

Local and regional approaches to demographic change in the Nordic countries

Ingrid H G Johnsen & Liisa Perjo

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NORDREGIO
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Stockholm, Sweden, 2014

Contents

1. Introduction	9
Examples of local and regional approaches to demographic change	13
2.1 In-migration	13
2.1.1 The in-migration project in Nordland	13
2.1.2 The “Närpes model” for integrating immigrants	17
2.2 Promotion of social mobility and inclusion	21
2.2.1 Young people as a resource for sustainable regional development in Kalmar County	21
2.3 Access to services	24
2.3.1 Cross-border health care in Tornedalen	24
2.3.2 Distance Health Care in Sydjylland, Denmark	27
2.3.3 Improving educational opportunities in Northwest Iceland	29
2.4 Improving regional attractiveness	31
2.4.1 The regional attractiveness of Sør-Trøndelag	31
2.4.2 Facing demographic challenges in Hedmark-Dalarna	34
2.4.3 The “We Choose the Faroe Islands” campaign	37
2.4.4 Cold Hawaii in Nordjylland, Denmark	39
3. What can be learned from these examples?	43
4. Directions for future research	45
References	47

1. Introduction

The Nordic countries are currently undergoing dramatic demographic changes that affect almost all policy areas at the municipal, regional, and national levels. As an example, the ageing population increases demand for health and elderly care and at the same time decreases labour supply, which may cause a labour shortage and weaken the tax base. These complex and interrelated issues require action in many areas. In the Nordic countries, many demographic changes influence the policy areas that concern municipal and regional authorities, and in some cases, the areas for which they are responsible. The room for manoeuvre of local and regional authorities is both limited and supported by the national policy framework, and in many cases, they can develop solutions to address challenges and to utilise opportunities for demographic change within their territory.

The “Innovative Local and Regional Approaches to Demographic Change” project commissioned by the Nordic Working Group for Demography and Welfare has studied selected local and regional examples of measures to address demographic change. The project and this report as its outcome build on the Nordic Demographic Handbook (Nordregio 2012) and complement it by highlighting a variety of local and regional examples of measures to manage a variety of demographic changes. The 2012 handbook provides local and regional authorities with tools to identify demographic challenges and a list of examples of ways in which challenges have been addressed by other regional and local authorities in the Nordic countries. As a continuation of the Nordic Demographic Handbook, this project examines some examples of meeting demographic challenges in greater depth and hopefully provides inspiration and explains lessons learned on how those challenges can be met.

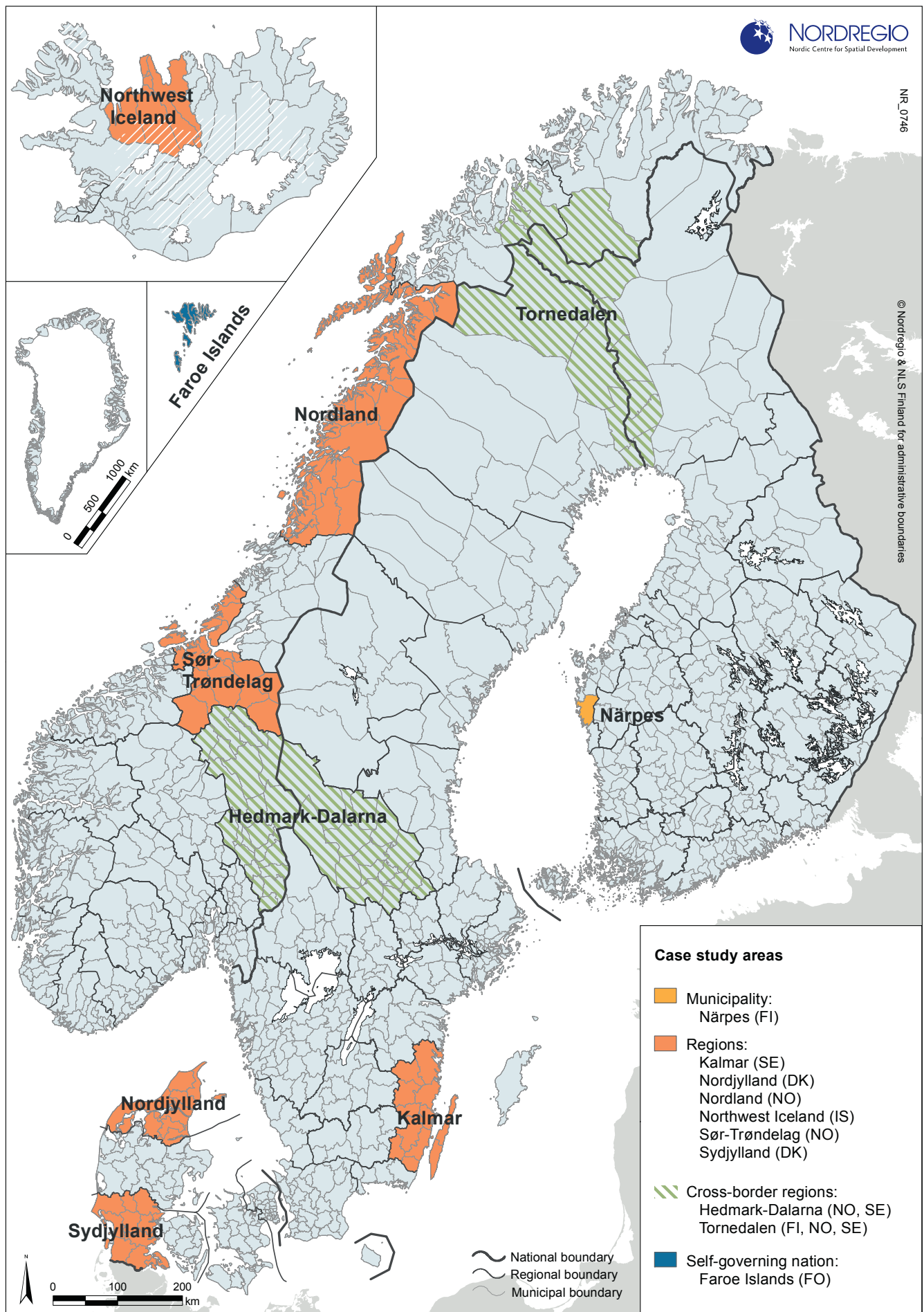
This report presents a variety of local and regional examples of different ways to adapt to the demographic change and to mitigate unwanted demographic development, from project-oriented initiatives to more strategic approaches, including both top-down and bottom-up initiatives. Many of the examples in this report cover several themes related to demographic change, both directly and indirectly. These examples are chosen based on discussions with national experts in the Nordic Working Group on Demography and Welfare as well as on desk study and interviews.

The examples address the following main themes.

- In-migration, geographic mobility and matching labour demand with supply (the In-migration project in Nordland, Norway and the “Närpes model” for integrating immigrants in Finland)
- Promotion of social mobility and inclusion (young people as a resource for sustainable regional development in Kalmar County, Sweden)
- Access to services (cross-border health care in Tornedalen, Finland/Sweden; distance health care in Sydjylland, Denmark; access to education, in Northwest Iceland)
- Regional attractiveness (regional attractiveness in Sør-Trøndelag, Norway; facing demographic challenges in Hedmark-Dalarna, Norway/Sweden; We choose the Faroe Islands campaign in the Faroe Islands; Cold Hawaii in Nordjylland, Denmark)

The examples of these themes cover a variety of demographic challenges and policy areas. The two examples on in-migration in particular address the mismatch between labour demand and supply that can result from out-migration or population ageing, among other causes. The examples related to social mobility and inclusion focus on the ways in which inclusion and involvement of population groups can influence trends; for example, by mitigating out-migration or ensuring the availability of labour. The examples related to access to services focus on aspects such as the logistical and resource-related difficulties of service provision in areas that are sparsely populated or that have an ageing population and/or a scarcity of resources in health care services. One of the examples of the theme of “access to services” also highlights the role of provision of education as a way to mitigate out-migration.

Some examples that have a more general approach to regional attractiveness are included to show how municipalities and regions characterised by out-migration work with holistic approaches to attract new inhabitants, tourists and businesses. Developing the specific assets of a region to attract business and residents can be one way to counteract out-migration and the challenges posed by an ageing population.



The examples are primarily intended to serve as inspiration for regional and local authorities but could also inspire national policy-making and provide new insights into the characteristics of successful ways of both addressing demographic challenges and building on the opportunities offered by changing demographic structures. Even though all of the examples presented are bound to specific historical and institutional backgrounds, they can promote exchange of experience and provide general lessons concerning potential success factors in responses to demographic change across Nordic regions and municipalities.

To provide a better understanding of the context of each example, a short description of the demographic challenges of the municipality or region is provided in the introduction to each initiative. The background information is based on the maps in the Nordic Demographic Handbook. The maps provide one way of studying the demographic vulnerabilities of Nordic municipalities and offer information such as the number of different types of demographic vulnerabilities of a specific municipality, such as low birth rate.

Connected to each of the examples, we present the

amount of demographic vulnerabilities of each case study areas based on the demographic vulnerability map. The indicators that are used to show the complexity of demographic challenges in the map are the percentage shares of different age groups of the total population (0-14 years, 15-24 years, 25-54 years, 55-64 years, 65 years and over), the total number of females per 100 males, the total number of females in age group 15-64 years per 100 males in age group 15-64, the total number of live births per 1000 inhabitants, the total number of deaths per 1000 inhabitants, and net-migration.

The vulnerability map as well as the other maps can be found in the handbook that is available at <http://www.nordregio.se/en/Publications/Publications-2012/Att-mota-demografiska-forandringar/>. More detailed information about the technical notes concerning the maps and indicators can also be downloaded.

This report first presents all the examples separately and then discusses them in combination in the final conclusions. All the examples are presented in a shorter form on Nordregio's web site, where they are also located on a map showing their geographic locations within the Nordic Region.

Map 1. Geographic locations of the case study areas of the examples. Map design: Linus Rispling.

2. Examples of local and regional approaches to demographic change

2.1 In-migration

2.1.1 The in-migration project in Nordland

The in-migration project (“Tilflytningsprosjektet”) intended to attract new citizens to the county and has focused specifically on work, housing, integration, and language education for the people moving to the county. It was implemented by the Nordland County Council in co-operation with the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service (NAV), the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (NHO), the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), and the Centre of Competence for Rural Development (KDU), and it received funding from the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Authorities.

Nordland County is situated in Northern Norway. The county consists of 44 (mainly small) municipalities, and the county administration is situated in the main city of Bodø, which has approximately 44,000 inhabitants. There are vast differences between the municipalities and in the extent of their demographic challenges. The smaller municipalities are vulnerable on at least seven of 10 indicators of demographic vulnerability listed in the Demographic Handbook.¹

Initiation

In response to the lack of skilled labour in many of the smaller municipalities in Nordland, the county council in 2009 initiated a two-year project funded by the former Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and

Regional Development (KRD). The idea of the in-migration project was to attract immigrants to meet current and future needs for skilled labour, especially in health care, engineering, and fisheries/aquaculture. The project also aimed to make Nordland more visible as an attractive place for employment, business creation, research, and entrepreneurship from an international perspective.² The project was initially named “Migration–Recruitment–Integration, Exploring Potential for New Settlement and Integration of Immigrants and other Newcomers in Selected Communities in Nordland”.³

The purpose of the project was to explore opportunities to attract immigrant labour, and for immigrants to become important resources in efforts to revitalise and develop small communities in the county. The long-term goal was to increase permanent settlement in Nordland, and five main priorities to achieve this were outlined: 1) Obtain an overview of the industries and agencies that will have trouble with future recruitment; 2) Facilitate the marketing of selected municipalities; 3) Facilitate the quality assurance of workers with vocational training from other countries; 4) Facilitate settlement of migrant workers and other newcomers in the county, and include measures to identify opportunities for partners to find work, as well as to provide Norwegian language training and integration; and 5) Initiate projects in one or more municipalities.⁴

1) Nordregio (2012): Map 1

2) Nordland Fylkeskommune (2013)

3) Tilflytting- rekruttering- integrering, utforskning av potensialet for ny bosetting og integrering av innvandrere og andre grupper tilflyttere i utvalgte småsamfunn i Nordland

4) Nordland Fylkeskommune (2013)



Photo: Magnus Fröderberg/norden.org

Implementation

Nordland County Council chose to approach the project by dividing the work into four pillars: recruitment, language, housing, and integration.⁵ The municipalities to be targeted in the project were chosen. One employee in each targeted municipality was given responsibility for the preparation and administration of each of the four pillars. In addition, a co-ordinator was responsible for organising seminars and meetings as well as co-ordinating the pillars and the work of the county council, municipalities, and participating organisations/institutions.

