

Sustainable Regional Development: Learning From Nordic Experience

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Nordic co-operation

takes place among the countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, as well as the autonomous territories of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

The Nordic Council

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Foreword

Substantial progress is being made across Europe in the institutionalisation of sustainable development. Most of this activity has been focused on national and local levels, but attention is increasingly being devoted to the scope to realise sustainable regional development (SRD). The field is now characterised by expanding thematic networks, a series of international comparative studies, and guidance drawn from EU evaluation research, all with the objective of enhancing the integration of sustainable development principles into regional development practice. With regard to the Nordic countries, a previous Nordregio report (2001:8) indicated that a variety of project types broadly approximating to SRD existed, and that this material clearly offered scope to learn from Nordic experience.

This report presents the results of a project designed specifically to follow up on those conclusions by looking in greater depth at selected case studies to identify and highlight best practice in Nordic SRD. It contains separate in-depth analyses of seven projects from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, which form the basis for identifying strategic benchmarks in Nordic SRD. The report output is represented by over 50 qualitative performance measures related to the three phases of project design, management and evaluation.

The research was commissioned by the Senior Officials Committee for Regional Policy within the Nordic Council of Ministers. The report was written by Senior Research Associate Keith Clement and Research Fellows Malin Hansen and Karin Bradley, with Keith Clement acting as project manager.

The content of the report is based substantially on information derived through interviews and analysis of materials provided by a range of individuals. Nordregio would like to express its appreciation of all those who participated in the interviews, who made documentation available, and who assisted in the verification procedure.

Stockholm, June 2003

Contents

Foreword

Abstract	7
1. Introduction	9
1.1 Sustainable Regional Development	9
1.2 Sustainable Regional Development in the Nordic Countries	10
1.3 Project Aim and Objectives	11
1.4 Methodology	12
1.5 Report Structure	13
2. Destination 21, Denmark	17
2.1 Profile	17
2.2 Project Development	18
2.3 Implementation	20
2.4 Achievements	23
3. Learning Sustainability, Lapland	28
3.1 Profile	28
3.2 Project Development	29
3.3 Implementation	31
3.4 Achievements	34
4. Strategic Assessment in Regional Development, Southern Finland	39
4.1 Profile	39
4.2 Project Development	40
4.3 Implementation	42
4.4 Achievements	45
5. Sustainable Development through Planning, Greater Bergen	50
5.1 Profile	50
5.2 Project Development	51
5.3 Implementation	54
5.4 Achievements	56

6. Regional Agenda 21, Sogn and Fjordane	60
6.1 Profile	60
6.2 Project Development	61
6.3 Implementation	64
6.4 Achievements	67
7. Natural Resource Centre, Dalarna	71
7.1 Profile	71
7.2 Project Development	72
7.3 Implementation	75
7.4 Achievements	77
8. Green Trade and Industry, Småland	81
8.1 Profile	81
8.2 Project Development	82
8.3 Implementation	84
8.4 Achievements	86
9. Identifying Best Practice – Nordic Benchmarks in Sustainable Regional development	90
9.1 Introduction	90
9.2 SRD Drivers	90
9.3 Strategic Benchmarking for SRD	93
10. Conclusion	103
References	105
Appendices	107
1. REGIONET Thematic Network	
2. Programme of Interviews Conducted	
3. Project-Specific Questions within Interview Programme	
4. Sustainability Criteria and Indicators – Destination 21	
5. Beach and Marina Criteria – FEE Blue Flag Campaign	
6. Sustainability Themes and Indicators – Greater Bergen SDTP	
7. Core Indicators for Sustainability – Sogn and Fjordane	
8. Progressing SRD: Appraising Institutional Innovation and Tools appropriate for Nordic Practice	

Abstract

The aim of this research project was to progress from a broad overview of Nordic sustainable regional development (SRD), as outlined in a previous report (2001:8), to an in-depth investigation through case studies. The project's three objectives included deriving a detailed knowledge of factors impacting on SRD realisation, identifying and highlighting best practice in Nordic SRD, and facilitating a Nordic network for SRD information exchange.

The survey included seven projects, each of which links regional economic development with sustainable development. In Denmark, the focus is on destination-labelling for the tourism sector, drawing on the principles of Agenda 21 and seeking to promote a process of continual improvement. In Finland, the case studies have a common link through public participation, encouraging involvement in regional development initiatives, in addition to introducing strategic environmental assessment procedures into regional programming. In Norway, the examples comprise attempts to use sustainable development principles as a catalyst for greater cohesion, regional identity and regional development by utilising them as a foundation for strategic planning. Lastly, in Sweden, the cases are oriented towards sustainability in the private sector, seeking to encourage a regional transition based on ecological sustainable development and to promote a competitive environmental sector capable of operating in international markets.

The analysis of case studies relates to three phases. *Project development* addresses background factors, key actors and the interactive process; *Implementation* identifies distinctive characteristics, strengths and weaknesses; and *Achievements* reviews progress in relation to objectives, barriers encountered, and lessons learned.

In addition to the exposition of case studies as insights into practice, four categories of strategic benchmarks are derived from Nordic SRD experience. Within *Feasibility Prerequisites*, the performance measures relate to issues such as project realism, political support, conceptual clarity, manageability, generating and sustaining interest, and assembling an effective team. *Framework Conditions* for the operational phase comprise factors such as active participation, co-operation and dialogue, access to the policy process, learning opportunities, a common arena to explore SD issues, staff continuity, structured inter-departmental liaison, and parallel evaluation.

Methodology is concerned with issues such as deriving working definitions of SD and SRD, securing strategic integration, operating within a clear hierarchical perspective, creating alternative scenarios, fi-

nancial control, project selection criteria, using networks and group-working, and encouraging corporate participation. *Impact and Outcomes* includes factors such as the overall integration of SD activity, perceived benefits in cohesion and regional identity, tangible impacts on the decision-making process, new cross-sectoral networks of expertise, new regional development organisations, and the creation of follow-up projects.

1. Introduction

1.1 Sustainable Regional Development

The concept of sustainable regional development (SRD) refers to the integration of sustainable development principles into regional development practice. Accordingly, SRD encompasses all activities and instruments that promote sustainable development within regional economic initiatives. This focus is justified firstly by the important role of regions as intermediaries between national and local levels, and secondly by the growing consensus that sustainability is an essential criterion within future regional development.

In addition to matching policy trends at EU and national levels, each of which is moving towards much more integrated forms of operation, SRD aims to act as a catalyst in raising awareness amongst regional development professionals. It illustrates that there is no longer scope to concentrate only on economic growth, and this broader perspective encompasses activities ranging from establishing new forms of partnership to exploring innovative planning and integration methodologies.

Although it represents a relatively new field, substantial knowledge and expertise in SRD already exist, and it has advanced sufficiently in theory and practice to become recognised as a specialist field with an emerging body of literature, as well as associated intellectual dilemmas and problems of realisation (CEC, 1998; ENSURE, 2000; Schleicher-Tappeser et al, 1997 & 1999).

The key documents attempting to rationalise SRD have recently been augmented by an EU Thematic Evaluation on the Contribution of the Structural Funds to Sustainable Development (Commission of the European Communities, 2001 & 2002). This evaluation had three main objectives:

- To develop methods, indicators and approaches for the evaluation of sustainable regional development.
- To identify ways throughout the delivery system for the Structural Funds to generate better projects promoting sustainable development.
- To identify the main policy trade-offs being made in regional development policies either explicitly or implicitly.

The synthesis report provides tools and methodologies to assist regions, Member States and the EU in assessing the sustainability of development plans and to enhance the sustainability of the Structural Funds programmes in the 2000-2006 period. It is also intended to act as guid-

ance in the preparation of Structural Funds policies beyond 2006, with particular relevance for programmes in the new Member States (the former Candidate Countries).

In its approach, the study modifies the three pillars (economy, society and environment) conceptualisation of sustainable development into four types of capital that sustain well-being: manufactured (man-made), natural, human and social capital. The potential for sustainable or unsustainable development lies in the trade-offs occurring between the different forms of capital, when an increase in one prompts a corresponding increase or decrease in another. Thereafter, when proposing tools to assess regional sustainability, the report develops the concept of regional development pathways and designs a sustainability assessment matrix, specifying criteria against which to evaluate policies, programmes or projects. Finally, a 'project pipeline checklist' provides questions for programme managers and monitoring committees designed to generate projects that contribute more effectively to SD.

In parallel with the EU activity, the theoretical and practical development of SRD has been supported by a series of multi-disciplinary conferences and international workshops (Gabriel and Narodaslawsky, 1998; Häkkinen, 2000; Larrue, 2002). This momentum has included comparative research into instruments for SRD, the formation of ENSURE, the European Network for Sustainable Urban and Regional Development Research, and the launch of REGIONET, an EU Thematic Network project aimed at providing an interdisciplinary approach to support the implementation of sustainable regional development in Europe (see Appendix 1). A key element of this exploratory process has been the identification of differentiated experience between countries and regions, offering considerable scope and need for researchers and practitioners to learn from each other.

1.2 Sustainable Regional Development in the Nordic Countries

With regard to Nordic activity in this field, a Nordregio report in 2001 addressed the concept of SRD and identified recent and on-going initiatives in the countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (Clement and Hansen, 2001). The review examined regional policy instruments, institutions or processes that recognised the importance of balancing economic, social and ecological factors. The fieldwork encompassed a series of 30 interviews and structured analyses of projects from each national context, selected on the basis of their perceived potential to make significant contributions to the initiation, promotion or monitoring of SRD. Three conclusions were presented in the report:

- (i) *There was a considerable diversity of approaches in pursuit of SRD within the Nordic countries*

In the absence of national or Nordic guidance on sustainable development at the regional level, a wide range of project types and methodologies has been adopted. With regard to effectiveness, it was evident in many cases that the most direct routes to linking regional development and sustainable development had not been followed, often as a result of political and institutional constraints. However, this diversity appeared both interesting and useful in offering a laboratory of examples of possible alternative means of realising SRD objectives.

- (ii) *There was a lack of awareness amongst Nordic regional policy-makers and researchers of the existence of SRD theory and practice*

Even though the second meeting of ENSURE was held in Finland in 1999, those attending represented specialist interests – mostly academic – from across Europe, and the message that regional development and sustainable development could be integrated did not reach the wider Nordic audience. Consequently, attempts by research institutes and government agencies to implement regional research and policy instruments based on sustainable development were occurring in parallel with SRD initiatives, rather than drawing on the material and experience already available.

- (iii) *In practice, conceptual overlap was hindering the transition to SRD*

In a number of projects with SRD potential, the two issues of environmental protection and sustainable development were being interpreted as having the same meaning. This conceptual confusion prevented these projects from making the essential transition from one-dimensional environmental assessment to embrace the multi-dimensional character of sustainable development. Reasons for this overlap included a belief in the comprehensiveness of the environmental policy framework in the Nordic countries, disciplinary divisions and institutional reluctance to accommodate change and broader perspectives.

1.3 Project Aim and Objectives

Representing an important stepping stone in the SRD information process for the Nordic countries, the aim of this current project was to act on the conclusions of the first report, further developing those insights. Accordingly, the broad horizontal overview was used as a basis for an in-depth,

vertical exposition through case studies. In approach, the project had three objectives:

- (i) *Derive a detailed knowledge of factors impacting on SRD realisation*

In practice, this meant pursuing greater detail on promising case studies to *generate a better understanding* of the interaction between individuals, institutions and processes that determine project effectiveness. Going beyond single interviews (as in the previous research), the fieldwork drew upon a wider circle of actors and organisations at national, regional and local levels, as well as related county departments and other project beneficiaries. From each perspective, the research sought to identify key factors that helped or hindered implementation.

- (ii) *Identify and highlight best practice in Nordic SRD*

This objective adopted a normative perspective seeking to *create benchmarks* through cataloguing operational strengths. What lessons were learned or actions taken that should be replicated? It was anticipated that practitioners and researchers would benefit from this assembly of material in the form of guidelines that facilitated project design, implementation and evaluation at different levels. In addition to contributing benchmarks for use across the Nordic countries, it was recognised that scope existed for wider influence territorially, as this activity helps to create and promote a Nordic identity in this area.

- (iii) *Facilitate a Nordic network for SRD information exchange*

The third objective was to develop the capability of Nordregio as a *central institution and contact point* to promote SRD in the Nordic countries. This builds on Nordregio's considerable experience in bringing together policy-makers from all the Nordic countries and in hosting Nordic events. The outcome of this phase is envisaged as an informal network, potentially with an Internet homepage linked to Nordregio's, allowing access to relevant reports and contact with research staff. In addition to SRD information provision and liaising between national, regional and local actors, Nordregio's educational input may extend to specialist workshops and training sessions.

1.4 Methodology

To achieve the three objectives, case studies were selected from the overview report for each of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.¹ In the research design, the criteria for choosing these case studies was based not on similarity, but rather on distinctiveness. Each exhibited interesting features, for example in the logic of methodology and its scope for wider replication or in the insights gained that could offer important lessons for other regions or national contexts.

Developing the previous investigations – which generally included interviews with one or two project representatives – the case study survey method involved participants from a number of different levels, as well as from parallel organisations. Depending upon the specific project, the range of meetings – which aimed for 10-15 face-to-face interviews for each case study – included a combination of the following actors:

- National government officials
- Regional and local government staff
- Steering groups
- Politicians
- Project managers
- Fieldworkers
- Project beneficiaries, including small companies' representatives
- Non-governmental organisations
- Evaluators
- Researchers and academics.

This wider scope allowed a much more detailed presentation and analysis of the key factors impacting on project realisation, it facilitated the preparation of benchmarks, and it substantially increased the coverage of the Nordregio SRD contacts database.

Seven case studies² were included in the final selection, as indicated in Table 1. Interviews were conducted with 79 individuals, using a

¹ The fieldwork in the overview project revealed that there were no projects in Iceland designed specifically to integrate sustainable development into regional development activity.

² A second case study had been planned for Denmark, focusing on the Agenda 21 activity in Storstrøms County. However, reorganisation within the county administration reduced the scope for collaboration, and ultimately Storstrøms County decided to withdraw its participation.

structured schedule addressing the development process, the operational phase of each initiative, and the identifiable achievements (see Appendices 2 and 3).

1.5 Report Structure

Chapters 2-8 present individual analyses of the seven case studies. The common format of four sections is sub-divided as follows:

- *Profile*, representing a summary outline of the project, as identified in the previous report.
- *Project Development*, comprising three sub-categories:
 - Background/Contextual Factors – describing elements such as legislation, and moves towards realising sustainable development at the regional level,
 - Key Actors – identifying individuals or institutions directly involved in formulating, launching or implementing the initiative; and
 - Interactive Process – describing how different organisations collaborated to produce the initiative.
- *Implementation*, comprising three sub-categories:
 - Distinctive Characteristics – considering whether particular characteristics distinguish individual initiative from others;
 - Strengths – documenting the main positive features of the project implementation phase, as identified by participants; and
 - Weaknesses – presenting the main negative elements of the project implementation, as identified by participants.
- *Achievements*, comprising three sub-categories:
 - Progress in Relation to Objectives – assessing the extent to which expectations were met or exceeded;
 - Barriers Encountered – identifying hurdles or problems that hindered project realisation and, in some cases, how these were overcome; and
 - Lessons Learned – drawing on the experience of project participants to fashion specific lessons for other initiatives to consider in project design, management and evaluation.

Chapter 9 reviews the SRD drivers impacting on the case studies, then addresses strategic benchmarking, ultimately identifying SRD

benchmarks from the Nordic case studies. Drawing principally on the strengths and lessons emerging from Nordic experience, the benchmarks are grouped into categories that correspond with the phases of project design, implementation and evaluation.

Chapter 10 presents the conclusion to the report.

<i>TABLE 1: SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES</i>
<i>Denmark</i>
• <i>Destination 21, Copenhagen</i> – a tourism destination labelling scheme, drawing on Agenda 21 and using a 3-phase process involving SD goals, objectives and indicators, and structured through a working manual. From seven participant regions, two have now reached the operational phase. The scheme represents a new sectoral perspective, institution and methodology to deliver sustainability.
<i>Finland</i>
• <i>Learning Sustainability, Lapland</i> - inter-regional and international co-operation to increase the capacities of regions and partnerships to facilitate sustainable development in marginal areas. Working with six areas of activity, increased local skills and new village development strategies have enabled greater understanding and involvement in SD within a regional growth context. • <i>SEA in Regional Development, Southern Finland</i> – participation exercises within ex ante appraisals of regional development instruments to integrate environmental impact assessment into the design process. Follow-up activities have included Agenda 21 and a sub-regional SD action Plan financed by all participating municipalities.
<i>Norway</i>
• <i>Sustainable Development Through Planning, Greater Bergen</i> – part of an EU TERRA regional development initiative linking spatial planning with economic development through a new regional partnership. SD was used as common goal to generate greater cohesion and regional identity amongst local authorities. Follow-up activities included decreasing energy usage and sustainability accounting.

- *Regional Agenda 21, Sogn & Fjordane County* – SD principles within RA21 used as reference for County (Master) Plan, which incorporated both a strategic policy plan and a physical land-use plan. Perceived as a process of political choice with scope to develop options in sustainable production, consumption and land use, a formal RA21 would also be considered a justification of county-level intervention.

Sweden

- *Natural Resource Centre, Dalarna* – a project supporting small and medium-sized companies in the transition to an ecologically-based regional economy. Features include network-building, information and indicator provision, and knowledge dissemination. The new institution has increased SD awareness in public and private sectors.
- *Green Trade and Industry, Småland* – a programme to promote the development of internationally competitive trade and industry while contributing to the achievement of regional ecological goals. Three phases have involved mapping of companies with potential, building networks, and marketing the region as a provider of environmental solutions.

2. Destination 21, Denmark

2.1 Profile

The tourism initiative of Destination 21 (D21) commenced in 1997. Its objective is to promote sustainable tourism in Denmark by developing a destination-labelling scheme based on geographically defined areas. Operating in accordance with the Brundtland definition of SD, D21 maintains that sustainability and development are compatible aspirations, and the various stages within the scheme are linked to achieving progress in a balanced and sustainable manner. With financial assistance from the Ministry of Environment and Energy and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, it took 18 months to establish this initiative.

D21 encourages local authorities to address the principles of Agenda 21 and integrate them into the tourism planning framework, products and services. Eight sustainability goals underpin the scheme's activity, focusing on ecological, economic and socio-cultural sustainability, measured by 37 sustainability indicators (see Appendix 4). No finance is offered through Destination 21, but instead advice, guidance and access to a detailed manual, the substance of which is drawn from Agenda 21.

To participate fully in D21, regions are required to work through a 3-phase process – pre-qualification, qualification and operation. The pre-qualification phase consists of the formation of a D21 Steering Committee representing various stakeholder groups. The qualification phase then lasts for 12 months, during which time several obligations must be met. These include formulating an overall strategic vision; conducting a qualitative SWOT analysis of existing values and resources; preparing a detailed baseline inventory for measuring annual progress; formulating sustainable tourism development objectives; developing an action plan; and preparing the first annual D21 report to identify progress.

Lastly, in the operational phase, the region receives the D21 designation, is entitled to use the associated logo, and it continues the cycle of improvement. Once regions have entered this third phase, the D21 Secretariat encourages them to assist in steering other regions through the process, so establishing a mentoring network. Of seven regions that commenced as pilot destinations, those of Odsherred and Møn are now in the operational phase.

In future, as the initiative evolves, it is envisaged that the scheme will become self-financing, potentially through charging membership fees and/or conducting consultancy services. The manual will be periodically updated and methods changed to improve effectiveness in the light

of experience. At present, work is underway to present a more simplified D21 concept without changing the basic philosophy.

As part of a new project on “Storytelling in Tourism”, which is supported by the Arbejdsmarkedets Feriefond, the D21 Secretariat has recently been awarded DKK 500,000 over a 2½ year period. In addition, a new form of co-operation on sustainable tourism has been launched with a Polish NGO, attracting a grant of DKK 120,000.

2.2 Project Development

2.2.1 Background/Contextual Factors

The immediate factor that stimulated the creation of D21 was the loss of market share by the Danish tourism industry. Events contributing to this change included the identification by the Foundation for Environmental Education’s Blue Flag of 120 beaches in Denmark that failed to meet environmental quality criteria³, media reports highlighting a disease affecting seals, and an algae bloom. For the ecology-conscious German market – which represented the main source for Denmark’s tourism industry, delivering up to 50 percent of visitors – this created a negative image, and these tourists chose to travel to more southerly European countries. This reorientation undermined Denmark’s annual letting of summerhouses, and a new form of market differentiation was sought to reverse the trend, offering a guaranteed green product that would persuade tourists to return to Denmark.

By the mid-1990s, substantial success had been made in improving Danish beaches to meet the EU standards, and the new idea of the Green Key was launched, comprising a scheme for the ecological rating of tourist accommodation such as individual hotels, holiday homes and camping sites. The success of this scheme inspired the further thought that perhaps the principle could be extended to encompass a whole tourism destination and support larger scale marketing efforts.

In parallel, the Danish Outdoor Council had become active in persuading its members to address sustainability concerns, producing an action plan with over 200 recommendations for future policy, one of which was to create a Green Destination. The participation in this venture was subsequently extended to three organisations – the Outdoor Council, the Tourism Development Centre (TUC) and the Danish Tourist Board – and it was re-named Destination 21. This reflected the principles of Agenda 21, an output of the United Nations Conference on Environment and De-

³ For further details and criteria used by the FEE Blue Flag scheme to assess beaches and marinas, see Appendix 5.

velopment in 1992, and it raised awareness of the need to deal with sustainability matters, while the Danish Government urged all local authorities to prepare a Local Agenda 21.

