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JOURNAL OF NORDREGIO

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Researching Regional Change

THE SOCIAL CHANGES experienced by the Nordic countries in the past few years may, from an outsider's perspective, look minor. Many still assume that some kind of Nordic model is still in operation, a model that shelters the northern corner of Europe from economic turmoil and cultural clashes. This however is no longer the case. Firstly, the question of whether or not a Nordic model of societal design and political integration could really ever have been said to exist is open to question. Moreover, observers of Nordic politics today cannot fail to register the strong tendency towards political, economic and even cultural heterogeneity across Norden.

In 1994 the split between the EU countries of Sweden, Finland and Denmark on the one hand and the EEA countries of Iceland and Norway on the other was settled. Thus an important institutional divide formed within the realm of the Nordic family of nations. The 1990s also saw the upsurge of economic instability particularly in Finland with the downfall of its former trade partner the USSR. It was not however until the end of the decade that such problems became more visible in Sweden with the structural crisis sending Sweden – in terms of measuring economic strength – form the top of the international ranks of economic performance down to a rather unglamorous middle-ranking position in European terms.

A creeping demographic imbalance is also now detectable in many Nordic regions, stemming from long-term movements manifest as a natural deficit and an aging of the population in many, particularly peripheral, regions. In fact, Sweden is already now dependent upon foreign migration to keep up its population figures, and the other Nordic countries will follow suit in the years to come.

Added to this is the fact that the political homogeneity of the Nordic sphere seems now to be at stake. During the last few months an ideological dispute on the desirability of immigration and on the ways in which to handle immigration as questions of cultural and political importance emerged as a significant

issue between Denmark and Sweden giving rise to a number of bitter exchanges.

Clearly, these important traits of societal change are also reflected on the regional level. As such, some three years ago Nordregio set out to research the “future challenges and institutional preconditions for regional development policy” as the research programme of the institute came to be named. In this research programme the regional consequences of the broad trends of globalisation, environmental concerns, and institutional change were the focus of interest.

In this issue of the *Journal of Nordregio*, we highlight some of the conclusions of the first phase of this research programme. At the same time as the programme reports on its first phase, a revised programme enters its second phase. The original strands of globalisation and environmental concerns are given the more precise labels of innovation and sustainability whereas the new theme of demography is taken up to assist the political and administrative preoccupations with all aspects of population issues that should be given increased attention in the years ahead.

Thus, a couple of projects are now being reported, while a number of new projects are being set up. Hopefully this Nordic effort at cross-border regional research will contribute to the further elucidation of the mechanism that operates the social fabric of the Nordic regions and the subsequent political strategies it spawns.

It should not be forgotten that, while the experimentation with styles and forms of regional management is visible in almost all Nordic countries, optimism with regard to the success of the political and administrati-

ve bodies operating in the regional fields of governance strongly varies. Many regions struggle with poor budgets and depressing demographic and economic trends, while others, notably the Nordic capital areas and a few other urban strongholds, reap the fruits of internationally conditioned structural change. These are not trends from which research can save any country or region. Nor, in the short term, can research alter the national ambitions and ideologies governing political schemes and administrative cultures.

In fact, Sweden is already now dependent upon foreign migration to keep up its population figures, and the other Nordic countries will follow suit in the years to come.

What research can do however is to point to instances of policy success and policy failure thus potentially opening up a learning process that may result in more promising and robust policy regimes being adopted in the long run. Furthermore research should also be able to detect fallacies, trends and preconditions moulding the conditions for regional policy development so as to bring this debate back to the centre of national political interest.

In Norway, this is currently the case. Regional politics is hot stuff. One could ascribe the difference between Norway and the other Nordic countries in this regard to different national traditions and interests, but it could also be worthwhile to ask whether researchers working on regional policy matters are clever enough to make their research relevant to the current political debate. Social science has an obligation to be relevant. As such Nordic regional research should see to generate a more general debate than has hitherto been the case. ■

Positive Evaluation of Finnish Urban Research Programme

The Finnish Research Programme for Urban Studies 1998-2001 has been given a positive evaluation by an international team of experts. Though the evaluators note more attention should have been given to the dissemination of results to policy-makers.

by Jon P. Knudsen

A team consisting of professors Susan Smith (UK), Arnold R. Alanen (US) and Doreen Massey (UK) has, after having been invited by the Research Council for Biosciences and Environment of the Academy of Finland, expressed its view on the recently concluded Finnish research programme for urban studies (URBS) carried out between 1998 and 2001. The team was asked to pay special attention to:

- the functioning of the programme
- evaluation of the scientific and

the administrative co-ordination of the programme

- scientific activity, production, progress and impact
- recommendations for the future

The overall evaluation is very positive, pointing to the programme as seminal in the development of urban studies in Finland. Moreover, an impressive number of Master's and PhD students have benefited from the programme, even though a rather meagre financial basis initially caused problems when it came to finalising all of the projects adopted. The team was impressed by the academic standards of the research

undertaken, though it did comment on the apparent lack of a stronger European or international emphasis in the topics that were dealt with.

There has, as the evaluators also note, been a strong tendency for the ministries involved in the programme to often be concerned only with results pertaining to their own field of policy, a finding that may help to explain why there remains a "demand for wider and more detailed dissemination of findings to policy-makers", a statement that made the team themselves advocate for the provision of extra resources to be targeted on this process. ■

Norwegian Regional Minister Redirects Policy Goals

by Jon P. Knudsen

Firmly established as one of the main pillars of Norwegian regional policy rhetoric, the goal of maintaining the settlement patterns in all parts or corners of the country is finally given an explicit interpretation. The minister of local and regional affairs, Erna Solberg (cons.) in a report to the Norwegian parliament on April 30, defined the geographical level of

this goal to be "landsdeler" comparable to the regional equivalent of NUTS 2 in international statistical terminology.

She also stated the need to develop functional regions based on strong regional urban centres and argued that decisions on where to live or locate resided solely with individuals and firms. These formulations are all viewed as a significant redirection of Norwegian regional policy away from its historical, and in a

European context rather unique, identification with the geographical periphery and small-scale settlement aspirations. ■



Erna Solberg

Finland Beats Norway on Responding to Globalisation Challenges

by Jon P. Knudsen

In a survey study conducted by post.doc. Eli Moen for the national Norwegian programme Power and Democracy, a comparison between Finland and Norway concerning the ability to respond to globalisation challenges has been made looking both at the allocation of national resources and the national policies pursued. The study points at the striking differences between the two countries.

While Finland has set out to re-arrange its industrial profile and couple its research resources to the effort of innovation and economic renewal, Norway relies on the Petroleum Fund for securing its economic future and furthermore lacks a consistent and cross-sectoral policy for economic innovation. Thus the 90s have made Finland and Norway European counterparts as far as innovation and economic change is concerned. "Norway has not met the economic globalisation with any kind of proactive or consistent policy. The policy

pursued is to a large extent introvert, almost hostile to industrial concerns, whereas the overall economic policy has remained more or less unchanged", the report concludes.

The Norwegian tragedy, the author finds in its recent economic success hampering the country's ability to change its political institutions and priorities. The R&D sector is depicted as shattered and with little consistency, reflecting traits that also characterise the state and its lacking ability to leave old political paradigms behind. ■

Jørgen Gren Launches New Book on European Regionalisation

by Jon P. Knudsen

With the open-ended title "The Perfect Region?" (Den perfekta regionen?), the Brussels-based Swedish bureaucrat, scholar and writer, Jørgen Gren, has added one more title to his already impressive list of writings on European political matters and regional questions. The book, which will appear later this month, promises an outline of the European project of regionalisation as an interplay between states, regions and the European integration process thus pitching itself as a book more of ideas than of polemical stances.

Clearly, the perfect region will never exist, but the author nevertheless highlights two prerequisites that any competitive region must meet,

one consisting of the material or institutional assets and the other made up of the regional attitudes, essentially then, the hardware and the software of the region in question. The author sees these two, in combination with scale and location, as the basic determinants for a successful regional future development and then links aspects of leadership and managerial style to the software leg of the regional set-up.

The book, which deals with the EU 15 plus the EEA countries, is written with a broad audience in mind and exemplifies the historical trajectory from the Europe of regions of the mid-1980s to the present situation of a competitive regionalisation within an international political framework of a loosely regulated globalised economy. ■

CALL FOR TENDER

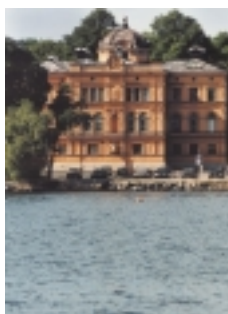
The Nordic Council of Ministers' research programme "Future Challenges and Institutional Preconditions for Regional Development Policy" commissioned to Nordregio, Stockholm, hereby invites tenders to submit their project proposals for the second phase of the research programme. The budget for the year 2002 is DKK 2 000 000 with an expected prolongation of the programme into 2003 and 2004 involving a comparable budget for each of these years.

The research programme consists of three main thematic strands, namely innovation, demography and sustainability, all of them being relevant as they relate to institutional change on a comparative regional scale within Nordic society.

A paper containing guidelines, a detailed programme description and desired project approaches can be found on Nordregio's website at www.nordregio.se or ordered from Nordregio (tel.: +4684635400). Project proposals should be received no later than September 15, 2002. Questions concerning the programme should be addressed to Jon P. Knudsen, jon.p.knudsen@nordregio.se

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NORDREGIO
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Spatial Development

in short

Denmark

■ The Government announces a new strategy for regional economic growth to supplement its national strategy. The new regional strategy will be proposed to the Parliament during its spring session 2003.

