

The Røst Declaration

Dialogue with actors in the
field after a research project

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Report from the NORA funded workshop “The New Nordic Periphery. Municipal Learning Through Local Innovations”

Supplement to the report “Innovations in the Nordic Periphery” NORDREGIO 2004



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Preface

The Nordic researchers within the MOST Circumpolar Coping Processes Projects (MOST CCPP) researchers network are grateful to Nordisk Atlantsamarbejd (NORA) for the financial support and cooperation that made possible the Røst workshop, upon which this report is based. The workshop took place at the Lofoten Island of Røst 22-24 September 2004. On behalf of the researchers network I also thank Bodø University College and the University of Tromsø for their financial contributions to the workshop.

I thank Nils Aarsæther and Torill Nyseth for fruitful comments, and Mary Jones for proofreading the text. Especially, I have to thank Marit Aure for clarifying discussions and good comments in the process of formulating this report.

Finally, this is an opportunity to thank all the participants at the workshop for truly intensive days of discussions, and to also thank the excellent hosts at Røst. Your contributions have been inspiring and important, and your efforts will bring our research further.

Tromsø, December 2004,

Brynhild Granås

Meeting the actors again

The municipality of Røst is characterized by its smallness, fishery dependence and peripheral location in the Lofoten region of Northern Norway. These are all characteristics that reflect key elements shared in the West Nordic area. This was one of the reasons why Røst was chosen as a location for the users' workshop, "The New Nordic Periphery. Municipal Learning Through Local Innovations", which took place on 22-24 September 2004. Thirty participants from Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Norway gathered to discuss the innovative capacities of the West Nordic periphery. Municipal leaders, innovators and researchers were offered the possibility of exchanging experiences and ideas, to learn about and develop West Nordic trans-regional networks.

The Røst Declaration is written as a supplement to the research report "Innovations in the Nordic Periphery". The declaration points to challenges of particular interest, seen from the users' point of view, in stimulating innovative activities in the West Nordic periphery. In particular, participants addressed the relationship between the municipal institution and "innovation activists". The declaration is aimed at municipalities and innovators in the Nordic northern periphery, as well as the relevant ministries of all Nordic countries, other important private and governmental organizations and institutions within the field, and research institutions.

Nordic researchers from the MOST CCPP¹ network initiated the NORA funded workshop² after the completion of the research project. Actors were invited who had been involved as informants. What would be their reaction to the presentations, analyses and conclusions outlined in the "Innovations in the Nordic Periphery" report? Would the actors recognize the descriptions of the world where they operate in their daily work? Could a new and more open setting add new perspectives and further develop the research and understanding of the innovative capacities of the Nordic periphery?

¹ <http://uit.no/mostccpp>

² The workshop was mainly funded by NORA, co-financed by the University of Tromsø, NORDREGIO and Bodø University College, and was part of the Norwegian Research Council's annual research dissemination week, 'Forskningsdagene'.

One important aim of the Røst workshop was to create an arena for mutual learning between researchers, innovators and municipal leaders on innovation processes, and stimulate network development between all the actors invited. Participants were given the opportunity to address related questions of interest and make suggestions about how to overcome challenges and barriers regarding local innovative capacities, especially those involving the role of the municipality.

Background

In 2003-2004, the Nordic researchers mentioned above worked together on a NORDREGIO³ funded project, collecting data in a total of 21 municipalities and writing a report entitled “Innovations in the Nordic Periphery”.⁴ More than 300 innovations⁵ in the public, civil and municipal sectors were scanned; of these, 66 were selected for closer study (see appendix Table 1 for a list of municipalities and innovations).

The findings from Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands were then the subject of analysis and comparison.⁶ For those who have not read the report, a short résumé is provided. The concluding chapter attempted to discern whether any distinct patterns emerge when viewing the material from a comparative perspective:

- Firstly, the question of what may be learned from an overview of the selected innovation processes was discussed. This overview analysis deals with the three types of innovations outlined in Chapter 1: business innovations, public sector innovations and civil society-type innovations.

- The next step was to see, from the reports of the sub-teams, what we could learn about the role of the municipality in these processes. Several role types, ranging from considerable involvement to none, were presented in Chapter 1. In the empirical chapters the role of the

³ <http://www.nordregio.se>

⁴ Six research teams visited 21 municipalities in the Tornedalen region of Finland, Sweden and Norway, as well as the Faroe Islands, Iceland and the Lofoten area of Norway.

⁵ The innovations represent new local activities and practices that have appeared over the last ten years, constituting new solutions to local challenges. The focus has been on initiative (i.e. whose idea was this?), the process (support, barriers, implementation and continuity), networking aspects of the innovation, the role of the municipality in the process, and the direct and indirect local effects of the innovation.

⁶ The research project was completed in July 2004 and the NORDREGIO research report, “Innovations in the Nordic Periphery”, was published in September 2004.

municipalities, as actually performed during the innovation processes, was most frequently that of the “facilitator” or “supporter”.

- Thirdly, the effects of the innovation processes were identified with respect to substantial outcomes, learning and identity formation, and the transformative potential of innovations for the municipalities and localities involved.

- Finally, three questions were addressed: to what extent do we see the contours of a “new” periphery in the post-industrial age? What are the implications of this study for regional policy development? What concrete recommendations can be made?

Participation

Participants at the Røst Workshop were from the West Nordic area (Lofoten-Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands), representing the municipal leadership, a selection of innovations and the research teams. In addition, invitations were sent to the Lofoten Regional Council, Lofoten municipalities not included in the research project, Nordland County, and to relevant ministries in Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands (see Table 2 in the appendix for a list of participants).