Regarding the first pillar, the recruitment of foreign workers was identified as an important topic. It was decided to direct efforts towards the recruitment of personnel from abroad, instead of targeting those who had already arrived in Norway. It quickly became apparent that there was insufficient expertise on this subject in Nordland. Therefore, the county council arranged meetings with relevant partners, including Bodø municipality, Nordland Regional Council, Health North, Nordland Hospital, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), the Norwegian Public Roads Administration, the European Employ-

ment Services and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV EURES), the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), the University of Nordland, and the county council's own personnel organisation. It became apparent that there was a need for clear goals for this pillar, and among the measures that the county council considered important to prioritise was a recruitment project with a focus on internationalisation and international migration. Through collaboration with the Norwegian Embassy in Manila, the Philippines, the county council was able to obtain knowledge about the process of recruiting labour from abroad. Many of the municipalities have also worked with NAV EURES to advertise jobs abroad and with staffing agencies to recruit temporary staff for the local government. However, most migrant workers are recruited through the personal social networks of immigrants already living in Norway.

Language skills are a prerequisite for participation in society and the work-place. The aim of the second pillar, language, was to develop language training for the large groups of immigrants who are not eligible for the existing language training offered by the public authorities, such as immigrants from the European Economic Area (EEA) or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries. One of the municipalities in Nordland, Hamarøy, decided to offer courses in Norwegian to all migrant workers. Participants pay only a small fee (around 1500 NOK) for an 80-hour course held on evenings and some weekends. The municipality also facilitates other initiatives, for instance by lending meeting rooms to a private company that offers courses in Norwegian for its employees. For migrant workers employed in the public sector, the municipality offers free language courses immediately after their arrival in Norway.

The third pillar, housing, involves many actors: the Norwegian State Housing Bank (which is responsible for the implementation of housing policy), municipalities, intermunicipal co-operation bodies, companies in relevant industries, educational institutions, and local health care institutions. Because housing is primarily a municipal responsibility, the Nordland County Council has limited influence over this issue. However, it often collaborates with key players such as the Housing Bank and in a sense has taken on a role of promoter and co-ordinator in relation to local authorities and others. The idea has been to include the construction of housing as an important part of development projects in the municipalities.

For the fourth pillar, integration, the aim was to improve the integration of immigrants by engaging voluntary organisations and NGOs. Organised leisure

5) Nordland Fylkeskommune (2013)

activities are an integral part of Norwegian culture; however, immigrants and children of immigrants are often under-represented in such activities. The reasons for this are many but could be related to a lack of financial means and/or to cultural barriers and differences. The focus was to create a model for integration of immigrants that could be transferred to other municipalities. There has been a specific focus on children, youth, and their parents. As part of this pillar, the intermunicipal co-operation body allocated NOK 250,000 to support voluntary organisations in applying integration schemes to their activities. One example of the ways in which municipalities encourage integration is found in the municipality of Andøy, which has made an action plan for inclusion in the municipality. Among other aspects, the action plan focuses on sports, and one initiative on this theme has been the establishment of a cafe run by the Lions service club that introduces new immigrants to the local community.

Main challenges

One of the main challenges has been the regulations regarding recruitment of labour from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). It can be difficult to obtain the required visa, and for health care professionals, there are special regulations regarding the validation of degrees obtained outside the EEA, and Norway in gen-

eral. Through the project it became apparent that employers in Nordland, particularly in the public sector, had to a limited extent developed strategies for recruiting from abroad and that certain employers seemed sceptical of recruiting personnel from abroad because of cultural barriers. At the end of the project, there was a study tour to the Philippines, which gave the participants some insight into what was needed when recruiting health care personnel from this specific country. However, the absence of other stakeholders in the project, such as health care facilities and universities and colleges, and integration-related activities has made it challenging to achieve any clear results from the efforts to integrate the immigrant labour force.

Regarding the language pillar, geographic distance and the large number of municipalities in Nordland were major challenges in offering suitable language courses for immigrants. The immigrants are a diverse group in terms of occupations and backgrounds, and thus have different needs. Although many can pay for tuition, many cannot—at least not for a long time, which is a further challenge.

With regard to integration, the above-mentioned strategy employed by Andøy has the potential for transfer to other municipalities. At the same time, municipalities in Nordland differ greatly, and there is still a need for concrete results from other municipalities.



Photo: Magnus Fröderberg / norden.org

Many municipalities are small and vulnerable in terms of resources for integration.

The final challenge relates to the opportunities for municipalities to share their experience, as there are few venues where this actually occurs. There has generally been a need for more extensive sharing of information and expertise, and for increasing co-operation between municipalities. The municipalities themselves have also taken little initiative in this regard, and one has therefore tried to establish a system for knowledge sharing through the “Local Community Development in Municipalities” (LUK) programme, which is embedded in the national regional development policy. One of the aims of LUK is to assist the municipalities in the planning, mobilisation, co-operation, and implementation of local development projects. Through the LUK programme, there has been an effort to develop a system for disseminating and sharing experience and knowledge.⁶

Outcomes and continuity

The main priorities of the in-migration project have been achieved with varying degrees of success. With regard to recruitment of foreign labour, the project has revealed an overall low level of competence and awareness in enterprises and municipalities concerning this issue and the opportunities that recruiting from abroad offers. As recruitment from abroad is demanding for individual companies, there is a need to develop expertise, common systems, and co-operation to facilitate the recruitment processes.

With regard to the adaptation of language courses, there is still much to do, although some municipalities have found good solutions to offer to immigrants. This work must be given priority in the future, as it is necessary for language courses to be available to immigrants throughout the whole county for them to integrate more easily into local communities.⁷

With regard to the housing issue, the experience and conclusions from the project will contribute to proposed housing policy programme initiatives directed by the county council. Resource allocation and practical organisation of the activities related to housing need to be discussed further, but it has been proposed that the planning department of the county council should work in co-operation with municipalities because construction of housing is restricted by priorities in planning at the local level.⁸ The Housing Bank has

been and will remain an important and active partner in the work of strengthening the planning and construction of homes in Nordland.

Finally, with regard to further integration, there has been an effort to develop an educational programme as well as to increase the knowledge and competence of municipal actors concerning these issues. Several municipalities have participated in a collaborative programme to increase awareness, to build networks and to share knowledge and experience.

Nordland County Council has decided to extend the project from 2014 to 2018. The new four-year project will include more participants and requires greater efforts while continuing the work undertaken in the first programme period. As part of this initiative, the KUN centre for gender equality was granted NOK 890,000 from the “Bolyt” national initiative and NOK 800,000 from Nordland County Council to initiate the “Immigrants as a resource in Nordland” project.⁹ The idea is to develop a model of the ways in which local authorities can structure the inclusion of immigrants, strengthening their ability to develop their own resources and to participate in Norwegian society. This work is being conducted in collaboration with the Vesterålen Regional Council and the municipalities of Lødingen, Hadsel, Bø, Øksnes, Sortland, and Andøy.

Lessons learned and transferability

The project has managed to increase significantly the focus on the challenges associated with recruitment from abroad. It highlights the complexity of the issue, which also concerns language, housing and leisure, as well as attitudes and knowledge. A key driver of project implementation has been the development of a comprehensive and long-term strategy for recruitment and integration.

Many of the municipalities that need to recruit foreign labour are small and therefore benefit from intermunicipal co-operation and partnerships with the county council to establish networks and to enhance expertise in the recruitment of foreign labour. By combining efforts, collaboration can facilitate activities such as organising language courses or well-being measures. However, one challenge is to encourage municipalities to share their experience; thus, there should be a focus on creating arenas in which the municipalities can meet, as the municipalities themselves take little initiative with regard to information sharing. Municipalities should also co-operate with local businesses in recruitment processes to ensure correspond-

6) Nordland Fylkeskommune (2013)

7) Nordland Fylkeskommune (2013)

8) Nordland Fylkeskommune (2013)

9) Innvandrere en ressurs i Nordland

ence between labour demand and supply.

Much remains to be done, particularly in the area of language training and the development of a comprehensive recruitment plan for the municipalities. There is, however, an increased awareness that a response to this issue requires co-operation between public and private bodies as well as different administrative levels (i.e., the municipal and county levels).

Three main points may be highlighted with regard to the transferability of the project. First, this example shows that one way for municipalities to succeed in the recruitment of foreign labour is to establish a comprehensive and long-term strategy for recruitment and integration that includes issues such as housing, information, co-operation, language training, and job satisfaction.¹⁰ Second, the success of this comprehensive strategy has depended on broad political participation to place the issues on the agenda. For instance, the immigration project has been politically well embedded in Nordland County. Migration, recruitment, and integration were also the themes of the regional planning seminars during 2012, as well as conferences hosted by the regional councils that contributed to placing these issues on the political agenda. Finally, because single municipalities often do not have the resources to initiate collaboration with other municipalities, the county administration can have an active role in creating forums for knowledge sharing and stimulating collaboration. Intermunicipal collaboration is an important means of finding new and collaborative solutions to tackle the challenges related to in-migration and integration.

2.1.2 The “Närpes model” for integrating immigrants

The Närpes model refers to the ways in which the small Swedish-speaking municipality of Närpes in Western Finland has been working to integrate immigrants. The example of the “Närpes model” concerns the demographic issue of mismatch between labour demand and supply. In this case, immigration from abroad is utilised successfully as a way to meet labour demand. The term “model” is used relatively loosely to describe an approach consisting of a variety of elements (such as

cross-sectoral co-operation). Those factors have been studied in an extensive report by Mattila and Björklund (2013). This short presentation of Närpes’ approach to labour market-based immigration is based largely on that report as well as on discussions with a representative from the municipality.

According to Mattila and Björklund, the Närpes model contains several aspects: the existing positive attitudes towards labour force immigration, various activities by the municipality, the active role of employers, and a relatively large proportion of immigrants in Närpes. Cross-sectoral co-operation and development of different aspects of integration (e.g., employment and housing) in a holistic manner has been essential as well. However, labour demand has been key to the success of Närpes in integrating immigrants. Immigrants who have come to Närpes have already been employed in the municipality, which has made it easier for them to integrate into the local community.¹¹

The demographic profile of Närpes is typical of many municipalities in the Nordic countries. There is a lack of people of working age, and fewer women than men, but a positive inflow of international migration. In total, there are approximately 9,000 inhabitants in the municipality. Map 1 in Part one of the Demographic Handbook (2012) shows a set of indicators of demographic vulnerability and indicates that Närpes is vulnerable on nine of the 10 indicators. There is a surplus of men and the replacement ratio in Närpes is <0.8, which means that there is a shortage of people aged between 15 and 64 years; i.e. those active in the labour force.

A large proportion of the working-age population left Närpes during the 1960s and 1970s to work in Sweden. This development led to a situation whereby an entire generation is “missing” (the children of those who emigrated in the 1960s and 1970s). The shortage of labour caused by the challenging demographic structure has been mitigated by international migration to Närpes during the past two decades. At the moment, approximately 10% of the population have foreign citizenship (which is a high proportion compared with other parts of Finland). Today, 35 different nationalities are represented among the inhabitants of Närpes municipality.¹²

10) Proba (2014)

11) Mattila & Björklund (2013); Ivars (2013)

12) Nordregio (2012); Statistics Finland (2013)



Photo: Magnus Fröderberg/norden.org

Initiation

Närpes was the first municipality outside the largest city regions of Finland to decide to accept quota refugees in the late 1980s. From the beginning, the inhabitants of Närpes were comprehensively and widely informed on the subject of immigration and integration. Education and information were also directed to employers regarding opportunities to recruit foreign labour. Information and communication measures to influence the attitudes of the inhabitants and employers have been central in creating a good environment for integration.