■ On May 16 the Government decided on the removal on two Government institutions from Copenhagen to other locations. The institutions concerned are the National archives, the Forest and Nature Agency and a newly created Security Agency.

■ On May 27 The Ministry of Interior Affairs presented its annual regional report to the Parliament. The report was lively debated, especially concerning the prospects and livelihood related to the peripheral corners of the country.

Finland

■ A new bill on regional policy was passed in the Parliament this spring and will come into effect on January 1, 2003.

■ Reduced tax on labour will be introduced in a few municipalities in then Finnish periphery.

■ About 100 governmental jobs related to police administration will be relocated from Helsinki to Rovaniemi.

■ The Government has taken its position regarding the EU post 2006. It wants the basic structural arrangements relating to objective 1 to remain unchanged. The same desire goes for the amount of money spent.

Sweden

■ The process of compensating local communities for employment losses due to disarmament and military reorganisation came to an end this spring.

in short

Iceland

■ The regional plan adopted earlier this year will need to find its modes of implementation during the months ahead.

■ There is turmoil at the Regional Institute in Sauðarkrúkur. The managing director has resigned as has the chairman of the board. The crisis came after a long history of tension between the institute and its chairman.

■ Norsk Hydro has resigned from the aluminum smelter project in East Iceland. As a new possible partner for the project is mentioned the Canadian company, Alcoa. These changes are not expected to disturb the hydroelectric power plant project also planned in the area.

Norway

■ The minister of local and regional affairs, Erna Solberg, made a statement to the Parliament on April 30 on regional policy being by most observers interpreted as a realignment with more realistic goals in the regional policy.

■ The vast gas project off the coast of Finnmark, Snøhvit, has explicitly been redefined as a project subject to the logic of regional policy in order to be granted a favorable taxation regime otherwise in conflict with the EEA-agreement.

Åland

■ The demographic situation of the outer archipelago continues to worry the authorities that furthermore also fear the effects of Finnish attempts to lower tax on labour.

Nordregio Research Programme at Mid-Term

by Jon P. Knudsen

The Nordregio research programme "Future Challenges and Institutional Preconditions for Regional Development Policy" has just completed the first phase of its operation. Financed by the Nordic Senior Officials' Committee for Regional Policy (NERP) the programme was launched in 2000 with 2004 as its final year of operation.

The programme picked the three strands of,

- the regional challenges of economic globalisation
- environmental changes and environmental policy changes challenging regional development, and
- challenges to be taken into account by regional policy institutions as guidelines for project adoption.

By the beginning of 2002 a total of seven projects have been finalised. Some are already in print while others are currently being edited at Nordregio and will appear throughout the summer as reports and working papers.

In this edition of the Journal of Nordregio we will seek to present an overview of the projects, their findings and the staff involved. As such it is our hope that these projects can thus be brought to the attention of practitioners throughout Norden. An in-depth presentation of the projects will also be made at a special

Nordregio-seminar in Stockholm at the beginning of September.

Concurrent with these developments a new phase of project adoption is now taking place within the programme, which aims to deal with new aspects of regional policy as they present themselves. Thus the following strands will guide project adoption for the final programme period:

- innovation
- sustainability
- demography

The innovation theme is a follow up to the globalisation theme from the first period, in a similar fashion the sustainability theme follows on from the environmental preoccupation. The demography theme is however a newcomer selected in light of the aggravated demographic situation now engulfing the Nordic periphery. Though it originally manifested itself in Sweden it has subsequently affected welfare provision and community structure in all of the other Nordic countries. As for the institutional strand included as a separate area of study in the first period, it is now proposed that such questions should permeate the other three new strands as the central crosscutting dimension. The final reports from the project will be submitted in the Nordregio Report series. ■

Coping Strategies and Regional Policies – Social Capital in the Nordic Peripheries

by Jon P. Knudsen

Nordic local communities differ in resources and social structures. Hence, their ways of coping with changing economic and political circumstances differ accordingly. When seen from below, as cases of projects or coping strategies in selected localities, the dynamics that lie behind social innovations crucial to regional and local development may look rather different than they perhaps do from a central political point of view.

The project “Coping Strategies and Regional Policies - Social Capital in the Nordic Peripheries” has essentially compiled a set of thick descriptions of socio-spatial practices from peripheral communities in Greenland, the Faeroes, Iceland, Sweden and Finland in order to investigate the encounter between broader policy regimes and the varying local strategies. Starting with the assumption that coping strategies are the combined strategies of innovation, networking and the formation of identity in which people engage, the course is then set for an analysis of how social capital is actually put to use in local contexts.

The project was led by Professor Nils Aarsæther and research officer Jochen Peters, University of Tromsø, in cooperation with lecturer Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt, Roskilde University.

East and West

Though the project did not set out with the ambition to generalise, through the course of the study a number of recurring frameworks or cleavages were noted by the researchers as having a strong bearing on the local strategies adopted. Perhaps

the most important of these is the division between what can be labelled as the one community-societies of Greenland, Iceland and the Faeroes, in which a national regional policy regime in proper terms hardly exists, and the nationally or EU-embedded regional policy regimes of Finland and Sweden. The first category generates a more obvious market-like style of action, while the latter seems to foster a type of project economy responding to the complex institutional set-up in place.

Another important factor is the extent to which economic activity takes place in what can be labelled as either a traditional or a natural resource based sphere or within the context of the so-called new eco-

nomy. The researchers have therefore sought to utilise cases from both economic spheres.

Conclusions

Adopting a typology of bridging/bonding and territoriality/mobility, the researchers try to classify local ‘coping’ from the case studies as mobile bonding, territorial bonding/mobile bridging or territorial bridging. One of their major findings is that innovative local development does not happen without crosscutting networking, which is networking between the social fields in question.

Concerning the role of regional policy, their conclusions are however ambiguous. In some places regional policy and coping strategies worked in concert, whilst in other such strategies were forged with little or no regard to regional policies. Moreover, in some instances fields of policy other than those explicitly defined as ‘regional policy’ played an important role with regard to the local practices actually adopted.

What seemed to be of paramount importance however in the communities studied, was the central role of the municipalities in social transformation and spatial restructuring, though of course the nature and the individual workings of the municipalities vary substantially from, say, the Faeroe Islands to Sweden. This may be so because the municipality more or less reflects a dimension of reflexive reciprocity pertaining to the administration of social capital in any local setting. Any regional policy that misses this insight will therefore, according to the researchers, be doomed to failure. ■



Nils Aarsæther



Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt

In Search of Process-based Regional Development Policy

by Jon P. Knudsen

Regional development policies are often developed through strategic processes following strict recipes for planning procedures. One or several problems are singled out, analysed and met with what are hoped to be adequate measures. In real life, however, policy development may evolve in a rather different fashion. Professor Markku Sotarauta of the University of Tampere, together with colleagues, Henrik Bruun, Janne Huikkinen and Reija Linnamaa, have sought to pose the question rather differently: What

if regional policy development takes place as process-based acting where the paths of the actors and instances of leadership play a stronger role than traditional schemes of top-down policy development?

A multitude of factors

Starting from a



Markku Sotarauta

model which establishes a multi-dimensional framework of policy formation the researchers are able to demonstrate on the basis of a number of Nordic examples, comprising technologically involved business development projects in Turku, Jyväskylä, Trondheim and North Jutland, how the involvement of different factors, only rarely considered as important to regional policy, are able to generate success or failure as specific projects evolve.

The paramount importance is not these factors as such, but rather the flows that run through them as

people forming networks make use of different social, mental and technical resources and opportunities when moving in and out of the regions studied. As the researchers themselves put it, we move from a concept highlighting the space of places to one emphasising the space of flows. The importance of institutions thus becomes the role of promoting, framing and giving the various processes in operation their context. Regions exhibiting what has been described as institutional thickness generally have an advantage over other regions in this respect, but what really makes the

difference in the end is the ability of the actors to chart a path or trajectory through the landscape of the given internal and external drivers of change and institutional set-ups

Conclusions

A regional policy scheme that cherry-picks winners and secures a stable and lasting position of regional supremacy for a given region is not a realistic policy scenario. On the contrary the researchers observe that traditional strategic procedures through their often narrow and unimaginative approaches can often impair or impede successful policy

development. What the research group recommends is thus a more subtle awareness of the notion of change and its concomitant importance for regional change.

To cite the researchers on their conclusions: "Policy-makers should be required to become more skilled in managing transition and processes, not only in administrating resources, but in formulating development programmes also. In leadership, the ability to speed up, boost, and change the course of action when the environment changes is often crucial." ■

The Partnership Response – Regional Governance in the Nordic States

by Jon. P Knudsen

Governance has increasingly come to be used as a term characterising the forms of multi-level and multi-actor policy processes in Western Europe during the 1990s. Being a term that seemingly presents opacity and confusion for anyone who seeks clear answers on the contemporary loci of power, the quest for the specific geographical and historical forms of governance is a tempting one for researchers. In this study Anders Östhol and Bo Svensson (Sweden) assisted by Henrik Halkier and John Flockhart (Denmark), Seija Virkkala (Finland) and Arild Gjertsen (Norway) set out to investigate the partnership response as it occurs in 12 regions in four Nordic countries at the turn of the century.

Method

Taking as a point of departure that partnership response and institutional change could be a fruitful way to endeavour the political terrain of the new Nordic institutional setting where three of the countries have joined the EU, the researchers raise the following question: To what extent and how partnership-based regional development activity create new patterns of governance in the regions,

and what are the consequences for existing political structures.

By conducting qualitative interviews in 12 regions, all differing with regard to economic structures and political traditions, the researchers arrive at conclusions showing both diversity and common features among the countries and regions in question.