Primary questions

The point of departure for the two days of discussions at the workshop were formulated as three primary topics:

- In what innovations is the municipal institution presently involved, and what is the nature of its involvement?
- How can innovators and municipal leaders co-operate in positive local development (problems, possibilities and challenges)?
- What can we learn from different West Nordic innovations about the process of initiating and implementing innovation?

Main points of the programme

The programme (see appendix) included one day of plenary sessions; these encompassed presentations relating to the research project and two of the innovations, municipal perspectives (from two mayors) and a plenary discussion. An Open Space Workshop was run on the second day. This allowed participants to group according to topics suggested by the participants themselves for informed group and plenary discussions.



A view from the harbour of Røst bryggehotell (Røst Seaside Hotel), where hostess Irene Johansen provided accommodation and meals for the participants. (Photo and copyright: Halldór Halldórsson)

User response to the research report – recognition and learning

One main characteristic of the approach to innovation in the research project is the broad innovation concept used, including new activities and practices within not only business, but also the public sector and civil society. Both smaller and more extensive innovations are included, as long as they are considered to have produced local effects, not only with regard to new jobs created but also in the sense that they contribute to improved living conditions.

The participants stated that the approach used was recognizable. Including the civil and municipal sphere in addition to the business sphere opens up an overall view of local development that coincides with the one that participants experience in their everyday life. In addition, the inclusion of activities that are smaller in scope was recognized to be of vital importance for innovations within peripheral and, mostly, small municipalities. Many participants highlighted the learning potential in obtaining information about innovation processes in other municipalities and other countries, including the East Nordic cases. It was perceived as inspiring to experience a kind of shared destiny between actors within this geographically extensive area.

How innovators and municipal leaders experience innovation processes

Four plenary presentations from innovators and municipal leaders highlighted conditions and circumstances that gave a sense of direction to further discussions throughout the workshop:

The music organization Grót and ICT company Poseidon Simulations AS

Two local musicians in Gøta, in the Faroe Islands, saw a need to improve facilities and infrastructure for musicians and manage their talents more

professionally. They established the music organization Grót⁷ to meet these challenges. Today, they also run “G!”, the annual music festival. Local and external networks have been of great importance in developing their activities. Network development in its own right is also an important outcome of their activities. The budget has increased as their activities have expanded and become better known. Economic support from the municipality has followed in the wake of this growth. The municipality is otherwise described in positive terms as easily accessible, swift and efficient.

Poseidon Simulations AS⁸ produces computer based maritime training systems, and was partly initiated and developed in an attempt to create suitable jobs for academically skilled persons within Vestvågøy, Lofoten. The importance of internal and external networking for the development of activities was highlighted. The company operates within a global market and employs 27 people in different subsidiary companies. The presentation from the manager highlighted aspects of innovation, positive contexts and the main challenges for “innovation activists”; innovation is not a business affair alone, but a family-, community- and municipality-based affair. The relationship with the municipality has gone through different phases, but is now described as quite positive.

Shared destiny of actors within the municipalities: both presentations described the importance of the municipality in the further development of these innovations and stressed that innovators and municipalities have to realize their shared destiny and the interdependence that exists between general local development and innovative processes.

Long-term planning and common visions: political instability can sometimes impair conditions for long term planning. Establishing a common vision and common strategic goals within the municipalities is an adequate way of countering this instability. This addresses the leadership role of the municipal institution that is not very often acknowledged or developed.

Municipal mechanisms: there is a potential for municipalities to improve their handling of innovation processes through the further development of appropriate mechanisms to implement goals and take care of spin-offs in the innovation process. This should include the means to meet the existing business need for support in order to make better use of its potential.

⁷ See page 52 of the “Innovations in the Nordic Periphery” report.

⁸ See page 95 of the “Innovations in the Nordic Periphery” report.

Innovations as non-traditional activities: both Grót and Poseidon Simulation AS represent new practices, i.e. non-traditional activities, within traditionally fishery-dependent communities. They both encountered obstacles in the process of innovation, in the form of scepticism and partly negative attitudes, not only from the municipality, but also from some of the local inhabitants. Such barriers have not been insuperable, but they have impaired the innovative processes.

Perspectives on municipal leadership in innovation processes: Isafjördur, Iceland

The need to learn about innovation processes: The Mayor of Isafjördur, Halldór Halldórsson, stressed the need for an increased knowledge of innovation processes within the municipalities. This includes an understanding of how local actors may adapt “innovatively” to changes arising from globalization. One approach is through learning from other cases, including from other countries, such as those within the “Innovations in the Nordic Periphery” report.

The quest for a broader approach to challenges from the restructuring of fisheries: Halldórsson maintains that approaches within local development strategies need to be extended. The region where Isafjördur is located has undergone profound changes since the introduction of the quota system within the fisheries. Even so, more comprehensive strategies are needed to strengthen innovative capacities, i.e. strategies that encompass more than just that of influencing fishery related political processes and regulation systems. It is evident that people will stay where they have work, but it should be added that companies providing jobs will locate where people want to live. Also, a reduction in the volume of fish produced cannot be explained by the quota system alone: the application of new technology within fisheries, the prevention of fish stocking and enduring difficulties in recruiting people to work within the fish processing industry also explain some of the changes. Halldórsson showed how a smaller volume of fish has also stimulated innovative action, as this has led to a greater focus on the quality of products and the development of new products, e.g. sushi.

An emphasis on providing good services should be included in this broader strategy, as services are key factors for people and firms basing themselves in the municipality. Stimulating development through research and education in smaller localities is also part of a broader strategy; this will strengthen the innovative capacities of local firms and people, and should include the adaptation of local knowledge and competence to new activities, as well as attracting well-educated people

to the area. Creating jobs for young people with higher education is considered a principal challenge in staunching the population decrease.