Societal structures for integrating immigrants were developed in the 1980s and 1990s, when Närpes took in small numbers of immigrants. The small scale of immigration to Närpes facilitated the development of well-functioning systems for integration, such as ways to manage day care for the children of immigrant families and ways to organise language courses and to disseminate information. These established structures facilitated an increase in immigration in the 2000s.¹³

In the early 2000s, employers considered using labour-market-based immigration to meet their labour demand because they were unable to recruit the necessary labour from the local market. As there already were immigrants in Närpes, the international social

networks of the existing immigrants could be used to recruit more immigrant labour. This caused a so-called “snowball effect”, whereby the presence of many immigrants in Närpes attracted more immigrants to the municipality. The municipal organisation supported immigration in ways such as providing the structures needed.¹⁴

Implementation

It has been emphasised that there has been no clear or explicit strategy in Närpes to attract immigrant labour. Rather, it has mainly happened to satisfy the needs of employers. The greenhouse and metal industries especially have had a need for labour that has been addressed through migration. Mattila and Björklund note that employers have actively recruited from abroad, while the municipality has had an important role in providing the societal structures needed for the integration of the labour force.¹⁵

The role of co-operation in developing approaches to the integration of immigrants in Närpes is a key aspect of the Närpes model proposed by Mattila and Björklund (2013). Partly because of the small size of the community, it has been possible to create effective

13) Mattila & Björklund (2013); Nordregio (2012)

14) Mattila & Björklund (2013); Nordregio (2012)

15) Mattila & Björklund (2013)

cross-sectoral co-operation between municipal authorities, and between authorities, employers and the third sector (non-profit organisations). In the Närpes model, co-operation has also been central to the simultaneous development of parts of the integration structure (employment, housing, language education, and social infrastructure). This has been another key to the model's success.¹⁶

In addition to the structures provided by the municipality, support measures from employers have been central. Both Mattila and Björklund and the interviewees note that local business owners independently launched campaigns to recruit people from other countries actively and succeeded in attracting a large number of people, especially from South East Asia, Poland, and the Balkan states. Employers have also supported their employees in ways such as organising language courses during working hours and helping with housing arrangements. The small size of the community and the small size of the employer companies have also facilitated the establishment of personal relationships between employers and employees.¹⁷

Specific information and communication measures have continuously been targeted at both existing inhabitants and immigrants. New information channels have been found to reach immigrants who speak a variety of languages.¹⁸ The municipality has also invested in immigrant children and their education. After a first year in special language classes, the children are integrated into the same classes as the Finnish children in order to promote integration. There is an education programme for teachers in multicultural education, and kindergarten staff members receive continuous education on multicultural issues.¹⁹

The municipality has been active in various projects, often partly financed by the EU. At the moment, the municipality co-operates with four other municipalities in the region (as a member of the so-called K5 municipalities) in a state-funded project. The goal of the project is to develop a new model for education on issues related to integration that is to be rolled out throughout Finland. The project also develops a shared integration programme for the five municipalities in addition to a virtual learning environment on societal issues and language for immigrants. In another project, Närpes, together with other municipalities, plans to establish a "welcome office" that among other func-

tions will provide step-by-step information on settling in Finland as well as information about authorities that provide assistance on a variety of issues.²⁰

Main challenges

Mattila and Björklund (2013) mention difficulties in finding suitable housing and the problems related to residence permits for non-EU citizens as the main challenges for immigration and integration in Närpes. Increased demand for housing has increased housing prices, which has complicated the housing market situation. However, as the ageing population of Närpes move from the countryside towards central areas, immigrants have been able to buy and renovate old houses in rural areas. This has revitalised village communities.

Furthermore, residence permits granted to non-EU citizens are often for short periods and are renewed only when employment contracts are renewed. The bureaucracy related to residence permits has caused insecurity among immigrant families. There is a minimum income limit for people with resident permits, and there is a risk that a residence permit may not be renewed in case of unemployment.²¹

Even though co-operation and co-ordination between actors has mainly functioned well in Närpes, there have been some challenges in terms of communication and exchange of information between employers and the municipality. The employers may not always have the time to inform the municipality whenever they recruit immigrant labour, or how many employees are moving to Närpes and whether they are bringing children. This has in some cases made it challenging for the municipality to plan service provision.

The municipality has also lacked an organisation responsible for integration issues with a good overview of the various aspects of integration. However, Närpes is currently co-operating in a project ("Delaktig i Finland") with the other K5 municipalities to create the kind of organisation that is needed and to employ a shared immigration co-ordinator. By working together, these small municipalities with their limited resources can provide services and improve their work in ways that would not be possible individually.²²

16) Mattila & Björklund (2013)

17) Mattila & Björklund (2013); Ivars (2013)

18) Mattila & Björklund (2013); Nordregio (2012)

19) Ivars (2012)

20) Ivars (2013)

21) Mattila & Björklund (2013)

22) Ivars (2013)



Photo: Magnus Fröderberg/norden.org

Main outcomes and continuity

Attracting a good number of immigrants and their successful integration into the labour market and the local community can be considered to be the main outcome of the various activities of municipal actors, employers and the third sector in Näripes.

This success is found to be dependent on many factors. Mattila and Björklund emphasise that the continuity of various projects and initiatives promoting integration has been good. Projects on integration in Näripes have built on the success of the earlier projects. This has created a “positive circle”, where successes in some aspects feed into successes in others.²³

Mattila and Björklund also note that the upcoming municipal reform, merging several small municipalities into larger entities, is seen as a possible challenge for the future implementation of the Näripes model. The model is to some extent dependent on the small size of the municipality and the flexibility that this provides. In the case of municipal mergers, the local authorities are afraid that service provision may be centralised and that the effective local integration services of Näripes may be closed down.²⁴

23) Mattila and Björklund (2013)

24) Mattila & Björklund (2013)

Lessons learned and transferability

The Näripes example shows the importance of the public sector’s co-operating with other actors and involving both employers and employees in its work. Cross-sectoral co-operation and a bottom-up approach have been central to this model. Without collaboration between public and private actors, and the municipal authorities considering employers’ and employees’ needs, Näripes would not have been so successful in establishing a well-functioning integration framework.

Näripes has several strengths that have contributed to its success in the integration of immigrant labour. As noted, its small size has facilitated co-operation and close and personal contact between actors (e.g., between immigrant employees and small employers, and between employers and authorities, as well as between authorities and immigrants). The study by Mattila and Björklund further emphasises that being a Swedish-speaking municipality has also been an advantage, as Swedish can in many cases be easier than Finnish for immigrants to learn. Mattila and Björklund also stress that Näripes has a tradition of immigration, and many inhabitants have their own experiences of immigration among family members. This has contributed to a generally positive attitude towards international labour mobility.²⁵

The existing high demand for labour has also been

25) Mattila & Björklund (2013); Nordregio (2012)

crucial for the success of the Närpes model in integrating labour immigrants. However, even though immigration has mitigated the demographic challenges in the municipality, current immigration is not sufficient to respond to the ageing of the current population.

Mattila and Björklund emphasise that the long-term future success of the municipality depends on the success of local businesses, on whether immigration continues and on whether the municipality succeeds in keeping the young people in Närpes. Education and promotion of entrepreneurship are mentioned as good ways to achieve this goal.

It is difficult for municipal actors in Närpes to see the main reasons for their success, because the development of the methods and measures has happened over a long period of time. Maintaining the continuity of integration-related projects and the ability to keep the issue on the agenda in policy-making and administration has been crucial. EU-funded projects have also been very important, and many effective methods have been developed in those projects.

Närpes has been able to benefit from its small size, which could inspire other small municipalities. In Närpes, the small size of the municipality and the limited resources that this entails have not been seen as negative but rather as encouragement for increased co-ordination, communication and co-operation between actors within the municipality and with the neighbouring municipalities. As noted above, Närpes has also taken a step forward and co-operates actively with four other municipalities in the region (the other K5 municipalities). Co-operation and combining resources is a good way for small municipalities with limited resources and population to develop and provide services that they could not offer on their own. Co-operation also contributes to the exchange of experience and mutual learning between the participating municipalities.²⁶

2.2 Promotion of social mobility and inclusion

2.2.1 Young people as a resource for sustainable regional development in Kalmar County

The Regional Council in Kalmar County has made “youth as a resource for sustainable regional development” one of its focus areas in dealing with a negative demographic development. In 2006, it developed a policy for a child and youth perspective where it outlined

the ways in which child and youth issues should be included in policy making.²⁷ The Regional Development Strategy 2012–2020 prioritises youth issues, and the regional council has taken several individual initiatives concerning young people as a resource for sustainable regional development.²⁸

Challenges related to out-migration of youth are common demographic issues that the Regional Council in Kalmar County intends to address. The initiatives of the council are to encourage young people to stay in the region to balance the population development.

All of the municipalities in the county face demographic challenges caused by the large proportion of elderly people and the shortage of children and young people. The municipality of Kalmar is vulnerable in only two of the demographic vulnerability indicators, but all the other municipalities in the county are vulnerable in six to 10 indicators. The county also has three municipalities that are vulnerable in all the indicators. This clearly shows that the county in general faces severe demographic challenges. The challenges related to the ageing population and the low proportion of the younger population seem to be the most pressing challenges facing Kalmar County in general.²⁹

Initiation

The Regional Council of Kalmar County is a politically steered regional authority owned by all the municipalities in the county and the county council. It shares regional development responsibilities with the county council and the county administrative board. It was established in 1997 as a pilot authority when Sweden trialled the transfer of regional development tasks of the county administrative boards and county councils to regional councils. It became a permanent authority in 2002.

From its initiation, youth issues have been prioritised by the regional council. This is partly because some of the municipalities in the county had previously worked on these issues and partly because some active employees in the new authority had previously worked in municipalities that had prioritised youth issues and had brought relevant experience to the regional council.³⁰ The regional council has thus actively engaged municipalities in work with youth as a resource for regional development. At first, the proportion of active municipalities was smaller, but the exchange of

26) Ivars (2013); Mattila & Björklund (2013); Nordregio (2012)

27) The Regional Council in Kalmar County (2006)

28) The Regional Council in Kalmar County (2012)

29) Nordregio (2012)

30) Ilhammar (2013)



Photo: Magnus Fröderberg/norden.org

experience between municipalities has continuously increased the number of municipalities actively pursuing the theme.³¹

Co-operation and knowledge sharing between municipalities have been central in the process of engaging municipalities, encouraging them to include youth themes in their daily operations and raising their awareness of the potential of youth for regional development. Some municipalities have already had long traditions of work on various youth issues, and the regional council has been active in spreading knowledge of good examples from those municipalities to encourage other municipalities to participate. By now, the regional council has engaged most of the municipalities in the county to work on youth issues, although in practice, there are variations in the degree to which the municipalities actively participate and incorporate this into their daily work.³²

Implementation

The regional council considers that the likelihood of young people staying in the county or returning in future will increase if they realise that they can have an

influence on their everyday lives in the county (by means of bodies such as youth councils) and if they feel that they belong in the region. At the regional council, youth policy is implemented by the department of population and welfare, which is also responsible for the in-migration of labour, refugees, equality, and health care.³³

Youth work is prioritised in the Regional Development Strategy of Kalmar County, which includes youth policy goals that will be followed up in 2015. The current main priority areas in youth policy are engagement and participation (e.g., youth councils and influence in schools), and employment and safety (e.g., decreasing drug and alcohol use and safety on public transport). The regional council also prioritises equality issues.³⁴

The Regional Development Strategy also includes a list of recommendations for municipalities and other actors. For example, the strategy recommends that municipalities should establish structures for regional and local youth politics and invest in youth involvement at all levels and in a variety of administrative sectors within their municipal organisations. The strategy also encourages the public, private, and third sector to fa-

31) Ilhammar (2013)

32) Ilhammar (2013)

33) The Regional Council in Kalmar County (2013)

34) The Regional Council in Kalmar County (2012)

cilitate and promote the involvement of young people in the labour market.”³⁵

The priority areas in youth policy are chosen based on an analysis of the situation of youth in the county. The analysis is based on a survey that is conducted in almost all municipalities and co-ordinated by the regional council, while the analysis is conducted by Linnaeus University. The theoretically grounded research reports and analyses from the university provide good support and recommendations for policy-making at the regional and local levels. Most of the municipalities in Kalmar County engage with youth issues in their local areas and use the survey as a tool to monitor the opinions and experiences of youth at the local level. However, the extent to which the municipalities can incorporate the survey and analysis results varies in practice. Monitoring and analysing the situation of young people in the county is one of the two main current projects related to youth that the regional council is co-ordinating.³⁶

The other main project focuses on strengthening young people’s opportunities for personal development through national and international experience as well as on developing the competence, quality, and methods of municipal youth work.