Conclusion

First of all, there seems to be a division between the non-EU member Norway and the other three countries pertaining to institutional response to the mainly EU-hatched paradigm of partnership. Then there seems to be a divide between the more state-lead partnership approaches of Norway and Sweden and the more regionally anchored partnership processes of Finland and Denmark. Adding to this comes the dimension of public-private in which Norway and Finland belong to a type of countries where partnerships mainly consist of public actors, whereas the process of partnership in Denmark and Sweden in various ways more actively seeks to incorporate private actors. It should be said, though, that there are intra-national variations in this over-all picture.

A further element brought in was the degree of coherence rela-

ting to the partnership processes. Defining the coherence factors as the variables of strategy and resource mobilisation, the researchers tried to identify the strategies as being diverging or common and the level of resource mobilisation as either weak or strong. The results were that all the Norwegian regions and one of the Swedish regions performed diverging on the strategy variable and weak on resource mobilisation leading the team to conclude that the policy impact in the regions was merely ritualistic. On the other hand one Danish and one Finnish region performed strong on resource mobilisation and common on the strategy variable making the team classify these regions as innovative and the policy impact significant.

Summing up there seems to be institutional weaknesses in the Norwegian and Swedish models leading to regions in these two countries performing less well than their Danish and Finnish counterparts when it comes to partnership response. The main reason for this seems to reside in the fact that local and regional actors are accorded less autonomy and thrust in the policy formations process in these traditionally very centralised political systems. ■

***Euroopan alueellisen kehityksen analyysi
Analysis of the regional development in Europe
Analyse du développement régional en Europe
Analyse af den regionale udviklingen i Europa
Analyse der Regionalentwicklung in Europa***

Nordregio is an institute for applied research and development. Our fields of study includes regional development, spatial planning and environmental aspects of spatial planning and policies. The geographical focus is on the Nordic countries and Europe. Our main clients are the Nordic Council of Ministers, the European Union and governments and regions in the Nordic countries. The institute is located in attractive surroundings in the City of Stockholm, Sweden.



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www.nordregio.se

Restructuring of State Activities and their Impact on Various Types of Regions – A Comparative Nordic Perspective

by Jon. P Knudsen

Throughout the 1990s what can be labelled as new public management, a model of public administration borrowed from the realm of business administration, increasingly came to influence the public sector in the Nordic countries. Its rationale was primarily cost-efficiency motivated, but the numerous political, social and economic side effects associated with it soon came to be hotly debated in most societies.

In the project entitled “Restructuring of state activities and their impact on various types of regions – A comparative Nordic perspective” Lars Olof Persson together with a team consisting of Paul-Olav Berg, Torben Dall Schmidt, Sigurður Guðmundsson, Valdimar Halldórsson, Merja Kokkonen, Kaisa Lähtenmäki-Smith, Jörg Neubauer and Stein Østbye sets out to investigate the regional impacts of this reorganization of politics and institutions.

Decentralization and centralization

Starting from the two basic questions:

- what characterizes the current restructuring of state activities, and

what are their estimated impacts on various types of regions?

- what conclusions can be drawn concerning alternative future trajectories with regard to the institutional framework for state intervention at the regional level?

The research group observes that two opposing tendencies are in operation here. On the one hand they find that a tendency towards decentralization can be detected at several levels.

Transfers of authority take place form central to regional and local government, and privatization brings in markets or quasi-markets as a substitute for the provision of more or less uniform public services. On the other hand, the process of rationalization both within the public and the (semi-) privatized sector seems to entail the concentration of services and employment, a process already being accelerated by demographic for-

ces entailing the ongoing geographical concentration of populations.

To this can be added the often conflicting rationales of regional policy being both growth-oriented and distributional in scope. The tendency throughout the decade, the researchers note, is for regional policy to become more growth-oriented to the detriment of the distributional aspects of policy making.

Conclusions

This leads the team to ask for a more clearly stated role for the state in shaping the geography of the Nordic countries. Being the largest sole actor regarding employment, service provision and economic activity, the state cannot simply delimit its operations to mirror the ideology of new public management or to imposing strict sectoral perspectives on a cost benefit basis, without putting its responsibility for safeguarding welfare distribution at risk. The research team therefore invites the state to formulate more accurate standards pertaining to the distributional aspects of regional policy, arguing that such standards can be specified both regarding quantitative and qualitative aspects of welfare provision in regard to different types of regions. ■



Lars Olof Persson

Institutional Challenges for Common Property Resources in the Nordic Countries

by Jon. P Knudsen

Common property and the management of common resources play a significant role in the historical economy of the Nordic countries, particularly in the Northern parts of the area where low population density and the extensive use of various natural resources were regulated through a socially embedded regime of what could be labelled “sustainability”. With the advent of changing economic forms of integration and the opening up of larger European and global markets, these regimes came under increased pressure, and many of them

eventually collapsed through what is generally referred to as the “tragedy of the commons”. Beginning with the massive deforestation of the oak forests in Denmark, south Sweden and Norway opening the



Audun Sandberg

modern époque of these countries and ending with the depletion of the Northern fish resources in the late 20th century, the management of such common property resources still troubles policy institutions to this day.

Some examples

Audun Sandberg has set out to investigate the interrelationship between sustainability and institutional solutions pertaining to the commons in a contemporary Nordic context. His examples of problematic areas are many. Starting with an overview of the main Nordic national positions in this field – positions that are actually quiet different from



one country to another – he moves on to show how the theme is relevant to

three specific sectors:

- The management of the Northern fisheries with its few species and large fluctuations in the light of a revised CFP.
- Mountain pastures for reindeer, meat-sheep and milk-goats as they are treated within the context of modern agriculture.
- Game hunting and inland fishing as these activities find themselves trapped between urban public rights and local enterprise.

In all of these fields, Sandberg argues that the modern sector logic applying national political norms in combination with business principles for maximising individual or company revenues produces a strange and indeed counter-productive property regime. This fact is made even more complicated by the recent

changes in settlement patterns and agri

cultural habits bringing about important transformations across rural Norden, transformations that are poorly understood as far as sustainability at least is concerned.

Conclusions

Sandberg thus points to the need for a more thorough examination of the institutional aspects of sustainability as they are presented in the actual Nordic context. The traditional sector logic, he claims, is not suited to deal with the future management of common resources, and he is also sceptical of a strong state-led strategy in policy development. Instead he proposes a renewed interest in the devolution of power to the regional and local levels, entailing a process of decentralisation and the delegation of resource management tasks, a move which he suggest will spark processes of democratisation, transparency and legitimacy in a policy area that badly needs them. ■

Sustainable Regional Development in the Nordic Countries

by Jon. P. Knudsen

Sustainable development has recently sought to present itself as a set of principles for political guidance and implementation both in the national and regional contexts, though the regional context remains as yet rather under investigated. Keith Clement and Malin Hansen have therefore conducted the first comparative investigation of the Nordic countries providing an overview of public-sector activity corresponding with, or contributing to, the practice of sustainable



Malin Hansen



Keith Clement

regional development (SRD).

The report produced from this investigation concentrates on the conceptual crossroads between economic development and environmental concerns in the promotion of sustainable development.

Method

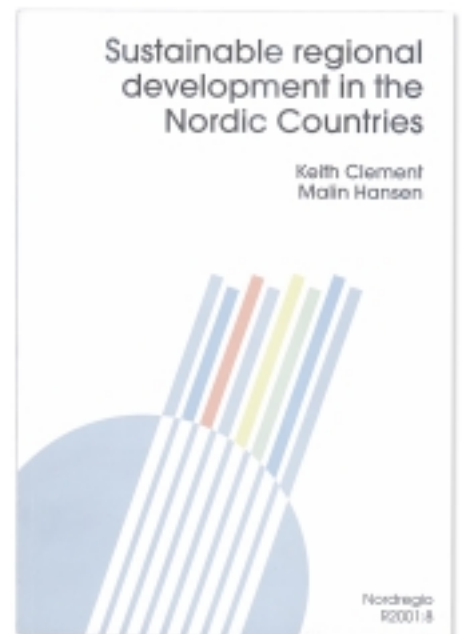
The method adopted has been a mix of literature review, contact with relevant individuals and institutions and an intensive interview programme in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Iceland was excluded from the study as no SRD activity was identified there. Following fieldwork, a stage of comparative analysis was conducted to establish the main patterns of Nordic SRD.

Conclusions

Globally, the notion of sustainable development has made considerable advances in recent years, and this has also resulted in SRD becoming a special theme of interest meriting special attention. Very important in this respect is the launch of an EU thematic evaluation of sustainable development in the context of the Structural Funds, funds that are of special relevance to regional policy implementers.

Within the Nordic countries, though, only a limited range of project activity can be identified as cor-

responding either wholly or partially to SRD principles. Moreover, there seems to be a distinct lack of awareness among Nordic policy-makers and researchers of the existence of SRD theory and practice. In practice, the transition towards SRD seems to be being hindered by conceptual overlap, as policy-makers and researchers continue to mistake traditional environmental policy for sustainable development policy. ■



Between Pro-active and Reactive Responses: Balancing Regional Regimes and Institutional Change

by Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith

The basic assumption of the project "Regimes of regional development and growth across Nordic regions: borderless practices in the making" was that as national policy instruments and their institutional preconditions are adapted to better suit prevailing international conditions of competition and policy effectiveness, regional practices become the intermediaries that seek to balance such national and international "requirements" with the regionally specific institutional, cultural and historical circumstances. The regional "regimes" as constellations of politico-administrative practices thus formed can become factors that either dampen or accentuate the external impact of policy change.

This project was undertaken by Senior Research Fellow Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith, with the assistance of Åsa Petterson, both from Nordregio.