Policies needed that define perceived municipal roles: even though municipal involvement in innovation processes uses considerable resources, and much of the effort does not pay off, such involvement has to be accepted as part of the municipal responsibility. Policies are needed to handle the complex and demanding involvement in innovation associated with municipal involvement. Ísafjörður's policy is to take on the role of an initiator and lead some projects at a political level before devolving them to others. In addition, the municipality intends to become involved in projects as a co-ordinator and by working at a political level, such as in the case of lobbying for a University in Ísafjörður.

Perspectives on municipal leadership in innovation processes: Vestvågøy, Lofoten, Norway

A "double-headed" municipal institution: A differentiation must be made between the political and administrative functions of the municipality when approaching the question of the role of this institutional level. In the presentation from Guri Ingebrigtsen, Mayor of Vestvågøy, the "double-headed" municipal institution was outlined: the administrative staff provide the expertise, while the politicians handle the democratic functions of the municipal institution.

The democratic institution: when handling innovative processes, politicians represent many political parties, and therefore different voices. The implication is that the role of politicians in innovation processes will also be that of a negotiator, within the frame of a democratic process. It is this democratic aspect that may be noticeable to other local actors when "the institution for slow processes" is visualized. A challenge facing the municipality is to communicate the need for "slow" democratic processes, while still meeting the expectations of innovators.

Municipal monitoring responsibility: responsibilities are placed on the municipal institution as a welfare state representative, to ensure that activities are run according to regulations and the law. This implies that the municipality has a double role in the handling of innovation processes, i.e. that of monitor and of service institution. This constitutes another aspect of the role of the municipality that is not easily communicated beyond the municipal building.

The function of vision in local development: a good and innovative society is one where differences in meanings, discussions and struggles stimulate the creation of new ideas. Local innovators in our communities need clear guidelines and signals from the municipality on

innovation policies and goals; this can cause difficulties but it is also understandable. At the same time, the democratic character of the municipal institution implies that common visions must be manifold. By means of negotiation, democracy has to allow for many visions to exist side by side.

Municipal leadership potential: the political role ascribed to the municipality makes this institution better suited for tactical than strategic planning. Another way of putting this is that a municipality is much better at problem-solving and acting than visionary leadership. Politicians should still aspire to provide stability and constantly review how political processes might be speeded up. There is a potential for municipal improvement in assuming more of a leadership role and expressing enthusiasm, also for innovative action.

Plenary discussions after the four presentations

Democratic processes – making them more efficient and/or creating understanding for the time they take? Democratic considerations have to be addressed when the municipality becomes involved in innovative processes, but there is potential for making political processes more efficient. Can politicians work more efficiently, e.g. by learning from the business sector about negotiation practices and decision-making, or through a restructuring of the political system at a local level? Is there a need for a better understanding on the part of innovators of the time needed for such democratic aspects to be addressed? The discussion reflected different perspectives about this on the part of actors from different sectors.



Plenary sessions at Røst Municipal Council meeting room on the first day. From left: Paul Rånes, Atle Kanstad, Britt Kjensli, Gunnar Thór Johannesson, Bjarne Pedersen, Gjermund Molund, Margretha Sólbjörg and Haldóra Ranghamar. (Photo and copyright: Sigurður Mar Halldórsson)

The facilitator role as a strategy to overcome municipal capacity obstacles: the work of politicians is often to cut costs, becoming “the one who cannot please everyone”. This points to an economic barrier and a double role of “pleaser” and “disappointer”, affecting the municipality’s

capacity to stimulate innovative processes. Strategies to overcome such barriers might be to prioritize the facilitator role of the municipality, as seen in Swedish cases in the research report, where municipalities have concentrated on setting up networks and arenas that are often more continuous, lifting innovation involvement out of the political arena.

Lack of capital: there is a continuous and widespread problem of getting capital into innovation processes, from banks and through public funding. An unwillingness to support new innovations on the part of the banks was mentioned, and was further discussed on the second day.



Pictures from the boat trip excursion to the lighthouse “Skomvær fyr” (right) on the Thursday afternoon. (Photo and copyright, Sigurður Mar Halldórsson and Halldór Halldórsson)

Open Space Workshop: a self-organizing method for discussions

The Open Space Workshop⁹ used on the second day of the workshop is a group work method that is especially designed to allow for the self-organizing of groups and themes to be discussed. The participants suggested twelve topics for discussions in groups. Some suggestions were combined, before all participants registered for six different group discussions, run within two sessions. At the end, all participants gave a short summing-up of their experiences from the group work, and some topics of interest were discussed in the plenary session.

Several points from the presentations and discussions on day one came up as suggestions for group discussions. But, crucially, this section allowed for an openness in approaching the over-arching theme of the workshop, i.e. *How can innovators and municipalities co-operate in a way which leads to positive local development?*

⁹ For more information about the Open Space World method used, see www.openspaceworld.org

The following topics were suggested for discussion in groups:

- 1: How we can create better communication between communities and innovators
- 2: Increasing/improving job selection
- 3: Raising the level of professionalism
- 4: Whether a mentality and culture for innovation in communities can be created
- 5: Local democracy and business development: conflict or interplay?
- 6: How to design a process to achieve common long-term goals between municipalities and industry
- 7: How to communicate better between different levels of interest (municipality – state and municipality – innovators)
- 8: Female innovators: how to find them and spend county money most efficiently
- 9: How can the municipal institution stimulate innovation?
- 10: How can we utilize in our municipalities what we learn here about innovative projects in other municipalities? By co-operation and networking?
- 11: Culture in terms of innovative projects
- 12: The development of creative industries.