During 2013, the regional council has been working with municipalities to develop project ideas targeting youth unemployment. In the autumn of 2013, it also received funding for a pre-study in a project on youth employment in which young people would receive internships in health care. The regional council is also building a system of “student co-workers” whereby local students are given opportunities to work part-time in local enterprises.³⁷

The regional council has an important co-ordinating role at the county level, and it co-operates mainly with municipalities and an NGO (“Kumulus”) that was first established as part of the regional council to work with youth issues but now functions as an independent organisation. The activities of the NGO are funded by the membership fees of municipalities. Work tasks are divided between the regional council and the NGO. The regional council works on a strategic level, while the NGO works on practical youth-related projects. The two organisations have co-operated well, and the regional council finds it useful to co-operate with a smaller, dynamic organisation that is more adaptive to

changing needs and more agile than a public authority such as the regional council.

As noted above, the regional council has been successful in persuading almost all the municipalities in the county to participate in activities to strengthen the position of youth in the county. However, it has not been particularly active in engaging non-public actors outside Kumulus, and organisations such as enterprises have not taken part in its activities. In the future, the regional council intends to engage more companies as it devotes increased attention to youth unemployment and labour market issues.³⁸

Main challenges

Although the division of tasks between the regional council and Kumulus has been clear, it has been challenging to communicate the various roles to the municipalities. Because both the regional council and the NGO are financed by membership fees from the municipalities, some municipalities consider that they must pay twice for the same services. Moreover, some municipalities have delegated responsibility for youth issues to their own employees and therefore have difficulty in seeing the added value of working on these issues at the county level and supporting two organisations in addition to the cost of local activities. The regional council considers that the current structure functions well, but there still appears to be some challenges in including many administrative levels and diverse types of actors.³⁹

The regional council would also like to improve its dialogue with the National Board of Youth Affairs and co-ordination between the regional and national levels. The board could provide more support, and the regional council wishes the board to be more active in disseminating information and knowledge in regions and municipalities.⁴⁰

Main outcomes and continuity

No evaluations are available on whether the work in engaging youth and related initiatives—for example, increasing young people’s influence, participation, and safety—has affected the youth population of the region or whether it has contributed to balanced population development in the manner that the regional council seeks.

However, according to the regional council, its promotion of youth affairs in policy-making has at least

35) The Regional Council in Kalmar County (2012)

36) The Regional Council in Kalmar County (2012); The Regional Council in Kalmar County (2013); Ilhammar (2013)

37) Ilhammar (2013)

38) Ilhammar (2013)

39) Ilhammar (2013)

40) Ilhammar (2013)

resulted in more municipalities placing these issues on their agendas. The regional council works actively to initiate and establish dialogue with municipal authorities and politicians to increase awareness of youth issues. It seems that the regional prioritisation of youth affairs has contributed to the issues being considered at the local level and prioritised in many municipalities.⁴¹

Many of the municipalities have drafted action plans and have youth councils. Some have also recruited an employee to work in the area of youth affairs or at least to be responsible for this area. According to the regional council, many of the municipalities have understood the importance of working across sectors and between administrative levels. This may improve work on youth as a resource for regional development.⁴²

Lessons learned and transferability

The strategic work and implementation of youth policy at the regional level in Kalmar County can be considered to be an illustration of the ways in which municipalities can pursue policy goals established at the regional level. The regional council works across sectors and remains in continuous dialogue with municipal employees and politicians. It also promotes the exchange of experience and mutual learning between municipalities, which has improved co-operation between them.

According to an external evaluation, the municipalities find the co-ordinating work of the regional council useful in supporting their local policy-making and implementation concerning youth as a resource for the development of the county.⁴³

The youth policy of the Regional Council in Kalmar County is a good example of a policy process where analysis of the current situation is the basis for formulating policy. The extensive surveys and analyses by a local university provide a good knowledge base for regional policy-making. Most municipalities participate in the process and conduct the surveys in their municipalities, where they can also support local policy by giving the municipalities a view of the situation.

The work on youth issues in Kalmar County has spread to other actors (the regional council, Kumulus, and municipalities), which may improve the efficiency of the work because different actors have different strengths and roles in the system. However, the presence of many actors with a range of administrative roles at a variety of levels has been shown to present

some challenges because it complicates the governance system and makes it more difficult for some stakeholders to understand. Nonetheless, for the regional council, establishing an NGO that later became an individual organisation has been a good way of having a smaller and more agile organisation for practical implementation, while the regional council can focus on the strategic level.

2.3 Access to services

2.3.1 Cross-border health care in Tornedalen

Tornedalen is situated on the Finnish–Swedish border and has a long tradition of mobility across the national borders. Many inhabitants live in Finland and work in Sweden or vice-versa. Co-operation on cross-border health care was initiated in the region in the 1970s and has been further developed in the 2010s; for example, in INTERREG projects.

This example of meeting demographic challenges is related to provision of access to services, especially health care, in sparsely populated regions. Cross-border health care has enabled the inhabitants of the cross-border region of Tornedalen to receive acute health care from the closest health care service provider, even if it is located on the other side of the border. This is useful for the inhabitants of this remote region, as well as for the health care providers.

The work on cross-border health care has made health care less dependent on the place of work or residence of the patient and thus meets the challenges of sparse population, remoteness, an ageing population, and scarcity of resources for health care services. Health care centres and hospitals in both countries have been the main actors developing cross-border health care in the region.⁴⁴

The Tornedalen region has approximately 60,000 inhabitants; 40,000 live on the Finnish side and 20,000 on the Swedish side of the border. Except for Tornio in Finland, all the municipalities in the Tornedalen region face severe demographic challenges. Most of the municipalities are vulnerable on all 10 of the demographic vulnerability indicators identified in the Demographic Handbook. Haparanda in Sweden is vulnerable on nine of the indicators and Tornio on five indicators. All the municipalities except Tornio have a negative labour force replacement ratio and a surplus of males in the population (a replacement ratio lower than 0.8 and fewer than 92 women per 100 men).⁴⁵

41) Ilhammar 2013

42) Ilhammar (2013)

43) The Regional Council in Kalmar County (2013); Ilhammar (2013)

44) Eero (2011); Eero (2013)

45) Nordregio (2012)

Initiation

Development of cross-border health care in the region was initiated in the 1970s. Physicians on the Swedish side of the border were overloaded with emergency duties, which had a negative effect on their work. Because there was another health care centre on the Finnish side, a decision was made to attempt to initiate co-operation to divide responsibilities and resources across borders. A shortage of resources and the challenges of providing health care in such a sparsely populated and remote region were the main reasons for initiating co-operation.⁴⁶

For this purpose, the health care centres negotiated with respective national ministries responsible for health care issues. Initially the ministries were sceptical about ideas such as shared emergency services, but the health care centres were granted a year-long test period. After the first year of testing, they were given permanent permission to share emergency duties between the two health care centres.⁴⁷

From the beginning, it was decided to avoid bureaucracy to improve co-operation. Contracts between actors across the border were made simple and non-bureaucratic. It was decided that there would be no exchange of money because this was thought to facilitate bureaucratic co-operation. This co-operation was considered to be a win-win situation for all partners, and therefore, no monetary transactions were needed.⁴⁸

Implementation

The co-operation on health care has always been based on a local need for co-operation. Working methods have evolved over time in co-operation between the actors. Initiatives to establish co-operation between actors have been undertaken locally based on need and interest. For example, there has been co-operation between dental health care centres in acute dental care.⁴⁹

The co-operation has in principle been effective, and over the years, many practical solutions were established to facilitate cross-border health care. However, not all of the practices always functioned well in all emerging situations. Therefore, an INTERREG project was implemented in the period 2008–2011 to assess the quality of existing methods and to develop new ones. The Norrbotten County Council was the lead partner

of the INTERREG IV A Nord “Gränslös vård” project.⁵⁰

Main challenges

The action space for the partners on each side of the border is restricted by border obstacles. The main obstacles to further development of cross-border health care in the region have been related to legislation and differences in regulations between Finland and Sweden.⁵¹

In particular, in the management of patient journals and confidentiality, differences in regulations impeded further development of co-operation, as it is not possible to access patient journals across borders. The example of a large EU project in which the Tornedalen region has participated illustrates how the main obstacles and challenges in the development of cross-border health care are often related to large legislative changes. The so-called epSOS project, for example, included a measure to test e-prescriptions. However, the testing period needed to be rescheduled, as legislative changes were demanded on the Finnish side even to commence testing these new methods.⁵²

Main outcomes and continuity

There are no available evaluations of the actual consequences of cross-border health care co-operation for aspects such as accessibility or the travelling distances of the inhabitants, or for the efficiency of health care in the sparsely populated areas.

One of the most tangible results of the work on cross-border health care was an agreement that was established in 2011 for co-operation in acute health care across the national borders of Sweden, Finland, and Norway. According to the agreement, ambulances and helicopters can be used across borders. The agreement has been in force since 2012 and covers insurance and costs for patients from all of the regions of the three countries.⁵³

The future of cross-border health care in Tornedalen is uncertain at the moment. According to the project leader of the Gränslös vård project, both Finland and Sweden may be moving towards changes in the organisational structures that may result in increased centralisation. The trend towards increased centralisation could extend travel times to health care services for the patients. It is emphasised by the project leader that when health care services are moved farther from

46) Eero (2011); Eero (2013)

47) Eero (2013)

48) Eero (2011); Eero (2013)

49) Eero (2011); Eero (2013)

50) Eero (2011); Eero (2013)

51) Eero (2011); Eero (2013)

52) Eero (2011); Eero (2013).

53) Eero (2011); Eero (2013)



Photo: Johannes Jansson/norden.org

the border areas, cross-border health care issues may not be so easily prioritised by the personnel because the border issues do not affect their everyday practices. As an example, the transfer of the ambulance services on the Finnish side of the border from Rovaniemi south to Oulu is considered to have a negative influence on the possibilities for ambulance co-operation.⁵⁴

It remains unclear how the new directive on cross-border health care and patient mobility will influence health care in Tornedalen. The directive allows citizens to seek specialist health care services across borders and does not limit cross-border health care to acute cases, as was previously the case. The experience and skills that the actors in Tornedalen have already acquired in their earlier work on cross-border health care may make it easier for them to adapt to some of the requirements of the directive.⁵⁵

Lessons learned and transferability

The measures to develop and organise health care across borders in Tornedalen have from the beginning been based on actual need for co-operation and sharing resources to provide services in sparsely populated

areas with demographic challenges. It is notable that there has been no explicit strategy behind these efforts, and that the ways of working together have grown organically over time in an informal manner. Tornedalen provides an example for other regions of development that has been driven by employees and actors in a specific sector rather than in a top-down manner by authorities working at the strategic level.

It has been central that co-operation has been based on active employees at health care centres who are committed to the issue. In the case of the Tornedalen region, this bottom-up approach has been effective, and cross-border health care is an organic part of the daily activities of the health care centres. The health care centres consider their co-operation to be a win-win situation.

However, such informal working methods may have a downside if the activities are not co-ordinated, and their quality may not always be assured if they evolve without careful planning and control, and grow in an informal way. In Tornedalen, this problem was recognised, and an INTERREG project was started to provide quality assurance for the working methods. In more informal development, it remains important to recognise the need for co-ordination and quality assurance.