Ties that bind – regional borders as barriers or meeting points?

The project sought to identify administrative and political practices and forms of shared problem-solving methods that could be considered "regional regimes" and that could be transferable across administrative borders. Though administrative reform was one of the main starting points for the whole exercise, regions were viewed as not only another level of governance or administration, but rather as a meeting point of various factors

that are articulated into action through institutions and social and political interaction, strategic agency being the factor that united all regions, though the strategic choices made often differed. It was expected that such regional regimes would be strategic though often informal solutions or discursive instruments adopted in the face of regional or local conundrums. Ideally such regimes provide a framework within which insti-



Åsa Petterson



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tutional learning is accumulated. It soon became clear however that regional borders are a decisive factor, and that regional regimes are most often bound within these borders. Actors within the formal structures of regional administration sought at times to enlarge regime-building into a wider partnership-based constellation, though the structure of regional administration was often not capable of moving beyond the sphere of traditional regional-policy "elites".

Reactive and pro-active strategies

The actors and the regimes formed can be divided into three main groups: those representing the indifferent view, those with a pro-active

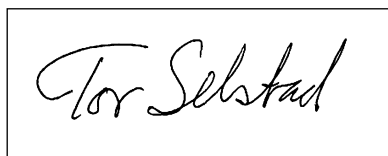
view and those with a reactive view with regard to the regional system and regime-formation within it. The "indifferent" view was held by those not intimately involved in regional development activities and by those who consider such activity to be merely one policy tool among many, not infringing in any significant way upon the other on-going regional policy processes taking place. These people are in a minority, as strategic agency on the regi-

onal level has become a dominant trend in all countries. The pro-active view was held by those who sought to influence the actual forms of regional governance rather than being constrained by them, and by those who were conscious of regime-formation on the regional level. The reactive view was at times held by those working with regional development activities, especially in regions with limited human resources. The weaknesses of the institutional structure in one case for instance echoed similar experiences in other regions with insufficient levels of "critical mass" to introduce novel or "daring" policy choices, and where historical path-dependency has not given latitude to innovative and pro-active policy approaches, but had instead given rise to a more reactive approach to development and to exogenous sources of development.

The strength of regional regimes is often based more on the personal commitment and motivation of those involved than on institutional construction. As such, regional strengths are essentially based on uniqueness and thus are difficult to replicate. The level of individual commitment and the density of networks should both however be more deeply embedded in the regional environment and in the institutional resources of the region concerned. This desire is expressed in particular by the regional representatives, who felt that their personal resources and commitment are often not met with sufficient support from the administrative structures and the representatives of the national administrative system. This could however be characterised as a reactive response, while a more pro-active stance should be embraced through the development of more conscious regime-formation. ■

The parallel expansion of regional policy and regional research during the 1950s and 1960s raised expectations of a new, knowledge-based policy. A *spatial science* was to become the basic scholarship for all regional planning and policy. And spatial science was an offshoot of economics, just as regional policy was in many respects a regional appendix to the Keynesian growth policy.

Regional policy and regional research have had major difficulties in defining their relationship to one another in post-Keynesian times. Following a close and strong relationship during the continued directionist



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optimism of the seventies, this connection became more ambivalent during the eighties. The two most recent decades have been characterised by a growing crisis in regional policy. The instruments and means of the industrial growth epoch lost their impact; the technocrats could no longer deliver. It became even worse when policy makers no longer knew exactly where they were heading as far as districts and regions were concerned. It was a double crisis – affecting both the end and the means.

In such a situation it would be tempting to believe that the close connection between policy and scholarship would be eroded, but practically the opposite has proved to be the case. If we take Norway, for example, the regular production of regional policy white papers (*Stortingsmeldinger*) to the national parliament can be taken as an example. From its beginning in 1967, to the most recent example in 2001 there has been a steady increase in the scientific aspect. The most recent report puts the crowning touch to this development by adding *footnotes*, the leading characteristic of academic scholarship. Which of course does not mean that we have established a post-

Keynesian regional technocracy, to point the way for the politicians to follow, no, quite the opposite. A closer look at the texts reveals that today's professionalisation is an expression of political impotence. The researchers describe the world as a reality with which the politicians can in fact do very little.

There is nothing as practical as a good theory, said a former Norwegian Minister of Research and Education, Gudmund Hernes. Himself both a researcher



of repute and an active social

democrat, he wished to revive the unity between social policy and social science. Even if his slogan does contain a certain degree of truth, it is difficult to see it applied to regional policy. Generally speaking, I think quite the opposite is true: Apparently there is nothing as impractical as modern regional theory.

The interplay between policy and planning was at its best when research produced clear models which policy could use as guidelines. Examples of such models are growth centres, regional centres, urban systems, etc. While we can discuss at length how good these models actually were, what was most important was that they provided a platform for a discourse which both the politicians and scholars could stand upon. In more recent times as well attempts have been made to transform scholarly concepts into policy – the transformation of agglomerations to operational *clusters* is a well-known example. Many people believe that they can recreate directionist optimism by transforming the planned state's project to the regions. Which is naturally an illusion.

Regional Research – is it still useful?

Regional research should no more be an extension of policy than regional policy should be an extension of research. As researchers, we make our best contributions by analysing regional processes of change, including those affected by regional policy interventions. Today our regional research is far more *varied* than ever before, which is part of the reason why we can make ourselves useful through better *evaluation* of the effects of regional policy. The danger lies in our becoming too servile in carrying out commissioned research. It is possible to be both critical and constructive at the same time.

An even deeper significance of regional research is evident in its leading characteristic: it has become exactly what it should be – *research on the regions*. Today's regional research investigates the social and cultural, economic and geographic changes in individual regions. In so doing, research contributes towards developing regions' *capacity*, i.e. their ability to deal with their growth and adjustment problems. Regional research is useful for the regions!

The problem is naturally that the current regionalism can lead to researchers becoming locked in by regional interests. Regional boosterism may be a current phenomenon, but it is not the task of regional research to promote it. On the contrary, researchers must show how the regions are linked together by functional systems which respect neither regional nor national boundaries. If something is missing today, it is spatial perspectives and theories which can supplement and correct simple regionalism, in brief a *spatial science!* Which brings us back to where we started. ■

Nordic Labour Markets within National Confines

Nordic national labour markets, despite their relative openness and the free Nordic movement of labour, are still to a significant degree, national entities. Regional employment and unemployment in the Nordic countries remains characterised first and foremost by variations between countries and only secondly by variations between regions within countries. Apart from Sweden, new job creation has favoured nearly all of the Nordic regions, though variations within regions are substantial. Unemployment particularly in Finland remains high.

by Tomas Hanell

Although unemployment across the Nordic countries has increased and decreased in line with normal economic cycles over the last four decades, structural unemployment for most Nordic countries is a relatively new phenomenon. In the aftermath of the first oil crisis, by around 1975 Denmark became the first of the Nordic countries to experience high unemployment rates that later refused to decline despite good economic growth.



Tomas Hanell

Today Finland and to a lesser extent Sweden also can be characterised as being in a similar position, whereas nearly full employment prevails in the other Nordic countries.

In the three years between 1990 and 1993 well over a million Nordic jobs were lost, largely due to the severe economic crisis in Finland and Sweden, where the decline was 455 000 and 595 000 jobs respectively. Employment in Denmark, which also reached its lowest ebb in 1993, declined by some 65 000 persons during the period 1990-93.

Since then, employment across the Nordic countries has increased substantially, with approximately 1.1 million new jobs created between 1993 and 2000. Again, and not surprisingly, Finland and Sweden have been the main beneficiaries, with nearly 360 000 and 330 000 new jobs respectively. However, rapid economic growth between 1993 and 2000 has also seen 275 000 more

jobs created in Norway and 20 000 in Iceland. Between 1993 and 1999 employment in Denmark increased by some 140 000 persons.

All in all, employment in Iceland is 14% higher in 2000 than it was nine years earlier in 1991. The equivalent increase in Norway was 13% and in Finland 3%. Employment in Sweden however still lags behind the 1991 level by some 2%. For employment to attain similar heights as the all time high year of 1990, some 95 000 new jobs are still needed in Finland and as many as 265 000 in Sweden. In the year

onal entities. Thus regional employment and unemployment in the Nordic countries remains characterised first and foremost by variations between countries and only secondly by variations between regions within countries. In this respect (disregarding national differences) regional polarisation trends are strongest in Sweden and Iceland, though eastern and northern Finland is also lagging behind the largest urban centres.

New jobs unequally distributed

The largest absolute employment increases between 1994 and 1999 have been in the capital areas. During the period in question the number of jobs in Uusimaa (the region surrounding Helsinki) increased by 125 000 (23%) and in Stockholm County and Oslo (incl. Akershus County) by approximately 100 000 in each case (or by 12% and 21% respectively). The number of jobs also increased by 80 000 in the Greater Copenhagen area, which amounts to a near 9% increase. Similarly employment in Reykjavík region increased by as much as 16% or 13 000 persons during the corresponding period.



Figure 1: Change in employment 1991-2000, index 1991=100

Norway: LFS figures, other countries: register data.
Source: National Statistical Institutes

2000 employment in Denmark was some 5% above the level of 1991.

As we can see from Figure 1, Nordic national labour markets, despite their relative openness and the free Nordic movement of labour, remain to a significant degree, national entities.

The main motor behind employment growth in all of the Nordic capital areas is the expansion of the private service sector, with particular emphasis on business services. Other dynamic industries include ICT (all capitals) and pharmaceuticals (Copenhagen, Stockholm).