In the absence of a sustainable tourism strategy in Denmark, D21 was also filling a gap by providing a tourism scheme based on Agenda 21, and which was characterised by public and private sector participation. In addition to the kudos attached to such an innovative national scheme, it provided accountability for the forthcoming UN World Summit on Sustainable Development.

More generally, in some areas of Denmark sustainable tourism was already an active focus when D21 was under development. For example, in the region of Møn, initiatives related to summer cottages and cycling holidays had existed since 1996, and sustainability in tourism was considered with a range of different emphases and a broad sectoral involvement. Accordingly, when D21 was launched, Møn was easily able to adjust to the role of pilot destination.

2.2.2 Key Actors

Three individuals worked together to devise this initiative, representing the Danish Tourist Board, the Danish Outdoor Council and the Tourism Development Centre. The Danish Tourist Board addresses international markets, the Outdoor Council is an umbrella organisation for nature and countryside matters, and the Tourism Development Centre has an educational and knowledge-dissemination role.

State funding was acquired to support the development of the concept and to establish an organisation that could administer the brand of D21. This base funding came from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, with a supplement from the Ministry of Environment, from the Green Job Fund, and there were also contributions from the D21 Board in the form of membership fees.

Throughout the development phase, the D21 secretariat has comprised two individuals based in Copenhagen. Their tasks have been to obtain general acceptance for the concept and to encourage and secure the participation of regions through the three-phase process to become operational destinations.

2.2.3 Interactive Process

At the beginning, the discussions and formulations of D21 took place between representatives of national level organisations. At this point, institutional resistance to the concept was encountered, based on the uncertainty of the timescale that would be required and scepticism that a project of this nature could achieve tangible results. Nevertheless, a framework was

established, and efforts were then made to involve the local level in the process as rapidly as possible. However, difficulties in persuading the municipalities to work together meant that six months passed before their participation was realised. Securing this level of contribution was seen as essential, because a considerable proportion of the work could only be performed locally, such as identifying indicators that would be comparable between destinations.

When the seven pilot regions were designated – perhaps a year later – the local authorities became much more actively involved. Scheme development then took place through a dialogue between regional, local, sectoral and national institutions. Although the development of the D21 manual was primarily a sectoral initiative amongst the more active tourism organisations, the majority of interactions occurred between the D21 secretariat in Copenhagen and the local destinations. For example, Møn Municipality was involved through commenting on the development process, particularly to modify the D21 definition to broaden the eligibility. In comparison, Odsherred Municipality urged the secretariat and board to adapt D21 to local circumstances to gain local acceptance. In both cases, agreements were reached that promoted revisions, consistency and method for the forthcoming implementation phase.

Evidently, there was scope to influence the shape of D21 as the scheme progressed. This reflected an effective combination of top-down and bottom-up interventions, a board that included representatives from environmental organisations, the municipalities and the tourism sector, and a secretariat that was flexible in approach and willing to negotiate regarding the means to achieve the D21 objectives. However, it was recognised that the level of compromise must remain pragmatic to retain the scheme's sustainable development identity, and municipalities were discouraged from reverting to an environment perspective or familiar toolbox approaches.

2.3 Implementation

2.3.1 Distinctive Characteristics

D21 is not perceived as a unique initiative, as other countries in Europe and beyond have implemented similar tourism initiatives at the destination level. However, it is distinctive as a national programme with a direct link to the principles of Agenda 21, and it is unusual in its ambition and level of comprehensiveness, attributes that have been acknowledged by the European Commission. The practice of labelling is not a new activity in Denmark, where houses, dishwashers and other items are already subject

to such systems, but the endeavour to label a region for sustainable tourism in this way was regarded by participants as innovative.

The spatial coverage of the scheme has other distinctive aspects. For example, in comparison with the EU eco-management and auditing scheme (EMAS), which concentrates on certifying individual buildings or sites, D21 is a broader initiative, territorially and in terms of network creation. Furthermore, the decision to base the scheme on destinations rather than on villages or municipalities reflects a practical approach. In effect, a destination may extend over conventional administrative boundaries, and the D21 designation method allows greater flexibility to match the area of impact.

Another unusual feature is the attempt to merge process-based and performance-based approaches. D21 utilises a process-based system with the destinations making commitments to reduce overall impact and to improve their sustainability over time. In parallel, it incorporates performance targets linked to standards, with criteria for their attainment, as part of a certification scheme. Whereas these targets would usually be specified by an external organisation, D21 places the responsibility on the destination steering committees, which should set feasible targets based on the manual's indicators and derive benchmarks that demonstrate relative improvement in performance.

2.3.2 Strengths

The degree of involvement of stakeholders in certain pilot regions is considered to have been a major strength. As a voluntary initiative, D21 encompasses a public-private perspective, with broad participation amongst local authorities, local organisations, the tourism industry and individual enterprises. This has meant that, at an operational level, there has been a broad ownership of D21 by a range of actors.

D21 uses an effective combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The top-down element acknowledges and enforces certain minimum environmental requirements already established through government regulatory and policy frameworks. The bottom-up element allows the public authorities and local D21 associations the autonomy to set their own agenda for meeting the required criteria, so encouraging greater participation. For example, this might involve businesses decreasing their environmental impacts by purchasing materials from renewable or recycled sources or by modifying operations to reduce outputs of waste or emissions.

The concept and method have been consistent and precise. From the outset, the overall ambitions of the project have been understandable, and

during the implementation phase the secretariat has maintained the concept by applying the comprehensive scheme documentation.

Another important element has been the involvement of the project manager from the development phase as a member of the D21 Secretariat. This continuity has allowed professional relationships to be established and maintained over time, with an on-going identification of this individual as an information source and core team member.

The general applicability of D21 is seen as a strength. For the tourism sector, this represents a common brand that can be extended to a variety of Danish destinations, objectively trying to compare and evaluate the attributes of different locations.

Lastly, as indicated above, the scheme's operation is both process-based and performance-based, and this combination is considered a strength that allows flexibility, drawing the most useful elements from each system and applying them to deliver sustainability in Danish tourism.

2.3.3 Weaknesses

From the perspective of the destinations, the D21 process is seen as too detailed and complex. It comprises a number of tasks on different levels, developing common understandings and plans, and it requires a considerable scale of effort that overwhelms the individual regional co-ordinators, many of which have other parallel responsibilities.

Pilot destinations encompassing a large number of municipalities have experienced difficulties in co-ordination, particularly with the amount of work involved in registration, data collection and processing. In one case, a destination in the north of Denmark with nine municipalities was discouraged by the administrative and bureaucratic burden during the pre-qualification phase and opted to discontinue the process.

Compliance with the procedures outlined in the D21 Manual was cited as especially demanding. Some participants consider that the manual contains too many indicators, some of which are very difficult to measure, and not all are appropriate for every region. It is recognised that their diversity is linked to the requirement to measure the competing dimensions of sustainability, but in practice they have proved difficult to work with and to compare effectively, particularly concepts such as local identity. Although the manual provides an overview of method, it is considered to be primarily useful for tourism industry activities such as summer cottages and hotels with the green key designation, which employ relatively tangible measures, for example promoting use of fewer towels or less harmful soaps. However, the work of artists, whose output does not easily relate to this form of measurement, requires a very different approach.

The feasibility of D21 differs between regions according to their available resources, disadvantaging smaller destinations. In Møn, for instance, the qualification phase has experienced difficulties, as the area is small in scale and resources, with new initiatives invariably directed to the same people. Rather than superimposing established D21 thresholds onto regions, in effect limiting participation and overall programme feasibility, participants suggested that a more diluted set of demands would be more beneficial initially, allowing the idea of the brand to be launched, and subsequently introducing stricter criteria as each project progressed. This approach has apparently already been used to good effect in brand marketing for holiday houses.

The scheme presently involves no third party verification, an omission that may weaken its credibility. At present, each destination reports to the D21 Secretariat that the various eligibility conditions have been met for each phase, and this information is taken on trust. There is potential for the Environment Ministry to assume this validation role, but this may also be open to criticism as reference to a biased intermediary.

Restricting the D21 Secretariat to two members of staff is perceived as inadequate resourcing. In addition to the day-to-day management tasks, these individuals have responsibilities that include monitoring and responding to the international agenda, commenting on Danish Government bills, and strengthening the profile of D21 to assist its perception as part of the established structure.

It takes considerable time to establish a market brand, and D21 has not yet become generally accepted. The activity has been very process-oriented during the first years of implementation, there are no concrete results to see, and it is not yet impacting on tourist perceptions and travel decisions. Basically, two destinations in Denmark are not enough to generate a market shift or establish a national standard or image.

There has been uncertainty surrounding the financial future of D21 and the continuation of this institutional frame. In the short term, D21 needs public funding to operate, but no ministry has yet included the scheme in its strategy or as a permanent feature of its budget.

2.4 Achievements

2.4.1 Progress in Relation to Objectives

From a process orientation, D21 is considered to have been successful in integrating the tourism effort and acting as an umbrella for a range of ongoing and new activities. Various stakeholders have been brought together for the first time, a common dialogue has been initiated, and sustainability criteria have been structured and applied. Within the municipalities, a

clearer view has evolved on how sustainable development could be interpreted, means to integrate tourism and sustainability have been explored, and a tourism focus has been introduced into physical planning policy and activities.

Overall, the direction has been clear, with the method grounded in the production of the D21 manual, aspects of which have already been modified to broaden the regional eligibility criteria. However, the speed of progress and uptake has been slow, and the small number of destinations that have received the D21 brand to date has raised major questions. From 14 areas that applied to participate as pilot regions, seven were accepted as a manageable number, but only two destinations – Møn and Odsherred – have reached the operational phase.

Reasons advanced to account for the limited progress include the uncertainty surrounding the financial support for D21, meaning that destinations may be unwilling to invest until scheme continuity appears safeguarded. This reticence is further compounded in regions where a large number of municipalities would need to agree to the concept and resource commitment.

Although D21 appears to be commonly acknowledged as a useful and practical initiative, it is perceived as only a partial success, still awaiting a greater momentum of uptake, when tourists will recognise and choose to visit D21 locations. It is fundamentally a tourist product, and those consumers must place sufficient demand for the product to be viable. For the two currently operational destinations, the major concern for the future is that if no more regions aspire to reach the operational phase, the value of the D21 brand will diminish, and its effectiveness as a marketing tool may be undermined.

2.4.2 Barriers Encountered

The absence of motivated individuals and companies has sometimes acted as a barrier. In instances where a region has had no tourism manager or administrator strongly interested in sustainable tourism, it has been difficult to initiate a momentum or establish a network. These individuals are also important as intermediaries between D21 and enterprises, where they can minimise bureaucracy, as well as clarifying and concretising the system. As enterprises generally work to a profit orientation, they are only attracted to projects that generate income, or otherwise they must have a clear long-term perspective that time and resources are worth investing in this form of initiative.

A potential barrier to implementation was cited as the lack of awareness by municipalities of the beneficial impacts and importance of tourism, which is often not considered to be an industry in its own right.

When combined with reluctance among municipalities to implement Local Agenda 21 initiatives, due to their complexity and unfamiliarity, D21 becomes doubly disadvantaged in terms of overcoming local authority resistance.

Another issue has been that there may not yet be full acceptance that D21 is the most appropriate brand for an industry standard in Danish tourism. In this respect, there is considered to have been a difference between the sustainable tourism vision of the D21 Secretariat in Copenhagen and that held by various stakeholders at local level. This factor was described as one of the reasons accounting for the difficulty in securing commitment from more destinations.

One specific barrier has been to gain acceptance for D21 in the region known as the 'top of Denmark'. An island in this area participated as a D21 pilot project, but it withdrew when faced with the parallel initiatives of D21 and a separate regional tourism strategy agreed by nine municipalities in the surrounding area. This island now operates on a unilateral basis in tourism planning, representing a form of fragmentation rather than the national harmonisation envisaged by D21.

Public sector financial support was initially only available for the launch phase. With the new government elected in November 2001, a change in political priorities meant that a more market-oriented perspective was applied to public investment. It was reasoned that if the D21 brand was not commercially attractive to local businesses or destinations, the state should no longer financially support it. From the beginning of 2003, this funding was withdrawn. However, participation in two new projects has raised additional funds for the Secretariat, totalling DKK 620,000.

2.4.3 Lessons Learned

A broad co-operation is essential in this kind of initiative, with municipalities and sectors following a common strategy, rather than a small number of destinations working independently. There has to be a certain volume or critical momentum, accompanied by a form of continuous dialogue, in addition to informal or unofficial contacts, to convey attitudes, identify problems, and act as a system to foresee forthcoming difficulties.

Flexibility is an important quality in the dialogue with destinations. There should be scope to change the substance of the scheme when appropriate, as certain elements may not be achievable in every destination. There is a need to be pragmatic, tailor the process to meet regional circumstances, and make it more straightforward to obtain local approval and participation. Thereafter, accommodating a bottom-up process, each destination should be encouraged to find its own solution, representing the best

region-specific way to progress. For example, in Odsherred it was considered practical to start the process by identifying the distinctiveness of the region.

Ambitions should be kept within realistic dimensions, avoiding levels that may be too high for stakeholders to achieve. This includes the qualifying characteristics, the feasibility of goal achievement, and the choice of sustainability criteria. Of the 37 criteria associated with D21, those relating to local culture and authenticity, such as clarifying a destination's identity, were criticised as unreasonable and unrealistic.

A national scheme such as D21 should be promoted as a public-sector initiative, with public funding clearly in place and guaranteed. This would afford the scheme credibility as a long-term vision and encourage participation rather than hesitation based on uncertainty, and it may also allow an orientation towards greater risk-taking in efforts to deliver more substantial and diverse gains in impact.

There may be advantages in separating the strategic and procedural aspects in regional tourism initiatives. This could entail a common overall strategy as a framework or core on which to build, followed by a series of alternative scenarios from which destinations could choose an appropriate path. For example, in the current D21 manual, elements could be extrapolated for different groups, making more targeted use of categories such as socio-cultural development criteria. In this revised approach, if there were eight substantive areas, it would be possible to decide locally which to consider in greater detail and what the specific focus should be, the answers varying with local circumstances. This would correspond directly with sustainable tourism that builds on local characteristics and resources. It might also be an option to have parallel processes operating between the development of local projects and local documentation.

More time should be devoted to product development than to documentation development. It is important to gain ideas from local actors at an early stage, finding out which products and development paths interest them, and harnessing their enthusiasm before too much time has passed. This substantial local involvement promotes the impression of shared ownership, bearing in mind that enterprises and individuals are generally not driven by the broad concept of SD, but rather by concrete projects with which they can identify.

With regard to longer-term feasibility, initiatives such as D21 require a clear client focus and strong evidence of demand for their product. Whereas a reliance on public funding may feature in the early years, the aspiration should be to create a self-sustaining programme as soon as possible, with efforts made from the start to produce impacts and results that

are visible to tourists. In D21, many of the components behind the brand are not visible, for example the implementation of environmental policy standards, and so more tangible features must be identified and promoted to gain a profile.

3. Learning Sustainability, Lapland

3.1 Profile

Under the title *Towards a Sustainable Development Structure for Co-operative Actions between Marginal Areas in Europe*, this EU-funded project enabled the participating regions from Lapland, the mountains of Trentino (Italy), and Alentejo (Portugal) to work together. Its overall purpose was to increase the capacities of the regions and partners involved to tackle key challenges for the sustainable development of marginal areas. These included factors such as the outmigration of younger generations from rural areas, mismanagement and loss of natural and cultural resources, and difficulties for local SMEs to compete on the market.

In Lapland, the aim was to develop a village development strategy to slow down or halt migration from Lapland to the south of Finland. The objectives were to create and improve employment opportunities and offer a quality of life that would encourage people to live and work in the region. This approach was based on the experience of villages such as Kur-takko, which had been especially active within tourism. The project commenced in 1998, involving 13 different villages in Lapland, and concluded in 2002.

The implementation of objectives was divided between five areas of activity, those of sustainable tourism; quality management; participatory multi-use management of rangelands; co-operation; and the relationship between urban and rural areas. Attention was also given to scope for the creation of a multi-polar regional economy. In Lapland, the decision was taken to support villages that particularly needed help and that displayed an attitude of enthusiasm for development. Seeking to foster an increased capacity for local people to address sustainable development issues, the use of non-academic methods, based on sharing of experience and co-operative learning, were expected to benefit not only those attending the sessions but also the organisers and managers.

The village development projects commenced with surveys to obtain background material, placing special significance on the attitudes and opinions of the villagers. On the basis that offering a wide range of activities makes it easier to attract tourists, the surveys were oriented to find out whether development opportunities existed, related to factors typical for the different villages and for their surroundings, history and culture.

The expected qualitative impacts included awareness-raising amongst decision-makers and local activists on sustainable development; generating pilot projects; supplying information for entrepreneurs regarding innovation; an improved capacity for integrated management; and a

prototype of the future multipolar centre. The quantitative outputs included 24 associate partners from three regions and countries gaining new experience in regional and interregional co-operation; about 400 people, active at the local level, improving their capacity to contribute to the sustainable development of their region; a series of interregional exchange of experience sessions and demonstration actions; and dissemination in mass-media through newspaper articles and radio programmes.

3.2 Project Development

3.2.1 Background/Contextual Factors

From a cross-national perspective, although the regions were very distant from each other, they experienced similar problems as remote areas, and it was considered that they could learn from each other. The specific trends encountered in the rural areas included outmigration of women and younger people, a constant decline in the role of agriculture, and increasing economic constraints on SMEs from competitors and new challenges within the European Union. The project was anticipated to offer new ways of benchmarking with other rural areas and deriving new ideas on how to resolve local problems.

In Lapland, nature, tourism and industry operate in a delicate balance. With tourism growing in importance each year, it had been acknowledged locally that safeguarding environmental quality and ecological diversity would be best achieved through a sustainable development approach. This referred not only to ecological sustainability, but also to securing financial and social sustainability. Against this background, the *Learning Sustainability* project promoted rural development practice based on sustainable development principles, with village project ideas valuing culture, nature and other local resources.

3.2.2 Key Actors

An international co-ordinator introduced the *Learning Sustainability* project to the Regional Council of Lapland, as well as securing the participation of the regional groups in the other countries. In the Finnish context, his experience and knowledge of the field were perceived as important factors in persuading the participants that direct benefits could be derived from the project, and he became instrumental in planning and shaping the project method.

Throughout the implementation phase, this co-ordinator acted as a vital link between the different international arms of the project, and he was credited with having substantially supported the lead partner in the project (Trentino, Italy). In Lapland, the participants especially appreciated his guidance and prompting because of their relative lack of familiar-

ity with this method of working. His professional contribution was such that the Finnish participants believe the project would not have been completed without his assistance. As a corollary, this degree of dependence may indicate that too much reliance and pressure were placed on this one individual.

3.2.3 Interactive Process

Although supportive of the idea, the Regional Council of Lapland chose not to lead the project, and instead encouraged the University of Lapland to take on this task. When the project funding was obtained, the Continuing Education Centre at the University of Lapland became the regional co-ordinator, informing the public and the municipalities of the opportunities for participation in this rural development project. The project goals were quickly established, but it took longer to clarify a methodology, which essentially evolved during project implementation.

With regard to the international dimension, each partnership appears to have been active in its own country from the project launch, but this did not represent a strong co-operation, and the contact between public authorities was very limited in this initial phase. Certain fundamental differences quickly became apparent: for example, the Finnish partners favoured a very planned schedule for the project, but the Italian region did not follow that approach; and whereas Lapland was mainly interested in the tourism dimension, the Portuguese region had other thematic priorities.

The Finnish municipalities identified villages that were willing to take part, and each one forwarded an application containing a village plan and illustrating activities and development suggestions. The steering committee in Lapland then decided that the project should support the village group of Vika-Misi-Nammanseutu as well as the five individual villages of Kurtakko, Kilpisjärvi, Saija, Joutsijärvi and Tolva.

Thereafter, the general pattern was to have at least one meeting in each village, at which a standardised method was used to evaluate prevalent attitudes, willingness for co-operation, and the potential for projects encompassing natural resources, farming, forestry, wood products and sustainable village networks, amongst other themes. The responses were then presented in a summary analysis, highlighting where there was broad agreement and where there was variation.

The project generation process was considered to have combined both top-down and bottom-up aspects. The broad direction and sustainability orientation had been determined in advance by the project management team, subsequently conveyed in the meetings, and then through the interactive process the villages were encouraged to identify their own

aims, aspirations and specific project ideas for consideration. In some instances, the management team also made project suggestions that were adopted.

3.3 Implementation

3.3.1 Distinctive Characteristics

The international dimension to this project has afforded it a distinctive status within Lapland. Collaborative projects of such a scale and approach, and especially with an international co-ordinator, were previously unknown in this region. In addition to providing ideas for village development, the comparative element allowed participants the opportunity to meet and interact with people in similar situations in other countries, and to see other ways of living, thinking or working. It also facilitated the introduction of new knowledge and quality standards to the region.

In terms of the method, there were a number of innovative aspects. This particular combination of development actors had previously not worked together in this fashion; the strategy of using selected villages as pilots for revitalisation was a new tactic in Lapland; and the village network discussion of quality within the tourism sector was a new theme and approach for rural areas and rural entrepreneurs.

3.3.2 Strengths

University involvement was high, with the University overtly extending its activities beyond Rovaniemi and interacting with residents in the rural areas in support of regional development. For the Continuing Education Centre, it launched a new engagement with rural development, and its students have had the opportunity to learn directly by participating in survey research, by interviewing entrepreneurs and preparing environmental plans that will be a useful resource for some years ahead.

There was also an enhancement of social sustainability. The co-operation between villages has resulted in mutual knowledge and understanding, with improved communication and exchange of ideas through websites and e-mail correspondence. Interaction through the village network and between different organisations and experts takes place not only during the official working hours, but also during leisure time.