54) Eero (2013)

55) Eero (2011); Eero (2013)

2.3.2 Distance Health Care in Sydjylland, Denmark

Of the population in Denmark, 0.2 per cent—more than 10,000 Danes—are in contact with the health care system because of chronic wounds. Wound patients are mainly elderly, and Sydjylland in the region of southern Denmark is to a large extent characterised by an increasing elderly population. Moreover, according to the Demographic Handbook, parts of Sydjylland⁵⁶ (especially the municipality of Tønder) show a high degree of demographic vulnerability.⁵⁷

In Denmark, the responsibility for running the health service is decentralised, and most tasks are the responsibility of regional authorities. The region of southern Denmark currently has four hospital units running a total of 18 hospitals. Over the past five years, the Region of Southern Denmark has increasingly focused on eHealth and telemedicine—both in research projects and in implementation. All hospitals in the region have implemented telemedicine services, and the region is very active in several national and international eHealth projects.⁵⁸

Initiation

Telemedical wound care is a multidisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration, where telemedicine contributes to closer co-operation between the municipality and hospital treatment and care of patients and people with chronic wounds.

Telemedicine solutions are increasingly common in the health sector. In Sydjylland, the Telemedical wound care project (“Sår i Syd”), a cross-sectoral co-operation between Sønderjylland Hospital and Haderslev, Sønderborg, and Aabenraa municipalities, has led to an increase in the use of telemedicine techniques in wound management over recent years.⁵⁹ In the Sår i Syd project, patients are given the option of home treatment. The project is an interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration between four municipalities in Sydjylland as well as the Region of Southern Denmark, where treatment of wound patients is supported by telemedicine.

In January 2005, a project group, which was initially led by Aabenraa Hospital, was established. The group consisted of home health care representatives from the four municipalities of Sydjylland, and representa-

tives from the Hospital of Sydjylland.⁶⁰ At the political level, there was a mandate to improve the quality of wound management, and the former health boards of Sydjylland County decided to initiate a wound healing programme for the whole of Jutland. It was eventually decided that the telemedicine concept could support both the policy objectives and the objectives set by the project group. In 2006, telemedicine was introduced and offered to the home care personnel (wound care nurses) in the then 22 municipalities in the region of South Denmark.

Implementation

The technological arrangement available through telemedicine means that patients can be diagnosed, monitored, and treated in their own homes. The use of telemedicine normally requires only one visit to the clinic to make the final diagnosis, while routine checks are abolished, thus saving travel time for patients and resources for taking these patients to the hospital or doctor. The technology and the division of labour further increases the likelihood that patients who need specialist treatment receive it fast because the wound journal is easily accessible electronically. An electronic journal contains all information and images that represent the health professional’s assessment of the patients with the (greatest) need for specialist treatment. Because data transfer is simple and fast, and the data are collected in one place, work is reduced and resources are freed for other purposes.

The project has involved a wide range of actors, such as social and health care assistants, nurses, wound care nurses across sectors, doctors across sectors, prosthetists, podiatrists, and external experts. A steering committee for Sår i Syd, with representatives from hospitals and municipalities, is responsible for the main activities of the project, and this committee meets approximately every two months. Matters such as major project decisions and financial issues are vested in the local co-ordination forum led by Sydjylland Hospital.

Sår i Syd assumes that the actors involved (such as social and health care assistants) have sufficient knowledge and can use the technical equipment to support patient care, such as mobile phones, cameras, and digital pens. It is the individual hospital’s responsibility to teach actors how to operate the various pieces of technical equipment. The hospital offers ongoing training for 1–2 hours, while in the municipalities, local wound care nurses are responsible for the training of staff. The wound care nurses also meet regularly to discuss pro-

56) Sydjylland is a NUTS 3 region that is part of the larger NUTS 2 region of Southern Denmark.

57) Nordregio (2012): Map 1

58) Region Syddanmark (2009)

59) Region Syddanmark (2009)

60) Region Syddanmark (2009)



Photo: Johannes Jansson/norden.org

fessional issues and developments related to the project. Participation in Sår i Syd is therefore an opportunity for ongoing skill development and introduction to techniques that could be used in other telemedicine projects.

The implementation and operation of Sår i Syd would not be possible without the establishment and operation of a wound database as well as technical equipment. There are also costs associated with training medical professionals to manage the system. Syddjylland Hospital spent DKK 388,000 to develop the wound database. The yearly cost of the project is estimated to be approximately DKK 56,000, which is paid by regional authorities. Finally, the cost of procurement of necessary equipment amounts to a total of DKK 15,200 (excluding consumption).⁶¹ These expenses are paid by the users—local authorities and the hospitals. The organisation of the project provides a functionally differentiated division of labour, meaning that some parts of the patient pathway are handled by the municipal health professionals, while other parts require the involvement of specialists at the central hospital.

Main challenges

At a technical level, there has been a need to simplify the forms of communication between patients and administrative systems across hospitals and municipalities. The project has also lacked involvement by general practitioners. Previously, it was a problem that only a single hospital doctor and a handful of staff were involved in the project. This made it vulnerable to staff problems such as illness, absenteeism or job changes.

Another challenge has been a lack of equal financial distribution between the region, the hospital, and the municipalities, and in the future, this could be improved by creating a billing system that more accurately regulates and distributes the municipalities' payment for hospital services related to telemedicine. It has also been a challenge to simplify the integration of information from the wound database, municipal care systems and hospital patient systems. Clear management and integration of technical solutions and equipment for storing data are thus essential for the successful implementation and operation of such a project.

61) Region Syddanmark (2009)

Outcomes and continuity

There are significant benefits associated with telemedicine, especially for the patient. In addition to the time savings, there are economic gains, because the number of visits both to a general practitioner (regional and municipal savings) and the hospital (municipal savings) is minimised. The patient is diagnosed faster and thus can start treatment of the underlying cause more quickly. At the same time, there is a reduction in the number of outpatient contacts, implying a reduction in waiting time and financial savings for both municipality and region in each patient's treatment. The telemedicine collaboration also facilitates a division of labour between the parties,⁶² with the technology ensuring fast communication between health professionals and providing a better basis for monitoring patients.

While a loss of patients in the outpatient clinic represents a loss of income for the hospital, it is estimated that total activity remains largely unchanged, with other patient groups gaining quicker access to hospital services instead. The interdisciplinary co-operation between hospitals and municipalities in relation to wound treatment has been strengthened; however, extending this participation to general practitioners could benefit the project. Economically, there are savings for municipalities in the form of fewer outpatient visits and hospitalisations, and for the region in terms of fewer consultations with the general practitioner and fewer travel expenses.

In 2007, it was decided that the project should continue. This entails continued co-operation between the municipalities and the regional authorities. The conditions for the collaboration have been implemented in the municipal health agreements ("Sundhedsaftaler")⁶³ that regions and municipalities are required to develop at least once during every administrative term. In these agreements, the mutual obligations and expectations of the project are listed to ensure continued co-operation and management. This not only ensures support at the political level but also ensures that the challenges (economic, organisational, and technological) that occur on a regular basis are addressed in the local co-ordination forums.

Lessons learned and transferability

The project is rooted in co-operation across administrative levels. A main driver of this co-operation has been the active commitment of employees at health care centres. The formalised co-operation structures

and the strong consensus and leadership of the project have also been crucial for its success. At the operational level, support from local management in hospitals and municipalities to make telemedicine in wound management a priority focus area has been crucial. Similarly, at the local level, support from academic institutions has allowed continuous and/or further development of the treatment approach. The hospitals have ensured that a sufficient number of staff members manage the telemedicine equipment and are part of the project. On a practical level, agreements with suppliers to create a wound database, to procure the necessary equipment and to devote time and resources to areas such as training and skills development have been crucial for the implementation of the project.

2.3.3 Improving educational opportunities in Northwest Iceland

The region of Northwest Iceland is suffering from a sharp decrease in population, with young women in particular leaving the region. In terms of demographic vulnerability, the situation is not as alarming as in many other regions, but most municipalities are vulnerable according to several of the demographic vulnerability indicators.⁶⁴ In total, the region has 7,200 inhabitants in seven municipalities. The average education level in the region is low, which is an issue that influences demographic development.

As one of the primary ways to meet these challenges, the region has actively worked to improve the educational opportunities in the area to make it possible for young people to stay in the region and for companies to have access to a competent labour force.

Initiation

The Union of Local Authorities in Northwest Iceland has had an important role in identifying challenges as well as activating various actors to address the demographic challenges. The broadening of educational opportunities is based on an analysis showing that young people leave the region early, in many cases before the age of 18, because of the lack of educational opportunities.⁶⁵

The union and the municipalities in the region continuously survey the youth in the region to respond to their interests and to provide the kinds of educational programmes that suit the interests of the students and the needs and labour demand of the companies.⁶⁶

62) Region Syddanmark (2009)

63) Sundhedsstyrelsen (2014)

64) Nordregio (2012)

65) Andrédóttir (2014)

66) Andrédóttir (2014).



Photo: Magnus Fröderberg/norden.org

Implementation

The Union of Local Authorities, municipalities, firms and the local college have in practice worked together to establish educational programmes focusing on creative industries and other topics. At the same time, opportunities for distance studies have been developed as a way to mitigate demographic change.⁶⁷

Opportunities for distance studies at various levels have been found to be especially important for the development of the region and the smallest villages. In the most remote villages, young people often need to move out of their parental home at an early age to attend secondary education, but distance education makes it possible for them to stay at home longer. The distance learning opportunities have been organised by the local college and supported financially by the municipalities and the Union of Local Authorities, which allocates state-level support for regional development projects. It has been found that this approach makes a difference in the small villages because the young people stay there two years longer and contribute to the local communities in many ways, making local com-

munity life more dynamic.⁶⁸

Based on an analysis of the interests of the young people in the region and the needs of the local industries, there has been an aim to provide education related to the creative and other industries identified as a growing or key sector in the region. Educational programmes in filming and hair dressing have already been established. In the fall of 2014, a new educational programme focusing on innovation, technology, design, and art will commence. Among other purposes, educational programmes focusing on creative areas are considered to be one way of enticing young women to stay in the region instead of moving away to obtain their degrees. Before the initiation of the creative industries programme, college students had been predominantly male because of the educational programmes offered, but this programme has contributed to improving the gender balance.⁶⁹

Companies are actively involved in establishing and implementing educational programmes at various levels and in a number of subjects. This is a way to im-

⁶⁷ Andrésdóttir (2014).

⁶⁸ Andrésdóttir (2014).

⁶⁹ Andrésdóttir (2014).

prove the employment prospects of the students after graduation and to improve matching between labour demand and supply. This work is particularly important in the creative professions, and the aim of company involvement is to make them understand how employees with creative skills can provide new ideas for innovation and development. In this way, creative educational programmes not only encourage young people to remain in the region but also develop the local business environment.⁷⁰

Lack of funding has been a major challenge in developing educational opportunities as a way to develop the north-west region. The region had already been granted funding under the EU IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) programme, but because the Icelandic EU negotiations were put on hold, it was not possible to access the funding. For the application, a large two-year project had already been planned, focusing especially on keeping young women in the region by providing better educational opportunities and offering, among other measures, personal counselling and courses for young women to support them in seeking further education and strengthening their skills. The local authorities, firms and other actors together have been able to fund activities that were part of the planned project (including the establishment of the creative educational programme), but the Union of Local Authorities still seeks funding opportunities to implement all parts of the project without the EU funding.⁷¹

Lessons learned and transferability

Co-operation between the local authorities, the Union of Local Authorities, the educational facilities, and companies has been crucial in addressing the demographic challenges by broadening the educational options in the region. The co-operation of these actors is partly co-ordinated by the Union of Local Authorities, which has an important role in facilitating collaboration as well as providing background knowledge and analysis.

The analyses of the demographic situation have contributed to an increased awareness of the demographic challenges, which in turn has created a common understanding in the region on the actions required. Analysis is therefore an important building block in promoting co-operation and ensuring broad implementation of measures. In Northwest Iceland, involving young people, public authorities, schools, and companies in

forming the educational programmes and surveying the wishes of youth is an important part of the work, which may contribute to the future potential of using educational programmes to meet demographic challenges.

There are no evaluations or assessments available on the outcomes of the activities, but the numbers of enrolments in the local college show a shift towards a more balanced gender structure among students.

