

Mapping Norway for 250 Years - Maps Give Power

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SUMMARY

Maps can be described as tools to understand the world. Maps are often made by surveyors and cartographers, but earlier also by tourists and explorers. Their work was carried out in rain and sunshine, with pen and paper, and until today with GPS, satellites, and computer technology. They gave us a tool to understand the world and develop our surroundings.

In 2023 the Norwegian Mapping Authority celebrates its 250 years jubilee. A journey of 250 years of mapping Norway. It began as a mission to map the area close to the border with Sweden. The army needed maps and drawings of fortifications and strategically important areas. It was the military and national interest in knowing the situation along the Swedish border, which was the background for the German officer in the Danish-Norwegian army, Heinrich Wilhelm von Huth, being commissioned to be responsible for the mapping in Norway. He is therefore considered the first Director-General of what we today call the Norwegian Mapping Authority, when this was formed in Christiania (Oslo) in 1773.

At the end of the 17th century and into the 18th century, certain private individuals took the initiative to map Norway. It was not until the establishment of the Mapping Authority in 1773 that this work was formalized. In this sense, maps are a useful tool in the FIG 2023 saying “protecting our world, conquering new frontiers”. Mapping has old roots from the Egyptians and Babylonians. Sailors and traders created the need for maps, on their journeys out on sea. Major trading and shipping nations have in turn made great efforts as cartographers. Today we use new technology mapping our surroundings. In Norway laser scanning of the sea and harbours is important to make the journey of today’s sailors safe. It gives opportunities, and initiatives to make a model for how Norwegian ports can become digital and

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automated.

The mapping of Norway has been carried out for more than 250 years, nevertheless, the year in which General Heinrich Wilhelm von Huth issued our first national survey plan is a natural starting point for the article. The aim of the article is to shed light on parts of this history and emphasize the importance of maps, also in the context of power. The power that lies in the knowledge of where to find, the knowledge of geographical information.

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