All in all, between 1994 and

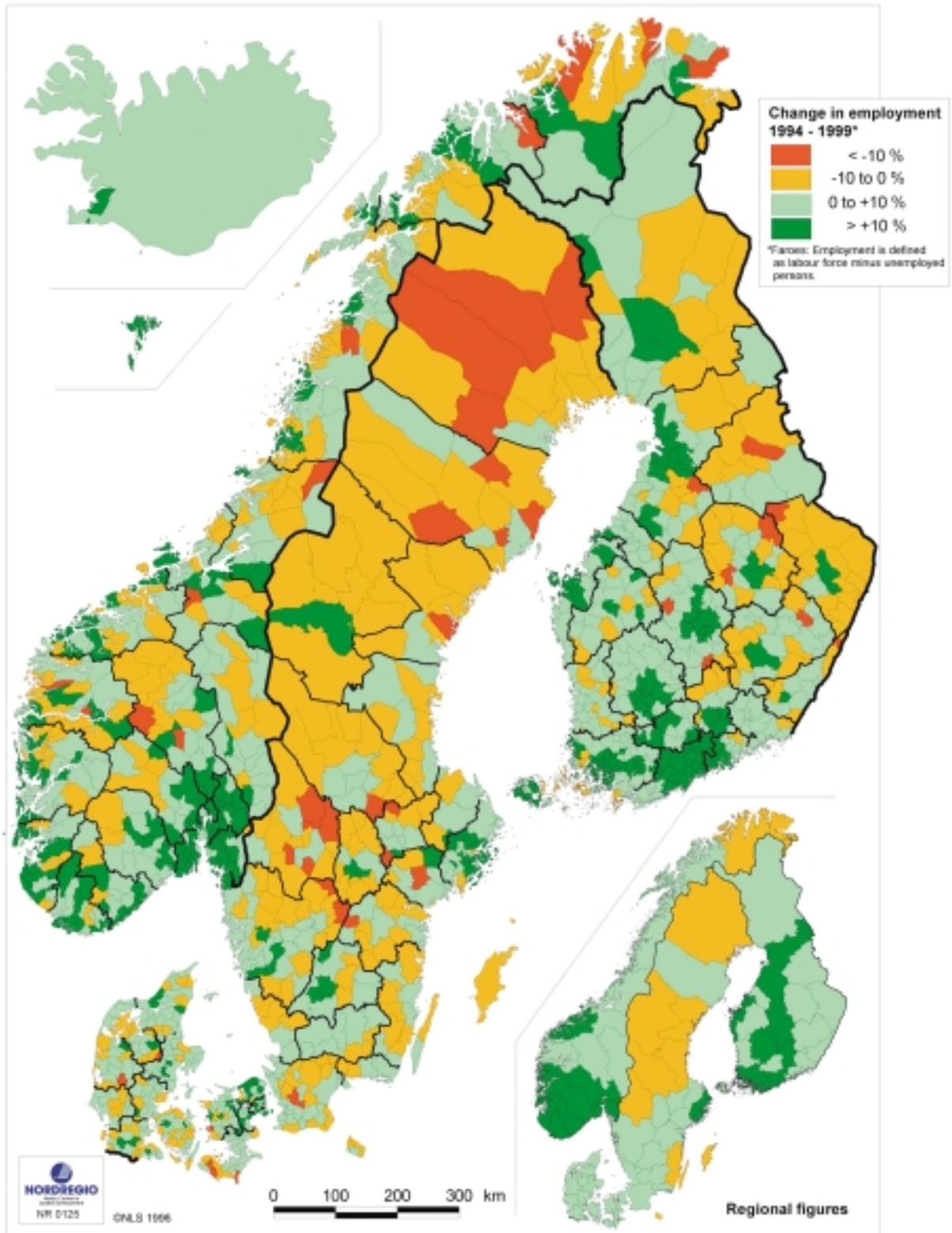


Figure 2: Employment change in Nordic municipalities and regions 1994–99, in %

1999 employment increased by over 10% in 20 Nordic regions, of which 10 were Norwegian and 7 Finnish. The relative increases between 1994 and 1999 were greatest mainly in the capital or surrounding regions (such as Østfold and Vestfold near Oslo) or in other regions with larger second order urban centres. The lat-

ter includes regions such as Pohjois-Pohjanmaa (Oulu), Pirkanmaa (Tampere), Varsinais-Suomi (Turku) and Keski-Suomi (Jyväskylä) in Finland as well as Rogaland (Stavanger) and Hordaland (Bergen) in Norway. In Denmark the largest increases have been seen, apart from in

Copenhagen and northern Sjælland, in Århus, Nordjylland (Aalborg) and in the Danish “Triangular Area” between Vejle, Fredericia and Kolding. In Sweden apart from Stockholm only Västra Götaland (Gothenburg) has had an employment increase of over 5% during the period (Figure 2).

The Faroes (Føroyar-Færøerne) are however in a class of their own. If employment here is defined as labour force minus unemployed persons, the estimated increase between 1994 and 1999 amounts to more than 25%. No comparable indicators are available for Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat-Grønland).

Apart from the capitals, the overall dynamics of regional growth vary slightly from country to country. Interestingly, there are some regions, in Denmark in particular, that are now partially breaking loose from the rigid urban hierarchy that for two decades has been dominated by capital regions, with a more 'mosaic-like' pattern - albeit still in very scattered pockets - now emerging. In the Finnish case (e.g. Oulu, Tampere, Salo) the expansion of the ICT sector has been most dynamic. A similar pattern is visible in Norway (Bergen, Stavanger) with regard to offshore and related industries. In Denmark, Århus partially competes with Copenhagen within the business services or ICT sector, whereas a specialised manufacturing sector (e.g. foodstuffs, textiles, furniture) in Jutland accounts for the major dynamics there. In Sweden, Stockholm/Uppsala's and to a smaller extent Gothenburg's position is dominant with regard to new job creation. On a smaller scale, areas such as Karlskrona/Ronneby in Blekinge have also done well. Here too the ICT sector is the main motor of growth. FDI has been pouring in to such an extent that some 35% of the workforce across the region is now employed by foreign-owned enterprises (compared to the Swedish average of around 10%).

Employment in the period 1994-99 decreased in ten Nordic regions. Of these, eight are Swedish, with the northernmost regions of Norrbotten (-4.9%), Jämtland (-3.2%) and Västernorrland (-3.0%) being worst hit. Employment in Värmland also decreased by some -3.7% during the period and in Gotland by 2.7%. Bornholm (-0.3%) in Denmark and Finnmark (-2.1%) in Norway are the only regions in their respective countries where the number of jobs decreased.

Variations within regions however remain significant. As a rule only a few selected municipalities within the more peripheral regions are responsible for the creation of new jobs in the entire region. For example in Norway, even though Finnmark was the only Norwegian county as a whole where employment decreased, employment decrease occurred in as many as 113 or one fourth of all Norwegian municipalities. More than half of these municipalities were located south of Trondheim. In Finnmark employment increased in 7 of the 19 municipalities. In Troms county only two cities (Tromsø, and Harstad) accounted for 85% of the employment increase in the entire county, as did Bodø, which accounted for half of the employment increase in Nordland County.

In Finland employment decreased in 102 municipalities even though an overall decrease in employment levels was not recorded at the regional level in any of the regions. As such, unemployment levels rose primarily in small municipalities located mostly in northern and eastern Finland. In Denmark the regional pattern is not as polarised as in the other Nordic countries, but nonetheless employment levels actually declined in 71 municipalities. The worst hit Danish areas, apart from Bornholm, are primarily the island regions, i.e. Storstrøm County and the southern parts of the County of Fyn.

In several more peripheral Swedish regions much of the new job generation has, to a large extent, been created by an expanding public sector. Furthermore during the latter part of the 1990s Sweden has been plagued by several closures or the relocation decisions of large employers. Typically these have been in small- to medium sized towns dominated by manufacturing industry. The employment effects of these closures have been considerable. Thus in Sweden the number of jobs was reduced in half of all municipalities across the country (144 of 289) in the five years between 1994 and 1999. The worst hit areas include all northernmost areas apart from a few scattered urban pockets on the coast (Umeå, Sundsvall) as well as manufacturing

areas in the south, especially in Kalmar County. Employment also decreased substantially in Gotland.

The most problematic areas in Iceland and those with the largest decreases in employment are generally in northwestern Iceland, the Vestfjords and in the southern parts of the Eastfjords.

Persistent unemployment

As a consequence of the significant reduction in employment in the early 1990s, followed by at times an extremely uneven distribution of new jobs, the unemployment landscape of the Nordic countries is now highly varied, but again by and large still confined within national boundaries. National differences aside, a clear spatial differentiation between centre and periphery is evident.

Nordic unemployment reached its peak in 1993 when more than 1.3 million Nordic citizens were unemployed, mainly in Finland, Sweden and Denmark. By 2001 this figure has halved to some 690 000 persons, most of whom were in Finland (275 000) and Sweden (220 000). The number of those unemployed is slightly over 105 000 in Denmark, with some 87 000 in Norway. In Iceland there is near full employment and the number of unemployed amounts to only 3 500 persons.

Finland - bedevilled by persistently high unemployment - is the most problematic Nordic case. In April 2001 the average unemployment rate in Finland was 10.2%, compared to the corresponding EU15 average of 7.6%. Finland is thus the only Nordic country lying above the EU average, and of the EU countries only Greece, Italy and Spain have higher rates. Youth unemployment in northern Finland is also among the highest in the EU.