2.4 Improving regional attractiveness

2.4.1 The regional attractiveness of Sør-Trøndelag

Many of the municipalities in Sør-Trøndelag, like most of the coastal municipalities in Norway, experienced a decrease in population during the last decades, although this trend has recently been offset by an increase in population mainly due to an in-migration surplus of international migrants⁷². This decrease has been linked to a decline in employment in the traditional coastal industries (e.g., fishing, fish processing, and shipbuilding).

According to the indicators in the Demographic Handbook, the coastal municipalities of Sør-Trøndelag are less vulnerable to demographic decline than many of the inland municipalities. However, the municipalities of Hitra, Åfjord, Roan, and Åsen are all vulnerable on seven to 10 of these indicators. In addition, several of the municipalities (e.g., Hitra, Frøya, Agdenes, Ørland, Rissa, Åfjord, and Osen), have a surplus of men in the population (fewer than 92 women per 100 men), even though they have a positive replacement ratio in the labour market.⁷³ One major challenge in the region will be a generational shift in the public sector in the coming years, when there will be a substantial demand for civil servants,⁷⁴ and there is currently a shortage of suitable competencies in the region.

Initiation

As a response to the challenges facing Sør-Trøndelag, such as out-migration, lack of access to technological expertise in the private sector, and insufficient personnel to work in the health care services and public schools⁷⁵, Kysten er Klar ("The Coast is Clear") was es-

70) Andrésdóttir (2014).

71) Andrésdóttir (2014).

72) Roto et al. (2014)

73) Nordregio (2012), map 2

74) Hanssen (2014)

75) Sør-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune (2012)



Photo: Karin Beate Nøsterud/norden.org

tablished in 2007. The ambition was to make the region the most attractive coastal region in Europe, based on its resources, advantages, and qualities. Overall, the goal of the programme was to contribute to user-driven projects that have practical applicability for the Sør-Trøndelag coastal area.

The programme was initiated by Sør-Trøndelag County Council, which is a regional political body with a directly elected County Council consisting of 37 elected officials.⁷⁶ Initially, the independent research organisation SINTEF was appointed to manage the programme, and eight of 11 municipalities joined it. However, it was feared that the programme would be too research oriented, and in 2009, a new programme manager was appointed, and all 11 municipalities (Hemne, Snillfjord, Agdenes, Frøya, Hitra, Ørland, Bjugn, Rissa, Åfjord, Roan, and Osen) joined it.

Kysten er Klar has a steering group consisting of all 11 municipal mayors and five politicians from the county council. In addition, there is a programme manager and a programme board who are responsible for implementation. The programme board consists of two administrative representatives from the municipalities, one administrative representative from the county au-

thority and four representatives from local businesses. Kysten er Klar is funded by the participating municipalities and the county council. The 11 municipalities pay an annual membership fee of NOK 200,000, and the county council contributes NOK 200,000. In addition, the project receives funding from thematic subprojects administered by the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation and Innovation Norway. The participating municipalities and local businesses also contribute extra funding to projects of special relevance to them.⁷⁷ The project can thus be regarded as a partnership that involves a broad range of institutions and groups, such as municipal departments and employees, local businesses, local chambers of commerce and tourism, and upper secondary schools. Moreover, it makes use of services from R&D institutions such as SINTEF, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Sør-Trøndelag University College, BI Norwegian Business School, and Nord-Trøndelag University College.

Implementation

Initially Kysten er Klar analysed the industrial and economic situation for the coastal region. The analysis

76) 75 Sør-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune (2012)

77) Zaucha & Świątek (2013)

led to the choice of three thematic priorities: 1) improvement of quality of life and regional reputation, 2) development of knowledge and competence, and 3) land use planning. The first two thematic priorities especially are related to demography and welfare issues, as increasing the attractiveness of the region may help to counteract out-migration and to attract skilled people as well as businesses to the region.

Under the first thematic priority, improved quality of life and regional reputation, Kysten er Klar has implemented a variety of subprojects aimed at housing, tourism, industrial areas and harbours, inclusion of foreign workers, and work-force recruitment.⁷⁸ For instance, one subproject focuses on comprehensive recruitment to ensure the future growth of districts in Sør-Trøndelag. In 2012 Kysten er Klar received NOK 4 million from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development to initiate a development project called “Bolyt”. The goal was to develop a toolkit with specific measures directed at various target groups—such as high school and college/university students, and local people who have moved out of the region—to attract people with relevant education and background to meet the labour demand. The measures were targeted at the local, intermunicipal, and regional levels to create attractive communities.

One of the problems in the region has been access to qualified labour. This is linked to the fact that the decline in the traditional industries has been offset by new growth in other industries such as farming, ship technology, services, and construction. More specifically wind farming and tourism are new growth areas that provide increased job opportunities in the region. Attracting qualified people can also be seen as an important way to attract business to the region, and several projects have been initiated to retain and attract young people. One example is the “Coast Trainee” programme, which focuses on attracting young graduates to the regional labour market. Another example is the “Decentralised College Education” initiative, conducted in collaboration with the University College of Sør-Trøndelag, with the goal of strengthening the presence of university colleges and nursing education in the peripheral regions. This project is a response to the future needs of employees in the health care sectors.

All these projects have been initiated through collaboration between the municipalities, the universities and colleges, and the private sector in the region.

Main challenges

The main challenge has been to build trust among the municipalities and enterprises, because both groups have a history and tradition of internal competition. The main success is actually the degree of trust that has already been built during the first 4–5 years of Kysten er Klar, which has convinced both private and public partners of the benefits of regional co-operation.

The municipalities also compete on certain issues, such as the construction of roads, which has previously been problematic because various parts of the coast have had different and competing priorities for projects. Therefore, one strategy to avoid conflicts arising is to stay away from “dangerous” matters such as transport and road building, which automatically trigger competition between transport corridors and other parties.⁷⁹ Instead, the initiative has focused on “safe issues” that create less tension, at least at the beginning of the programme period, in order to build trust and consensus among the participating municipalities.

There has also been some tension between the municipalities and the county council. This may be attributable to a general scepticism towards the county authorities and not the programme in particular.

Outcomes and continuity

Kysten er Klar has had significant activity related to various projects associated with the focus areas. The extensive number of collaborative projects has also been made possible through co-financing from other sources. In addition, support from Kysten er Klar has triggered additional co-financing from sources such as the private sector.

From a structural point of view, Kysten er Klar can be considered to be one of several networks that connect municipalities. The initiative provides networks and information channels to actors such as the county administration, private sector companies, and municipalities. While the existence of multiple network structures can create confusion about responsibility and authority, the positive aspect is that such a network overall provides greater resources in terms of knowledge and thus the possibility of influencing external actors. The idea is that by combining efforts, the whole region will have a greater ability to achieve goals such as attracting business and labour to the region. However, in a mid-term evaluation of the programme,⁸⁰ it was clear that there was a lack of collaboration between Kysten er Klar and similar networks and that this is

78) Zaucha & Świątek (2013)

79) Hanssen (2014)

80) Hanssen (2014).

one aspect that could be improved in the future.

Lessons learned and transferability

The mid-term evaluation⁸¹ concluded that the programme has been successful and that the external co-funding of projects demonstrated that external stakeholders perceived the programme as useful. The programme has been well organised with a small central management team of county council staff, while the activities of the programme have been decentralised to the municipalities.⁸² This has led to broad participation and autonomy for the actors in the various projects.

The opportunities for improvement that have been indicated are a need to create a more active and dynamic programme with increased efficiency and more focus on the local authorities and actors willing to commit to it. This would also lead to increased consensus and ability to conduct the proposed initiatives. There has been some vagueness around the programme's focus and relationships with other collaborative networks. A stronger connection to such networks may strengthen the programme through the exchange of experience and knowledge.

In relation to the transferability of the lessons learned, four points can be emphasised. First, there is a need for a clear focus and concentration of effort, focusing on a set of prioritised initiatives rather than a broad range of activities. Second, success stories should be highlighted and used to promote the programme externally. Third, target areas should be communicated in a clear manner to create enthusiasm for the programme. Fourth, the organisation requires sufficient competencies to ensure the successful management of the programme.

2.4.2 Facing demographic challenges in Hedmark-Dalarna

The "Demographic Challenges in Hedmark and Dalarna" project was implemented in 2013, and it focused on the regional attractiveness of the border counties of Hedmark in Norway and Dalarna in Sweden. The theme of the project was to make the region a more attractive place to live, visit and do business. The project was initiated by the Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna and funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers' Nordic Demographic Programme.

On both sides of the border, there are several municipalities with particularly challenging situations

because of high out-migration, ageing populations, and low fertility. Based on the maps in Nordregio's Handbook on Demographic Challenges in the Nordic Countries (2012), the project chose 11 municipalities that were vulnerable in more than five demographic vulnerability indicators to participate.

Initiation

Although the counties of Hedmark and Dalarna are separated by a mountain range, the regional authorities have close relations and have previously collaborated on various projects, in particular through the Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna, which is a cross-border co-operation body. In addition, the counties of Hedmark and Dalarna share similar demographic challenges, which encouraged them to start working together on the issues.⁸³

Before initiating the project on demographic challenges, the Border Committee contacted the selected municipalities. The municipalities expressed their interest in participating in the project, and the themes were then chosen based on the main challenges in the chosen municipalities. However, after the project was established, it was a challenge for the Border Committee to ensure true commitment and engagement of all municipalities in the project. It was particularly difficult to make municipalities far from the border areas see the added value of cross-border co-operation on demographic issues. When these difficulties were identified, the project plans were changed slightly, and time and resources were allocated to establish good contacts with all the municipalities.⁸⁴

The Border Committee found it to be important to ensure that good personal contacts were established with all municipalities and that the project was properly anchored in the municipal administrations. Therefore, it was considered to be necessary to pay personal visits to all the municipalities, which enabled the committee to hear about their needs and expectations and to include them in the project activities. These steps of the initial phase of the project proved to be essential in the later stages of implementation.⁸⁵

Implementation

The strategy of the project was to address the demographic challenges in the region by increasing cross-

81) Hanssen (2014).

82) Hanssen (2014).

83) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013)

84) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013); Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)

85) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013); Sahlander (2013); Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)



Photo: Johannes Jansson/norden.org

border co-operation across the Swedish–Norwegian border. The goal was to facilitate the work of the municipalities on the demographic challenges by creating, collecting, and spreading information and knowledge, and by creating a platform for exchange of experience.⁸⁶

In addition to the first stage of engagement with municipalities, the main activities planned were organising seminars (“demographic laboratories”) to spread knowledge and to build networks, collecting information, and conducting a study to map the work of the municipalities on demographic issues and to provide a consequence analysis and cross-border comparisons. Because there were challenges in public procurement to initiate a mapping study within the allotted time frame, the seminars were eventually the main element of the project.⁸⁷

The aim of the first seminar was for the project participants to introduce themselves to each other, while the following seminars focused on the themes of attractiveness and competence. The seminars contributed to the sharing of knowledge, building networks between the participants and drawing inspiration from other municipalities. For instance, in one of the

seminars, the “Attractiveness Model” developed by the Norwegian Telemark Research Institute was presented and received extensive attention from the participating representatives of municipalities. Many were interested in applying the model in their own municipalities. The model has not previously been applied in Sweden, although there has been national-level interest in investigating it. The municipalities of the county of Dalarna in Sweden may become pioneers of the model, which is considered to be advantageous for the county.⁸⁸

From the seminars, it became clear to the Border Committee that the municipalities were interested in obtaining more information on addressing demographic challenges and that there was a need to continue such activities after the project.⁸⁹

Although the planned activity of mapping the municipalities’ work on demography and conducting a consequence analysis was not followed through, data were gathered during the seminars to obtain an overview of the demographic situation. This resulted in a report produced by Hedmark University College

86) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013)

87) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013)

88) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013); Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)

89) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013); Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)



Photo: Magnus Fröderberg/norden.org

describing the project and examining demographic development in general. The report includes a list of possible future activities for continuing the work on demographic challenges. In addition, the project produced a good practice brochure presenting case examples from the 11 municipalities describing their work on demographic issues. The Border Committee has been active in disseminating information on the project and on demographic issues in external seminars.⁹⁰

Main challenges

It was a challenge for the project that properly engaging municipalities in project activities was more time-consuming than expected. However, after the challenge was identified, it was decided to readjust the timetable, to send representatives to visit the municipalities personally and to organise an initial seminar.