Some suggested topics met with no response (i.e. nobody signed up for the topics), so these groups were cancelled. Six group discussions took place during the course of the two sessions:



Front: Petur Martin Petersen, Margretha Sólbjörg, Halldóra Ranghamar, and Olga Biskopstø, signing up for suggested group work discussions during the open space workshop section. (Photo and copyright: Sigurður Mar Halldórsson)

1: Can communities create their own innovative culture and mentality?

This group had eight participants. The initiator of this discussion topic was Arí Torsteinsson, mayor of Hornafjörður, Iceland.

Problem: Local innovative capacities are sometimes limited by local culture and a mentality that is sceptical, or does not see the need for change.

Mentality and culture can be managed: experience shows that the municipality can influence, manage and control local culture and mentality to some degree. If the local mentality is negative towards innovations, this may be rooted in a lack of understanding of change as something necessary.

The power of the leadership role: The municipal leadership can become more aware of their leadership role and make use of the possibilities offered by this role. A leader can simply *decide* to adopt a positive role concerning innovation. By systematically expressing positive attitudes orally, in addition to being at the forefront of new thinking, it is more likely that the public will follow. Part of such positive management is to communicate positively about general matters as well, such as the employment situation. Some innovation stories report that it would have been a great help if the municipal leadership had assumed more of a leadership role, in the sense of expressing positive attitudes towards the new initiative, in the start-up phase of their projects.

Communicating innovation activities: a challenge for many municipalities is to improve local communications concerning innovations that do take place. This would stimulate learning and possibly inspire people to open their eyes and contribute to a proactive atmosphere.

Training of municipal employees: in order to develop a capacity for professional leadership, municipal employees require training. This may also include training in understanding innovation processes, to be able to communicate with innovators and obtain the necessary tools to handle innovation challenges.

Innovation on the school agenda: the systematic creation of a spirit of innovation could be underpinned through the school system, by introducing innovations as a topic for children and young people. This would stimulate them in understanding the possibility of creating jobs for themselves, for example by developing their hobby into a business. The earlier one is introduced to this way of thinking, the better.

2: Creative industries – culture as innovation

There were two initiators for this combined group work: Guri Ingebrigtsen, Mayor of Vestvågøy, Lofoten, suggested “culture industries” and Gisli Sverrir Arnason, leader of the Cultural Centre at Nyheimar, Hornafjörður, Iceland, suggested “culture as innovation”. The group had ten participants.

Problem: The innovation potential of culture is not acknowledged – not as a possible industry in its own right, nor as a

stimulator for local innovative thinking, nor as a supporter and fellow player for local industry, nor as part of the welfare infrastructure.

Culture can be an industry: it must be acknowledged from all parties within the municipalities that cultural activities can sometimes be developed into “creative industries”, as shown in the presentation of Grót on day one, and in the example of the cultural centre at Nyheimar, Hornafjörður, Iceland. A long-term perspective is required when talking about cultural industries, but such activities can result in jobs.

Need for research on and education concerning the cultural industry relationship: local actors in all sectors lack an understanding of the links and bridges between economic and cultural approaches to an understanding of innovative processes and local development. This could be met by offering education opportunities to work in such combined fields. There is also a need for more research on culture, marketing and innovations, including the need for quantitative research to learn more about these intermixed processes.

Alliances with local industry: cultural activists’ alliances with local industry might be one way to gain support for cultural innovation. Within such a co-operation, the interdependency between culture, identity and the marketing of more or less traditional products can be mediated.

Municipal organization of the cultural sector: the interdependency between cultural and general industrial development can also be accentuated by the way in which a municipality chooses to approach the cultural sector. The municipal co-organization of industrial and cultural development is one possibility. This action must be modified by examining unsuccessful attempts at co-organization of this kind, which have undermined the importance of culture by drowning it in what becomes a one-sided focus on industrial development.

“Culture Bank” financing, networking and learning: a bank similar to that of the “Women’s Bank” in Bangladesh, and latterly in Lofoten is a suitable model for the support of cultural innovation. This network-credit bank model offers limited economic support and access to networks, as well as confident and relevant contexts for discussion and learning. This is one way of meeting common challenges for cultural innovators, which include: the need for relatively small levels of financial support, the need to understand the long-term perspective concerning the development of the activity, the need for learning and support via access to networks constituted by other actors within the cultural field, and the need for access to economic and industrial development competence.

Arenas at county and municipal level for discussing culture: the cultural sector is characterized by its fragmentation. One challenge is

therefore to define those who represent cultural views. One way of meeting this challenge is to create arenas to discuss culture at a county and/or municipal level.

Municipal support for successful artists: sometimes, local artists are recognized in their work and achieve success at a national and international level. These artists often move on and out, which has both positive and negative consequences. The municipal focus should be on the possibility of arranging for successful artists to stay on.

3: Stimulating innovation and improving communication

Petur Martin Peterson, representing the municipality of Fuglafjørður in the Faroe Islands, and Martha Myri, leader of the Faroese research team, were the initiators of this combined group work, with ten participants.

Problem: central obstacles to local innovations taking place are: a lack of trust between local actors, problems of capacity and organizational challenges within smaller municipal institutions, and mental obstacles regarding a comprehension of the need for innovation.

A leading municipal role in changing attitudes: in order to overcome mental obstacles to innovative activities, municipal representatives could develop more positive attitudes towards innovation by stating, "We want innovation" and taking a leading role in such processes. This must be reflected in policy-making, election campaigns and public statements, and should also include an expansion of established activities.

Municipal long-term policies for innovation: to meet the challenges constituted by a lack of trust, problems of capacity and mental obstacles, the municipal institution needs to develop long-term policies on innovation: policies that do not fluctuate according to who is in office. Long-term plans should direct how to attract entrepreneurs and stimulate innovative action, and how to create networks with funding institutions or with other innovators. In terms of funding, a municipal board could be organized to deal with innovation proposals. The challenge is that such strategic planning may, in itself, require more administrative staff in smaller municipalities.