Of all the Nordic countries Finland also has the largest regional variations in unemployment. Among all Nordic regions Finnish ones hold both the highest and the lowest positions. Whilst the unemployment rate in April 2001 in Åland was 1.5% it was 18.2% in Kainuu in northern Finland. Even if

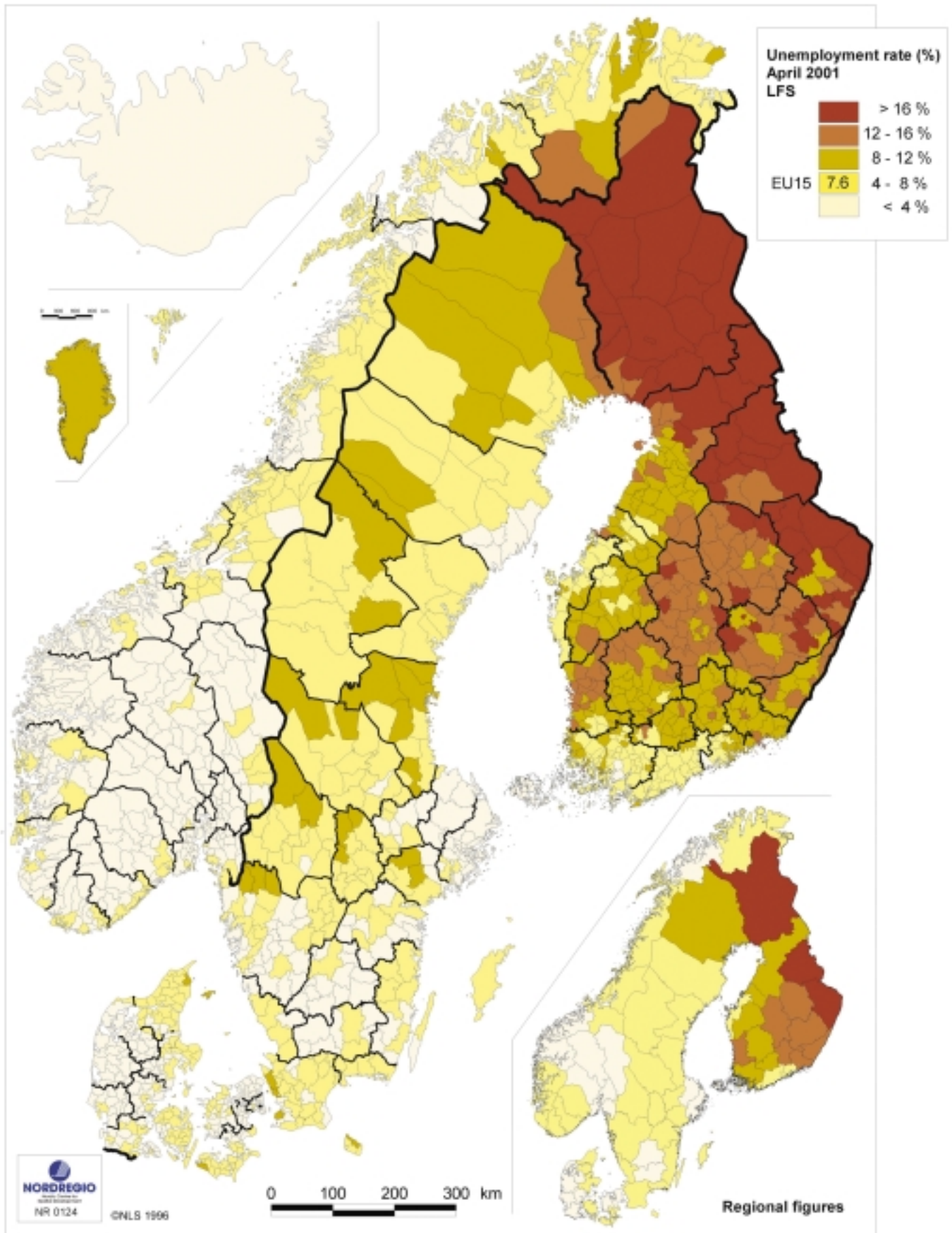


Figure 3: Unemployment rate in Nordic municipalities and regions 2001.

Åland - having the lowest unemployment rate of all EU NUTS 2 regions - were to be excluded from the comparison, Finland would still have the widest strata of rates. This is so to the extent that, within an EU context (excluding the overseas departments), the Finnish situation is rivalled only by the split between southern and northern Italy and the partition between eastern and western Germany. A total of 14 Finnish regions have an unemployment rate above 10%. The corresponding number of municipalities that do so however amounts to 251 (from a total of 448). A vast majority of these are in the northern and easternmost regions, but they can also be found in many of the heavily industrialised regions further south, such as Pirkanmaa or Satakunta. With the exception of Åland, Uusimaa (the region surrounding Helsinki) at 6.2% has the lowest unemployment rate in Finland.

Compared to Finland, unemployment in the other Nordic countries is very low, with Sweden, in April 2001, having a rate of only 4.9%, Denmark and Norway respectively 3.7% and Iceland as little as 2.2%.

Despite the comparatively low level of unemployment seen in Sweden substantial regional variations do exist. Norrbotten tops the Swedish list with an unemployment rate of 8.4%, which is three times as much as in Stockholm (2.8%), which is the lowest in the country. Norrbotten is also the only Swedish region where unemployment lies above the corresponding EU average. Other Swedish regions with comparatively high unemployment levels include Gävleborg (7.9%) and Västernorrland (6.6%) both of which are in the north of the country. All in all nine Swedish municipalities had an unemployment rate exceeding 10% in April 2001, the highest ones (Pajala, Haparanda, Övertorneå, Överkalix) being exclusively in Norrbotten. Almost half, or 133 of the total number of Swedish municipalities (289) had a higher unemployment rate than the country on average.

In Denmark regional variations are not that pronounced. In April 2001 unemployment in Bornholm

was at 6.9%, which was the highest of all Danish counties. Greater Copenhagen and Ringkøbing on the other hand had only 3.0 and 2.9% respectively. Other regions with, in Danish terms, high unemployment include Nordjylland (5.3%), Storstrøm (5.0%) and Fyn (4.5%). Viewed from the municipal level however the strata widens, though not as much as it does in Sweden. In one municipality, namely Læsø in Nordjylland, unemployment was over 10% and in a further 106 (out of a total of 275) the local figure exceeded that of the Danish average.

As in Denmark, in Norway regional variations are not particularly noteworthy, although Finnmark, with an unemployment rate of 6.6%, constitutes an exception here. In the counties of Sogn og Fjordane, Oppland and Buskerud, unemployment rates are all below 3%. At the municipal level however the gaps become larger, but only one municipality - located in Finnmark (Guovdageaidnu-Kautokeino) - exceeds 10%. In 69 Norwegian municipalities the unemployment rate was above 5%.

As opposed to the five years previously, in 2000 unemployment in Greater Reykjavík dropped below the country average and has since stabilised at 1.8%. Unemployment in the rest of the country is on the rise - albeit a very shallow one - lying at 2.8% in 2001.

Unemployment in the Faroes has - since the severe economic crisis which culminated in 1993/94 and when the rate peaked at more than 20% - been decreasing steadily. In April 2000 there were some 1 200 persons either registered as available unemployed persons in the general insurance system or receiving allowances from the social security system. This renders an estimated unemployment rate of 5% compared to 7% only a year before. However, the work force of the Faroese fish processing industry, which has its own special insurance scheme, providing supplementary compensation, is not included in these figures.

Exact levels of unemployment in Greenland are relatively hard to measure due to a part of the population living in a traditional subsistence economy and thus having a loose connection with the formal labour market. Calculations from Statistics Greenland for the first quarter of 2001 estimate the number of unemployed to be 2 200 persons, or 8.8% of all Greenland-born persons between 15-59 years of age living in urban settlements. Compared to the corresponding figure for 2000 this is a substantial increase. In 2001 the highest rates (>25%) were recorded in Qasigiannguut (Christianshåb) on the west coast and the northernmost settlement of Qaanaaq (Thule), whereas the capital Nuuk (Godthåb) had the lowest rates (4.5%).

Less people in the labour force

Unemployment figures alone however do not reveal the complete picture, as a large proportion of the Nordic population is statistically excluded from the figures. This group includes for example persons in receipt of labour market measures, persons studying instead of being unemployed, persons participating in education programmes in order to boost job-related skills, persons on permanent sick leave or on early retirement schemes, and so on. The percentage share of these persons has risen substantially during the 1990s, which explains why unemployment in some Nordic countries has been decreasing although a similar amount of new jobs has not been created.

This is particularly true in Sweden, where researchers at the Stockholm School of Economics (Magnus Henrekson, Kauppalehti, Tuesday 21 May 2002) estimate that more than one million Swedes are partly or completely outside the labour market and thus the unemployment statistics. Thus, if all working-age persons in Sweden not having a normal permanent relationship to the labour market were to be included in unemployment calculations, the Swedish unemployment rate would rise to as much as 20%, or more than five times the registered unemployment rate of 3.6% in April 2002. ■

From Principle to Practice: The Implementation of the “Partnership Principle” of the Structural Funds in Finland and Sweden

Involving a large number of actors from different spheres of society in the implementation of the programme is how the content of the “partnership principle” could be defined. It is one of four guiding principles in the Structural Funds programmes. How this principle is implemented in practice however differs, with actual practice often varying from place to place.

by Mikaela Grönqvist

How the partnership principle was put into practice in the new EU member states of Finland and Sweden was studied as one part of the project on Environmental Goals in Regional Development led by Helena Valve of the Finnish Environmental Agency (SYKE) and Tuija Hilding-Rydevik of Nordregio. The study regions were Gävleborg in Sweden and South Ostrobothnia in Finland. They both took part in the rural development programme (Objective 5b), during the period 1995–1999. The implementation of the principle was studied by examining which actors participated in the creation of the Single Programming Document (SPD) and in the actual implementation phase, and by examining what parts these actors received in those processes. The roles that the various actors received, and indeed the determination of which actors actually received a part in the programme implementation at all, were largely determined by the rules laid down at the national level to govern these programmes. The authorities that handled the administration of the programme naturally received a significant role in the programme itself.