Financial constraints were identified as a challenge, and it was noted that it is not sufficient to have access to good practice examples if the municipalities lack the financial resources to implement them in their own organisations. There is a need for funding opportunities from the national level for municipalities to work on the specific consequences of demographic

change. Nevertheless, it was found that although many municipalities may have no opportunity to follow the good practices presented in the good practice brochure developed for the project, collecting and highlighting good practice examples was a good way of strengthening the identities and pride of the small municipalities whose work was included.⁹¹

Outcomes and continuity

Increased visibility and raised awareness of demographic issues were the most significant outcomes of the project. After the initial difficulties, the project was successful in engaging municipalities in considering demographic issues. It has been noted that there has been local and regional interest in utilising the “Attractiveness Model” presented at a seminar. This shows that regional and municipal authorities are interested in addressing the demographic issues and that the project has given them access to particular tools that they can use in their work.⁹²

Demographic issues did not feature strongly on the earlier agenda in Hedmark and Dalarna, and this pro-

90) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013)

91) The Border Committee of Hedmark and Dalarna (2013); Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)

92) Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)

ject drew more attention to these issues. After the project, a cross-sectoral working group on demography was established at the regional level in Hedmark. In Dalarna, demography became a more integrated focus area in the work of the regional authority County Administrative Board of Dalarna. It was also decided that the Border Committee would continue working on demography in 2014 and 2015.⁹³

When the project ended in December 2013, the Border Committee already had many ideas for possible topics of new projects. The work of the earlier project, and particularly the contacts established between the Border Committee and municipalities as well as between municipalities across the border, may be essential in the success of future projects. The plan is for a new project with particular focus on matters of specific interest to the municipalities, and it should be linked directly to the municipalities' own strategies and action plans.⁹⁴

Lessons learned and transferability

One of the most important lessons learned was the importance of establishing good connections with all actors to create real commitment. This was found to be essential for the success of the project, even though the implementation phase was found to be more time-consuming than expected. It is essential to allocate sufficient time to ensure the engagement of actors and thereby the success of the initiatives.

Engaging with municipal actors is particularly important but also challenging in cross-border projects. One of the lessons learned in the process was that the added value of participating in such a project should be impressed upon the municipalities. This is important for engaging them, and also because small municipalities in particular may have very limited resources for projects or initiatives that require extra work.

During the seminars with the municipalities, the issue of attractiveness was identified as a common area of interest to all types of municipalities regardless of size, geographic location or other characteristics. Because they have limited resources, it was essential to find a common theme of real interest to the municipalities that could be incorporated into, and benefit, their daily work.⁹⁵ A common theme of interest can also facilitate their engagement, co-operation, and transfer of knowledge and experience.

This project shows that even with a project-based ap-

proach, it is possible to place new issues on the agenda and to build awareness and networks by thoroughly engaging actors at all levels. Creating a better understanding of the demographic challenges of the counties contributed to overall increased interest in working on those issues. Continuity is also crucial, and in this case, the activities of the project contributed to the development of new ideas and initiatives to implement after the project, based on the connections and new information created.

2.4.3 The “We Choose the Faroe Islands” campaign

The “We Choose the Faroe Islands” campaign focuses on changing the rhetoric concerning the living and working conditions in the Faroe Islands and presenting the positive aspects of life in the islands. The overall aim is to showcase the opportunities that the Faroe Islands can offer and in particular to attract highly educated young people from the Faroe Islands who have studied abroad to return to the islands.

The population of the Faroe Islands has been stagnating for several years, and the more remote parts of the island group especially suffer from demographic vulnerability related to various aspects. A particular challenge in the Faroe Islands is that a large proportion of the young population moves abroad for their studies and do not return after finishing their education. This is an issue that the “We choose the Faroe Islands” campaign wants to address.⁹⁶

Initiation

The overall initiative to address the demographic development was undertaken by the Faroese Government in 2013, but the campaign as such was initiated by the Faroese municipalities and industry in the same year.

Half of the campaign costs are covered by the municipalities in the Faroe Islands and half by companies. The Association of Municipalities, as well as the umbrella organisation of industries, is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the project. Their aim is to spread knowledge of the campaign and to make it a national Faroese project including a wide range of actors.⁹⁷

Implementation

The campaign is mainly implemented via the Internet on the campaign website, as well as social media. People who have moved back to the Faroe Islands have

93) Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)

94) Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)

95) Sahlander & Vaagen (2014)

96) Christiansen (2014)

97) Christiansen (2014)



Photo: Nikolaj Bock/norden.org

made a commitment to tell their stories concerning life in the islands on the website. An Instagram account is also used, where one person per week documents his/her life on the Faroe Islands. The social media accounts of the campaign are widely followed and have become popular.

Sceptical attitudes have been the main challenge faced by the campaign. Some actors find that the campaign attempts to glorify the life on the Faroe Islands while emphasising the positive aspects as well as the career and social welfare opportunities. Some industry actors have also been sceptical about the focus on attracting highly educated people to the islands because they consider that there is no need for such workers.⁹⁸

Lessons learned and transferability

There are no evaluations available of the effects of the campaign because it is a relatively new project. However, the project co-ordinator notes that there has been an overall shift in the rhetoric and general image of the Faroe Islands. There has also been some positive popu-

lation development, but it is not possible to assess the role of the campaign in that, as other issues such as economic development may be more important.⁹⁹

Co-operation between the municipalities and the private sector has been considered to be effective in this project. The co-ordinators of the Association of Municipalities and the industry association have been able to mobilise their members to become involved. The use of social media, among other things by sharing the stories of expatriates who have moved back to the Faroe Islands, has also been an important aspect, and as expected, it has proven to be a good way to reach out to those who have left the Faroe Islands.

As noted above, the main challenges have been related to sceptical attitudes. A lesson learned could be to work more actively on engaging various actors and to make sure that there are common goals in order to avoid challenges related to attitudes. Moreover, it may be beneficial to provide more information and to communicate the goals of the project even more clearly, and to explain the role of the target group of highly

98) Christiansen (2014)

99) Christiansen (2014)

educated young émigrés in the Faroese labour market.

2.4.4 Cold Hawaii in Nordjylland, Denmark

The peripheral areas that stretch from Skagen down along the west coast to Sydjylland across the archipelago to Lolland-Falster and Bornholm have long been characterised by declining population, an increasing number of senior citizens, rising unemployment and relocation of public jobs. In Thisted municipality, which is located in the region of Nordjylland, one of the biggest challenges has been a strong decline in the population over recent years; from 2006 to 2011, the population fell by 2.2% (from 45,910 citizens to 44,908¹⁰⁰). In addition, the population is older as a result of the out-migration of the younger population. This is partly because of the region's lack of educational opportunities, which is also reflected in the fact that the proportion of the population with higher educational qualifications is one of the lowest in the country.¹⁰¹

Thisted municipality is vulnerable on nine of the 10 indicators in the Demographic Handbook.¹⁰² One reason for this is that many of the villages in Thisted municipality have traditionally been dependent on fishing, manufacturing, and farming, and have therefore experienced hard times because of the centralisation, decline, and outsourcing of jobs in these sectors. One issue has therefore been how to change this trend and to attract new residents in the municipality.

Initiation

Cold Hawaii is not one but 29 registered surfing spots, all located on the west coast of Thisted Municipality, where many villages have long been an attractive destination for surfers. In the 1980s and 1990s, surfers were already coming to the small villages along the coast to surf. However, in early 2005, the politicians in the former Hanstholm municipality (now part of the new Thisted municipality) challenged a proposed expansion of the port of Hanstholm that would threaten the surf spots in the area. Hanstholm Harbour administrators wanted to establish a new onshore area with room for aquaculture facilities, among other proposals, opposite the beach on the north-east side of the harbour, which was considered to be one of the best surf spots in the area.

As a response to these plans, the surfers together with the NASA (North Atlantic Surf Association) surf

club launched a public protest against the port expansion project. And in August 2005, they established the “Save Middles” association to promote the positive impact of surfing, especially in Thisted municipality but also in the rest of Denmark and Europe. The idea of this was to emphasise the contribution of surfing to the local economy. With funding from the three nearby municipalities, the association was granted one year to find a solution.

Implementation

Together with Hanstholm's mayor at the time, Save Middles drew up a master plan for surfing in Thy,¹⁰³ an area that covers Thisted municipality. The first step was to create a web site to inform surfers around the world about the campaign. Similarly, it was possible to donate money to the association via the web site for the preparation of an alternative proposal that would not harm the surf spots. The idea of a web site as the central platform for communication and articulation may have been inspired by similar projects elsewhere in the world, where surfers have organised to oppose projects that would destroy surf spots.¹⁰⁴

In less than two months, the association managed to recruit 300 members, and through crowd-funding collected DKK 130,000 from surfers around the world. The funds were used to hire NIRAS, a consulting engineering company, to propose a minimum of two alternative plans for the Port of Hanstholm and to secure optimal business development.¹⁰⁵ In addition, contact was made with the Danish Hydraulic Institute to document how the area's unique geographic characteristics made it ideal for surfing.

In 2007, the project resulted in a long-term development strategy called Building the Cold Hawaii—Master Plan for Thy as a Centre for Surfing in Northern Europe. The strategy had three main objectives: surfing should be the basis of a major annual event hosted in Thy, surfing should be part of an alternative settlement strategy, and surfing should become part of the local culture in Thy. The plan had a national and international perspective, but it was built around the local associations and led by the NASA Surfer Organisation. Sydthy, Thisted, and Hanstholm municipalities were the main sponsors, together with private companies. A large variety of local organisations also supported the development of the master plan.

The desire to have a major annual surfing event led

100) Statistics Denmark (2014)

101) Pedersen & Ibsen (2010)

102) Nordregio (2012), map 1

103) NASA (2007)

104) Pedersen & Ibsen (2010)

105) Johnsen (2007)

to Thy's hosting one of the World Cup of Surfing competitions four years later. This is the biggest windsurfing event in Scandinavia and is one of the major sporting events in Thy. The Cold Hawaii PWA World Cup was held for the first time in the small town of Klitmøller—better known as the capital of Cold Hawaii—in 2010, and this success was repeated in 2011. The annual event is the focal point of a larger effort to build awareness of Thy as an attractive place for tourism and living. At the same time, it is a gathering point for the many local actors.

Main challenges

The attraction of the surfers to the small villages along the coast of Thisted municipality was not an immediate success, because the surfers' attitudes created conflicts with the local inhabitants.¹⁰⁶ The late 1980s to the 1990s were characterised by conflicts between surfer tourists and locals. The focal point of the conflict was the Ørhage surf spot in Klitmøller, which was the first windsurfing spot that was discovered in the area. Surfers came in greater and greater numbers in the early 1990s and occupied much of the village with their vans and gear. It was said that windsurfers took up too much space and contributed too little to the local community.¹⁰⁷ The surfers spent the night in their vans and brought all their food and drink from home. Additionally, there were some cultural differences between local fishermen and surfers, when the local fishermen felt that the surfers had invaded their "space".

The first step to a proper dialogue between the surfer tourists and the local inhabitants around these issues occurred when surfers began to settle in the village and to become an integrated part of the local community.¹⁰⁸ In addition to some of the surfers' moving to Klitmøller, several local residents began to surf, which meant that it was easier for locals and surfers to communicate. Through the establishment of the NASA surfing association, a more formal institution was established that could communicate on behalf of the surfers with the community about conflicts. This was a very important step in institutionalising surfing, and the surf club could provide services such as advising surf tourists on respecting the local community. This helped to change the attitudes towards surfing greatly.¹⁰⁹

106) Pedersen & Ibsen (2010)

107) Pedersen & Ibsen (2010)

108) Pedersen & Ibsen (2010)

109) Pedersen & Ibsen (2010)

Outcomes and continuity

The focus on surfing has had a huge impact on the development of the area. It has attracted more educated young people to settle in the area, and Klitmøller in particular has become a magnet for surfers through its reputation of being one of the best surf spots in Cold Hawaii. The NASA Surfer Organisation now holds a strong position and can be said to have greatly influenced the development of co-operation that has led to growing settlement in the community. Thisted Municipality has also been active in providing excellent conditions for surfers. Besides its engagement in the Cold Hawaii PWA World Cup, the municipality has partnered with the Realdania foundation. Together, they have contributed DKK 60 million. The money has been placed in the "Land of Opportunities—The Good Life on the Coast" project, and one of the project's main foci is to make the area more suitable for surfing. The project has led to a large number of construction projects, primarily in Klitmøller but also in Vorupør, as proposed in the master plan, to create an alternative settlement based on surfing. This has resulted in a new dedicated surfing pavilion, a new beach promenade, and better access to the beach.