A municipal arena for innovators to turn to: to stimulate better co-operation between the municipal institution and other local actors in an efficient manner, the municipal institution should have an arena or contact person that people with innovative ideas can turn to.

The professionalization of municipal staff: in order to meet demands from innovators outside the public sector, municipal staff should be professionalized by means of training in leadership and

communication, and in legal, financial and business development fields. Training programmes could be arranged for municipal authorities on assuming office.

Innovations on the school agenda: one way of overcoming mental obstacles to innovations taking place is to introduce innovation policies within local schools. Children and young people should learn that sometimes you can, or have to, create jobs yourself.

Municipal efforts to improve communications: The 'lack of trust' obstacle might be dismantled by municipal efforts to improve communication between municipal authorities, innovators and investors, as well as focusing on the importance of the development potential of existing innovations. Meetings and conferences should be arranged between the municipal authorities, local inhabitants, successful innovators and investors. Internet home pages or discussion pages are also relevant tools for improving such communications.

4: How can we utilize in our municipalities what we learn here about innovative projects in other municipalities? By co-operation and networking?

This group had seven participants, and the initiator was Halldór Halldórsson, mayor of Isafjörður, Iceland.

Problem: Local actors within all sectors need to learn more about what it takes to stimulate local development and strengthen innovative capacities. One way of learning is through networking and learning within networks, especially within the Nordic periphery. One challenge, then, is to pass on the learning and experiences from meetings like the one at Røst to other actors back home.

Follow up co-operation established at Røst: one outcome of the Røst meeting will be establishing new co-operation through the concrete contacts made; participants must follow up this co-operation after returning home. One example is the Grót music organisation's annual rock music festival, which will collaborate with a festival in Isafjörður next summer, as well as presenting Grót as a cultural innovation to a broader audience while they are there.

Spreading ideas and learning from Røst: participants have exchanged ideas that they will now discuss with local actors at home. One particular perception from this workshop is that there is a shared destiny between participants present at Røst – there are other municipalities facing similar problems. It is important that the ordinary citizens in the different municipalities gain this same experience. Another observation was the possible payoffs of recounting these success stories.

It is important that people in power in our home regions and nations also learn about the project.

Further presentations from researchers: there was a request for the researchers to continue the dissemination process within each country by communicating directly, in different forms, with each municipality involved in the “Institutions and Innovations” research project.

Extractions and translations from the research report: smaller pieces could be written up as extractions from the report, translated into different Nordic languages.

The financing of follow-up activities: the researchers should make provision in their future research project budgets for the financing of a broader dissemination process. Municipalities and other organizations ought to be willing to co-finance ‘communication’ work of this kind.

Further development of a Northern Nordic trans-regional network: there was a general interest in continuing the development of a trans-regional network of actors after the Røst workshop. The network should include representatives from all sectors, reflecting the participation at the workshop. A vital motivation factor for this is experiencing a shared destiny and learning potential through co-operation within the region. Another factor is the impression that actors within the region sometimes compete over different topics when they should actually be co-operating. The responsibility for keeping the network going lies with actors from all sectors, including the researchers.

5: Female innovations

This group had five participants. The initiator, Britt Kjensli, represented the Department of Planning and Industrial Development in Nordland.

Problem: one initiative in the enduring challenge of persuading women to stay and attracting women to settle in peripheral municipalities is public support for female innovators. Experience shows that there are particular obstacles connected with stimulating female innovation through public funding. This concerns how to approach and get through to female innovators in efficient ways, including how to frame public funding systems so that they are directed towards female innovators.

Focus on networks and environments supporting female innovators: one important strategic dimension in public funding systems relating to innovation is whether funding should be directed towards individuals or the development of supportive networks and environments. Experience shows that female innovators gain a lot from being connected to female innovation networks, an environment for learning, confident

discussions and an exchange of ideas. These are arguments in favour of funding systems that are directed towards the development and support of female innovators' networks and environments. The Women's Bank, a network credit bank applied to Lofoten, has had good experiences of focusing on network development and setting up arenas for mutual learning between female innovators.

Distributing money directly to projects and using the municipality as an adviser: another important strategic dimension is whether to distribute the money directly to projects, or at a municipal level for further distribution. Generally, experience shows that directing funding at a municipal level is inefficient and involves too much bureaucracy when the amount of money is small. Nevertheless, in some situations it might be efficient and necessary to ask for information and advice from the municipalities, to find an appropriate recipient milieu and/or actor.

Women need motivation to apply: since female innovators seem to hesitate to apply, for various reasons, one specific task is to motivate women to apply for funding of this kind. The municipal or regional authorities can play an important role in contacting female actors and informing, helping and motivating them in the application process. This administrative level could also be asked to report at a county or national level about actors within the field who might be contacted specifically and asked to apply for funding. The question of motivating female applications also addresses the need for networks and environments to constitute arenas where women can find motivation and help of this kind.

Framing public funding projects by addressing typically small-scale female innovation: female innovation is characterized by its relatively small scale, with less risk-taking and an apparent hesitation on the part of women in enlarging their business. Public funding initiatives need to address these characteristics. One way of doing so, and motivating female innovators at the same time, is to address female innovations that are already established. In order to explore the phenomenon of female hesitation in enlarging businesses, it might also be interesting to form projects that focus on this theme in its own right.

6: Long-term development, municipal communication – innovation, democracy and business development

The two initiators for this combined group work were Bjarne Pedersen, Poseidon Simulation AS, Lofoten and Asbjørn Røiseland, a member of the Lofoten research team. The group had fourteen participants.