Finland initiated a complete reorganisation of its regional institutions as EU-membership became a real possibility. Responsibility for regional development was transferred in 1994 to the newly created Regional Councils, formed on the traditions of municipal co-operation. In 1997 the Regional State Offices of three ministries were transformed into one Employment and Business Development Centre. In Sweden no such major reforms took place; a new state authority, the Decision Group, was formed as a regional partnership forum with the task of deciding on the funding from the Structural Funds to the different projects. It consisted mostly of municipality politicians, though the chairman was a representative of the County Administrative Board (CAB), the central government's representative at the regional level. In Finland the Regional Councils were given a partnership forum,

the Regional Management Committee, whose task was to co-ordinate actions and to handle project applications. It was to be comprised of the social partners, the municipalities and the Regional State Offices and Ministries. In practice, however, it was in the



Mikaela Grönqvist

Working Group of the Regional Management Committee that project financing was essentially decided, and this group was made up from representatives of the regional state authorities and the Regional Council.

While the tasks of the Finnish Working Group and the Decision Group in Sweden were rather similar, the groups differed on two aspects: not only did they consist of representatives from different bodies, but the Swedish one was mainly composed of politicians while the Working Group in Finland was made up of civil servants from the various authorities involved. As there were few project applications to choose from in either region, there was little opportunity to use more qualitative criteria in the project selection, this difference probably did not have much influence. The project applications were normally approved of as long as they fulfilled the formal criteria for financing.

In addition to these administrative differences there were two major differences in the funding system between Finland and Sweden: In Sweden the decision on the national co-funding was taken separately from the decision on funding from the Funds. Furthermore, the subsidies for enterprises, an important part of national regional policy, were left out of the management of the Structural Funds in Sweden. (Aalbu et al. 1999, 169–170.)

For the CAB in Gävleborg the introduction of the Objective 5b-programme implied that the scope of their traditional regional development policy was to be widened to encompass fields that previously it had not covered. A similar widening of the actors involved in the development work, however, did not occur. The way in which the administration of the programme and the decision-making structure for the funding was formed meant in practice that the CAB and the municipalities in Sweden became the leading actors in the programme. The CAB was

seen as a neutral player, and as the representative of the region as a whole, and therefore handled the administration. The Board also adopted the role of the most important co-financer of the programme. The municipalities again decided on the EU-funding of the projects and their part was also to carry out the programme through the projects they created for different target groups and beneficiaries. The County Council, on the other hand, received only a minor part in the programme and had to fight to even get a seat in the Decision Group.

As with Sweden, Finland also decided that it was the Regional State Offices that were to handle the administration of the EU-funds that the regions had been assigned. The involvement of the state was then guaranteed and not just through state co-financing. The representatives of the state at the regional level were, as in Gävleborg, regarded as neutral and as possessing the expert knowledge of their various fields. Their opinions and priorities were seen as objective and as emanating from the SPD (Valve 2001, 54). The actual resources and the responsibility of the programme was, however, not delegated to the regional level, but remained with the central ministries (Virkkala 2000, 27). The reorganisation of Finnish regional administration and the formation of sub-regions made up of several municipalities meant that co-operation became the point of departure for the Finnish municipalities in their regional development work. The municipalities in South Ostrobothnia, however, had a less significant role in programme implementation in comparison with those in Gävleborg. They were important in terms of co-financing, but they had for example no direct representation in the Working Group of the Regional Management Committee.

Although the character of Finnish government and administration is traditionally characterised by a rigid division of competencies between different sectors, South Ostrobothnia has to a large extent succeeded where many other regions in Finland have failed to overcome ancient boundaries and to build a dialogue between, on one hand, the various Regional State Offices, and on the other hand, between these authorities and the Regional Council. Still, the strict division of competencies in combination with the prevailing principle of consensus implied that little interference

occurred with any project proposal prepared for the Working Group (Virkkala 1998, 46). The formation of the Regional Employment and Business Development Centre taught Regional State Offices how to co-operate novel ways. Nevertheless the central ministries are still to this day dominated by strict sector boundaries.

The Regional Council in South Ostrobothnia took on the role of the active promoter of regional development and of the programme, as it wanted to make sure that the region used the programme as efficiently as possible. The Council, together with for example the Rural Department of the Regional Employment and Business Development Centre, mobilised the region's actors to draw benefits from the assigned resources. The strong corporatist traditions in Finnish society can be said to have influenced participation not only in the more formal partnership forums formed, as for example in the Regional Management Committee, but also in the actual implementation of the programme. The different Regional State Offices were used to co-operate closely with the actors in the region involved in the same field of activity. The State Offices then partly took it upon themselves to secure the benefits inherent in the programme for these actors.

Though the way in which the partnership principle was actually put into practice in Finland can be viewed as an expression of state-centred corporatism, Sweden, on the other hand, can be seen as an example of retreating corporatism (Kelleher et al. 1999, 37). This trend where social actors leave public bodies can be said to have begun as early as 1991 with the withdrawal of the Swedish Employers organisation from the County Labour Market Boards, something that resulted in the removal of both employers and union representatives. This trend also affected participation in the partnership forums connected to the Structural Funds; the employers' representative, SAF, in Gävleborg opted to stay out of the Decision Group, which meant that the group consisted of public authorities only.

It was the municipalities that were the main recipients of EU-funding from the Objective 5b-programme in Gävleborg. The municipalities essentially acted as intermediaries, creating projects that were subsequently offered to the target groups of the programme, usually entrepreneurs, in the region. The small number of actors from the private and the voluntary sectors generating projects in Gävleborg is generally explained by the complicated rules and the heavy workload involved in administering the Structural Funds. Those actors outside the public sector that took part in the programme in Gävleborg were mostly organisations that saw in the programme a chance to finance parts of their own activities where costs would have been incurred in any case. Such organisations were predominantly larger actors having the ability to acquire the special competence that was required, and that had the capacity to run the heavy administrative workload involved with a project

financed by the Funds. As time went by some of these actors became more hesitant with regard to initiating EU-funded projects as the financial burden of such work was substantial: the organisation had to bear the costs before receiving any payments, and there were often also extra costs involved not reimbursed through the Funds at all.

In South Ostrobothnia it was mainly through the work of educational institutions and consultants that the programme was brought to the different target groups. So-called professional project developers were involved in the creation of projects to a much larger extent than in Gävleborg. A new type of cooperation was thus formed by the public sector and these consultants. The regional authorities and the municipalities each contacted potential actors that could create projects, and offered them financing for generating projects for different beneficiaries in the region. Educational- and research institutions, consultants and interest organisations could, through creating development projects, secure a part of their activity and at the same time become an approved partner for regional development. In this way a market for regional development was created in South Ostrobothnia, while project generation in Gävleborg was concentrated in the hands of the municipal administration. The greater involvement of the private sector in Finland can be attributed to the simpler rules concerning co-financing, and also to the fact that the subsidies for enterprises were included in the national funding of the programme.

In both regions the starting point for developing a project was in general centred on the possibility of obtaining the necessary financing; project proposals were made firstly by checking with the SPD for the different uses for which there was funding available. Instead of consulting the target group beforehand to screen the needs of the beneficiaries it was more commonly the earmarked funding that determined these needs. None of the regions succeeded in involving a wide partnership in drawing up the programme for the first programming period. Even though the municipalities in South Ostrobothnia were heard to a larger extent than those in Gävleborg, the common national Objective 5b-programme for the whole of Finland implied that regional differences could not be taken into consideration to the same extent as was possible in Sweden. In Gävleborg the municipalities had little influence on the programme and those of them that had in advance already screened the needs of their villages and regions often felt that they were simply being steered by the programme; they would rather have seen themselves being able to prioritise the use of the money. To avoid this problem in the future it is of the utmost importance when drawing up the programmes and when the priorities and needs of the region are put down on paper, to involve as large a spectrum of different actors as possible, in order to ensure that the programme actually reflects the existing needs of the region.

The possibility of including knowledge

from different fields and sectors other than the public one in the programmes was however made all the more difficult by the formal bureaucratic character of the Structural Funds themselves (Mäkinen 1999, 85). In the regions studied here work with the Funds was largely undertaken in a world of its own, and in order to be able to take part in this "inner circle" a great deal of expert knowledge about the terminology and the system of the project administration was required. This was something that distanced many potential actors from participating. The required public co-financing of the projects further strengthened the role of the public actors. The amount of bureaucracy that the system of co-financing implied made project administration even more difficult, and thus there were only a few who subscribed to the positive implications of this system, such as for example increased co-operation between the funding partners. This could be blamed partly on the co-financers also, and particularly on the public ones, as they usually remained only co-financers and did not in any other way contribute to developing the project.

Conclusions

The analysis of these two Objective 5b-regions showed that the co-operation that is undertaken in the partnership principle usually only included co-operation between public actors, and that there was little dialogue with enterprises or with voluntary organisations. The ability of actors from either the private or the third sectors to participate in programme implementation was restricted in many ways. Stricter, qualitative definitions of the term would not discuss partnership in these cases. Consequently this situation leaves much to be desired in each region and ultimately in their implementation of the principle in the Structural Funds programmes.