The international exchanges in relation to the theme of quality opened up a broad perspective. The initial aim had related to testing the Finnish total quality management system to see how it might function in Italy and Portugal, but it soon became apparent that each country had a very different focus with regard to quality. In Portugal, labelling was used in product quality, in Italy quality systems were developed in relation to industrial hygiene, and in Finland total quality management was used as a

tool for entrepreneurs. Ultimately, grasping these differences enhanced overall understanding for the participant countries.

Most participants were very willing to become involved and assume responsibilities. As the application process to be followed was not straightforward – necessitating agreement and involvement of the municipalities – this represented a lengthy undertaking for successful applicants at a time when village support structures were not considered strong in Lapland.

Certain villages were especially proactive, notably Tolva and Tianen. In Tolva, the villagers had a very clear idea to base their development project on nature tourism because of the high-quality environment, and they also initiated co-operation with a neighbouring skiing centre. In Tianen, the people worked together to develop activities based on local culture, exhibiting a high degree of participation, drive and commitment.

Overall, the project proved to be a significant learning experience for the villagers. It gave them a greater awareness of the quality of their locations, especially with the perceptions of visiting foreign partners. There was a valuable exchange of information between countries, particularly in the area of grazing and land management. Lastly, the villagers realised that their own knowledge and resources could be usefully applied at the local level to develop activities based on culture and heritage.

3.3.3 Weaknesses

Difficulties with the international dimension reflected the reality of bringing different cultures and languages together. In the early stages, the three countries had limited contact and initiated their own projects, unaware of what each other was doing, and these separate drives caused difficulties. For example, changes were frequently made to the project plan at meetings in the different countries, but there were many such meetings, and the results were not always disseminated. Although the lead partner in Italy was responsible for informing and maintaining regular contact with the other partners and the supported areas, in practice some regions had no contact outside the formal meetings.

Other international communication difficulties related to long response times, information delays and reliance on formal channels. For example, there was an expectation in Finland that e-mail enquiries would receive prompt replies, but the response times from Portugal and Italy were considerably longer than anticipated. On other occasions, the project management in Lapland was unable to provide requested materials to villages because of the delay in receiving information from the Italian partners. In retrospect, it was considered that directing the interaction mostly through formal channels had been a weakness of the project, and that

greater use of informal contacts might have produced better and speedier communication. Even the evaluation process was hindered by co-ordination inconsistencies: the Finnish and Portuguese evaluators communicated regularly, but there was very limited contact with the Italian evaluator.

To the villagers, most of the interaction appeared to be taking place at a high level, and for some participants this precluded a local sense of project ownership. This outcome was perceived as a result of the primary emphasis being co-operation between the international co-ordinators, rather than between the grass-roots participants from the villages. This might have been exacerbated if there had been more frequent meetings between villagers from each country, but this was compounded by language difficulties. By way of example, a quality management seminar in Lapland used English as the official language, and this was believed to have discouraged local attendance.

The goals of the project were not clear to all the participants. In Lapland, this has been attributed to inadequate discussion during the feasibility period on direction and overall goals. This uncertainty about what was actually to be achieved meant in some cases that participants could not assist each other with ideas or appropriate tools. This lack of clarity regarding goals also featured in the difficulties highlighted in the international communication.

Including six village areas in the Finnish side of the project was considered to have been too high a number for manageability and effectiveness. In some of the villages, the persons engaged with the project were uncertain of what they should be doing, but the other pilot villages were situated too far away for easy communication. In retrospect, 2-4 areas were suggested as representing a more appropriate scale.

Some villages were disadvantaged by the lack of individuals and networks willing to carry out the project tasks. For example, in Joutsijärvi very few people were actively involved, and the village would have benefited from appointing a village co-ordinator, such as had occurred in Kur-takko. Other areas had no real network extending beyond the village, such as the Vika-Misi-Nammanseutu group in the rural area of Rovaniemi.

To some participants, the training offered through the project was considered too theoretical. For these individuals, it was difficult to understand and of marginal interest, and it discouraged rather than encouraged their participation. In one village, Tianen, the previous experience in development activities had facilitated its selection as a pilot village, but this also meant that the villagers' familiarity with regional development made them perceive the training as unnecessary.

The practice of adopting a group of villages as one pilot was considered to have disadvantaged those villages. The resources available to the project were limited, and when they were divided up between the villages competing within the group, it reduced the scope for impact.

Changes in project personnel in Lapland created problems with continuity. There were four project managers during the implementation phase, resulting in a lengthier process and uncertainty amongst villagers about project sustainability and who best to contact for up-to-date information.

3.4 Achievements

3.4.1 Progress in Relation to Objectives

From the project objectives, tourism is the area in which participants believe greatest progress was made in Lapland. Nevertheless, this area took considerable time to develop, and it was only towards the end of the project – mostly in the final year – that impacts were identifiable. The villagers were introduced to tourism in other countries, gained new ideas, and they now place greater trust and value in their own work.

Examples of the tourism information exchange between villages include a visit to Portugal by a Kurtakko resident that inspired him to establish a horse farm, and a Tianen resident who returned from Italy with ideas for recycling fabrics and for modifying bread products that are now sold to tourists.

In addressing the area of quality, the Italian and Portuguese partners were interested in the Finnish total quality management (TQM) models, but the collaboration appears to have met contextual problems, achieving progress on the theoretical level but with more limited practical impact in the short term. In addition, the villages in Lapland aspired towards different outputs than those initially planned by the co-ordinator for the quality theme.

One of the aims within the quality objective in Lapland was to test the TQM system at national and international levels. This was achieved for the national level, with the system tested and developed for rural areas and rural entrepreneurs. However, at the international level, the different ways of conceptualising quality prevented this ambition from being fulfilled within the project's timeframe.

For the grazing and land use management objective, the Finnish participants invested considerable time working and exchanging experience with the Italian and Portuguese partners, and the collaboration was expected to continue after the project conclusion. The work carried out in Lapland is perceived as innovative with regard to the expression of prob-

lems and expectations of reindeer herders, the main local stakeholders concerned with this theme.

With regard to co-operation, on-going contacts were established between certain proactive villages. It was anticipated that these contacts would be maintained after the project support expired through the creation of CoopLapland, an organisation that provides multipurpose assistance and services to small-scale co-operatives and promotes sustainable rural development in Lapland. Accordingly, *Learning Sustainability* is considered to have provided the villages with new aims, aspirations and contact networks and improved the organisation of the co-operative system in Lapland.

Reconciling the relationship between rural and urban areas proved to be a more difficult task. For the Lapland participants, one positive outcome was the confirmation that the rural problems encountered in this part of Finland are common to a number of marginal areas. Although the knowledge gained from the international comparisons proved to be region-specific with regard to solutions, it also illustrated that there are different ways of approaching similar problems, and new approaches can be developed from these insights.

More generally, the project is considered to have created a positive image for Lapland and an inspiration for the future. Over 100 articles featuring the project have appeared in newspapers, the model has been presented at two international conferences, and it will be publicised further in an edited book for a European publisher.

In future, it is planned that the network established through *Learning Sustainability* will remain active, continuing the participation with Italy and Portugal and enlarging the membership to include partners from Poland, Hungary and different parts of Italy, as well as developing a village network at the Scandinavian level. A form of tourism village network is also envisaged, admitting villages according to specific tourism development criteria. The aim is to convert this tourism network into a brand, a particular interest of the Portuguese partners, which the villages can utilise as a guarantee of quality for products and services.

3.4.2 Barriers Encountered

The different ways of working in Finland, Italy and Portugal generated multicultural misunderstandings. Although these challenges became less of a concern as the project progressed, they did undermine confidence in the process and its likely outcome. A typical example related to the other countries' reluctance to observe Finnish protocols for partnership meetings. Such events were generally arranged as a means of finding answers to problems, with materials prepared in advance and a clear schedule and

agenda. However, this meticulous organisation periodically experienced setbacks due to withdrawals at a late stage in the process. When invitations to Lapland were regularly accepted and then cancelled, this pattern fostered psychological barriers.

Quality was a multi-dimensional theme that proved to be a barrier. As indicated above, the Finnish TQM system encompassed means for entrepreneurs to improve the management of their activities, but the concept of quality was approached from a different perspective in the other countries. Although efforts were made to produce a commonly acceptable definition of quality, this barrier proved to be insurmountable, as even the meanings attached to certain words were fundamentally different in each national context. Nevertheless, the project did produce a manual for quality development in marginal areas.

Reconciling the budget was a barrier for some organisations. This related partly to the EU distinctions and conditions attached to financing in-house staff and external experts. For instance, the Rural Advisory Centre of Lapland drew both staff and experts from in-house sources to work on the quality issue, but it was subsequently unable to recover the costs for the experts, even though no other organisation could have supplied expertise concerning TQM. Ultimately, this represented a considerable financial loss for the organisation.

Amongst the villages, the types of barrier varied. In one village, the main barrier was the limited scope to create a social atmosphere that would accept the innovation proposed by the *Learning Sustainability* project. The resistance lay in the older members of the existing community, who were perceived as unwilling to relinquish their positions and village status to younger, more dynamic individuals with new ideas. In another village, the problem comprised the lack of connections to social capital outside the village, meaning that they could not recruit the people they needed for the transition.

Relying on English as the language of communication proved to be a barrier to participation. Those already active at international level were understood to have a prior knowledge of English from conferences, seminars and workshops. However, for the majority of villagers – even in Kur-takko, the best example in Lapland – there was a lack of such language skills, with only a few individuals able to speak or write English. This problem was compounded when the Finnish villagers visited Portugal and Italy, where knowledge of English was also restricted.

3.4.3 Lessons Learned

For a village development project to be successful, the participants at the local level must be self-motivated to maintain their interest over time. Although the framework ideas and enabling finance can be introduced through a top-down approach, this may have only a short-term impact unless the people are prepared actively to improve their situation and develop both themselves and their villages. This form of project is only one catalyst for rural development; in the longer term a sustained momentum will depend on the people and the resources in the villages.

The number of villages supported has direct implications for a project's financial and managerial feasibility. If a large number of villages are involved, the distribution of funding may result in very small contributions to individual villages, and participants may become disillusioned if this is interpreted as the initiative losing momentum and real potential for change. In contrast, under conditions with fewer financial constraints, each village may be able to engage a local co-ordinator, a model that worked well in Kurtakko. With regard to project feasibility, the Lapland experience has shown that developing villages is a long-term and slow process, and in this instance 13 villages proved to be too many to manage, especially within the project timescale.

Cultivating external relationships and networks beyond the village is very important for development in marginal regions. Villages in Lapland that gave no priority to these factors found that it imposed limitations on their development potential, and one village that created a network of experts within the project made no links to social capital outside of the village. Universities or other intermediaries can help by raising awareness and offering guidance on these issues at an early stage.

When introducing a new programme to villages, it may be advantageous to commence with small-scale events. In Lapland, the process was launched with a very large session informing the villagers of the purpose and approach of the programme, gathering information and carrying out preliminary analyses. In retrospect, it was considered that this phase should have utilised smaller groups, allowing a better interaction and building up momentum over time.

The form of financial control may impact on the range of project outcomes. In Lapland, the administration of project finance was decentralised, allowing partners in each area to decide how the money would be divided locally; in practice, rather than achieving a more varied development profile, the most important actor in each area tended to absorb the funding allocation. Furthermore, in an attempt to stimulate activity, project funds were transferred to the partners in advance; rather than prompt-

ing rapid development, several months passed before these activities commenced. It is now considered that withholding a substantial percentage of the funding until project completion would have been more a motivational administrative procedure.

In the project selection process, partners should use a pre-determined set of criteria and always be clear about the benefits of supported projects. The criteria should consider factors such as the type of villages to support, the types of persons living there, the population age range, whether there are schools, shops and other amenities, whether they can be categorised as active or passive villages, and what relationship the villages have to other countries or areas within Lapland and Finland.

In terms of thematic coverage, the scale of endeavour may impact on project feasibility. In Lapland, the broad and holistic approach adopted was designed to generate cohesion, reflecting the reality that one authority could not solve multi-dimensional regional development issues alone. Working on a cross-sectoral basis with a range of actors and objectives was intended to create greater impact through integration. However, in practice, six themes proved difficult to co-ordinate, and a concentration on three was cited as a more feasible prospect.

The multi-level approach of combining the intensive sessions at the international meetings with visits to the villages and enterprises under discussion was recommended as a model worthy of replication. In cases when Lapland participants were visiting the other countries, it became much easier for them to understand the area, the problems, the people and the thinking behind these systems when they actually met the communities and were able to relate to their goals and activities.

4. Strategic Assessment in Regional Development, Southern Finland

4.1 Profile

As part of a national initiative to develop strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for policies, plans and programmes, Häme Regional Environmental Centre (REC)⁴ carried out participation exercises within three *ex ante* appraisals of regional development instruments. The work related to a programme for the EU Objective 2 region of Päijät-Häme (1996), and to development plans by the regional council of Häme (1996-1997) and the sub-region of South-West Pirkanmaa (1996-1998). The specific objective was to integrate environmental impact assessment into the regional development process, and in particular to ascertain the level at which the use of SEA would be most successful. The approach was based on promoting sustainable development as an appropriate medium to combine economic, environmental and welfare considerations.

In the cases of Päijät-Häme and Häme, the method relied on documented material, participants' observations and interviews, whereas in South-West Pirkanmaa, this information was supplemented through questionnaires, media-analysis and interviews with decision-makers. Overall, about 30 regional and local workshops and seminars were held for authorities, decision-makers, businesses, NGOs and residents. Most of these events occurred in the Pirkanmaa sub-region, where broad participation and co-operation were accepted as a fundamental part of impact assessment. Two expert groups representing economic and social-environmental interests drafted principles for sustainable development as a foundation for the project, and non-governmental organisations were invited to comment on this material.

The project results varied between location, but the three cases were considered to have demonstrated that systematic SEA could be successfully integrated into planning procedures. In the Pirkanmaa sub-region, where the participation was greatest, the SEA project was seen as part of a larger context, and the learning and development process has continued. Decision-makers who were involved in the SEA exercise

⁴ Häme Regional Environment Centre is responsible for environmental protection, land use and building, nature conservation, protection of the cultural environment and exploitation and management of water resources within its administrative boundaries. In addition to promoting environmental awareness, the centre compiles information on the state and use of the regional environment.

demonstrated further commitment by launching an Agenda 21 process, and all municipalities in the sub-region have financed projects that implement a common Sustainable Development Action Plan.

Although the aspiration of introducing sustainability into regional development was mentioned in individual plan and programme documents, its implications for land-use, education or other fields were not precisely defined. Accordingly, the project concluded that clear SRD principles and procedures would be needed in future as a means of facilitating comprehensive monitoring and evaluation.

Co-financed by EU technical assistance and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, the project started in April 1996, and its final publication was prepared in 2001.

4.2 Project Development

4.2.1 Background/Contextual Factors

In 1994, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act entered the statutes in Finland, specifying that plans, programmes and policies should be subjected to environmental appraisal. In practice, this represented a continuation of the conventional project-based approach, and at this time there was no tradition in Finland of integrating environmental considerations into regional policy initiatives.

Finnish accession to the EU in 1995 acted as a catalyst to launch a new focus on SEA as a means of appraisal. Through the procedures of the Structural Funds, the Finnish regions could secure European co-financing to assist regional development, which required the production of regional development programmes (RPDs) and single programming documents (SPDs). The EU regulations specified that these documents should be environmentally assessed as part of an *ex ante* appraisal process with a view to ensuring compatibility with sustainable development. The Ministry of the Environment perceived the Structural Funds process as an opportunity to concentrate resources on introducing environmental conditions into Finnish national regional policy.

Other factors relating to the national context included a growing awareness of SEA through Finnish participation in, and hosting of, international EIA conferences, as well as new projects in the Finnish Environment Institute (FEI) that attempted to test and develop SEA methodology. These FEI projects involved consultation with a range of sectors and the preparation of draft guidelines on SEA implementation.

The idea to launch an SEA project in Häme originated in the REC, responding to a Ministry of the Environment initiative to identify pilot projects for a handbook illustrating how SEA might be applied in the

Structural Funds. This reflected existing concern in the REC that environmental concerns were under-represented in regional economic plans and proposals.

4.2.2 Key Actors

The two key institutions behind the SEA project were the Ministry of the Environment and the Häme Regional Environment Centre. Whereas the Ministry of the Interior has overall responsibility for Finnish regional policy co-ordination and the EU Structural Funds, a range of ministerial representatives make inputs to the different stages of the process. In the Ministry of Environment, a representative at director level participated in each of the various external committees and also chaired an internal working group, which acted as a significant discussion forum on practical means of implementing the SEA exercise. Financial support for the evaluation was also co-ordinated from the Ministry of Environment.

The main actor within the internal working group was the Häme REC, which recognised and pursued this opportunity to integrate regional and environmental priorities. A senior researcher representing the REC facilitated the process, relating sustainable development to everyday activities and decision-making, and promoting participatory themes such as openness and discursive interaction.

4.2.3 Interactive Process

The interactions occurred at several different levels. At national level, the participants comprised the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Interior and the Finnish Environment Institute (FEI), at regional level the Häme REC and the regional councils for Häme and Päijät-Häme, and at local level the municipalities. Although the activity was mostly horizontal, there was also vertical interaction between these levels.

To meet the new tasks for EU Structural Funds regulatory compliance, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of the Interior held discussions on methods to integrate environmental aspects into regional policy design and delivery. This interaction was considered to have prompted greater interest in the work already underway in the FEI on SEA methodologies.

The national-regional interactions related to the development of SEA procedures, particularly the allocation of formal responsibilities. Whereas the regional councils had assumed that the national or regional environmental authorities would perform the necessary environmental assessments, the Ministry of the Environment considered this task to be a regional council responsibility. As the regional councils had no competence in environmental assessment, a general debate ensued between in-

stitutions to clarify the ambiguity regarding the appropriate level and actor.

At regional level, an informal collaboration developed between the REC and the regional councils. One feature of this included the placement of a researcher at Häme Regional Council to follow the planning process and identify how and when environmental factors could be introduced. As part of the research remit, this individual also participated in a number of planning meetings and negotiations.

With regard to regional-local interaction, the REC worked with all of the involved municipalities, but especially those in the Pirkanmaa sub-region, which were very active and directly sought REC assistance. For example, a survey of Pirkanmaa residents explored how different environmental features were valued, it identified the quality of surface water, groundwater and lakes as the primary concern, and the results contributed to the fashioning of the sustainable development definition. The REC attempted different bottom-up approaches to involve residents in the other areas, but the strategic planning focus was less readily appreciated.

At local level, there appears to have been limited contact between the separate municipalities, with the exception of the Pirkanmaa sub-region, which was cited as especially effective in its departmental collaboration, building on previous co-operation on other issues.

4.3 Implementation

4.3.1 Distinctive Characteristics

Prior to this initiative, the combination of SEA and regional economic development was unknown in Finland. Accordingly, this exercise was perceived as both innovative and a useful first step in deriving practical means to realise integrated programming at regional level. Moreover, the impetus to involve substantial public participation within a SEA framework was regarded as very ambitious and challenging, with the potential to create distinctive pilot projects.

As indicated above, a REC researcher was seconded to the regional council for nearly twelve months to develop an understanding of the regional development programming process. Although this placement was subject to some institutional misunderstanding regarding the researcher's role and responsibilities, it was an unusual strategy that produced practical insights into the scope for economy-environment integration.

The timing of the project meant that the focus was not restricted exclusively to environmental assessment, but it necessarily addressed the role to be occupied by various authorities in the EU Structural Funds process. This made project realisation more demanding, as the interac-

tions between different levels of government became a direct influence on content, method and feasibility.

4.3.2 Strengths

The project used a participatory framework to enhance the policy formulation process. This allowed members of the public openly to discuss impact assessment and to gain access to decision-support procedures. Whereas this form of involvement had already been available at project level, the SEA exercise elevated the interaction to policies within plans and programmes. Prior to this initiative, opportunities to impact on policy were offered through institutional conventions such as electoral voting, but now there was a possibility to influence municipality and regional policy.

From some perspectives, inter-organisational liaison was considered a strength in implementation. The project was effectively carried out at regional level, with a structured interaction between the organisations responsible for programme development. The Ministry of Environment had a key role in this process, on one hand distributing funding to the RECs to implement the project, and on the other hand having final responsibility to ensure that environmental factors were integrated into regional programme management. Successfully combining these two roles was considered to have facilitated an emphasis on regional level implementation.

Development of the methodology was an on-going and useful learning process, characterised by openness to new ideas and willingness to experiment. At the outset, the method and direction were not clear, and different suggestions were raised and developed as the project progressed. It was perceived as a positive quality that there was no overriding top-down direction, but instead encouragement to examine a variety of methods and techniques. In this process, as actors introduced separate perspectives, participants experienced this as working on a collaborative pilot project in an atmosphere geared to learning from each other.

Production of a working definition of sustainable development was at the core of the initiative, linked directly to the strategy and to development activities in the region. Working group discussions had focused on the economic, social and environmental dimensions, emphasising the principle that the concept of SD comprised more than increased ecological concern. From the seminars held, Pirkanmaa was considered the best example, where an open event was used to clarify SD and agree on the working definition. This was attended by decision-makers, civil servants, NGOs and local residents, and it exemplified good participation and

readiness to engage in discussion. Entrepreneurs also added perspectives from a micro-economic level.

4.3.3 Weaknesses

A number of participants criticised the pace of the project launch. A considerable amount of effort had been expended at the beginning to arrange large-scale seminars and associated workshops, scheduling different venues and trying to maximise the beneficial outcomes. These events usually commenced with a lecture to introduce the practice of SEA and the seminar objectives, followed by contributions from the regional and sub-regional offices to describe the regional development plan. Immediately thereafter, when the meeting would divide into small groups to assess the plan, people were often uncertain about what to assess, what the environmental impacts could be, and how to approach the task. Furthermore, as the meetings extended to a maximum of two hours, this was considered as inadequate to absorb such major concepts and questions and produce meaningful responses. Overall, this delivery was perceived as 'too much, too soon' and as undermining the purpose of the seminar.