Problem: Communication and co-operation barriers impoverish the municipal-innovator interplay. Actors within and outside the municipal institution represent different cultures and operate within systems that are sometimes run according to different logics. The sources of understanding of some of these challenges are found in the democratic character of the municipal institution.

Overcome the barrier of political instability: municipal innovation policies and approaches may change between election periods and appear unpredictable to innovators. This creates instability in the long-term development of innovations. To meet the need for the long-term planning of innovation processes, often involving a high level of risk, the municipality should develop clear goals and policies concerning how to deal with innovations. In this way, political instability can be overcome and industrial innovators' potential fears concerning co-operation with the municipality may be reduced.

Overcome communication barriers: innovators and municipal employees/leaders do not always understand each other's needs. In approaching the municipality with an idea, an innovator may encounter a lack of understanding concerning the time and effort required before the business can be started up. Communication must be considered a tool for co-operation in this relationship. One suggestion was to establish arenas and forums where both parties could meet and discuss ideas and plans for the development of innovations, together with businesses that are already established.

Overcome cultural differences: to handle possible cultural differences between industrial actors and municipal employees, communication within such arenas depends on acceptance from both parties of the different roles represented. In general, the point of departure is very different for the parties involved. The role of the municipality is not only to stimulate local development but also to handle democratic aspects of such processes and define overlapping interests. The communication within such arenas must also handle a tendency for different roles to result in different perspectives concerning whose interests should constitute the basis for this communication.

A more efficient handling of democratic processes through organization and professionalization: the time needed to process innovative requests by the municipality often exceeds the expectations and needs of the innovators. Since democracy requires that many voices must be heard, the municipal institution must think of new ways of organising its involvement in innovative processes. This also relates to

the need for professionalism concerning industrial development within the municipal organization.

Municipal assistance for innovators in communicating at county and central government levels: local development also depends on a common understanding of development and innovation between different levels of governance, i.e. the municipality, the county and the ministries. Small municipalities themselves experience the difficulties involved in understanding how central government operates and thinks. It is an important task for the municipality also to be aware of the challenges experienced by local innovators outside the public sector in relating to central government institutions' changing policies and signals.

Need for local decision-making power: as in the case of politics and banking, it is important as far as the whole Nordic peripheral region is concerned that local representatives should have the power to contribute to and stimulate local development, and not appear in local arenas without decision-making power like "neutered cats". One general obstacle for industrial innovation within the Nordic periphery is a short-term commitment from the banks. There is a need for long-term investment policies from the banks as well, to support long-term industrial development. As part of the process of economic globalization over the past few years, the banking system has centralized its authority. Because of this, the knowledge of local problems and opportunities, e.g. challenges specific to the fishing industry of the Nordic periphery, are now limited at a decision-making level.



A short visit to the dry cod production hall at Røst Sjømat AS (Røst Seafood) on the Friday afternoon. (Photo and copyright: Halldór Halldórsson)

Closing session: plenary discussion

West Nordic municipal friendship agreements: the interest in developing a formalized West Nordic co-operation at a municipal level could be followed up by making use of the already established format of friendship agreements. By now, many municipalities have such

agreements, often with partners located in the south and outside the West Nordic region. Partners are often bigger towns that lack shared interests and challenges with the municipalities of the Nordic periphery. Municipal friendship agreements could be developed in new ways, with clearer frameworks, defining shared intentions and goals. Shared challenges concerning development issues and learning potential should be highlighted. In defining this co-operation as a project, it could be run for a limited period of time, focusing on a small variety of activities and specific joint projects that reflect a potential for further contact.

A request for network development within the whole northern Nordic periphery: Nordic periphery municipalities share many of the same challenges. This also includes the East Nordic periphery described in the “Innovations in the Nordic Periphery” report. Municipalities or other local actors may not have the capacity to assume responsibility for the co-ordination and leading of network development within this region. Nevertheless, they can see the benefit of such networks being established over a period of time. Their request is for others, e.g. research institutions, regionally oriented organizations, national ministries or those at Nordic Council level to initiate and lead such a process.

Municipal contributions underpinning positive thinking on local development issues: the cultural and social “climate” or “atmosphere” for innovation may change within a municipality. The municipal institution can contribute to a positive change through strategic planning, establishing a shared vision for the municipality as a whole, and by making arrangements for politicians, industrial leaders and children to learn about innovative processes.

The restructuring of the banking system: decision-making power must be brought back to a decentralized level within the banking system, and/or specialized banking institutions must be established. Since the decision-making authority of the banks was centralized, some of the former knowledge and understanding of conditions specific to the locality and local industry is no longer present at a decision-making level. This may also involve specialization, as we see from Icelandic examples of specialized fishery banks and other examples of such specialization within the Swedish banking system.



The closing plenary discussion. From left: Torill Nyseth, Eiríkur á Húsamörk, Asbjørn Røiseland and Alf Ivar Samuelsen. (Photo & copyright: Sigurður Mar Halldórsson)

Main conclusions of the Røst workshop

As is clear by now, the participants at the Røst workshop indicated many important topics for innovation activities and made many suggestions as to how to improve local innovative capacity. To a greater degree than might have been expected, the Røst workshop brought about further discussion on topics covered by the “Innovations in the Nordic Periphery” research project:

Addressing the municipal level: culture, learning, municipal leadership role and communication

The open setting gave additional impetus to the discussion on municipal innovator interplay than had been described in interviews during the research project. Focusing on cultural barriers between local actors, learning potential, the municipal leadership role and communication challenges, various potentials for the strengthening of local innovative capacity at a municipal level were described:

Stimulating a local innovation mentality: innovation is a matter of attitude towards the creation of something new, seeing possibilities and welcoming change. Several examples from municipalities within this region show how such a mentality may be stimulated by means of different municipal initiatives based on an acknowledgement and underpinning of the municipal leadership role.

