

# Cultural aspects of place-names

Botolv Helleland

([botolv.helleland@iln.uio.no](mailto:botolv.helleland@iln.uio.no))

Place-Name Advisor

Norwegian Language Council

GGIM - COEX, Seoul 26 October 2011

# Nærøyfjorden, Sogn, Norway UNESCO's World Heritage list 2005



Nærøy < Njardar-øy – 'island  
of the Norse god Njordr'

# Botnen 'the end (of the fjord)'

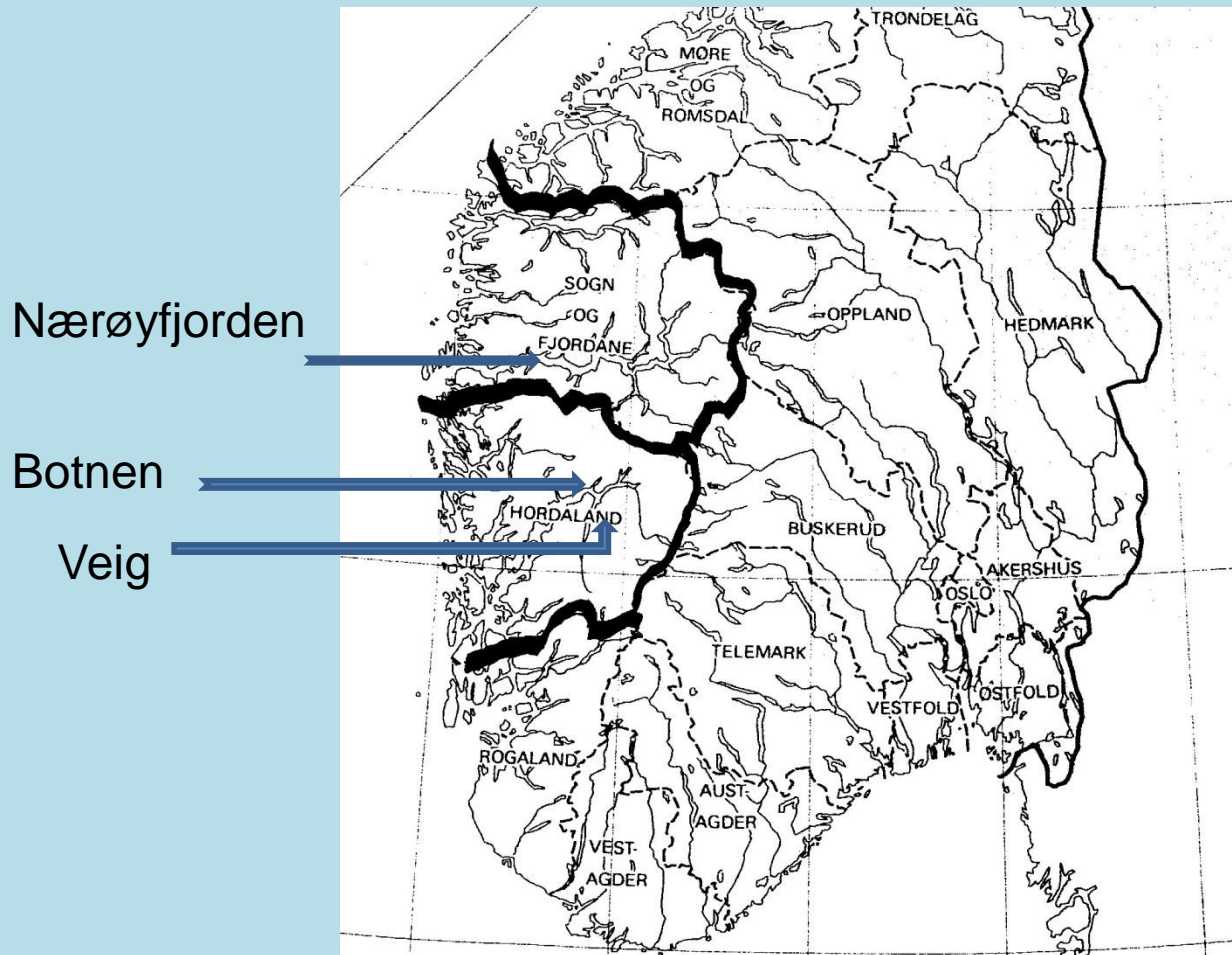


# Veig 'liquid, water'





# Southern Norway



# Act on place names of 1990 amended 2005 - Purpose

- The purpose of the Norwegian Place Names Act is to safeguard place names as cultural monuments, to determine a spelling which is practical and useable and to promote knowledge and active use of the names.
- The Act shall secure the consideration of Saami and Kvenish place-names in accordance with national law and international treaties and conventions.