As the scale of the project increased, the small REC team became over-stretched. In addition to the three pilot project areas, sub-projects and other activities were added to the remit, generally without being anticipated, and the management tasks continued to grow. One full-time senior researcher managed this effort as project leader, with assistance from several part-time staff and some students. Ultimately, the demands of this breadth of activity on the few available resources impacted on the depth that the project could achieve. Participants also considered that the potential of the SEA project had been weakened by its direct involvement in the Finnish institutional search for identity and roles within the new Structural Funds process.

Participants observed different levels of procedural and conceptual confusion within the project. Procedural confusion occurred especially at the beginning of the process, when no one appeared certain of how best to proceed. The various levels of project management also appeared unsure of which course to adopt, and even participants experienced in planning and regional geography commented that the system was especially difficult to comprehend. The initial, high-level discussion of EU policies and SEA was considered to be part of the problem i.e. while the participants were still attempting to understand the decision-making process, the role of the programme documents within that process, and what should actually be assessed, it was too demanding to relate these practices to everyday reality.

Conceptual confusion was partly due to the terminology being unfamiliar. This meant that some people did not really understand the topics under discussion and which required decisions. It was a completely new activity for them to consider environmental factors when designing a regional economic strategy. Some participants commented that a gulf existed between the discussion of the conceptual-integrative subject matter and the ability to implement the actions that these programmes would sanction or support. In other words, even if they could grasp and discuss themes, ultimately they could not realise their thoughts as action. It was suggested that this lack of understanding by residents meant that participation declined towards the end of the project.

From a research perspective, the SEA project was criticised for proceeding without first establishing both theoretical and practical understanding. Whereas the first aspect related to the need to develop some conceptualisation of the organisational environment and development process, the practical dimension referred to the interactions in EU-funded regional development and bureaucratic boundaries. For example, the environmental researchers consider that they overestimated the significance of certain regional policy documents, learning subsequently that development is driven more by actors than by text-based visions, particularly when the main objective is to invest the funding as effectively as possible. Had these dynamics been understood earlier, they would have impacted on the researchers' priorities.

Another weakness impacting on the environmental researchers was the difficulty presented by coming from outside the case study areas. This meant they had no strong connection with the areas and no awareness of local events or related opportunities. For this kind of information, they were dependent on those persons active in the working groups or that attended the workshops and seminars.

4.4 Achievements

4.4.1 Progress in Relation to Objectives

Most participants consider that progress has been made in furthering sustainable development by raising awareness, or even generating new awareness, and relating it to the level of everyday activities. More people are familiar with the terminology, and there is a wider understanding of the different dimensions of SD. The authorities at regional and local level have been obliged to consider the implications of SD and adopt a perspective that, at least on paper, appears to integrate this thinking into the development process.

Against the objectives of achieving public participation in SEA and developing a methodology for SEA, the project was considered a relative success. Although not every exercise was productive, this was regarded as an inevitable part of the learning process. Greatest progress was in public participation in the SEA process, providing direct experience in the tasks that need to be carried out to promote bottom-up participation. In comparison, the SEA output or product lacked certain key elements, such as generating and comparing alternatives, or producing estimates of impact pertaining to such alternatives.

Overall impacts on the system are difficult to identify at this stage. Throughout the project, the REC has gained considerable knowledge of the regional development programming process, while clarifying the most appropriate and useful stages for environmental intervention. Although some participants question whether the regional councils perceive this activity as encroaching on their administrative and management responsibilities, it was clearly useful and important for environmental researchers to learn the system and framework conditions within the Structural Funds. The direct benefits have included cross-sectoral learning and familiarisation with the professional focus of other actors in economic development. Whereas it appears that regional authorities have accepted environmental factors into the programming process, there is no information yet on the depth and effectiveness of this intervention.

With regard to longer-term impacts on development authorities, participants expressed the hope that the project may prompt these institutions to consider inputs from a more broad-based sustainable development perspective. It was observed that the limited territorial coverage restricts the initiative to that of a pilot project, and it would need to encompass all nineteen Finnish regional councils before the exercise could be considered to have made substantive impacts. Nevertheless, within the project areas, local residents and municipalities are now perceived as more open to environmental discussion.

One tangible outcome was the preparation of a sub-regional Agenda 21 action plan. The SD definitions prepared by the working groups (economic and environmental-social) during the SEA project were utilised in an Agenda 21 compiled after project completion. An action plan, which is not very detailed, was subsequently designed around five main themes that reflect the topics raised during the project meetings. All the municipalities in the sub-region have approved the plan, and there has been active discussion on how it could be supported within their budgeting systems. This plan is perceived as a direct continuation of the SEA project momentum.

4.4.2 Barriers Encountered

The level of abstraction when discussing SEA was perceived as a barrier. Unlike the researchers, the residents considered SEA to be too theoretical and very removed from concrete or practical topics with which they were familiar. For example, in the seminar evenings some participants found that they could relate only to the topic of water and lakes. Abstract issues such as eco-efficiency proved too difficult for them to identify with daily activities. One method that assisted comprehension was the use of a map exhibition, which made it easier for local people to understand themes such as developments around the lake and close to their homes.

Another barrier was confronted with the task of introducing SEA into the established process of regional development decision-making. In an example from Häme, the regional council saw the county strategy and development plan process as exclusively its responsibility, and this extended to organising seminars within the SEA project. Whereas the REC could suggest invitees, the final decision lay with the regional council. Rather than relinquish control to allow a separate SD or SEA seminars, the council preferred to direct the process as part of the institutionalised planning system. Another SEA element that proved difficult to incorporate was the formulation of alternatives, as the preparation of regional development plans or programmes invariably follows a method that does not support or identify alternatives.

Contrasting professional perspectives and the reliance on formal links were also experienced as adding barriers to the process. In some instances, environmental information supplied for the report text was relegated to the appendices, rather than featuring in core chapters. Working mostly through formal links and committees meant that such strategic differences became more difficult to resolve, as this seemed to simulate a form of bureaucratic barrier behind which different professionals appeared to pursue separate agendas.

Initiating effective participation proved to be very challenging. As the involvement is voluntary, the organisers must find ways of encouraging attendance and active involvement. This is a familiar problem with public participation, where opinions and ideas are sought, as people tend not to turn up, considering for example that the project is not important for them, the theme is uninteresting, or that other matters are more urgent. From the professional side, there was also initial resistance to the participatory process, based on the belief that such meetings are ineffective, and that the public interest in discussing environmental matters is limited. These expectations changed as the project progressed, as the community involvement appeared genuinely broad-based.

4.4.3 Lessons Learned

With economic-environmental projects that entail a learning process for all parties involved, it is important that the environmental authorities establish a clear perspective and ambition at the outset. This should be achieved prior to approaching the regional development authorities, to gain maximum benefit from focused interaction. Thereafter, the working relationships should be clarified so that key regional institutions fully understand the aspirations, scope and method of the project. This approach should help to avoid professional misunderstandings and associated delays in project implementation.

Understanding the planning culture can directly assist progress. This may differ between regions and municipalities, making it more important to identify individual regimes. For example, Päijät-Häme provided an example of good understanding and co-operation in organising the SEA seminars, as the planning culture included wide participation and close ties to the environmental authorities. In Pirkanmaa, co-operation with municipality leader meant that the working definition of SD was directly connected to the strategic planning of the region.

At the outset of a major project in a new sphere of operation, it may be useful to build a model of the interactions as a first step. For instance, this could initially emphasise an academic approach to convey an understanding of the dynamic and logic of the bureaucratic arena, offering some theoretical base and a holistic interpretation of the process and power interrelations. Thereafter, the objectives could be oriented towards finding practical solutions to the SEA integration problems identified, possibly experimenting with interactive forums and other sources to generate innovative ideas.

A combination of formal and informal links is considered an optimal approach. The formal channels are important for example for securing the approval of ideas and funding commitments, but they can allow uncertainty about interpretations and reinforce rather than dissolve barriers between professionals active in the project. Informal links allow improved and more regular interaction, confirmation of understandings, and more effective preparation for formal decision-making meetings. In addition, combining top-down and bottom-up approaches is considered to facilitate a more balanced regional output, securing involvement from political leaders and national institutions on one level, and local actors, organisations and members of the public on the other.

Care needs to be taken with the use of specialist vocabulary to avoid isolating sectors of the community. Professionals tend to develop and use language that is understood by colleagues, but which often leaves

ordinary residents disadvantaged. Some education regarding this terminology is advisable at an early stage, particularly to offset the abstract nature of themes encountered in strategic regional projects. The term sustainable development in particular is open to wide interpretation, and a first step to de-mystify it can be taken by organising workshops where residents can contribute towards a working definition for the regional context and local area.

A strategy to encourage participation should be planned in advance. It is advantageous if residents feel they are part of the initiative and even appear to retain a degree of ownership of the ideas presented. Ideally, the project theme should be introduced gradually through a series of small-scale meetings, allowing momentum and confidence in the participatory procedure to build up, and facilitating learning on all levels. This type of approach was followed in Äetsä Municipality in south-west Pirkanmaa, where a course was held in a recognised adult education centre, representing a continuing input scheduled for the evenings and open to the public.

It is essential to have political will behind the project idea and its realisation. Without such backing, it would be very difficult to launch and implement an innovative project if senior officials do not understand or support the idea. In addition to the external campaign to develop public confidence, there has to be an internal campaign to secure political confidence. This is especially true with concepts such as sustainability, which reaches into many elements of the economic development process and requires close co-operation from regional actors. The effectiveness of the methodology is linked to this need for political backing, as such support allows access and influence in the planning and policy formulation process. Strength in only one of these features may prove to be inadequate.

With regard to identifying tangible impacts, it is essential to retain a long-term perspective. One development project can set in motion a process of change, but it will be unlikely to possess sufficient momentum to initiate substantive systemic change, which always encounters institutional inertia. It has to be acknowledged that these integrative processes are slow to emerge, and it is perhaps only after three years that project impacts can be measured, as the regional objectives are realised through local development impact.

5. Sustainable Development through Planning, Greater Bergen

5.1 Profile

In November 1997, the project of Sustainable Development through Planning (SDTP) was launched as a catalyst to enhance co-operation and cohesion between local authorities in the Greater Bergen region. This two-year project sought to link spatial planning with economic development, while drawing on the principles of sustainability as a common goal. The activity formed part of an EU TERRA regional development initiative, with the Norwegian funding was provided by the Ministry of Local Government and the participating local authorities. The implementation phase was supported by the appointment of a full-time project officer.

The first steps necessitated a transition from a general understanding of sustainable development to follow a process that would move the sustainability debate closer to practical policy formation in spatial development. Accordingly, the partners – from Norway, Finland, Sweden, Spain and the UK – agreed on a theoretical model that illustrated a method by which sustainable development could be introduced into the decision-making process. Described as a generic model, transferable both to different localities and different levels of decision-making, it was envisaged as equally applicable in political and public contexts, as well as accessible by experts in economic and spatial development.

During the project implementation phase, each partner country established an economic forum and produced a baseline study outlining socio-economic and physical characteristics of the regional environment. Each country also identified from five to seven sustainability categories or themes, supplemented with appropriate indicators. Linkages were then highlighted between economic development and spatial planning, followed by a review of existing organisational structures to ascertain their capacity to implement the emerging SDTP principles.

In terms of impact, the project directly influenced the operation of the Greater Bergen Regional Association (GBRA). The on-going work was adapted to produce a two-year plan for the Association, focused on the practical task of improving existing administration and introducing responsibility for sustainable development. Considerable effort was put into active promotion to gain influence at a high level, while supporting the political agenda on sustainability.

Another outcome of the SDTP project comprised the introduction of a regional goal to decrease energy consumption and to move towards reliance on more environment-friendly sources. Each participant local author-

ity devised its own strategy on how best to reduce the use of energy, and the GBRA assumed the task of integrating these strategies for greatest effectiveness. The GBRA also applied for combined EU/Norwegian funding to develop a form of sustainability accounting.

5.2 Project Development

5.2.1 Background/Contextual Factors

Several factors influenced the project initiation phase. These related to a growing awareness of the concept of sustainable development, a desire for involvement in an EU project, and recognition of the need for co-operation between local authorities on a regional scale.

The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), which was chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Norwegian Prime Minister, and the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, had highlighted how the pursuit of materialism and economic growth had to be mitigated with other measures. In this context, a number of projects and investments already initiated through Local Agenda 21 were seen to have brought increased efficiency and reduced costs, encouraging interest in the principles and practice of sustainability and a belief that sustainable development was attainable through spatial planning.

There was also a desire for direct participation in an EU project. This link was perceived as important in the process, not only for the kudos of involvement in EU activity, but also to allow a comparison of practical experience between European regions in defining and implementing SD.

Lastly, central government was encouraging local areas to work together, to be able to operate on a regional level through inter-municipality co-operation. This was partly in response to the prevailing tensions between municipalities as a consequence of their strong individual identities. For example, Bergen Municipality is very large compared to its hinterland, and its concerns tend to overshadow those of neighbouring municipalities, from where many workers commute to Bergen. The Greater Bergen Regional Association was perceived as an instrument with potential to resolve this and similar jurisdictional conflicts by bringing the eleven municipalities closer together, and the theme of sustainability seemed an ideal foundation on which to build this new integration.

5.2.2 Key Actors

Several individuals were important for the successful launch and development of the SDTP initiative in Bergen. The initiator and leader of the TERRA project was based in the United Kingdom, from where he shaped the overall framework and structured the project plan, specifying when

and how each stage should be implemented. For practicality, he divided the plan into progressive ‘sustainability frames’, making the principle easier to explain to politicians and more persuasive in terms of its apparent feasibility. Thereafter, throughout the implementation phase, he continually pressed for prompt delivery of draft contributions, pushing the project along, and brought it to a conclusion.

The international team was derived from the project leader’s professional contacts in the different participant countries. It was recognised that collaborative ventures of this nature place substantial responsibilities on individuals, and consequently those invited to take part were selected for their combination of experience, specialist interests, achievements and reliability.

In Norway, three actors progressed the initiative from proposal to project. No EU funding was available for a Norwegian project, but the Ministry for Local Government and Regional Development strongly supported the declared objective, and this proved to be critical in obtaining financial support from national level. In Bergen, the GBRA representative put the idea forward to the county political assembly, following which discussions focused on the content of the project, who should pay for it, and how it should be shaped. Lastly, a project officer was seconded from the Municipality of Bergen, and this meant that he already had a good knowledge of the local government politics in the region and was known to those neighbouring authorities. This new appointment – which was substantially facilitated by the long-term networking process already conducted by the GBRA Secretariat – gave the project team an added legitimacy and strengthened the initiative.

5.2.3 Interactive Process

The interactions during the development phase can be categorised on the levels of international, national, and regional/local.

Five international meetings were convened, basically one in each participant country about four months apart, and there was one meeting in each of Brussels and Naples when all 15 TERRA projects met. By the time of the SDTP meeting in Bergen – the third in the series – the project momentum was established. The project managers, a number of officers and mayors attended these events, and rather than the lead partner conveying project direction, the different countries learned from reviewing each other’s experience. The Norwegian participants already had a clear idea of how the programme could benefit Greater Bergen, and the characteristics of the SDTP project evolved from the discussion.

The national level was very involved in assisting the initiative through advice and funding, rather than SD interventions. The Ministry for Local Government and Regional Development provided co-ordination and a scale of financial support that was a substantial encouragement for this operation. Although the SDTP project was a regional initiative, the national level strongly supported and guided the representative for the GBRA and acted as the overall paymaster and funding supervisor, as well as national co-ordinator.

Thereafter, most activity concerned regional level interactions.

Initially, Hordaland County Council, as the existing regional government, decided administratively against supporting the project. However, when the local mayors reached a consensus that the SDTP initiative should proceed, the executive board of the county was persuaded to reconsider its position and lend more meaning to the initiative by joining the team and supporting it financially.

A separate Board was formed for the project. Comprising five mayors from the municipalities (the existing board of the GBRA) and the mayor of the county council, it constituted a strong political group and a direct link between political environment and the project management. TERRA meetings generally involved only the project team, but members of this Board would sometimes also participate.

As a counter-balance to the political board, a Regional Economic Forum was established, comprising 15 persons drawn from private-sector companies and organisations and the civil service. It was intended that this forum should discuss the main development issue in the region and produce innovative ideas.

With regard to municipal-level interaction, the operational framework was determined by the original application document, and in this respect the action was top-down initially. The package was drafted in the UK and then explained to the regional actors by the GBRA representative and project officer. Consequently, the local authorities were not greatly involved in the development of the generic model, but they became much more involved after the grant application was successful. At that stage, the general discussions were replaced with more specific concerns focusing on Greater Bergen's regional problems and how the municipalities would benefit from participation.

Thereafter, various forms of input shaped the programme for the Bergen region. On the technical side, a working group composed of one planner from each municipality undertook to develop sustainability indicators, with its monthly meetings open to NGO participation.

5.3 Implementation

5.3.1 Distinctive Characteristics

A special feature of the SDTP project comprised its rationale for co-operation, basically that the expression of individuality should be overcome for mutual benefit. From this perspective, the local authorities working together was expected to bring positive returns in terms of gaining knowledge, setting and achieving goals, and developing a new regional consciousness and regional identity.

However, in terms of methodology, the project was the result of combined international experience, rather than a unique or original approach. The participants were inspired by a region in France that had initiated regional co-operation, with municipalities and county administrations agreed on how to share the resources and tasks delegated from the state. In addition, the Norwegian regions of Nordhordland, Sunnhordland and Hordaland had developed similar co-operative ventures. Nevertheless, it represented a new way of thinking for the Greater Bergen region, and the model was regarded as ahead of the normal pace of events.

5.3.2 Strengths

A strength of this programme was the sustained effort to during the launch phase, the drive to make it happen. For some participants, the project seemed somewhat diffuse and weak at the start, but over time they were effective in concretising vague concepts and putting SD on the agenda in a specific project. Not only was it made interesting enough for the municipalities co-operate on issues and politics related to business and societal planning, but in comparison with the formulation of the county plan, the municipal involvement has been much larger.

A related strength comprised the participatory process of identifying five sustainable themes – land-use management, transportation, consumption patterns, trade and industry structure and production methods, and education/expertise – and deriving seventeen associated indicators (see Appendix 6). This process helped the team to understand the sustainability links between the different development activities, and it made the discussion of potential projects more applied and informed. This multilateral working on these factors proved to be both a good interactive learning process and a positive experience that had lasting benefits for regional cohesion.

The use of a theoretical model was considered confusing initially – particularly in view of the wealth of papers and documentation – but later was perceived as a strength in approach. The model provoked debate,

and addressing theory at the outset was a tactic that helped the project team find its way strategically and clarified assumptions.

The direction was clear, and the idea of a phased approach was useful, specifying the different tasks to be completed at each step, and this made the project plan seem manageable. In addition, even though the project leader produced detailed suggestions and requirements, meetings were conducted in a democratic fashion, encouraging discussion, a working principle appreciated by the participants.

5.3.3 Weaknesses

The cohesion process did not go smoothly. Local barriers weakened the overall effort, particularly through individual municipalities wanting to compete by retaining their independence. For example, three municipalities – Fjell, Sund and Øygarden – co-operated in the task of attracting international investment, but the authority of Askøy preferred to remain outside of this coalition and worked independently. Askøy Municipality perceived its subsequent industrial development success as vindication that exclusion rather than inclusion had been the better policy.

This autonomous tradition was reinforced by the national government reducing the budgets and closing certain governmental institutions. This means that the municipalities have been facing a struggle for survival, with an associated reluctance to consider issues that extend beyond local concern. Overall, participants recognised that moves were being made towards sustainable development principles, but when SD was considered in daily practice, the idea of a functional region often gave way to a municipal prioritisation, further hindering effective integration between authorities.

Another factor was that most participants perceived this initiative for regional cohesion as top-down in character. Rather than emerging from the local level, it was regarded as another county-level instrument – this time through the GBRA – with an idea delivered as a package from abroad and then adjusted to suit regional conditions. Even though attempts were made to ‘trickle it down’ to lower levels, the municipalities were initially sceptical and hesitant about becoming involved.

With regard to the Regional Economic Forum, uncertainties arose regarding ownership and reporting responsibilities. This meant that the Forum was insufficiently integrated into the process, and it functioned as a parallel entity or process with no clear role and little influence. Ultimately, the Forum’s contribution to the SDTP project appears to have been insubstantial.

Although a number of politicians attended and participated in the various project meetings, their involvement was limited, and they ap-

peared not to have progressed towards a sense of ownership of the project. It was suggested that the long-term view and theoretical approach to SD adopted at the outset might account in part for this lack of engagement, as it was not characterised by the immediacy more familiar to political priorities. In practice, the participants from the administration mostly assumed the responsibility for project development and implementation.

5.4 Achievements

5.4.1 Progress in Relation to Objectives

Overall, the SDTP project has made progress on various fronts relating to the sustainable development and cohesion objectives. The most notable aspects concerned ways of thinking, co-operation across municipality boundaries, creating a regional identity, and various sectoral tasks.

Especially important, ways of thinking have been influenced by the project. Some participants considered that the project influenced and developed the political discussion, created a useful debate, and achieved a lasting impact on day-to-day practice. In these instances, SD concerns are now more apparent for decision-makers, and the administrative staff has benefited through gaining new knowledge. However, at this stage the impact on thinking remains limited, as attitudes and working methods cannot be changed rapidly, but the project achievement is regarded as having laid a foundation for further transition to SD integration.