Strengthening local communication: several suggestions were offered as to how the municipality might unlock innovation potential by acknowledging and meeting communication challenges involved in co-operation with innovators from outside the public sector. This includes the recognition and handling of possible cultural differences and role differences between local actors.

Handling political instability: innovators outside the public sector relate to a political system at a municipal level that may shift between election periods. This constitutes an element of instability connected to the municipality as a co-operative partner. The municipality should be aware of this factor and meet the challenges it presents. Possibilities for strategic planning could be considered.

Competence development: innovators outside the public sector would benefit from any strengthening of municipal competence, and this issue should be included in the development plans for municipal organization. The levels of competence required include leadership competence, expertise on legal matters, a better knowledge of business development issues and handling decisions made at a county and governmental level.

Municipal recognition and communication of the role of culture: the municipal leadership should assume a greater responsibility in highlighting the potential for strengthened innovation capacity by acknowledging the different roles performed by culture in the field of innovation. Culture may be a potential industry in its own right, as seen from several examples in this research project. Culture can also stimulate local innovative thinking and support an interplay with local industry, in addition to being part of the welfare infrastructure.

Addressing other decision-making levels: learning from bottom-up perspectives

The pragmatic setting of the workshop not only offered input into how the workshop participants and their colleagues back home could improve their work on innovation on their own and within the frameworks offered. Questions and topics also indicated that it was important to direct requests relating to their innovative capacities at other decision-making levels as well:

A broader approach, to grasp the innovative potential of the periphery: actors within this field recognize the relevance of a broader approach to innovation, including all the social spheres of the community and the small-scale innovations that are evidently present within these communities. This approach grasps the interwoven networks and development processes that constitute a dynamic in how innovation processes should be addressed in the municipalities. This perspective must be added to public debate on innovation, in order to encompass the true capacity for transformation and growth within the periphery.

Meeting requests for competence, guidance and financing: the workshop also explored enduring challenges relating to competence, guidance and financing, topics that are already on the agenda of international, governmental and regional programmes, and organizations involved in regional and local innovation development issues. Nevertheless, the impression given by participants at the Røst workshop is that such programmes and organization are to some degree out of the scope of and out of reach for actors within the peripheral municipalities of the Nordic countries. In their need for finance, competence and guidance in developing innovations, they do not refer to these institutions. This may be explained by the overall theme for the workshop, which focused to some degree on processes going on within the municipality; nevertheless, since other external processes were included, the absence of such institutions within the discussions is striking. The international, national and regional programmes and institutions mentioned need to consider the potential for better interaction

with peripheral innovators. With reference to the previous section, such considerations may include reflecting on the innovation approaches used.

The vital role of the municipality in innovative processes: it still needs to be pointed out to these other levels of decision-making that failing to see the vital role of the municipality, and failing to focus on its capacity for involvement in innovative processes, would contradict the message from the actors involved. Tools and approaches relevant to the strengthening of local innovative capacity certainly involve the municipal institution. Even though criticism and suggestions for improvement are directed at a municipal level, this institutional level is nevertheless always referred to as a vital and central actor in local innovative processes. This also confirms the local perception that the municipality is perceived as committed in general terms to the destiny of the local community as a whole.

The power of the Nordic dimension: finally, a clear message from the participants at Røst is that Nordic co-operation does matter. Actors in municipalities within the Nordic periphery seem to have experienced a shared destiny and see a potential for learning and co-operation through the development of transnational networks. From their perspective, such learning and co-operation would stimulate innovative capacities in the northern periphery. Nordic, governmental and regional institutions should recognize the potential of a Nordic co-operation of the kind described here, and consider their own roles in a possible further network development between Nordic periphery municipalities.

Appendix

Table 1: Municipalities and innovations included in the research project, distributed by sector.

<i>Sector</i>					
	Business	Public	Civil	Other	Total
Tornio	Steel Studio	Border City	Bothnian Market	-	3
Ylitornio	Concrete products	Elderly Gym	Shooting Centre	Kantele instruments (B)	4
Pello	Long Winged' village shop	Lively Life mun. plan	Across river marriages	Science history site (B)	4
Kolari	Health Hotel	Tourism strategy	Village house	Mountain Opera (C)	4
Muonio	Holiday Centre	Ski trails	Houswives organisation	-	3
Enontekiö	Holiday Camp	Distance education	Ice fishing event	Sámi Culture Centre (P)	4
Kiruna	Stone cutting centre	MRI Space and Env.	Sámi Dev. Centre	-	3
Pajala	Electronic industry	Care of Disabled	Village tourism	-	3
Övertorneå	Potato processing	Strategic mobilisation	Arctic march	-	3
Haparanda	Business incubator	Barents Road	Community feast	-	3
Kalix	Evonet industrial partners	UniverCity	Villages cooperation	-	3
Storfjord	-	Disabled employment	Market event revival	-	2
Kåfjord	Coastal tourism	Homepage	Indigenous festival	-	3
Kautokeino	Mobile phones centre	Planning and herding	Music organization	-	3
Røst	Cod farming	-	Italian friendshintown	New hotel (B)	3
Vestvågøy	High-tech sea navigation	Viking museum	-	Food production (B)	3
Isafjördur	Snerpa Internet	School-family office	-	Multicultural centre	3
Hornafjördur	Galdur Internet	Nyheimar Centre	-	Arts Centre (P)	3
Leirvikar	Marine products	Old people's home	Cultural house	-	3
Göta	Normek	Old people's home	Musical association	-	3
Fuglafjördur	Fish protein	Bus route	Cultural house	-	3
Total	20	20	18	8	66