The local business environment has also seen a positive development, and the Cold Hawaii master plan has been a strong contributor to this new identity. An increase in revenue of the city's two commercial surf schools of several hundred per cent within the past four years testifies that tourism in the area is changing, and an increasing number of tourists are coming to the area because of the surfing facilities and activities such as surfing lessons.¹¹⁰ Other companies have also chosen to locate in the area because of surfing opportunities and to contribute to local economic development. One such example is Starfish, an office space where people can come and rent space on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis and thus become part of the community. The office houses professionals such as graphic designers and project managers.

Today, Klitmøller is the only town in Thisted Municipality that has a positive population development, and the demographic statistics present an unusually positive picture of a fringe area in modern Denmark: an increasing number of people are moving to the region, both from Denmark and from other countries. These people are often families with small children, and many are highly educated professionals. The village has almost become a small surf colony, and surfers have created an exciting environment and given new

110) Pedersen & Ibsen (2010)



Photo: Karin Beate Nøsterud/norden.org

life to the village. The population has grown by about 20 per cent from the late 1990s to 2013, when it peaked at 833 inhabitants.¹¹¹ Approximately 160 of Klitmøller's inhabitants are new inhabitants or the offspring of migrants.

Lessons learned and transferability

Cold Hawaii is a good example of how to develop a rural area by building on one of its major strengths, leading to population and commercial growth. Cold Hawaii is now an international brand, and the story of how surfers from all over the world travel to this area to take advantage of the amazing surf opportunities has travelled around the world.

Four main lessons can be highlighted. First, the initiative has been led in a typical bottom-up approach whereby local enthusiasts managed to establish awareness of certain issues by building functioning networks in the local community and by establishing a solid association to front the campaign. Through this collaboration, the surfers managed to place surfing on the agenda and to build positive awareness in the community.

Second, by developing a strategy with a clear motive

and a niche branding strategy, Thisted—and Klitmøller in particular—has managed to attract positive attention nationally as well as internationally. The peripheral areas face huge challenges, and a way for these to be competitive is to focus on distinguishing themselves from others. Locations with specific features may be able to establish themselves as niche destinations. Klitmøller is one example where the optimal conditions offer a form of surfing not found in many other places on the globe, and this has attracted the surfer community not only locally, regionally or nationally, but also internationally.

Third, continuity is important. In the case of Cold Hawaii, activities based on the connections and new information created during the project contributed to the development of new ideas and initiatives to implement after the initial project had ended.

Finally, it is clear that public support for grass root initiatives, such as the development of the master plan, is an important precondition for the municipalities to gain overall support in the community. Cold Hawaii demonstrates that it is possible to turn a conflict into a positive development by working together across sectors and administrative levels.

¹¹¹ Statistics Denmark (2014)

3. What can be learned from these examples?

Demographic issues in one way or another influence all policy areas, and this report has examined examples of how local and regional authorities have approached the challenges and opportunities of demographic change. This final chapter summarises the lessons learned from the examples and highlights specific issues to be considered in policy-making.

The number of examples studied in this report is of course limited, and the selection of examples is restricted thematically and in terms of institutional settings. Given these issues, the lessons learned are by no means exhaustive but rather are a limited selection of lessons from the selected examples that illustrate responses to demographic change.

Co-operation across policy areas

The complex issues of demographic change cannot be managed in only one policy area, which is obvious from the selected examples in this report, illustrating that successful initiatives include collaboration across policy areas. In many of the examples, it is clear that to address the impacts of demographic change, it is essential for public authorities to co-operate across sectors in their organisations and in a holistic manner to ensure that all policy areas share common goals. The approach of the Närpes municipality in integrating immigrants and that of the Sør-Trøndelag region in creating regional attractiveness are good examples of collaboration across policy fields such as housing, the labour market and planning.

Co-ordination and co-operation between administrative levels

In addition to co-operation across policy areas and policy integration, many of the examples illustrate the need to include public authorities at various administrative levels. In many examples, it proved to be essential for parties such as regional-level authorities to engage in true dialogue with local actors to understand their concerns, to ground the project in common goals, and thus to establish co-operation between the regional and local levels as well as to facilitate co-operation

between municipalities.

This became very clear, for example, in the demography project in the cross-border region of Hedmark and Dalarna, where initial difficulties in engaging municipalities led to a change of plans in the project implementation. It was decided to allocate more resources to establishing a personal dialogue between project leaders at the regional level and the municipalities, which led to improved engagement of municipal actors, a more fruitful co-operation, and contacts that can be utilised in the future.

In several of the examples studied, engaging municipalities in initiatives and concrete activities co-ordinated by regional actors (e.g., in Hedmark and Dalarna, Kalmar County and Sør-Trøndelag) has been shown to be a good way of providing local authorities with support in policy-making, and establishing common goals and a shared understanding of the needs of the region.

The need to take local and regional experiences and knowledge into consideration in national level policy making was also illustrated in one of the examples. In Tornedalen, the local and regional actors find that there is a risk that national centralisation policies may have negative effects on access to services in the most remote parts of the cross-border region. This is because centralisation may make it difficult to provide services across borders and thereby make travel time to services longer for the inhabitants.

Co-operation between administrative levels may also contribute to the exchange of experience between municipalities, and facilitates sharing of information such as good practices. Smaller municipalities joining forces and pooling resources can be a good way of addressing demographic challenges, because a lack of resources in an individual municipality may limit its opportunities to act. For example, the Regional Council of Kalmar County has been successful in co-ordinating its priority area of “youth as a resource for regional development” at the regional level and contributing to policy-making, co-operation and exchange of experience in the local community and between municipalities. Cold Hawaii is another example of an initiative

where three municipalities decided to invest in a project together.

Engagement of private actors

In most cases, it is not sufficient for public organisations alone to engage in cross-sectoral activities. Rather, collaboration with actors outside the public organisation is of key importance in addressing demographic change. The importance of including companies is particularly clear for labour market issues and meeting the challenges of competence provision.

In Närpes, co-operation between employers (recruiting immigrant labour force to meet their labour demand) and the local authorities (responsible for the integration infrastructure) has been crucial, while there have also been some challenges related to establishing a dialogue between the two. In Sør-Trøndelag, there has also been broad collaboration between the public and private sectors in the various projects. In some of the examples, private sector actors were not included, although this may have been beneficial for the implementation of the initiatives. Involvement of companies is, naturally, not always needed and it seems that it may be easier for authorities to see the value of including private actors when they address labour market issues directly, while the value of working with companies may seem to be less clear with issues that have traditionally been managed exclusively by the public sector.

Citizen engagement and support for grassroots initiatives

Citizen engagement is important for local development as a way to involve the local community and to encourage residents to take an active part in activities. The examples in this report demonstrate that inclusion of civil society and citizens can have a substantial impact on individual decisions about whether to stay, to leave or even to move into the local community (e.g., the migration projects in Nordland and the Cold Hawaii initiative).

In terms of the responses to demographic change, the examples studied in this report included both top-down and bottom-up initiatives as well as project- and strategy-based approaches. The bottom-up initiative of Cold Hawaii demonstrates how local enthusiasts can drive development in a region by building on social networks in the local community as well as highlighting local uniqueness. This can contribute to creating a more attractive living environment that can attract young highly-educated people to move to the area. Support for grass roots initiatives can function as a way

to make use of potential initiatives that stem from the civil society and are not initiated or formulated by the public authorities.

Citizen engagement in the examples entails both including citizens' perspectives in policy-making and public authorities supporting good ideas in ways such as providing financial support.

Project-based approaches as a way to address demographic changes

The examples have shown that even though strategy-based approaches can provide a holistic way to address demographic challenges, project-based approaches can also provide valuable input into policy processes at different levels of government. Although there are obvious challenges in project-based work (in terms of e.g. continuity), projects can achieve outcomes such as placing demographic issues on the political agenda and making them priorities in policy-making and implementation. Projects can also be a good way to tackle specific challenges and to develop new working methods. However, it is important to ensure continuity in projects as well as co-ordination between the initiatives. Taking these issues into consideration can preserve the long term-effects of the actions, maintain achievements, and avoid the loss of knowledge.

An example of a project approach to respond to long-term demographic challenges may be found in the cross-border region of Hedmark and Dalarna in Norway and Sweden, where a demographic project led to increased awareness of demographic issues at the local and regional levels in both countries. Another example is Distance Health Care in Sydjylland, Denmark, where a project that was initiated by a hospital was extended to become an important part of service provision in the region.

In some examples, project-based approaches were used to continue established work in a less formal manner. For instance, the practices of organising acute cross-border health care in Tornedalen had grown from a need to share resources and the needs of health care workers. Through two INTERREG projects, it was possible to assure the quality of activities and measures that had developed over time based on various needs identified by health care personnel.

In the Närpes municipality, various projects co-financed by the EU have been used to develop working methods, and the municipality is currently co-operating with neighbouring municipalities on the establishment of a "welcome office" to provide information to immigrants and to co-ordinate the integration work in the region.

4. Directions for future research

This final chapter briefly discusses the issues identified during the course of this project that may be relevant for further studies. The Nordic Working Group on Demography and Welfare will continue until the end of 2016, and this chapter contributes to planning its future activities.

This report has examined a broad scope of responses to demographic challenges without focusing on any specific thematic or “methodological” ways to address demographic change at the local and regional levels. One possible theme for further study in the Nordic context by the working group is to focus on specific demographic challenges and opportunities to gather in-depth knowledge about policy areas or responses. For example, it would be interesting to study in detail some aspects of how local and regional authorities use international migration to address demographic change.

As the lessons learned from the examples in this report and earlier research show, more potential is often found in integrated cross-sectoral solutions across policy areas than in more traditional approaches focusing on single policy areas without cross-sectoral ambitions. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine holistic ways of addressing demographic changes. For example, the concepts of regional attractiveness and social innovation have been used by researchers and policymakers to discuss more integrated policy-making.

The lessons learned in this project suggest that regional attractiveness is a theme that could be further studied in the Nordic context. The concept of regional attractiveness describes integrated cross-sectoral policy processes to increase a region’s appeal as a place to live, to visit, and to do business. The need for integrated and holistic policy approaches, including policy areas such as housing, service provision, and labour market, was identified in many of the examples and is also central to the concept of regional attractiveness. Applying the concept of regional attractiveness may be a good way to address demographic change in a holistic manner in a variety of policy areas. In Norway in particular

the “regional attractiveness model” has been widely applied, and increased interest in the concept has arisen among Swedish policymakers. Similar models or other work on the same theme across the Nordic region could therefore provide insights and facilitate exchange of experience concerning existing tools.

Another concept that has gained increased attention among researchers and policymakers during recent years, and one that is prioritised by the EU, is social innovation. The Guide to Social Innovation (2013) by the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy defines social innovation as “the development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. It represents new responses to pressing social demands, which affect the process of social interactions. It is aimed at improving human well-being. Social innovations are innovations that are social in both their ends and their means.”¹¹²

Many of the examples studied in this report include elements that are discussed in the social innovation debate, such as the need to engage actors other than public authorities in the process of policy-making and implementation. In many cases, however, there is potential for greater use of various elements of social innovation at the local, regional, and national levels. Operationalising the concept of social innovation may provide policymakers and practitioners with new practical ways to address demographic challenges in an inclusive and efficient way.

More research is needed, both in terms of the implications of the social innovation concept in the specific Nordic context and in terms of adapting it and possibly developing suitable tools for operationalising it. It could be useful to examine the concept of social innovation more closely, as well as to examine critically how it suits the Nordic welfare state context and its potential for addressing the specific needs of Nordic local and regional authorities.

112)

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