There is now a greater understanding of how important and feasible it is for the authorities to engage in regional co-operation. The project has developed an improved interaction and understanding between the various municipalities, the county and the GBRA. However, the objective of achieving a regional SD co-operation has not yet been fully realised. In practice, it is anticipated that there will always be some form of political conflict concerning tasks and responsibilities, and the municipalities are presently more focused on SD within their individual boundaries than across Greater Bergen.

Nevertheless, moves towards the institutional objective of a closer regional identity have been initiated within the umbrella of the GBRA. The project represented the first time that the GBRA members had worked together on a plan or policy document, and this experience has engendered a fundamental way of working in other related activities. At this level, a positive momentum was launched to promote regional consciousness and working towards improved cohesion.

In terms of specific sectoral objectives, there have been achievements in the following areas:

- Energy planning, firstly by raising the level of knowledge with nine municipalities producing energy strategies for integration by the GBRA, and secondly by providing guidance on energy economy, so raising the level of competitiveness.
- Sustainable transport policy, involving CO² reduction through 40 natural gas buses in Bergen.
- Environmental certification for Greater Bergen, which has commenced in Askøy and Bergen.
- Sustainable development accounting, with the GBRA and Hordaland County Council working together, incorporating inputs from various municipalities, ultimately refining indicators to measure progress in diverse fields.

With regard to future aspirations, efforts are being made to establish a regional infrastructure company; and the planners group has started working with another regional association, with a new aim of involving 17 municipalities in the collaborative initiative. In the view of one participant, the SDTP activity has provided greater vision than any county initiatives, and this may lead to the GBRA being perceived as a threat to the authority of the county council.

Since the end of the project, political re-organisation has to a certain extent impacted on its momentum, so slowing the progress towards self-sustaining continuity. These changes include factors ranging from the national discussion on the re-distribution of tasks between public authorities, to different municipalities changing their political leader. Hordaland County Council has a new mayor, as has Bergen Municipality, where the mayor's political role has diminished as the leadership of the municipal council (Kommunestyrelsen) and the municipal board (Kommunfullmæktige) is now divided between two individuals. Some participants believe that this change has reduced the scope for co-operation with Bergen, which is significant because of this municipality's relative strength in the region.

5.4.2 Barriers Encountered

One obvious barrier comprised the feasibility of collaboration between Bergen Municipality and Hordaland County, which has a history of difficulties. To facilitate this aspect, the project officer appointed already had employment experience in both of these authorities, he already knew the working procedures and key individuals, and accordingly he was able to act as an effective intermediary, illustrating the importance of choosing a person appropriate for the task in hand.

More broadly, the participants had anticipated that political problems would arise in attempting to realise this initiative. In practice, solu-

tions were not always straightforward or immediate, but the municipalities ultimately worked together to find ways around such difficulties. The interaction between the municipalities and the county council was mostly perceived as effective.

The different understandings of SD acted as barrier in the early stages of SDTP project development. This highlighted the need to have a common definition of SD so that the different actors could understand each other. Consequently, the first steps in the TERRA project evolution sought to provide this grounding and facilitate communication.

As indicated above, the national discussion on public sector re-organisation was considering how to reform county-level administration, and the assumption was that inter-municipal co-operation would be favoured, weakening the role of the county council. However, certain participants considered that the participation of the county council had facilitated good inter-municipal co-operation. Without this common initiator with the broad overview, it might have been expected that the larger municipalities would have dominated the co-operation, and in this respect, the active involvement of the county council may have served an important function.

5.4.3 Lessons Learned

Significantly, sustainable development can act as an effective catalyst for cohesion. It was a very important common theme, with a broad ranging interest and relevance for all levels and sectors. However, a cautionary note relates to the breadth of the initiative, which can determine the available scope for learning. The SDTP project was very broad, and some actors believe more would have been gained if the focus had been narrower.

For such new initiatives, it is essential to have political support from the outset, with the project idea politically anchored: this single factor would motivate other actors and allow resources to be released. The political support should then be converted into political engagement, and this is especially challenging with SD, as politicians are primarily focused on economy, local financial health and development of the business sector. Ideally, the project outcome in terms of SD priorities should also be integrated into subsequent political decision-making.

For a challenging theme such as sustainable regional development, those individuals who become involved must be self-motivated and open to new ideas. This is clearly not an activity where tasks can be usefully delegated to people with no active interest, as that would become counter-productive rather than supporting the necessary policy innovation. Previous experience with sustainability issues was considered an advantage.

A clear plan is essential, identifying deliverables i.e. what needs to be done, where and when. In this respect, the SDTP project plan was strict, and it formed a very important base. In contrast, the methodology was not so clearly defined, and it took a considerable effort to develop it during the project.

It is very important to build a project team with the right combination of skills and legitimacy towards all partners involved, and also to allow appointment a full-time officer in the region to work on the project. This person should have a clear profile as a central contact point, and should be available and accessible. Also, it is essential to appoint a person who has the ability to oversee the proceedings, explaining the project concept and encouraging support across a broad spectrum. It is insufficient to support only the launch phase, and scope should be retained either to continue a project officer's engagement or to appoint another individual to see the project through the implementation phase.

Unless participants receive the benefits they seek, they may not retain any project involvement. To meet such a requirement, an initiative should directly tackle problems faced by participants, give them specific and relevant tasks to work on, and select projects and issues that will motivate politicians. In Greater Bergen, the energy planning theme proved to be a good example of this collective focus.

If a regional advisory forum is established or utilised, its remit should be clearly defined and limited in timescale. Rather than allowing parallel processes to develop, a one-year time horizon and a task to deliver a specific output would secure greater involvement and output.

When trying to stimulate SD thinking, one project is not enough. Instead, a number of inter-related projects are needed before new perceptions can become embedded into everyday practice. Rather than relying on isolated projects that make modest contributions, clearly identifiable follow-up projects from the same source would be more likely to offer greater and more consistent returns. Ultimately, this question of continuity is crucial for assessing whether a project has been successful.

6. Regional Agenda 21, Sogn and Fjordane

6.1 Profile

The County of Sogn and Fjordane is characterised by a high quality of life, a sparsely populated countryside and a specialism in natural resource management. In comparison with the rest of Norway, farming techniques have a relatively low-technology orientation, and Sogn and Fjordane has the country's highest percentage of both ecological farming and farms specialised in local produce, including Norway's only school of farming that is 100 percent ecological. However, as quality of life becomes an increasingly common feature in the competition to attract tourism, this county has been considering how best to move forward and secure a new distinction. Consequently, work is proceeding on a new development model applying the principles of Agenda 21 at regional level, designated as Regional Agenda 21 (RA21). This is evolving as a process of political choice with the scope to develop options in sustainable production, consumption and land use.

In the approach adopted, the sustainable development principles of RA21 were utilised as guidance for production of the County (Master) Plan in 2001, which on this occasion incorporated both a strategic policy plan and a physical land-use plan. Master Planning in Norway consists of two elements, those of a text-based policy plan, which has a wide-ranging thematic coverage, and a physical land-use plan. At the regional level, most counties have produced policy plans (which are obligatory), but very few have drawn up land-use plans, seeking to avoid conflict with the jurisdiction of the municipalities. At the local level, the opposite situation prevails, as most of the municipalities have prepared land-use plans (which are compulsory for that level), but their policy plans are comparatively undeveloped. Sogn and Fordane was the first authority to prepare a plan that incorporates both dimensions. In terms of legal status, the detail of this document is not binding, but plans from the municipalities must conform to the strategic guidelines and general principles established in the County Plan.

During the planning process, a County Plan website was set up on the Internet. This forum allowed the public and organisations to follow the political discussion and to use the website as an interactive tool, submitting comments for publication online, subject to editorial approval. Earlier attempts at such participation achieved only limited success, but on this occasion there was a substantial response and constructive input.

As part of the methodological development, two reports were commissioned from the Western Norway Research Institute (WNRI). The

first report raised the issue of introducing the RA21 concept into the planning process; and the second report addressed the question of which themes should be in focus. As a mark of distinction, establishing a formal Regional Agenda 21 would be novel for Sogn and Fjordane, and it could contribute significantly towards a justification of county-level intervention. Even if sustainability questions were to fall from the political agenda at national level, it is expected that this theme would still be pursued in Sogn and Fjordane.

6.2 Project Development

6.2.1 Background/Contextual Factors

Norwegian national publications relating to the UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992 included an immediate response in 1992 and a subsequent White Paper in 1996 entitled *From Environmental Protection to Sustainable Development*. This latter publication placed SD on the agenda, raising awareness in general and within the political parties in particular.

To address the responsibilities arising from Agenda 21, a national conference was organised in Fredrikstad in 1998. Representatives were invited from municipalities, county councils and the private sector. A significant outcome was that all county councils and 270 municipalities adopted the Fredrikstad Declaration on introducing local initiatives for sustainable development. For Sogn and Fjordane, this occurred in 1998, when the decision was taken to realise these aspirations through the County Plan.

A programme with the title *Sustainable Local Communities* (Bærekraftige lokalsamfunn) was launched in 1996, and this acted as a parallel influence from national level. It involved seven Norwegian municipalities acting as pilots for a three-year period to implement sustainable development. One of these municipalities was located in Sogn and Fjordane. The county council initiated a dialogue, and the idea to use the SD approach in the county plan was influenced by this experience of the sustainable communities project.

There had also been a discussion at national level on whether the county councils should take over the responsibility for environmental protection issues from the County Administrative Board (Fylkesmannen). In Sogn and Fjordane, this discussion influenced practice through the belief that if SD were introduced into the County Plan, the county council would have a better chance of acquiring the remit for environmental protection. Against a background of diminishing budgets and an uncertain future for

county councils, the prospect of gaining such new responsibilities was appealing.

Another influential factor was that several staff members in the Sogn and Fjordane county administration were especially knowledgeable about environment and interested in SD. This meant they had an awareness of related activities in other counties – such as the Akershus Regional Agenda 21 – in addition to international perspectives. To them, it was apparent that the county level could perform an important SD function between the national and municipal levels, and this view was conveyed to the county politicians.

In addition, in 1996 the Municipality of Sogndal was the first in Norway to agree upon a Local Agenda 21 plan. This set a standard for other Norwegian municipalities to follow, and it also inspired the Sogn and Fjordane County to follow up this initiative at the regional level of governance.

6.2.2 Key Actors

The key actors in initiating and designing the County Plan comprised individuals in the Sogn and Fjordane County Council, the County Administrative Board and the Western Norway Research Institute (WNRI).

In the county council, the officer responsible for leading the County Plan process secured support from senior officials in the council organisational structure and succeeding in gaining the participation of politicians and younger members of the community. Thereafter, the officer responsible for the County Plan's Regional Agenda 21 dimension – who had participated in the Frederikstad meeting – contributed extensively to drive the issue forward. In this work, she co-operated substantially with the equivalent officer in the County Administrative Board, while building a regional network of professionals and other parties involved and interested in the SD issue.

The WNRI was also perceived as very important for the process, to the extent that without its experience and research support, the county politicians may have proved unwilling to follow the Regional Agenda 21 direction. In particular, the WNRI's previous input to the Akershus RA21 provided access to a knowledge base that was directly useful for initiating this theme in Sogn and Fjordane.

6.2.3 Interactive Process

The role of the national level appears to have been primarily to launch the idea to work with SD, as exemplified by the conference in Fredrikstad. Although credited as a success, the interaction at that event was primarily between national ministries and the municipalities, related to SD in LA21.

A direct connection with the regional level was not made, but the work on the national and local levels was perceived by some participants as creating a basis for introducing SD at the regional level.

The County Administrative Board co-operated with the County Council on Regional Agenda 21. This occurred because it has governmental responsibilities for environmental protection, and it is also distributes Ministry of Environment funds for LA21 in the municipalities and for networking at the county level. This has included supporting the partnership deal with RA21 in Sogn and Fjordane.

At regional level, the political County Board (Fylkesutvalget) has played a key role. Firstly, it held a discussion with council officers on the extent to which SD issues should be taken into account in the plan. The decision was that it should be treated both as a separate topic and also integrated in other topics, so addressing both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Subsequently, after the administration had presented the objectives and strategy, the County Board held a discussion on the Climate and Energy Plan (one component of the Master Plan), which was then followed by a hearing. Written comments from the hearing were incorporated into a new version of the Climate and Energy Plan for the politicians to discuss before reaching a final decision.

The research community – essentially in the form of the WNRI – also played an intermediary role. Whereas the politicians had agreed that SD must be visible in the Plan, the on-going support and arguments from the researchers were intended to maintain the level of interest, have the theme taken seriously and secure its integration.

The interaction was deliberately characterised as an open process. This fitted with the SD aspect of broad participation, and it involved programme groups with different actors and partnership deals, engaging the politicians, municipalities and NGOs in an early phase of the planning process. The open process is believed to have given the various participants a sense of ownership of the plan, facilitating partnerships for its implementation. As part of the method, a one-day workshop was held to discuss the theme of SD, involving the county politicians and younger members of the community.

Another interactive resource was the use of the Internet. The plan and supporting materials were made available on an Internet website, a step intended to make the planning process transparent. In practice, comments were submitted mostly by people with special subject interests, such as academics and NGOs, but inputs were also received from municipalities. In the final document, the opinions submitted by the different parties are incorporated separately.

In the process of creating the County Plan, county politicians acted as moderators of meetings with the municipalities, when the objectives, the action programme and SD were discussed. However, with the exceptions of Flora and Sogndal, where certain individuals were very involved and influential in plan development, few of the municipalities became actively engaged in the process.

A network known as the 'Forum for Sustainable Development' was also utilised by the county administration. This network especially involved interaction with NGOs, organising courses for LA21 and establishing a county-level medium for co-operation. Whereas earlier county planning processes involved NGOs only at the end of the planning process, this initiative encouraged much earlier participation.

6.3 Implementation

6.3.1 Distinctive Characteristics

The use of an Internet website was considered innovative in the planning process, offering the opportunity for anyone to access it and add comments anonymously, if preferred.

Another distinctive aspect was the emphasis on sustainable rural development, with the RA21 focused on what SD could mean for a large rural county with a dispersed settlement pattern. In contrast to SD policies and approaches from the national level, which had been very oriented towards urban conditions, the Sogn and Fjordane approach contested the conventional belief that rural areas are unsustainable.

The administration worked to involve the politicians from the outset. Prior to this initiative, the standard approach was for the administration to prepare the plan and then present it to the politicians. However, on this occasion, early discussions with the county politicians were oriented to convey the practical significance of the challenges being faced, the development options, and the important issues of SD and Agenda 21. This was conducted with role-play and other non-traditional methods, and this direct involvement was considered to have secured greater commitment.

The regional LA21 co-ordinator was divided between the county council and the County Administrative Board, an unusual structure that occurred when six counties in Norway had to create region-specific solutions for this office. Sogn and Fjordane decided on this shared position, reflecting the relative importance placed on this activity, and in practice it was considered an effective combination. Furthermore, and again unlike most counties, the individuals working with these issues remained in post after the project finished, and so the specialist knowledge was retained.

6.3.2 Strengths

In effect, a common arena was created for the discussion of SD issues, and it stimulated practical co-operation on these themes. The open process enabled a wide range of actors to participate, with regional meetings and use of the Internet facilitating this exchange. Diverse views were presented for discussion, not always in line with the county administration perspective.

Clear direction and method was provided by the county plan co-ordinator, with support from the County Council, and these were commonly perceived as important success factors. In comparison with other counties, the Sogn and Fjordane administration's vision and operational style were very different, seeking to make the plan a product of the politicians and not just the administration. Consequently, the idea of integrating SD into the plan was anchored politically, achieved by constantly involving the politicians, which was considered a precondition for a successful outcome.

The decision to have SD as both a vertical and a horizontal topic was seen as an important characteristic. This meant that SD featured on the agendas of all the different committees. Even though it was seldom actively debated, this inclusion helped to create greater awareness and knowledge of sustainability.

Formulating the County Plan to encompass a land-use plan was seen as both innovative and influential. With SD as a topic in the County Plan, it also features in the land-use plan, which identifies areas appropriate for environmental protection, wind power, fish breeding and national parks, amongst other themes. In practice, the municipalities are expected to take cognisance of this document when addressing questions of land use.

NGO participation with co-ordination through a single representative was considered effective, and it represented the first time that these organisations had worked together to submit observations on a plan. Within the planning process, it proved easier for the authorities to maintain a dialogue with one individual rather than several and for this contact person to act as a channel to the other organisations. It appears to have been the start of an enduring NGO co-operation with the County Administrative Board and the County Council.

6.3.3 Weaknesses

Sustainable development has proved to be difficult to handle in daily activities. Whereas it may be commonly perceived as a good theoretical basis for development, it still has to be delivered in practical terms. The ongoing work with sustainability indicators and SD checklists linked to the

implementation of the plan was cited as an opportunity to overcome the difficulties in concretising SD.

There may be limited acceptance of the County Plan as a tool for SD. Although the national authorities have stated that the plan should be a common arena for regional development with SD as an important component, not all actors in Sogn and Fjordane accept this national policy direction.

The lack of correlation between the objectives and the tools to realise the objectives was cited as a weakness. Whereas the County Council – being responsible for the RA21 development – has set the objectives, most of the tools to realise the plan are held by other actors such as the municipalities, governmental agencies and business sector. The plan has the status of guidance, and it does not determine how rules and regulations should be applied in a sustainable regional development context. Furthermore, few of the municipalities have become actively involved in these county council activities, even though they bear most of the implementation responsibilities. Compounding this dichotomy, County Council departments that have the economic resources to introduce SD tools – for example in the energy or transportation sectors – have not been working with SD issues.

The attempt at horizontal integration of SD is seen to have only limited effectiveness. For example, the business and education sector is not encompassed by the SD approach, and it is difficult to identify SD perspectives in the Action Programme amongst issues regarding power stations, roads, infrastructure, transportation and agriculture.

In the budget for plan implementation, the finance allocated to the separate topic of SD was seen as inadequate to secure effective knowledge, projects and integration. The funds reserved for SD amounted to less than 2 percent of the NOK 88 million budget.

In some instances, the county politicians were perceived as limiting the plan's potential. First, the concept of 'double roles' meant that certain politicians were also members of the boards of energy companies or shipping companies, or had personal investments in the farming and agriculture industries. This could lead to conflicts of interest, with the possibility of weaker regulation or protection in the affected activities. Secondly, even though the politicians were extensively involved in the plan development process, they were criticised for delimiting the extent of SD knowledge they were willing to acquire. In particular, after the WNRI had developed the Climate and Energy Sub-Plan, a related workshop was offered to the politicians, but the majority declined.

6.4 Achievements

6.4.1 Progress in Relation to Objectives

In terms of achieving sustainable development, most participants in the survey stated that the County Plan could not yet be considered a success. Instead, it is seen as the first step in a long process, basically a first attempt at raising the SD issue and ensuring its regular inclusion in development discussions. From that perspective, SD has been introduced into the planning process, the practical knowledge of SD is widening, and the sustainability indicators and checklists are expected to be useful in the further spread of knowledge (see Appendix 7). In addition, an arena for discussing and planning Agenda 21 themes has been created. Inevitably, this encounters competing goals, such as protecting fjords for wild salmon while simultaneously developing the salmon fish farming industry, or the energy and environmental demands of renewable energy facilities. However, these conflicts do not appear to have undermined the process.

Nevertheless, participants had expected to achieve more in relation to the objectives, especially given the previous municipal environmental focus and evident progress during the 1990s. The process of plan preparation was perceived as very good, but the implementation phase not nearly as effective. Most progress has been made in the conventional areas of environment, energy and participation, but the objective to have both vertical and horizontal integration – to integrate SD into all fields of the Plan – has not been achieved. Similarly, the ambition for SD to feature in all co-operation with the municipalities, the state and the business sector has not been realised. Inroads have been made with the political anchoring of SD, but the County Plan has not impacted on the fundamental political and administrative structures.

Overall, a significant range of initiatives has been launched as part of the County Plan, the most notable being the Climate and Energy Plan. Without the stimulus of the RA21 initiative, it is considered that the political acceptance for working with climate and energy issues would not have been forthcoming. Tangible progress has been made in relation to energy in terms of both production and consumption. However, the planning process has also been criticised, in that the orientation has shifted towards energy rather than climate. Whereas the focus was expected to include analyses of courses of action relating to traffic, energy use and gas production, these climate aspects are considered to have been subordinated in favour of extending power stations and gas production to allow the business sector to flourish. The recent political contribution to the planning process has favoured hydroelectric power plants, indirectly reducing CO² emissions from imported energy.

Positive steps in the energy field include that all new buildings must now have water based heating systems, and there has also been considerable work with renewable energy sources, both in terms of wind power and waterpower. The County Council has evaluated areas of coastline for locating new wind power generators, and the expansion of waterpower has been discussed as a resource to replace coal power. Recognising the associated negative impacts, the County Plan states that waterpower installation should minimise environmental impacts to construct power stations that maximise energy gain.

In autumn 2002, the County Council adopted an environmental management 'lighthouse' system. This specifies that a sustainability profile will be included in the county annual reports, using a politically approved set of sustainability indicators.

6.4.2 Barriers Encountered

In Sogn and Fjordane, an element of resistance to SD has been based upon the misunderstanding that it equates with greater environmental protection. With the absence of a national Agenda 21 that would have clarified the distinctions between environment and SD, the concepts appear to have overlapped. The reluctance to sanction expanded environmental protection is based on the belief that it would act as a hindrance on economic development and impose restrictions on proprietorship, and it also reflects previous experience of preservation projects that lacked direction and effective management. To counter this problem, the WNRI presented the politicians with examples of what Agenda 21 should mean in practice, and they were encouraged to think in an integrated, cross-sectoral fashion. In retrospect, this input was considered to be critical, to the extent that the RA21 initiative may never have been approved without such external support and clarification.