The Objective 5b-programme in both regions came to be dominated by the regional actors that already had a prominent position in regional development. The experienced actors, no matter if they were public authorities or organisations that had worked as consultants before, had a privileged position in comparison with new actors willing to participate for the first time. In order to receive new and innovative project ideas the authorities should however take special responsibility in securing the programme participation of less institutionalised actors (Katajamäki 2000, 70). Unfortunately as things currently stand in reality few of the truly innovative project ideas get the evaluation that they deserve because of inexperience in applying for the funding. Established organisations, on the other hand, perhaps rather too easily receive funding for presenting correctly filled applications while creating routine projects whose substance does not provide for anything new (ibid., 70).

Participation in the programme partly depends upon the actor's own choices and partly on national practices that often exclude some actors rather than others from the programme. Nevertheless, a large part of the difficulties experienced by the smaller, less-

institutionalised actors in participating can be attributed to the rules and structures of the Funds themselves. Thus if the European Union really wants to expand participation in the programmes it is up to them to ensure that the rules and procedures governing the Funds in practice enable such participation.

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Differences and similarities between the Objective 5b-programmes

| | <i>Gävleborg</i> | <i>South Ostrobothnia</i> |
|--|---|---|
| The construction of the programme; the SPD | An SPD and a Monitoring Committee for every 5b-region | One national SPD with subordinated regional programmes, one national Monitoring Committee |
| The regional responsibility of the implementation of the programme | The Decision Group and the Monitoring Committee | The Regional Council and its Regional Management Committee in addition to 9 Ministries and their Regional State Offices |
| Central actors in generating projects | The municipalities | Different organisations, mostly private, that generated projects on a professional basis |
| The role of the municipalities | Generators of projects, co-financers, deciding on the EU-funding of projects | Co-financers, initiators of projects |
| The role of the enterprises | Target group, co-financers | Target group (also subsidies for enterprises), representation in the Regional Managements Committee, co-financers |
| The role of the voluntary sector | Little, generated few projects | Little, generated few projects |
| Co-financing | The state co-financing mainly through the County Administrative Boards, though others were also used, handled separately from the decisions on EU-funding | Decisions on state co-financing and EU-funding commonly, financing was separated in different regional authorities, usually only one state co-financer involved |
| Administration of the application for EU-funding | Concentrated; the Secretariat handled all Funds, instead of different Secretariats following the County borders | The regional authority that handled the field the project concerned and the Fund concerned handled the application for funding |
| Decision-making on the EU-financing | The Decision Group decided (consisted of co-financers, municipal majority), central authorities could alter its decisions | The Working Group (consisting of co-financers) handled the application, larger projects were handled in the Regional Management Committee. The final commitment was taken by the Regional State Offices |

Economic Growth and Change: National and Regional Patterns of Convergence and Divergence

Edited by John Adams and Francesco Pigliaru. Edward Elgar Publishing, 1999. (xxvii+483 p.)

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Swedish Institute for
Growth Policy Studies (ITPS)

One of the most enduring features of the last say twenty years is that the nature and 'health' of the economy has become an increasingly important feature of everyday life. Unemployment and interest rates, inflation, GDP, budget deficits and the fluctuations of the stock exchanges are front-page news, dominating also radio and TV broadcasts. Economic growth has thus become one of the prime objectives for regional, national and trans-national politics and policies.

One of the problems facing policy actors and other decision-makers is however the uneven spatial occurrence of economic growth. Development policies aim at decreasing the economic gaps on a global scale by increasing growth in the third world. Regional policies aim at increasing growth in less favoured regions within nations. Governments form economic policies to promote growth on the national scale.

All of these issues are dealt with in the book *Economic Growth and Change*, which is divided into three parts. Part one deal with growth in general and with global disparities. Part two consists of studies of the development of regional disparities in the United States and Europe. In part three some studies of regional convergence and divergence patterns in a number of European countries are presented.

Part one opens with an essay by Dennis Müller, which takes Spengler's and Toynbee's somewhat odd hypotheses of nations' rise and decline as the starting point for a discussion on the importance of the rise and decline of firms for general economic fluctuations. Müller argues that periods of poor economic performance are accompanied by waves of ineffective mergers and by a falling rate of return as managers engage in self-serving rent-seeking, as does the society at large when the welfare state expands. As a comment on the recent ABB/Percy Barnevik's pension affair, this statement appears rather prophetic. As an explanation of long-term economic fluctuations, however, firms' size and merger activity seems to provide a less than convincing explanation, particularly when compared to what one may call rather more 'structural' perspectives.

Shalaid Alam argues in chapter two that sovereignty is crucial in explaining the pattern of global divergence during the 20th century. He constructs an index of sovereignty and shows a clear correspondence between economic and political autonomy and economic development during the colonial epoch. After 1950 the economies of the former colonies have improved sharply....[of course I have not read the book, but as a throw-away line this just isn't true, for instance in sub-Saharan Africa most countries are poorer now that they were before independence.]

Chapter three, written by Irma Adelman, is a study of 67

developing countries that shows that economic, social and political institutions played an important role in economic performance during the period 1980-94. She also finds that institutions affect development in a very non-linear fashion. Both "threshold" and "ceiling" effects seem to exist. One of her conclusions is that the policies required differ by development level and that their relative effectiveness is conditioned by the institutional setting in which policy interventions take place.

In the 1950's, Solow and Abramovitz laid the foundations for modern growth theory, by highlighting the declining importance of the traditional production factors - capital and labour - for economic growth. The residual was seen as a consequence of exogenous technical progress. A few years later, Schultz and Becker pointed to 'human capital' being a crucial factor behind the residual. In the new theories of endogenous economic growth, in which e.g. Romer has made important contributions, technology and human capital are both seen as non-external factors that are possible to affect. However, their nature as non-rival and partially non-excludable goods distinguishes them from the traditional factors of production. Technological and knowledge 'spillovers' thus have an important role to play in the new growth theory.

Technology and human capital are the focus of some of the chapters of the book. Livio Cricelli and Agostino La Bella analyse the impact of R&D

investments and GDP in 15 OECD countries over the period 1973-1993. They find a positive but relatively weak correlation between the two variables. When they test R&D investments against the growth rate of GDP, the correlation is however negative. The authors continue with an analysis of the relationship between total factor productivity (TFP) and knowledge stock per worker and get higher positive correlation. However, when they decompose investments in the knowledge stock in business and non-business investments respectively, they get the surprising result that countries with a non-business stock above average tend to see a better performance in terms of TFP, than countries with a business stock above average.

Bart Verspagen's chapter deals with the issue of spatial technological 'spillover'. Via cluster analyses he divides European regions into two types of clusters, in line with economic performance and technological performance respectively. He finds that the economically advanced clusters are much broader than the technologically advanced ones. According to Verspagen, a possible interpretation of this result is that spillover from high-tech regions strongly affect the surrounding regions: "From the policy point of view, this would mean that one would not necessarily have to concentrate on the less favoured regions themselves when implementing technology policy to stimulate development. Instead, policy makers might target one or a few central region(s) [... ..] Complementary policy measures might then focus at facilitating economic spillovers from this central region..." (p. 253).

Sergio Lodde analyses a related topic, namely the relationship between human capital and regional economic growth. His

results show - as usual - the problems of measuring human capital in an appropriate way. However, with the support of arguments put forward by Baumol, specifically that all activities do not contribute to growth, Lodde decomposes human capital and finds a significant and robust correlation between productivity growth and educated labour occupied in technical activities. The editors stress that "Lodde's finding suggests that one hypothesis worth further investigation is that the spillovers accruing from the high-tech clusters to other regions may be related to the composition of the latter's human capital stocks" (p. 8).

Several of the chapters in the book are devoted to the topic of regional convergence and divergence patterns. From the traditional economic perspective, everything develops towards equilibrium unless some disturbances occur. Thus, regional disparities should not be anything to worry about, as they will, according to theory, fade away. However, some leading scholars, among them Myrdal and Kaldor, have instead stressed the occurrence of cumulative causation, resulting in regional (and global) divergence rather than convergence.

There are of course empirical results that support both these main hypotheses. Barro and Sala-I-Martin have, in a number of comprehensive studies on the United States, Europe and Japan, found a slow but steady convergence process. On the other hand, there seem to be many exceptions to this general trend, both within the OECD countries and certainly on a global scale. The book presents evidence supporting both views. In two chapters, Andrew Sum and Neil Fogg show that regional per capita income inequality has decreased constantly in all decades from 1929 onwards,

with the exception of the 1980's. Raffaele Paci and Francesco Pigliaru find in one of their chapters a slow convergence process across the regions in the European Union.

The examples from Italy and Spain do not however indicate a similar trend. Paci and Pigliaru find in their second chapter a convergence process in Italy during the period 1950-75, but thereafter, increasing inequalities between Northern and Southern regions. Andrea Boltho, Wendy Carlin and Pasquale Scaramozzino claim that the convergence period in Italy was linked to policies focused on direct investment in lagging regions, whereas the following period has been characterised by income transfers and the recruitment of civil servants "with the associated improved opportunities for growth-damaging rent-seeking activities" (p. 9). In an analysis of Spain, Teresa Garcia-Milà and Ramon Marimon find positive regional effects in some of the poorer regions. However, these positive effects are due to governmental investment, and thus productivity gaps in the private sectors remain largely unaffected.

The book also contains a number of other chapters, which due to considerations of space cannot be reviewed here. All in all, this is an important and interesting book that gives a good overview of current theories and empirical research on economic growth and development on different spatial levels. Moreover, it is written in a language that even non-specialists can understand. Vital too for any volume of this nature is the quality of the editors' introduction, which thankfully gives a good summary of the results of the different chapters and links them to both theory and policy issues. Overall, this is a work of merit that is to be recommended. ■

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