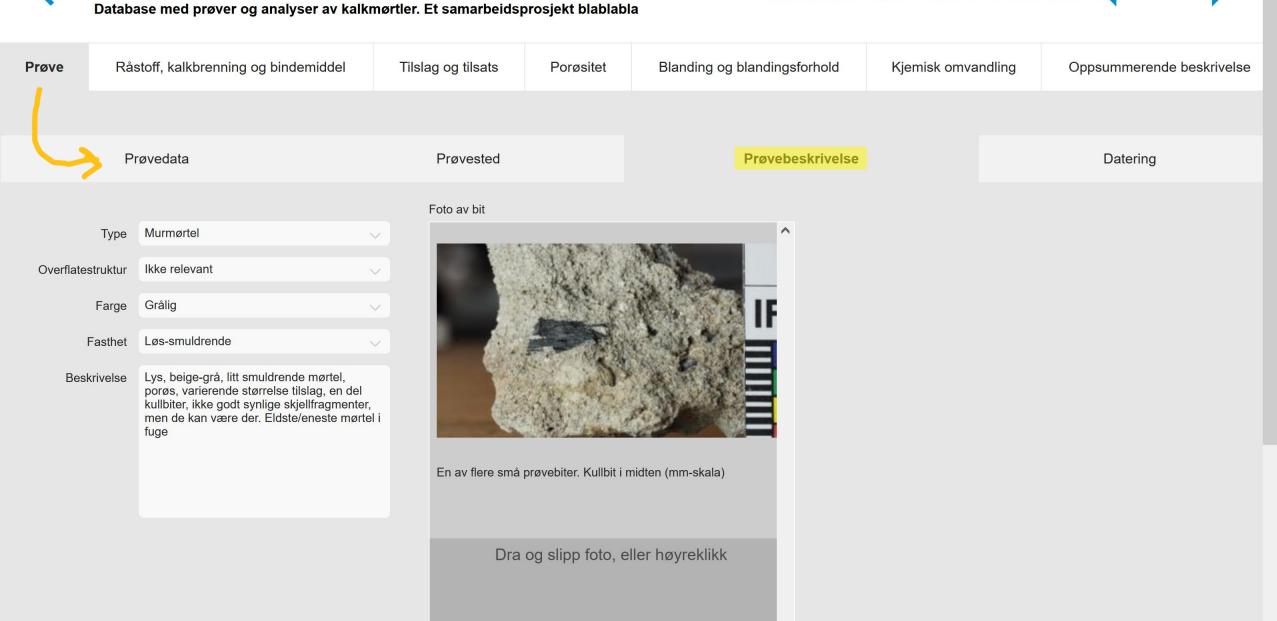


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Database med prøver og analyser av kalkmørtler.

Prøve

Råstoff, kalkbrenning og bindemiddel Tilslag og tilsats



Bindemiddel

Porøsitet

Blanding og blandingsforhold

Kjemisk omvandling

Oppsummerende beskrivelse

Raw material/burning/binder Aggregate

Porosity

Mixing

Alteration

Summary

Råstoff for bindemiddel	
Hovedråstoff	
Kalkstein	~
Renhet anslag	
Litt uren 80-90%	~
Hovedmineralogi	
Kalsittisk	~
Metamorfose	
Dels kontaktmetamorf	~
Hypotese proveniens	
Regional (innen fylke/nabofylke)	~
Beskrivelse	
Kalkstein med en del skjellfragmenter, mulige rester få sjøliljestilker. Sannsynlig dels kontaktmetamorf, n store kalsittkorn kan også representere sparitt. Det finnes en del små kvartskorn i kalksteinen. Kalkstein fremstår relativt ren til tross for det ganske brungrå	nen
Brenning Anslått temperatur	
Lay <900°C	
Indikator høy temperatur	
f.eks. slagg, mangel på underbrente korn, annet	
Indikator lav temperatur	

Karbonatisering	
Fullstendig	~
Generell farge i lupe / visuelt	
Lys brunt	~
Homogenitet	
Ujevnt	\vee
Kalkkorn synlighet	
Visuelt synlige Visuelt ikke-synlige	
Kalkkorn mengde, anslag av bindemiddel	
● Mange >30% ○ Noen 10-30% ○ Få <10%	
Kalkkorn størrelse	
Middels 0,1-1 mm	~
Kalkkorn farge	
Varierende	~
Synlige hydrauliske komponenter	
Sannsynlig noen hydrauliske komponenter fra skiferlignende korn og brent kvarts i kalksteinen, men brenntemperaturen har vært relativt lav og det	
Hydraulisitet anslag	
Sub	~
Beskrivelse	
Bindemiddelet er preget av mange kalkkorn, som relik	



Work with database

In project

- Populate with up to 100 existing and new analyses
- Develop tools for statistics and reports
- Focus now: Medieval mortars

Future

- Build modules for plasters/paints and Post-Reformation mortars
- Provenance (sourcing) and dating

Vision

- For all new mortar analyses related to medieval churches in Norway –
- A public treasure trove



Current knowledge/<u>hypotheses</u>

Early Middle Ages

 Opportunistic, local raw materials, lime burning at variable temperatures, great diversity

High Middle Ages

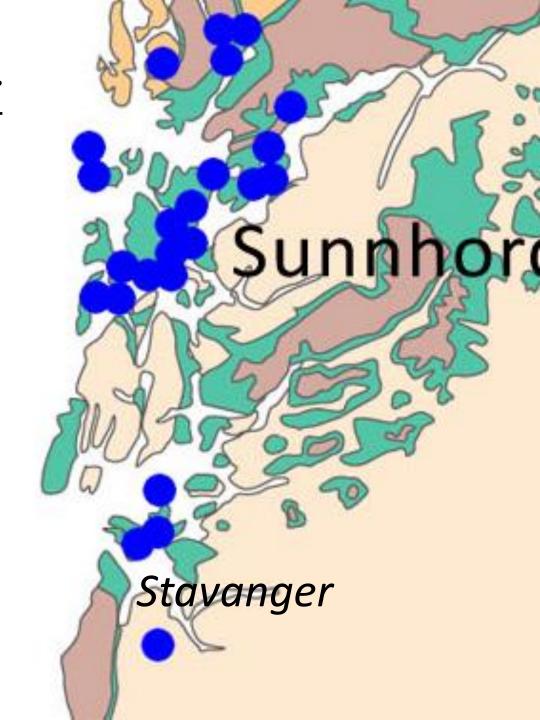
 Lime burning centres established, purer lime, domestic trade along the coast

Late Middle Ages/Early Post-Reformation Period

• Tradition from Midle Ages broken. Diversity.

Post-Reformation Period (prior to industrialisation)

 Lime centres, domestic trade along coast/rivers.
 Foreign trade (Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, Germany)





The archipelago in Boknafjord, near Stavanger