SD is not a subject to which people relate easily, and the absence of a public debate on SD means that it remains excluded from public consciousness. In comparison with more familiar and tangible themes such as traffic safety, SD is difficult to grasp, especially at regional level, and it tends not to catch public attention. For politicians, this is particularly relevant, because – from a pragmatic perspective – it is considered less useful to promote SD concerns.

The county council level of administration was perceived as having a legitimacy problem with regard to functioning as a regional development actor. Basically, it is not considered strong enough politically or financially to fulfil this role, and it has no legal obligations in SD. Nevertheless, some participants recognise the county councils as necessary advocates of SD amongst the 3-level hierarchy of municipalities, counties and national

government departments. To augment their capabilities for this task, it was suggested that the county councils might usefully be grouped together into larger and stronger units, more resembling the EU norm for regional level administration.

6.4.3 Lessons Learned

There is a need for a clear hierarchical framework within which to operate SD, extending from national down to local level. This structure is important for identifying the precise function and role of the regional level in relation to Agenda 21, following which the characteristics of RA21 can be derived for specific locations. Within this framework, counties and municipalities need to ensure that their efforts work in the same direction – previous research by the WNRI relating to barriers for municipalities working with SD concluded that an essential criterion was for both county and national levels to be focused in this way.

Securing interaction between levels and sectors is a critical step. The county level has only limited influence, and this may prove inadequate to sustain the momentum. Accordingly, there are clear advantages in supporting municipalities to work with SD issues, not least because these authorities control and regulate land use, emissions and agricultural activities. A strong regional partner for co-operation – in contrast to the image of a regional-level controller – would be a potentially positive development as the economic pressures on municipalities increase. The Sogn and Fjordane mechanism for this interaction was to create a ‘Forum for Sustainable Development’, supported by the County Council, but involving participants from all levels and sectors. Common tasks for this institution could include exploring indicators for sustainability.

Conducting an open process is time-consuming, but there are direct benefits from encouraging a broad discussion. Key elements of this approach include involving the politicians at all stages in the process, disseminating information to facilitate participation and decisions on goals and methods, and – as evidenced by the Sogn and Fjordane experience – using the Internet as an outreach tool.

It is valuable to approach SD with both vertical and horizontal integration.⁵ The more conventional vertical approach ensures that SD has a recognised presence, and usually a dedicated budget, whereas the horizontal approach seeks to broaden the coverage and transfer SD factors into all other areas of the plan or programme. Relying on only one ap-

⁵ For a discussion of orders of integration culminating in ‘strategic integration’, see Clement (2000), p121.

proach may be insufficiently comprehensive; a working combination would be more effective.

From the outset – and throughout the subsequent phases – it is important to have on-going support for the objectives and process at a high level in the administering authorities, ensuring continuity. Thereafter, administrators should aim to direct and influence as much of the implementation as possible. Collaborative ventures such as regional strategies and plans are clearly difficult to co-ordinate when so many actors are involved, most of which have autonomy within their own jurisdictions. County councils, as the initiators, can reorganise their activities to improve co-ordination, but the major challenge to be addressed is finding working methods that steer those actors controlling tools such as development finance and regulations.

7. Natural Resource Centre, Dalarna

7.1 Profile

The Dalarna Natural Resource Centre (NRC) was established in 1995. Within a framework of sustainable development, its aim is to assist the transition to an ecologically-based economy. Emphasis is placed on the development of sustainable businesses, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while informing and involving local authorities and the community. In 1996, in a (successful) bid to obtain EU Urban Pilot Project (UPP) funding, the existing mission was appropriately re-packaged, introducing additional perspectives such as partnership. This development phase of the initiative operated from July 1997 to December 2000.

The initial four broad objectives for the project were refined as the work progressed. In providing *environmental support for companies*, a programme of network-building now encompasses approximately 300 members, with supporting activities including information on new environmental legislation, initiating company-partnering, and developing indicators within an 'environmental key'. *Increasing people's knowledge and participation* was approached through encouraging local school-teachers to integrate ecological thinking into educational practice, using methods such as small seminars, study tours and exchanging experience between schools. Other activities included internet-based study circles, an environmental network between sports clubs, and environmental families. To *integrate research and society*, municipalities were invited to develop practical ideas, but the resulting sub-projects contained a relatively small research component. Pilot projects were launched in the areas of waste management technology, systems analysis of waste handling and environmental procurement, amongst others. Lastly, to *develop the Vassbo estate* for business, research and education, 18 SMEs were established at this location, but employment fluctuations in neighbouring Borlänge and Falun undermined the regional significance of Vassbo.

A monitoring committee or project council was created for the NRC project, and this signalled the transition to more effective partnership working. This group considered indicators relating for example to how many companies had been assisted, how much work had been carried out and the hours of education delivered, as well as views on the content of courses. It also attempted to estimate investments resulting from projects and the impact on company activity and performance. Working with the local ALMI – part of the Swedish national network of business support – progress has been made in setting up environmental manage-

ment systems in companies, with participants selecting the entry point appropriate to their phase of development.

Since the completion of the UPP initiative, the NRC programme has included eco-design, a baseline scorecard system for evaluation and monitoring within municipalities, and training in ecologically sustainable development. Today, the NRC operates as a regional development agency focused on sustainable development and sustainable growth, seeking to support the regional development process through networking and dialogue.

7.2 Project Development

7.2.1 Background/Contextual Factors

The signal from the Swedish Prime Minister that sustainability was an important national consideration was a significant background factor for the NRC in the beginning. In addition, a link existed between the national and regional perspectives through an academic who was instrumental both in government policy formulation and in the regional impetus for ecologically sustainable development. This individual had been a former expert adviser to the Swedish Prime Minister, and he had been active in the county strategy design.

In terms of regional characteristics, Dalarna already had several prerequisites affording it status as a frontrunner in environmental issues. For example, the first company in Sweden to gain the ISO 14000 environmental management certification was based in Dalarna, reflecting the high environmental awareness amongst firms in this region and their keenness to profile their operations as environmentally conscious. In comparison, in the public sector, the two municipalities of Falun and Borlänge had been very successful in working with environmental issues and received awards for their achievements. The county council had also gained recognition for its energy efficiency measures.

Both the public and private sectors regarded environment as an important factor when considering the future, particularly its significance for trade and industry: Companies associated with environmentally damaging processes or products would not be expected to survive for many years. Moreover, there was a perception that appropriate measures and investments could have a positive effect on the number of jobs available and the associated taxation revenues. In this context, the NRC was envisaged as a practical intermediary, especially to encourage SMEs to think in environmental terms.

In the first formulation, the NRC was intended to act as a resource for the whole region. As part of this scenario, it was proposed that an envi-

ronmental zone should be established between Falun and Borlänge, and that the NRC would occupy a central role within this zone. For instance, this might have formed an experimental laboratory that helped in different ways with environmental purchasing and identifying examples of good practice to assist the transition to ecological sustainability. However, the NRC very soon took an alternative course when substantial EU funding was obtained.

The European Commission UPP initiative supports projects that utilise transition measures as economic growth factors. Participation in this initiative changed the territorial focus of the NRC, as the concern became primarily with cities, not regions. The regional funding that had been reserved for the NRC became the national co-financing for the UPP, and for the next three-year phase the institution and initiative essentially became synonymous. The material in the UPP application to a large extent governed the objectives and activities of the NRC, the areas and purposes for which the resources could be used, and the concern with the city and built-up areas, rather than rural areas.

7.2.2 Key Actors

As already indicated, an academic and Prime Ministerial adviser acted as a key background figure and catalyst in the conceptualisation and launch of the NRC. In addition to his national advisory role, he had experience at the Swedish Council for Building Research, he had been influential in devising the forward-looking environmental policy in Borlänge Municipality, and he was instrumental in launching the Dalarna Research Institute (Dalarnas Forskningsråd – DFR), an initiative of the Dalarna County Council. Throughout the project, he provided a considerable motivating and constructive input credited as critical for the NRC formation i.e. without his vision and drive, it is considered that the NRC would not have materialised.

The project manager that was appointed was faced with the tasks of re-defining the project objectives into realisable ambitions, building the new organisation, and – as a first objective – implementing the UPP project. Her knowledge, organisational skills and enthusiasm for the project are widely recognised as being responsible for the effective delivery of the NRC networks and their associated outputs.

Other actors involved in the UPP project's development included the Agenda 21 offices at the municipalities, especially in Borlänge, where contact with companies was a particular strength, and ALMI.

7.2.3 Interactive Process

At the outset, other actors addressing the challenges of regional development were unsure whether the NRC represented a complement or a challenge to existing organisations. From the perspective of the municipalities, which were already working with environment and Agenda 21 issues, the NRC involvement with companies resembled a first step towards assuming local authority responsibilities and tasks, equivalent to a form of direct competition.

When the UPP funding was secured, this initially increased the likelihood of institutional conflict. However, during implementation, the financial allocations to municipality projects illustrated that economic resources and political support were available to enhance existing local authority work. In this aspect, the UPP both clarified and steered the NRC's role.

In the first stages, there was also an on-going territorial question. As major financial contributors, the CAB and the county council believed that the NRC should work to benefit the whole county, as originally envisaged. In contrast, the municipalities of Falun and Borlänge – which were the only financial contributors at local level – believed that it should have a more restricted territorial focus. This dichotomy was resolved when UPP status was attained.

Most participants perceived the direction of influence as a top-down process. In this scenario, the NRC identified the activities that should be carried out, and interested companies then participated in the work. Another perspective identified elements of a bottom-up process, for example working with two residential areas and two industrial areas, each case including consultations on appropriate measures and how to proceed. Suggestions from the project council were also described as constituting a form of 'sideways intervention'.

The national level was not directly involved in the interactive process. However, the national environmental objectives were cited as contributing a framework that was interpreted both regionally and locally by the CAB, county council and municipalities.

The project council became very important in the interaction. A political board had been formed at an early stage, but this proved inappropriate for monitoring project implementation, and therefore an expert-based project council was established. This comprised individuals from the municipalities and trade and industry, each of which was engaged in some way with environmental issues. The project council provided the substance for the UPP financial framework, deciding which projects and investments should be supported.

7.3 Implementation

7.3.1 Distinctive Characteristics

NRC's operation is based on a broad understanding of the development context. In particular, it acknowledges ecological sustainability as a driving force important both for trade and industry development and for regional development. The NRC seeks to act as a link between companies, the public and the public authorities. Adopting this role ahead of national policy was considered to have been a strength of the initiative, but one that caused problems during the launch phase.

It is not perceived as a unique initiative, as similar organisations exist in areas such as Värmland, Gävleborg and the Västra Götaland, which are promoting new interactive environmental groupings and new methods of working. Nevertheless, NRC is considered distinctive in its attempts to operate in a neutral role, separate from existing organisations and not representing a public authority.

7.3.2 Strengths

The neutrality or impartial position of the NRC was cited as a strength. It is neither a political organisation nor an authority with supervisory tasks. In practice, this status of being free from formal office has been regarded favourably by companies. As SMEs form the NRC's largest target group, this has been an important advantage in the priority task of establishing industrial contacts.

In establishing its identity as a new actor, the NRC was seen as very effective in circulating information and marketing its services. Presentational features, for example in relation to printed material and the NRC logo, appeared to have been very systematically considered, and they assisted its recognition within Dalarna.

The NRC was perceived as having rapidly established a knowledge base and competence in the area of environment and SD. The experts associated with its activities have reputations for high levels of competence, and this has raised the private-sector confidence in the NRC as a potential 'knowledge' partner. The quality of the services offered, such as workshops and training seminars, has strengthened this image.

The NRC method of working has been effective in identifying contacts and establishing networks. The strategic alliances that have resulted have been useful in generating trust both in the public sector and amongst trade and industry.

A clear delineation of the NRC's professional involvement has also been cited as a strength. The NRC approach has been to create opportunities for companies, providing knowledge and information, and arranging

activities to raise awareness and assist with environmental processes. It has not included pro-active visits to individual companies with advice and instructions on performance. Acknowledging this dividing line has been important.

7.3.3 Weaknesses

From the outset, the range of different outcomes expected from this new initiative was perceived as undermining its effectiveness. These include project opportunities and new resources envisaged by the research community, the attention to practical problems and construction of new infrastructure sought by the municipalities, and the substantial building and associated employment anticipated from the development of Vassbo as a new science park.

The vision upon which the NRC was launched was not precise, but consisted of general goals and overall ambitions. Moreover, there was a distance between this political vision and its realisation amongst the political leadership and the civil servants that impacted on the daily activities of the Centre. Over time, these SD aspirations were progressively transformed into a set of more concrete activities.

Another disadvantage was that the NRC had to be started from the beginning, working independently to overcome a lack of experience and expertise. This meant establishing a new organisation, without building on the environmental work already carried out locally. Potential synergies were lost in this process. Subsequently, but still at a very early stage, the Centre began managing the substantial UPP project. This juxtaposition essentially over-committed the available resources at a point when more knowledge was needed on project management, as well as agreement on common values and working methods.

A major criticism expressed by participants was the restricted territorial focus of the NRC. Rather than operating as a regional actor for Dalarna, as originally envisaged, it became concentrated on the municipalities of Falun and Borlänge, and this had various direct implications. The NRC did not function as a network for other actors in the county, and its communication with a broader range of municipalities was limited, encouraging scepticism amongst those municipalities not involved. This restricted coverage limited the potential for project diversity, which becomes an important issue in EU projects with strict schedules for funding disbursement.

Appointing a political board to oversee the work of the NRC was considered to have placed administrative and political responsibility on too high a level. Although many of the board members had high status, they had relatively little practical and detailed knowledge relevant to the

UPP initiative. The formation of the expert project council was designed to rectify this situation.

Of the three dimensions in the NRC task, adult education was not considered to have been a success. This outcome was attributed to NRC not having sufficient human resources to allocate to this task.

In the launch phase, the NRC had no clear methodology or direction. When the UPP became the direction, this meant there was no time to conduct an in-depth analysis of strategic regional needs or to involve more people in the process of developing a project ideology. Instead, these fundamentals had to be developed in parallel with the project implementation, requiring some improvisation, which in effect delayed the practical work.

The link with research did not function as well as anticipated. Some participants attributed this to the irreconcilability of university research culture with the priorities of municipalities and entrepreneurs. Whereas academics favoured basic research, the authorities and companies preferred action research. Other participants perceived the problem as an absence of an action plan and corresponding research questions from the municipalities. Ultimately, specific research themes were formulated, and these resulted in the residential and industrial area projects, latterly considered to have formed a useful basis for development work.

The UPP initiative created a pressure to launch projects within a limited timeframe, dominating the NRC agenda and diverting attention away from broader local priorities. The obligation to achieve such a large number of project launches meant that the selection process sometimes had to accept projects of less-than-optimal quality. In parallel, a high concentration on financial management was required in fulfilling EU accountability.

7.4 Achievements

7.4.1 Progress in Relation to Objectives

The NRC is generally perceived as a successful initiative with direct benefits for the county. It is considered too soon as yet to be able to measure the degree of transition and the NRC's real impact as a driving force for development, but it is apparent that system changes at the political level have not been achieved.

The company focus is the area where the NRC has made greatest progress, especially through network activities to raise knowledge levels and encourage companies to think about their products and production methods. The NRC has identified a specific role or niche in this field. Although ALMI has a similar role, particularly in supporting SMEs, it does

not have competence in environment and SD. In this respect, the NRC has acted as both a support and complement to ALMI.

The objective of establishing Vassbo as a research centre – as a meeting point for researchers and producers to develop new ideas - was not achieved. The NRC moved out of Vassbo, and the technical park status was not realised. Reasons suggested for this outcome included a lower degree of involvement than expected from the research community, a reluctance to relocate to Vassbo rather than more central areas in Borlänge, and changing employment patterns locally.

The government has selected Dalarna as one of the pilot counties for ecological sustainability. This is regarded as an indicator that the NRC's work in delivering an environmental profile for development in the county has made recognisable progress.

Following the completion of the UPP initiative, the NRC launched a project on quality and environmental considerations in Dalarna. Funded through the regional growth agreement, it is being implemented over a 3-4 year period. With this new regional focus, the municipalities of Falun and Borlänge will no longer be the main responsible authorities, and accordingly the NRC has moved into a new position within the remit of the Dalarna County Council regional committee. The strategy document now in preparation for the NRC aims to make the organisation more target-oriented, working to a vision for 4-5 years ahead, and with objectives that can be measured after 1-2 years

7.4.2 Barriers Encountered

The absence of a political platform acted as a barrier for NRC activities. Until now, NRC had not been linked to an authority with regional development responsibility, and this hindered access to certain political levels and development forums. The move to the County Council is expected to resolve this restriction, while the potential for a further transfer to a future Dalarna Regional Development Agency is envisaged as an even more appropriate outcome.

Its status as a completely new agency was considered to have held some practical disadvantages for the NRC. In operation, rather than acting as an additional strength for the existing organisations, the NRC's arrival resulted in new conflicts. This meant that NRC time was devoted to overcoming institutional resistance and suspicion, as well as reconciling inter-agency competition.

A form of resource barrier was encountered with SMEs, in that these companies found it difficult to participate in activities due to the potential loss of production time and other costs.

The changing territorial focus – or confusion regarding the focus – acted as a barrier. Whereas the NRC scope was initially perceived as covering the whole county, during the UPP phase it became regarded as a Falun/Borlänge project, with the other municipalities sceptical about any degree of involvement. This attitude was described as having been partly overcome by the credibility of the UPP sub-projects and the project management.

7.4.3 Lessons Learned

When an initiative such as NRC is launched, a clear view is needed from the outset on its core competence, what it should achieve, and how its role fulfils regional needs. Thereafter, it should be well focused, supported by a strategy that identifies target groups, and the objectives should be limited in ambition and concentrate on the most productive areas. Criteria should be identified at an early stage for project selection, drawing from a review of existing good examples.

It is important to have clarity in project organisation. It should be readily apparent what the initiative involves, especially the role of the project manager, and how it relates to the municipalities, so that there is a clear system of delegation and division of responsibility. Thereafter, for such projects that promote co-operation between research, trade and industry, and society, it is essential to be explicit about the various driving forces to allow realistic expectations for growth and development.

Political sanction can have significant impacts on project realisation. Where such support exists and is made apparent, it can add substantially to the momentum. Where it does not exist, projects may be delayed or even precluded.

It is generally difficult to establish a new organisation among existing actors, but once operational it does have the advantage of greater freedom to manoeuvre. Whereas municipalities are increasingly very stretched with commitments and legal duties, without room for other activities, a new organisation can choose its specialist theme and construct appropriate networks and groups with which to co-operate.

In launching an initiative, individuals with a strong academic or professional reputation can add substantially to the project profile and momentum. In the case of the NRC, the initiator was very well known regionally and nationally, and his involvement is considered to have been a vast influence on project feasibility, both in terms of formulating the project idea and securing financial support.

There is a need for regional actors to synchronise the work concerning sustainability issues. Whereas neighbouring authorities and agencies launch projects with differentiated methods and objectives, there is often

no evaluation of the part these projects play in the greater regional scenario. In such cases, a new type of thinking is required, and an organisation such as NRC can function effectively as a co-ordinator for sustainability factors.

The political objective of making a transition to sustainability cannot be achieved by addressing single-sector issues such as IT or transport. Using a more comprehensive approach, sustainability needs to be integrated into all sectors according to a strategic method.

Networks and group-working can form a useful alternative method to address specific policy problems such as sustainability. This may be an innovative way to circumvent conventional administrative procedures, which can be time-consuming and act as a constraint in tackling cross-boundary issues. Once the immediate task is resolved, such networks may be dissolved and replaced by similar networks focusing on other issues.

8. Green Trade and Industry, Småland

8.1 Profile

The purpose of the Green Trade and Industry project was to strengthen the competitiveness of trade and industry in Småland in environmentally related markets and to increase turnover in this sector through improved marketing. The means of achieving this transformation included stimulating co-operation and development projects between companies, groups of companies and other actors that could benefit from environmental industry development. Launched in 2000, the project had a two-year timescale and funding of approximately 3.3 million SEK. The spatial coverage extended to the whole of Småland (the counties of Kronoberg, Kalmar and Jönköping), but took advantage of the earlier mapping of the Väre region carried out by the four municipalities of Växjö, Alvesta, Tingsryd and Uppvidinge together with the CAB of Kronoberg. The project idea originated in Växjö municipality.

The Green Trade and Industry project was divided into three stages. The first activities comprised mapping existing trade and industry from an environmental perspective. This was designed to identify relevant companies, to estimate which ones had the potential to evolve as environmentally focused companies, and to consider what advantages Småland might have over other regions in the environmental sector. The objective was to define those lines of business with greatest growth potential in environmental markets, and identify the investments and initiatives needed to support these companies.

Approximately 1000 companies were registered through the mapping process. Thirty percent of those enterprises were involved in ecological agriculture, exceeding the national average, and consequently this area received special attention. Other areas considered for exploration included bio-energy and energy efficient products, wood processing, environmental techniques, water purification and eco-tourism.

The second phase of the project was designed to stimulate contacts and build networks between existing and potential co-operation partners. This was facilitated through company visits, meetings and seminars with enterprises engaged in promising areas. From this activity, a number of co-operation and development projects was anticipated in the areas of business development, product development, marketing of environmental products, skills development and potential exports of bio-energy, sustainable buildings, wood processing, environment-related tourism, ecological food from Småland and environmental engineering.

The third phase markets the region as a provider of environmental solutions. Methods to support this promotion include advertising the region's good practice, organising technical demonstrations for foreign delegations, and establishing a database of the region's environmental companies. An environmental website for Småland is planned to illustrate the location of different products and technical services, linked to individual company descriptions. Working in co-operation with the Sustainable Sweden initiative in Kalmar, there is a broader aim to establish a regional environmental export centre for Southwest Sweden.