Table 2: Participants at the Røst workshop

	<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Institution</i>
ICELAND	Hornafjörður	Sigurður Mar Halldórsson	Galdur ehf.
	Ísafjörður	Björn Davíðsson	Snerpa
	Ísafjörður	Halldór Halldórsson	Municipality
	Hornafjörður	Gísli Sverrir Árnason	Nyheimar
	Hornafjörður	Ari Torsteinsson	Municipality
	Reykjavík	Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson	Iceland University
	Reykjavík	Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir	Iceland University
	Reykjavík	Vilhjalmur Egilsson	Icelandic Ministry of Fisheries
THE FAROE ISLANDS	Fuglafjörður	Petur Martin Petersen	Municipality
	Leirvík	Margretha Sólbjörg	Municipality
	Leirvík	Eirikur a Husamørk	Faroe Marine Products
	Gøta	Haldóra Ranghamar	Municipality
	Gøta	Jon Tyril	Grót
	Klaksvík	Martha Mýri	Center for Local and Regional Development
	Klaksvík	Olga Biskopstø	Center for Local and Regional Development
	Klaksvík	Gestur Hovgaard	Center for Local and Regional Development
NORWAY	Røst	Paul Rånes	Municipality
	Røst	Gjermund Molund	Municipality
	Vestvågøy	Guri Ingebrigtsen	Municipality
	Vestvågøy	Bjarne Pedersen	Poseidon Simulations AS
	Røst	Irene Johansen	Røst bryggethotell
	Røst	Geir Børre Johansen	Røst Seafood AS
	Bodø	Asbjørn Røiseland	Bodø College
	Tromsø	Torill Nyseth	University of Tromsø
	Tromsø	Brynhild Granås	University of Tromsø
	Vestvågøy	Atle Kanstad	Lofotrådet
	Flakstad	Alf Ivar Samuelsen	Municipality
	Bodø	Britt Kjensli	Nordland County
SWEDEN	Uppsala	Cecilia Waldenström	Agricultural University of Sweden

Programme

The New Nordic Periphery

Municipal Learning through Local Innovations

International Workshop

Røst, Lofoten, Norway, 22-24 September 2004

All meetings took place in the Municipal Building in Røst.

Wednesday 22 September

19:00	Departure from Bodø by chartered plane
19:30	Arrival at Røst by plane
20:15	Welcome to Røst by Irene Johansen, Røst bryggethotell
20:30	DINNER

Thursday 23 September

09:00-09:15	Opening by Paul Raanes, Mayor of Røst
09:15-09:45	Introduction to the workshop by Torill Nyseth, University of Tromsø and Cecilia Waldenström, Swedish University of Agriculture, Uppsala
	Presentation of participants
09:45-10:30	Presentation of main results from the NORDREGIO research project 'Institutions and Innovations' by Torill Nyseth, University of Tromsø
10:30-11:00	COFFEE
11:00-11:30	The history behind <i>Grót</i> in the Faroese Islands, including a consideration of the role of the municipality, by Jón Tyril
11:30-12:00	The history behind <i>Poseidon Simulations</i> , Lofoten, including a consideration of the role of the municipality, by Bjarne Pedersen
12:00-13:30	LUNCH at the hotel
13:30-14:00	Perspectives of the municipal leadership in innovation processes, by Mayor Halldór Halldórsson, Ísafjörður
14:00-14:30	Perspectives of the municipal leadership in innovation processes, by Mayor Guri Ingebrigtsen, Vestvågøy
14:30-15:00	Plenary discussion
15:30	Departure on an excursion
19:00	Arrival after excursion
20:00	DINNER
21:00	Local entertainment

Friday 24 September

Theme for discussion: How can innovators and municipalities co-operate in a way that will lead to positive local development?

09:00-09:45	Introduction to group work, formulation of questions and groups
09.45-11.00	Group session 1
11.15-12.30	Group session 2
12:30-14.00	LUNCH
14:00-15.30	Plenary presentations, the establishment of priorities, closing remarks relating to the group work sessions
15:30-16.00	COFFEE
16:00-16:30	Summing-up by Torill Nyseth and by Haldora Ranghamar, Mayor of Gøta
19:00	Departure by plane to Bodø

For participants travelling from abroad:

21:00 Dinner at Restaurant Svengårds, Bodø

Accommodation 24.09.04-25.09.04 at Comfort Hotell Grand, Bodø

Saturday 25 September, morning: departure from Bodø to destinations outside Norway

The municipality of Røst is characterized by its smallness, fishery dependence and peripheral location in the Lofoten region of Northern Norway. These are all characteristics that reflect key elements shared in the West Nordic area. This was one of the reasons why Røst was chosen as a location for the users' workshop, "The New Nordic Periphery. Municipal Learning Through Local Innovations", which took place on 22-24 September 2004. Thirty participants from Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Norway gathered to discuss the innovative capacities of the West Nordic periphery. Municipal leaders, innovators and researchers were offered the possibility of exchanging experiences and ideas, to learn about and develop West Nordic trans-regional networks.

The Røst Declaration is written as a supplement to the research report "Innovations in the Nordic Periphery". The declaration points to challenges of particular interest, seen from the users' point of view, in stimulating innovative activities in the West Nordic periphery. In particular, participants addressed the relationship between the municipal institution and "innovation activists". The declaration is aimed at municipalities and innovators in the Nordic northern periphery, as well as the relevant ministries of all Nordic countries, other important private and governmental organizations and institutions within the field, and research institutions.



Department of Planning and Community Studies,
The Faculty of Social Science, University of Tromsø

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