# Motivation - 1

- Place names are *historical monuments* that transmit a multifaceted picture of older generations' experiences and insight into the interplay between man and Nature, and they are a valuable source of local history, at the same time as they represent an important factor for the well-being of the people in a local community.

# Motivation - 2

- The names of places also belong to the nation's linguistic heritage, they are part of the dialects, and usually follow the same phonological development as other words. They are therefore an integral and irreplaceable part of the vocabulary of the local community, and will as a rule be pronounced in conformity with the form of speech there.

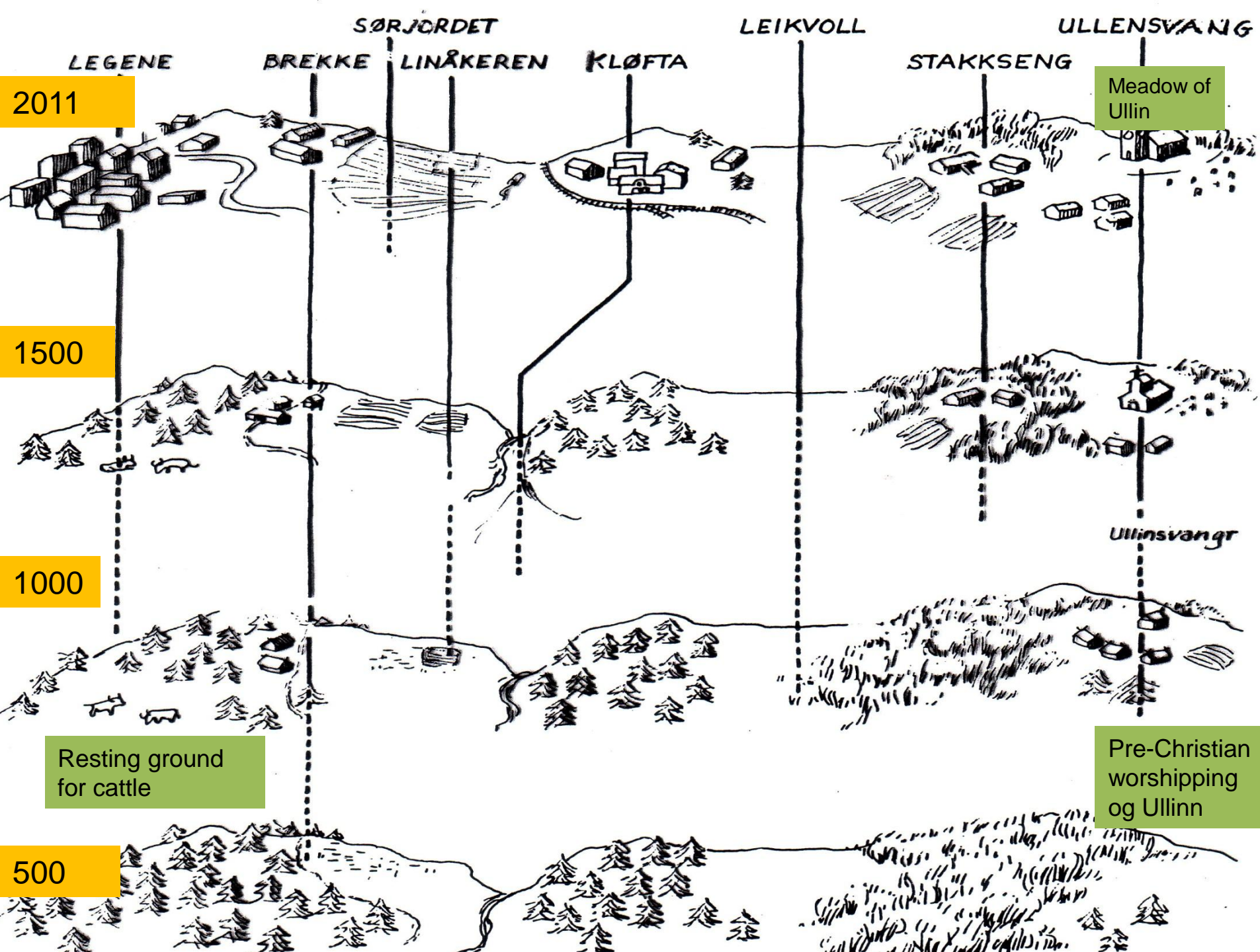


# The story of a place

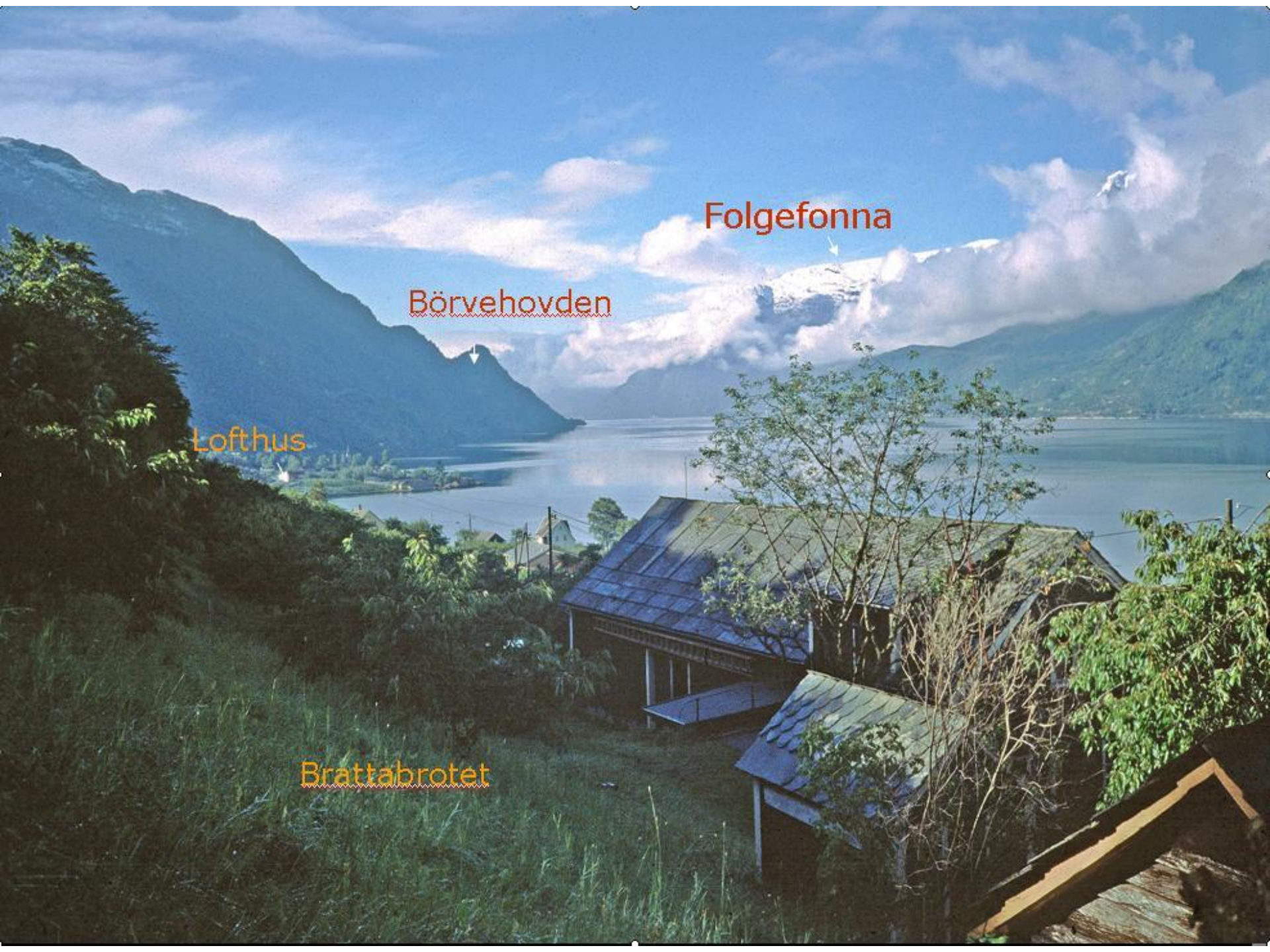
- Place names have a special property of being part of our cultural heritage in the sense that they tell us something about the locality of which they are the name; in other words, they provide important supplements to the history of where people settled.

# Interplay between man and nature

- One can also see place names as a reflection of the interplay between man and Nature through different periods of time. The many regional name studies that have been carried out in the world show that place names provide a detailed picture of human existence in relation to man's surroundings.







Folgefonna

Börvehovden

Lofthus

Brattabrotet

# What more?

- One can bring to life the name landscapes of the past through activity within local history such as the writing of the history of rural residences and farms, publishing historical maps with geographical names, or putting up signposts in selected areas in order to tell the story of the areas through the names.

# To sum up

- “The [place-]name is a key to memories and experiences. To be familiar with the same name is to know a little about each other. The names are social signals of solidarity. The more names one shares with others, the stronger is the solidarity.”
- (Lars Huldén, Finnish poet and name researcher)