8.2 Project Development

8.2.1 Background/Contextual Factors

In recent years, growing consumer demand and increases in environmental regulation internationally have substantially expanded the market for environmentally driven products. However, Swedish trade and industry has been slow to exploit this potential, as indicated in a report from the Swedish Government in 1998, *Sustainable Sweden – A Success Story*, which promoted environmental business activity. This document proved to be an important stimulus for Småland, where there was already an aim to support market expansion for companies, and it focused new attention on enterprises involved in environmental work.

A parallel background factor was a high level of dissatisfaction with national public sector support for accessing international markets. Organisations such as the Swedish Export Board were perceived as insufficiently proactive in comparison with similar institutions in other countries, as they were not surveying regional capacities or export market potential, nor were they providing support for expanding industrial sectors. This meant that such initiatives had to be initiated locally and financed through local and regional funding sources accessible in the short term.

Another significant element was the existing high environmental awareness of trade and industry in Västergötland, where a substantial proportion of companies worked with environmental technology and several companies had been among the first in Sweden to receive environmental management certification. A number of regional corporate environmental networks also existed, such as the Biomass Energy Group and Miljöresurs Linné, the latter representing a combination of actors from the local and regional arena. Nevertheless, many of the resident companies were unaware that their environmental credentials could be used to comparative advantage in pursuing export markets, and they made very limited use of their environmental labels or certificates.

8.2.2 Key Actors

The project development was in two main phases. The first step comprised a survey by Växjö Municipality of environmental companies operating within its boundaries. The data provided by this survey prompted further work that extended the coverage territorially to include the Värend region. At this point, the Municipality of Växjö, which had a record of innovation in environmental measures, continued to manage the project. The Agenda 21 co-ordinator (who was the project initiator) and the trade and industry manager in Växjö were key participants in a management group that included two other officials from the Municipalities of Alvesta and Uppvidinge.

When the project expanded into the second phase, it was relaunched as Green Trade and Industry for the Småland region. The management responsibility was transferred to Miljöresurs Linné, where both of the Växjö officials had accepted appointments, ensuring the continuity of project management.

A team of three persons conducted the larger project from within Miljöresurs Linné, and financial support was obtained from savings-bank foundations, the Swedish Delegation for Sustainable Technology, the county administrative boards of Jönköping and Kronoberg, and most of the municipalities in Småland. Miljöresurs Linné was considered to have been a significant forum for open discussion between professionals from public and private sectors and an effective catalyst in project development.

8.2.3 Interactive Process

With regard to vertical interactions – between the national, regional and local administrations – the national engagement was limited to modest funding provision (Swedish Delegation for Sustainable Technology) and acting as a source of inspiration for the theme of environment-driven business. The Swedish Institute for Ecological Sustainability also assisted by arranging meetings to facilitate a network for regional hubs. However, most of the project activity occurred at the regional level, with participation from the county administrative boards (CABs), ALMI (part of the Swedish business development network), the industrial development centre (IUC) and the universities. The regional level was also the main source of funding, particularly from the CABs. Thereafter, the co-operation was principally between regional and local decision-makers and individual companies.

Companies participated in the project to differing extents. Those with previous experience of this form of interaction were able to assist in establishing networks, whereas others preferred a less direct involvement,

perhaps limited to visiting seminars. The seminars included group work, where those in the same lines of business discussed how the project could help them access a larger market with environmental products and services.

With regard to the direction of influence, it was described as middle-down, rather than top-down. As there had been no substantial national activity to assist this project, the aspirations were derived through members of Miljöresurs Linné, which comprised representatives from regional and local authorities, organisations and companies, and which was fronted by the project management team. Some participants thought it important that a non-profit organisation should manage the project, rather than consultants. In this context, Miljöresurs Linné was considered to have a neutral status, an existing dialogue with potential project beneficiaries, and an extensive network of contacts and informal links that supplemented the personal networks of the former Växjö Municipality staff.

8.3 Implementation

8.3.1 Distinctive Characteristics

Although the project method was new to Småland, it was neither unique nor the first to use this approach in Sweden. The consultants employed to carry out the Växjö mapping had already used this method in Malmö Municipality, and there had been similar projects in Skåne, Halland and Västerbotten. In addition, the theme of environmental exporting was already being supported in Kalmar and Göteborg through the Sustainable Southeast Sweden initiative, although the approaches adopted in those locations differed from Småland by focusing on technology and life cycle analysis respectively.

Nevertheless, clustering companies was perceived as an innovative approach. Many of the companies were too small to act individually in environmental export promotion, aware of the long processes they often precede successful co-operation or business deals, and this initiative enabled them to work together. Other regional hubs had also become engaged with green trade and industry, but the Småland participants considered their region to be one of the most advanced in this respect.

The extensive networking and regional scale of operation were considered particularly distinctive features. Småland was seen as an especially favourable location for this type of interaction, because the region is characterised by relatively short distances between towns and the various communities know each other well, facilitating a co-operative and creative environment.

8.3.2 *Strengths*

The project co-ordination was considered a strength, both in terms of the organisation appointed and the project management team. Miljöresurs Linné was already well known and respected by the majority of participants, and the individual project managers were perceived as having a good knowledge of environmental issues and entrepreneurial priorities, as well as possessing the necessary skills to market the project idea to the companies effectively.

The extensive active contact network was seen as a fundamental strength of the project structure. Managing this network was considered one of the major functions that Miljöresurs Linné fulfilled in the project. This was realised firstly through utilising existing contacts in the public sector, in companies and at the universities, secondly through the ability to establish a broad-based range of relevant new contacts, and thirdly by developing a working regime within project parameters. Throughout project implementation, close contact was maintained with participants.

Most participants considered the project methodology to be another strong element of the project. As indicated above, the first step of mapping the companies had been performed before in Malmö, and the same consultancy firm carried out the work in Växjö. However, the project managers observed that there was no complete and ready method, and it was continuously developed through discussion during the project's life span, recognising the need to retain flexibility to incorporate new ideas as they arose. Even after acceptance, certain measures were revised after they had been tried in practice.

Similarly, with regard to project direction, participants perceived it as clear and understandable, but the project managers regarded this as another example of incremental development. Whereas there was an obvious sense of purpose, the project had progressively increased in spatial scale within Sweden, and subsequently links were established with the United Kingdom as a target market for environmental expertise. In practice, this meant that the direction was evolving by taking advantage of opportunities as they appeared, and then fitting them into the existing framework.

The project promoted sectoral integration. This was achieved by identifying companies that worked with the same products or services, or within the same sector, and then transforming them from competitors into colleagues by forming a mutually beneficial network. The focus was on the common factors amongst the companies, in this case their capacity to satisfy environmental export markets. This transition to encourage a col-

lective approach was considered a major strength of the project, initiating a process of change in the way these entrepreneurs perceived their roles.

8.3.3 Weaknesses

The absence of a long-term, strategic focus within the project was criticised as an overall weakness. Although the experimental process used by Miljöresurs Linné was seen as flexible, it was not based on substantial sectoral analysis but rather on the organisation's interpretation of a theme that would generate interest and attract funding.

In terms of the timeframe, the project was perceived as under staffed, and Småland proved to be too large an area to co-ordinate during the twelve months of the project's second phase. However, even though a greater budget would have provided more staff, participants commented that a longer timescale was necessary – perhaps another two years – to build effective relationships, establish networks and launch market strategies. Instead, the brief timescale meant that meetings could not always be well prepared, and not all actors felt directly involved.

The project outcomes were seen as uncertain, particularly in view of the evolving nature of the implementation process. Consequently, it was difficult to identify measurable objectives, and this also impacted on the feasibility of preparing financial cost estimates for the project.

The lack of national level involvement was considered a weakness, and this referred to both regional policy decision-makers and trade and export ministries. Participants would have preferred a more active national presence, not to steer the project but to offer support in practical ways. However, instead of being directly involved through Miljöresurs Linné, the relevant national officials were perceived to be observing project implementation, but still maintaining a professional distance.

8.4 Achievements

8.4.1 Progress in Relation to Objectives

The overall goal for the project was to achieve regional growth through increased business activity in the environmental improvement sector. However, there are a number of parallel factors that influence market conditions, and it is difficult to measure the impact of this particular project on regional growth. To estimate the degree of success would require specific project evaluations, but it is considered too early as yet for results to be identifiable.

The objectives of the project evolved as it progressed. The initial objective was to carry out a mapping exercise to gain an impression of the environmental sector. In practice, the mapping proved to be very valuable, and the project was considered to have met and surpassed the

first objective by subsequently increasing companies' awareness of opportunities in environmental markets. Bringing different companies into contact with each other became a second objective, and a number of processes were launched for its achievement, especially with regard to network building. For some of the participating companies, environment has now become a form of added value, as they use environmental arguments in their marketing with greater emphasis than before.

A third objective arose regarding the need to obtain knowledge of market requirements in other countries, with a view to obtaining successful business contracts. This step was prompted by an enquiry from the UK, where regional actors who were obliged to work towards waste management goals set by the state were seeking advice and international experience. In response, the mapping information provided immediate company data and evidence of accumulated expertise, which initiated a dialogue and exchange visits. Networks or clusters were subsequently established regarding environmental export to the UK. Initially, the expectation was that experience would be exchanged between companies, but it became apparent that the expertise within the Swedish CABs was also of particular interest.

A momentum has been established, perceived to have created an identity for, and interest in, the Småland region. There is optimism amongst the participants that this initiative will be able to continue without public support, and the immediate task is seen as transferring responsibility to the companies to allow them to sustain the networks and related activities.

The mapping information was entered into a database, which is being extensively updated in co-operation with Swedish Environmental Products (formerly Green Market Sweden), situated in Falköping. This will form part of a major database for the south of Sweden, listing all actors with environmental specialisms. Aspects of this information will be made available on the Internet, possibly identifying examples of best practice.

8.4.2 Barriers Encountered

The national level administration was perceived as a barrier, regarding its lack of direct support for the initiative. Basically, the participants regarded international contact networks and export promotion initiatives as management tasks for agencies such as the Swedish Export Board, and that these were inappropriate activities for small municipalities and a non-profit organisation. Whereas the UK Department of Trade and Industry provided finance to assist English authorities to visit Småland, the Swedish participants had considerable difficulty in gathering equivalent funds

for the exchange. It was eventually resolved through a combination of local and regional contributions, particularly from the county administrative boards.

As indicated above, the time perspective was considered to have undermined project feasibility. Participants cited three years as necessary for this scale of undertaking, otherwise it would be unlikely to produce measurable results. SMEs – the main target group of the project – are most aware of this limitation, as they are more likely to be diverted from participation to manage their own activities. After accepting seminar places, SMEs were frequently unable to attend due to unexpected business developments requiring immediate attention. Larger companies can sustain their project momentum over the long-term, relying on own resources, but SMEs are dependent on public sector initiatives and so more vulnerable to losing benefits from short-term measures.

Another barrier encountered was the way that companies perceived market potential. From a local perspective, companies were unable to see the different market possibilities, and they were unlikely to invest time into researching these opportunities. They required assistance in overcoming this barrier, as well as in learning how to work together in clusters, as experienced in the UK sub-project. Although this aspect a central theme in the green trade and industry initiative, considerable scope remained for its further development.

8.4.3 Lessons Learned

In public sector initiatives for corporate benefit, there must be direct engagement by companies. This means that they must provide time and resources, so that effective use is made of the project. To encourage this action, the environment should be presented to them as strategically important, leading not only to decreased costs but also to accessing emerging and growing markets, where the customers make increasingly higher demands. This corporate involvement and commitment may be a critical factor in a project's realisation.

Success stories can be inspirational. Those companies that are involved and successful can serve as role models for others, acting as evidence that the value-added dimension has been profitable for the organisation. Rather than relating only to individual enterprises, these 'ambassadors' could also comprise a group of companies with a common interest, who may stimulate another group to take this step. In this way, less emphasis is placed on the role of project managers, and the project may be moved further towards becoming self-sustaining.

Reporting back is important, for example ensuring that all companies contacted in the first round – and the investors – are informed and

their interest maintained. Although it is often difficult to be comprehensive in this task, it is a significant aspect of retaining a profile and momentum.

The regional hub is a practical means of co-ordinating public and private sector strengths. The co-operation between companies, between groups of companies, and also with the public agencies and universities allows a pooling of expertise and financial support, and it facilitates more effective decision-making. Thereafter, national level organisations should access the knowledge and experiences from the regional level so they can adjust their support in an efficient way. This allows an improved awareness of regional development priorities and enhanced communication between regional and national levels, from which both can benefit.

The choice of individuals for the project management team is a significant element in securing project success, especially in such a long-term task. They have to be committed and represent a strong driving force, and they need to have a good knowledge of the specialist subject they are promoting, as well as experience in interaction with both private and public sectors. The more of these characteristics they possess, the greater will be the likelihood of project realisation and long-term impact.

Whereas projects can provide important stimuli, a permanent regional organisation supporting green trade and industry may be a more effective catalyst. Some participants considered that, over the longer term, such on-going support should assist both business development and product development. However, it was recommended that these activities should be placed outside existing public organisations to secure a functional rather than geographical delimitation. This would be designed to encourage different sectors to co-operate and address regional questions, avoiding artificial divisions created by observing administrative boundaries.

9. Identifying Best Practice – Nordic Benchmarks in Sustainable Regional Development

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, elements of best practice are identified from the Nordic case studies and clustered as strategic benchmarks. Whereas the detailed analyses of projects in the previous chapters form the basis for this synthesis, they can also be utilised as ‘stand-alone’ chapters, allowing project designers and managers with a similar sectoral focus or objectives to gain insight into comparable strengths, weaknesses and barriers to progress, amongst other factors.

Operating on a more generic level, this chapter presents not a comparative analysis, but rather a grouping of positive or significant elements from within the case studies. Drawing selectively from the lessons and strengths already highlighted, this extrapolation represents best practice. It is intended to serve as a guide to the key elements that have characterised, or been critical within, successful projects or successful elements of projects both through realisation (strengths in implementation) and aspiration (project lessons).

Divided into two parts, the first section reflects on the SRD drivers, namely the combination of external factors that stimulated or steered project action that assumed the form of SRD initiatives. The second section considers the role of benchmarking in an SRD context, and then identifies a series of qualitative strategic benchmarks interpreted from the Nordic examples.

9.2 SRD Drivers

These framework factors comprise the events or trends that moved policy-makers’ attention towards SRD as an appropriate direction or response. Encompassing both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, the list is extensive, illustrating the broad momentum that underlies this transition process.

The push factors relate to all three dimensions of sustainable development. *Environmental factors* were especially in evidence, reflecting familiar themes:

- There was an increasing momentum of environmental initiatives, public sector schemes and international regulation, heightening awareness and the need to incorporate this dimension into public policy instruments.
- New analytical techniques such as strategic environmental assessment showed potential to bridge the gap between policy

development and policy appraisal in a regional development context.

- Sectoral growth in tourism had created a need for greater environmental protection and an effective means of introducing this issue earlier in the policy formulation process.
- There was existing concern that environmental factors were underrepresented in the design, management and appraisal of economic programmes.
- Accession to the European Union had introduced the procedures, instruments and evaluation culture of the Structural Funds into the Nordic countries, one core component being the requirement to integrate environmental factors into regional development programmes.
- In a climate of local government reform, the potential to acquire environmental responsibilities had prompted a higher degree of involvement to demonstrate competence.
- A number of municipalities with accredited achievements in environmental innovation were considering the next steps in integrated development.
- A high environmental awareness among indigenous companies meant that certain regions benefited from active corporate networks and regular information exchange.

There were also identifiable *economic pressures* acting as push factors to encourage SRD project responses:

- SMEs were experiencing increased competition from the expanding European markets, requiring a new strategic response.
- A substantial loss of market share in the tourism sector had prompted a search for a solution that would be sustainable and appeal to foreign visitors.
- There had been an overall decline in the role of agriculture, with consequent losses in income generation and employment.
- Stimulating sectoral growth had been identified as an objective, with an emphasis on integrating existing strengths in sustainable industrial practices.
- An absence of initiative from national level government with regard to identifying and accessing export markets had prompted a regional response.

As a third component, *social factors* also featured amongst the pressures:

- Peripheral areas were experiencing out-migration of women and young people, with the associated loss of services and undermining of community lifestyle and institutions.
- There was a perceived need not only to safeguard social and cultural sustainability, but also to promote it through encouraging stronger associations within and between communities, changing perceptions to favour integration rather than accepting fragmentation.
- In the face of increasing political and administrative challenges, creating a regional identity had been furthered as a practical means of securing cohesion amongst municipalities, replacing competition with collaboration.

Whereas the above ‘push’ factors were encouraging region-based solutions, other ‘pull’ factors were operating at a broader level. Sustainable development was progressing from an aspiration internationally into a more tangible mission nationally:

- Agenda 21, the programme of action for sustainable development worldwide, had been devised at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, and its message had been influential through practical interpretation in different sectors and at different levels of administration. Formerly utilised at national and local level only, its appeal as an instrument to justify sustainable development as a feature of regional intervention was being recognised.
- In anticipation of the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly had set a target in 1997 for all countries to have strategies or programmes for sustainable development to submit to the conference. This raised global awareness of the concept and compelled governments to address SD as a strategic issue.
- Sustainability discussion papers, consultative drafts of indicators and SD strategies, and conferences designed to motivate local government into municipal level action all contributed to make this theme part of the public sector culture.
- A comparable momentum was occurring amongst major companies in the private sector, which were participating in international initiatives such as the Business Charter for Sustain-

able Development launched by the International Chamber of Commerce.⁶

- Local Agenda 21 initiatives were launched in some cases with county-wide terms of reference that included measures with an identifiable regional focus, potentially encompassing sectoral initiatives and seeking to integrate sustainable development principles into regional planning processes.

Against this background of converging development issues, the policy responses reviewed in this report – the Nordic case studies – derived or followed a methodology based on an SD approach. Rather than consciously framing SRD projects, the measures were pragmatic, seeking the best way to accommodate multi-dimensional problems with sufficiently flexible policy instruments. For the majority, it meant incorporating SD principles most appropriate for the regional development context; where appropriate instruments or institutions were not already in existence, they had to be invented.

9.3 Strategic Benchmarking for SRD

9.3.1 The Role of Benchmarking

The practice of benchmarking involves external comparison and analysis of performance, deriving the information needed to support continuous improvement. Whereas benchmarking is more commonly used in the private sector, where emphasis is placed on gaining competitive advantage, it is used increasingly in the public sector for the development of processes and procedures, generally by identifying leading practices for adoption and improvement (Bendell et al, 1998).

In character, benchmarking is forward-looking, participative, and quality-focused. Its objective in application is to maximise opportunities, minimise errors, and present a clear communication of goals or aspirations. The process of continuous improvement that it advocates – setting and achieving ever-higher standards – often necessitates organisational and cultural change.

The activity of deriving benchmarks requires a comprehensive understanding of current practice, supported by an analysis of parallel or competing projects, to identify best practice. To have value, this knowledge must then be applied. The assumption is that even the best in the

⁶ Launched by the International Chamber of Commerce in 1992, the Business Charter for Sustainable Development has gained considerable support worldwide, having been signed by more than 2,300 companies and associations in over 50 countries, with virtually all economic sectors represented.

field can still learn from external comparison or knowledge of other projects or initiatives:

Benchmarking provides the basis for prioritising opportunities for change and for providing ostensible proof that change must occur (McNair and Leibfried, 1992, p48).

Once best practice has been identified, organisations can define the type of result or change needed to match or exceed best practice. In this context, a benchmark is a standard against which actions or processes can be compared or measured, to understand what to aspire towards in future. Accordingly, benchmarking leads to specific performance targets.

9.3.2 Benchmarking for SRD

Sharpening the focus on SRD is closest to generic benchmarking – comparing development initiatives that extend into different fields or sectors and rely upon different instruments (Bendell et al, 1998, p83). This allows scope to identify innovative measures that could create breakthroughs for improvement. A further step would be the transition from benchmarking to benchlearning, defined as the culture shift towards a learning organisation that brings collective rather than individual benefit (Karlöf and Östblom, 1993 p.181).

Reflecting the qualitative analysis of the case studies, this section identifies qualitative benchmarks for Nordic sustainable regional development:

Much of the key information that adds meaning to the benchmarking process consists of descriptions of the underlying process used to accomplish a task, qualitative characteristics... and anecdotal evidence (McNair and Leibfried, 1992, p166).

Accordingly, the output from this study does not involve resource consumption measurements, but rather strategic benchmarks. To illustrate the logic of the process followed, Table 2 outlines the actions carried out during the different phases.

The first column relating to data collection corresponds to the previous Nordregio project in this SRD series, which defined the research focus as regional policy instruments, institutions and processes that recognise the importance of balancing economic, social and ecological factors. The project report provided a review of European literature and research into SRD, as well as an overview of SRD-related projects in the Nordic

countries (Clement and Hansen, 2001). The second column of data collection relates to the fieldwork for the current report, which incorporated an interview programme with projects selected from the overview, presenting the results as structured case studies.

The data analysis phase corresponds to the activity unfolding within this chapter, leading to a synthesis of the positive features identified in the assessment of case studies. In essence, these qualitative observations are translated into strategic benchmarks for Nordic SRD, differentiated according to the stage of project development.

<i>TABLE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR DERIVING SRD BENCHMARKS</i>				
Phase <i>Action</i>	Data Collection		Data Analysis	Implementing Change
<i>Inputs</i>	Definition of SRD within regional policy instruments, institutions and processes	Selection of case studies and conduct of interview programme	Analysis of case study characteristics, assimilating strengths, lessons and aspirations	Identification of relevant benchmarks to use as reference points in project design, targeting or management
<i>Outputs</i>	Overview of European SRD literature and practice in the Nordic countries	Comparable project data in structured case study format	Derivation of qualitative SRD strategic benchmarks associated with project phases	Modifying actions in ongoing projects, and designing new projects to meet or exceed benchmarks

*Adapted from McNair and Leibfried, 1992

Thereafter, the final column relates to report publication, when the benchmarks could be used as a basis for implementing change. This would be achieved through selecting those benchmarks appropriate to the project type and maturity, and using them as reference points to match or exceed within project design, targeting or management.

9.3.3 SRD Benchmarks from Nordic Case Studies

In this section, the material reflects the experiences and aspirations of the seven Nordic case studies. It does not represent a comprehensive list of all

possible factors, but rather a selection drawn from project analyses – principally from the sub-sections on strengths and lessons – fulfilling the task of learning from Nordic experience.

Whereas these benchmarks are envisaged as a checklist of alternative criteria or performance measures against which initiatives can be assessed, it is recognised that individual projects would be unlikely to meet all the benchmarks listed here. However, the more that can be fulfilled, the greater the capacity of the project to achieve a measurable SRD impact.

In Tables 3-6, the benchmarks have been grouped into four categories corresponding to the phases of project design (feasibility prerequisites), project implementation (framework conditions and methodology), and project evaluation (impact and outcomes).

The strategic benchmarks in Table 3 relate to *Feasibility Prerequisites*. These comprise factors to be considered at the earliest stage of project design. As such, they could have a critical impact on whether an SRD project is launched effectively and the likelihood of a sustained momentum. In the event that these criteria are not satisfied, the project may not be realised, or it may have only limited impact.

For this phase, the performance measures relate to issues such as project realism, political support, conceptual clarity, being well focused/targeted, manageability, generating and sustaining interest, demonstrating public sector financial commitment, and assembling an effective team that can deliver the desired results.

TABLE 3: STRATEGIC BENCHMARKS – FEASIBILITY PREREQUISITES

- Aspirations and objectives should be kept realistic and limited in ambition to encourage and retain broad participation.
- Advance planning is essential, clearly identifying responsibilities, deliverables, timeframe etc.
- A participation strategy should be oriented to secure local ownership of the initiative.
- Participants at all levels need to be self-motivated and open to new ideas.
- Insofar as possible, projects should address a collective focus, reaching the maximum number of beneficiaries and retaining their active interest.
- Initiatives introducing new concepts such as SRD should be launched with small-scale events, building up momentum and coverage as projects proceed.
- The number of themes and participating areas should be sufficiently low to allow manageability and adequate distribution of funding support.
- For SRD realisation, it is essential to have political will behind the project idea, and this may necessitate both external and internal campaigning.
- Securing public sector funding can be a significant factor in generating confidence

in the initiative.

- Support from well-known and respected professionals can add kudos and credibility to the project, enhancing feasibility of financial assistance and other public-sector backing.
- For long-term effectiveness, SRD projects require a clear client and territorial focus and evidence of demand from target groups.
- The project management team should comprise committed individuals with specialist knowledge and relevant experience.

The benchmarks in Table 4 relate to the *Framework Conditions* that would facilitate the operational phase. These comprise factors within the general operational environment, the presence of which can alternately facilitate or undermine efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of SRD projects.

These framework conditions include features such as active participation, co-operation and dialogue, access to the policy process, learning opportunities, unambiguous remits and responsibilities, overt political support for SD and a common arena to explore SD issues, staff continuity, structured inter-departmental liaison, combining formal and informal links, and parallel evaluation.

TABLE 4: STRATEGIC BENCHMARKS — FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

- Within a common strategy, there is a need for broad co-operation supported by on-going dialogue.
- Flexibility is important in tailoring the process to regional requirements.
- A strong participatory framework enhancing social sustainability should allow stakeholders access to the policy formulation process at municipality and regional levels.
- In projects with private sector engagement, companies are expected to provide time and resource commitments.
- Participants must be willing to become actively involved and assume responsibilities.
- Projects should represent a significant learning experience, for example generating awareness of culture and heritage in addition to the principles of SRD.
- SD should be anchored politically in the project/programme planning process.
- It is important to have on-going support for SRD objectives and processes at a high level.

- Political and administrative involvement should follow structured interactions between organisations at national, regional and local level.
- Professional and disciplinary perspectives should be clarified before cross-departmental initiatives are launched, to avoid misunderstandings and delays.
- The creation or expansion of specialist contact networks can be a significant catalyst for realising development potential.
- The language of communication should be accessible by all the community, especially in relation to definitions of sustainable development or SRD.
- Building an understanding of the regional economic development process can assist significantly in creating links between SD and strategic planning.
- A working combination of formal and informal links is considered optimal for project implementation.
- Continuity of project staff through the design phase to implementation is important as a contact point and familiar information source, and it encourages confidence in the process.
- A precise remit and timeframe for task completion should accompany the appointment of advisory forums.
- The project organisation should be clear in terms of responsibilities, objectives and how it relates to other actors in parallel initiatives.
- A common arena should be available for exploring SD issues, stimulating wide-ranging discussion. Theoretical models may assist a strategic view and clarify assumptions.
- Depending on the scale of operation, involving NGOs in the dialogue may be facilitated through one representative to improve efficiency.
- Appointing an evaluator or evaluation team at the beginning of the project allows parallel working, with on-going information exchange and practical advice.

The benchmarks in Table 5 relate to the *Methodology* adopted during the implementation phase. The choice of approaches, techniques and timing can make a substantial difference to project implementation.

The methodology is concerned with operational issues such as deriving working definitions of SD and SRD, securing strategic integration, operating within a clear hierarchical perspective, modelling interactions and sustaining momentum, creating alternative scenarios, financial control, project selection criteria, using networks and group-working, and encouraging corporate participation.

TABLE 5: STRATEGIC BENCHMARKS — METHODOLOGY

- A clear, hierarchical perspective is required for implementing SRD, identifying national, regional and local level responsibilities.
- Sustained effort may be needed during the launch phase to concretise unfamiliar concepts and put SD and SRD on the agenda.
- A working definition of SD should be at the core of the initiative, linked directly to the strategy and development activities in the region and emphasising all three dimensions of SD.
- Pursuing vertical and horizontal integration of SD should maximise access to different levels and spheres of activity.
- The methodology can be further developed within the ongoing process, encouraging constructive inputs and exchanges from all levels.
- Before conducting a search for practical solutions, building a model of interactions can act as a first step to convey understanding.
- Designation of a regional forum may be an effective means of securing interaction between levels and sectors and sustaining momentum.
- Strategic and procedural aspects may be usefully separated by offering alternative scenarios.
- To gain recognition and sustained interest, tangible impacts and visibility may be given a higher priority than the development of documentation.
- Retaining central control of finances may secure greater efficiency in implementation and be a motivating factor in promoting accountability.
- Project selection criteria should be identified in advance to assist overall clarity and appropriate project design.
- International meetings in host countries can be usefully combined with visits to communities and local enterprises to enhance practical and cultural knowledge transfer.
- Regional co-ordinators should encourage and assist municipality-level autonomous actors.
- If a new organisation is established to implement the initiative, it should present a clear view of its competence, remit and how it meets regional needs. It should also have sufficient

freedom to build its own networks and specialisms.

- Networks and group-working can be useful instruments to address complex policy themes such as sustainability, which are often cross-sectoral and cross-boundary.
- To encourage corporate participation, whether by individual companies or groups, documented success stories can be useful sources of inspiration.
- Regular reporting back can help to keep participants or beneficiaries interested and sustain project momentum.
- Documented project guidance should be flexible and perhaps encompass a phased approach, allowing a gradual transition.

The benchmarks in Table 6 relate to *Impact and Outcomes*. This corresponds to performance evaluation to identify targeted impact that progresses SRD, while acknowledging that measurable results are generally attainable only over medium-long term perspectives.

This stage encompasses factors such as the overall integration of SD activity within a regional context, perceived benefits in cohesion and regional identity, tangible impacts on the decision-making process, enhanced private sector collaboration, new cross-sectoral networks of expertise, new regional development organisations, and the creation of follow-up projects.

TABLE 6: STRATEGIC BENCHMARKS – IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- Through SRD, regional actors can synchronise and integrate their sustainability work, for example through a new organisation, forum or policy instrument.
- SRD can act as a catalyst for regional identity and cohesion.
- Political support should convert into political engagement, and the results should influence decision-making directly and visibly.
- SRD initiatives can effectively co-ordinate public and private sector strengths, creating a pool of resources and expertise for regional benefit.
- Through sectoral integration measures, companies based in the region can be transformed from competitors into colleagues, with enhanced collaboration perspectives.
- If a permanent organisation for promoting regional sectoral development is established, a functional rather than geographical basis for operation may be more advantageous.
- To reinforce the transitional impact, the momentum should be maintained through follow-up projects or extended funding. One short-term project is generally not enough to change thinking, and a series of inter-related projects or several years of funding may be needed to make a lasting impact on practice.

To supplement the use of these qualitative benchmarks, it is envisaged that additional quantitative benchmarks would be derived on a region-specific basis, allowing more precise measurement of particular aspects of SRD policy implementation. With regard to facilitating this process, examples of SD indicators used in the case studies are contained in Appendices 4, 5, 6 and 7, some of which may be adapted to suit regional requirements.

In a further step to provide practical insight into SRD implementation, Nordregio is currently engaged in a third project in this series, entitled *Progressing Sustainable Regional Development: Appraising Institutional Innovation and Tools appropriate for Nordic Practice*. The project objectives include a critical review of Nordic institutions and political

expectations involved in delivering SRD; examining the actual and possible role of tools such as SWOT-analysis, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and Sustainability Impact Appraisal (SIA) in the regional institutional context; appraising the institution of the Canadian Commissioner for Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) for transferable lessons; and drawing conclusions concerning the scope for utilising or modifying these innovative techniques and/or features in the Nordic countries (see Appendix 8).

10. Conclusion

As the impacts of global commitments to operationalise sustainable development become more tangible, this worldwide momentum makes it apparent that SD has become a permanent feature of governmental action and interaction. From being an unknown concept with no clear methodologies, its gradual dissemination and accommodation are giving it ever higher status and prominence across industrial sectors and at all levels of government. Although there are individuals and organisations that demonstrate a lack of faith and even opposition regarding the applicability of SD, its incremental progress into day-to-day practices in public and private sectors indicates that its realisation will continue, as strategies and tools become more refined and precise.

Is the same phenomenon likely to occur with SRD? The emerging pattern is similar, though smaller in scale. Nevertheless, there is evidence of international interest in the potential of SRD in countries from Australia through Europe and on to North America, as well as in supra-national organisations such as the European Commission.

In the European context, the recent EU Thematic Evaluation on the Contribution of the Structural Funds to Sustainable Development represents a significant stage in the maturing of SRD. With this form of EU guidance available to direct regional programme design and evaluation, there is now the expectation that SRD must be considered in policy formulation, and that it will feature increasingly in policy appraisal. This evaluation appears as the latest in a series of innovative and influential Commission handbooks associated with modifying performance in the Structural Funds, from which environment similarly progressed through a period of legitimisation to become a standard factor of horizontal integration.

Other catalysts that are contributing to the wider promotion of SRD include the various international thematic networks, which reach an expanding audience with each conference, seminar and workshop dedicated to deriving appropriate tools and evaluation methods. They are also similarly addressing the major potential of regional programmes in the Structural Funds.⁷ In parallel, independent institutes and academic centres are adopting research orientations that integrate disciplinary perspectives in favour of long-term scenarios compatible with SRD.

⁷ See for example Vol.16 No.3 of *Innovation: the European Journal of Social Science Research*, a special issue to be published in September 2003, which contains a series of articles on the inter-relationship between SRD and the EU Structural Funds.

Amongst the Nordic countries, another identifiable source of progress comprises the arena of policy-makers and practitioners, where projects approximating to SRD have been launched in advance of EU, Nordic or national guidance. In most cases, there has been no regional precedent, but rather this upsurge reflects their appreciation that this is an appropriate level of intervention. The consequent diversity of approaches, instruments and organisational formats demonstrates that the field is dynamic, and that there are a number of alternative ways to approach the questions posed by SRD. Some projects are clearly more successful than others in realising their objectives, as initially formulated, highlighting the need to retain room to manoeuvre when pursuing the most effective methods for specific regional contexts.

From the cases examined in this report, it is evident that the greater commonalities correspond to the difficulties encountered, whereas the more positive characteristics are differentiated between projects. This illustrates that launching SRD is experienced effectively as a challenge that demands commitment and vision. The hurdles that have arisen have especially included the need to spend time persuading others of the value of SRD, an activity that in one case was described as having consumed more resources than project management. Specific examples of these issues include overcoming resistance to the idea of integrating SD and SRD, dismissing scepticism regarding the short-term nature of 'faddish concepts', reconciling disciplinary differences and relative positioning within regional economic development processes, gaining acceptance for the long timescale required before results can be seen and, of course, acknowledging the difficulties inherent in measuring qualitative change.

However, the identification of common problems also allows the recording of methods used to tackle them and of lessons learned that would be used to change practice, should the same scenarios be encountered again. From this perspective, this study has used the medium of case study analysis to establish a series of reference points presented as benchmarks to assist future practice. Addressing the phases of project design, management and evaluation, the resulting performance measures represent qualitative standards to facilitate the transformation from regional development to sustainable regional development. Accordingly, this distillation of Nordic experience should directly benefit Nordic practice.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this report – and the Nordregio series of which it forms a part – will make a significant contribution to the realisation of SRD both within and outside the Nordic countries.

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APPENDIX 1

REGIONET thematic network

REGIONET (Strategies for Regional Sustainable Development: An Integrated Approach beyond Best Practice) is an EU thematic network project, funded by DG Research under the 5th Framework Programme. The overall objective of REGIONET is to provide an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to support the implementation of sustainable development in regions across Europe. REGIONET has the aim of bringing together stakeholders with experience in the study and/or implementation of regional development plans and programmes to discuss the experiences to date as well as the new needs and challenges being faced.

The promotion of regional and social cohesion, as well as of environmental protection and sustainability, are among the most important Community objectives. REGIONET contributes knowledge that helps to improve the integration of environmental concerns into regional development plans and management (as required in Structural Funds proposals) and helps integrate environmental protection with economic development and employment. REGIONET links science and policy with the aim of providing empirical research outcomes for sustainable regional development policy-making.

REGIONET comprises four workshops on the following topics: (1) Sustainable regional development and the role of Structural Funds; (2) Strategies for effective multi-level governance; (3) Evaluation tools and methods for sustainable regional development; and (4) Cross-fertilisation and integration of results of sustainable regional development research. The outcomes of the workshops will provide an extensive overview of research into the above-mentioned topics. The research results from the workshop contributions will be distributed in the form of rapid reports to inform researchers and policy-makers alike and provide policy recommendations.

More detailed information can be found at the REGIONET Homepage: <http://www.iccr-international.org/regionet/>

APPENDIX 2

Programme of interviews conducted

Denmark – <i>Destination 21</i>
• Jan Eriksen, Danish Outdoor Council • Anne-Mette Hjalager, Advance/1Consultants • Ann Hein Hedegaard, Danish Tourism Development Centre • Pernille Kernel, University of Aalborg • Thomas Kruse, Danish Tourist Board • Frank Lambert, Danish Agency for Trade and Industry (formerly National Association of Municipalities) • Peder Balzer Nielsen, Ministry of the Environment • Hans-Jørgen Olsen, Destination Odsherred • Niels Ramm, United Nations Environment Programme • Annette Tenberg, Municipality of Møn
Finland – <i>Learning Sustainability</i>
• Seppo Aho, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi • Asta Hakso, Municipality of Kolari, Kolari • Jukka Kauppinen, Village Co-ordinator, Kurtakko • Kyllikki Lampinen, Association of Rural Advisory Centres, Helsinki • Maiju Mäkinen, Regional Council of Lapland, Rovaniemi • Sirkka-Liisa Peteri, Nature Academy, Lapland • Tarja Tammia, Continuing Education Centre, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi • Helka Urponen, Continuing Education Centre, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi • Heino Vasara, Local Labour Office, Kolari • Jaana Wicks-Näsi, Korvala Kestikievari Inn, Tiainen
Finland – <i>SEA in Regional Development</i>
• Eveliina Asikainen, Hoika Centre, Karkku • Riitta Eerolainen, Häme Regional Environment Centre, Lahti • Juha Hietanen, University of Tampere, Tampere • Jyri Juslén, Ministry of the Environment, Helsinki • Ulla Koski, Ministry of the Environment, Helsinki

• Mirja Lumiaho-Soumi, Häme Regional Environment Centre, Hämeenlinna • Lea Mikkonen, Pirkanmaa Regional Environment Centre, Vammala • Kimmo Rintala, Hoika Centre, Karkku • Silja Suominen, Ministry of the Environment (formerly Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre), Helsinki • Suvi Suomalainen, Tampere Regional Solid Waste Management (formerly Häme Regional Environment Centre), Tampere • Helena Valve, Finnish Environment Institute, Helsinki
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Norway – <i>Sustainable Development Through Planning</i>

• Jone Engelsvold, Opus Consultants • Øyvind Fluge, formerly Askøy Municipality • Ole Fredheim, Fjell Municipality • Per Hillestad, Askøy and Osterøy Municipalities • Nils Arild Johnsen, Greater Bergen Council • Gudrun Mathiesen, Hordaland County Council • Froydis Ones, Sund Municipality • Don Peace, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, Middlesbrough • Rolv Svein Rouge, formerly Øygarden Municipality • Willy Sorensen, Fjell Municipality

Norway – <i>Regional Agenda 21</i>

• Carlo Aall, Western Norway Research Institute • Kirsti Eklund, Socialist Party • Astrid B. Eliassen, Forum for Nature and the Outdoors • Erland Fagermoen, Christian Democrat Party • Gunnar Fröland, Flora Municipality, formerly project consultant • Ole Jørgen Grann, Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities • Liv Janne Kvåle, Sogn and Fjordane County • Torolf Norheim, Sogn and Fjordane County • Knut M. Olsen, Agrarian Party • Trond Sundby, Sogn and Fjordane County • Nils-Erling Yndesdal, State Regional Office

Sweden – <i>Natural Resource Centre</i>
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• Per Berg, Dalarna University, Borlänge • Martin Bergdahl, Dalarna County Council Estates, Falun • Anders Blomquist, Stockholm University School of Business, Stockholm • Bjarne Harrung, Falun Municipality, Falun

- Kristina Harsbo, Falun Municipality, Falun
- Pelle Helje, Borlänge Energy, Borlänge
- Nils-Göran Johansson, Mora Municipality, Mora
- Leif Jonsson, Federation of Private Enterprises, Falun
- Elsmari Julin, Dalarna Natural Resource Centre, Falun
- Lennart Lindqvist, ALMI Dalarna, Falun
- Per Ölund, previously Heimer & Co, Höör
- Åke Persson, Borlänge Municipality, Borlänge
- Stig-Åke Svensson, County Administrative Board of Dalarna, Falun
- Christer Wahlbäck, Dalarna County Council, Falun

Sweden – *Green Trade and Industry*

- Stefan Henningsson, Nutek, Stockholm
- Carl-Philip Jönsson, County Administrative Board of Kronoberg, Växjö
- Annika Nilsson, Alvesta Municipality, Alvesta
- Ulla Rolf, ALMI Kronoberg, Växjö
- Bengt Lund, Sävsjö Trade and Industry Ltd, Sävsjö
- Dan Löfving, formerly County Administrative Board of Kalmar, Uddevalla
- Sölve Johansson, Growing Älmhult, Älmhult
- Bo Frank, Växjö Municipality, Växjö
- Margareta Moqvist, Miljöresurs Linné, Växjö
- Martha Wägeus, Miljöresurs Linné, Jönköping
- Karin Carlsson, Kairos Future Ltd (formerly Ecotopia), Stockholm
- Elin Mohlin, Mohlins Market Information Ltd, Jönköping
- Pär Wallin, Växjö University, Växjö

APPENDIX 3

Project-specific questions within interview programme

THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. In your perception, what were the key factors that shaped the development of the plan/programme/initiative?
2. Why did these factors have this significance?
3. Were any of the following aspects particularly influential in contributing to the process?
 - Interaction between national, regional or local government departments or agencies
 - Informal and/or formal links
 - Top-down and/bottom-up approaches
 - Clear methodology and direction

THE INITIATIVE

4. What do you consider to be the principal strengths and weaknesses of the plan/programme/initiative from the perspective of sustainable regional development?
5. Do you regard it as a success?
6. Do you believe its approach to be unique?

ACHIEVEMENTS

7. In relation to the original aims, where has the plan/programme etc made greatest progress?
8. Were there barriers that hindered the realisation of the objectives? If so, how were these overcome?
9. What lessons were learned or actions taken that should be either replicated or avoided?

APPENDIX 4

Sustainability goals and indicators – destination 21

Goals	Indicators
Local organisation, co-operation and mutual strategy	• Sustainable tourism strategy • Tourism policies • Participation of local Destination 21 • Local Agenda 21 collaboration • Annual reassessment of D21
Competence-building towards a viable development of tourism	• Destination 21 competence
Dissemination of D21 philosophy and practice	• Promotion of D21 philosophy • D21 activities
Protect nature of destination and cultural environmental values	• Tourism development and physical planning • Quality of natural areas • Quality of the aquatic environment • Quality of cultural and environmental values • Accessibility of the natural and cultural environmental values • Adventure potential
Strengthen and promote the local culture and authenticity	• Local culture and authenticity • Tourism's influence on the local community, especially local population • People to People understanding • Local and national visibility
Reduce consumption of resources and pollution	• Eco-labelled tourism establishments • Tourism establishments with environmental work • The municipality's environmental work • Materials • Energy consumption • Water consumption • Use of chemicals (pesticides and cleaning materials)

	• Waste/refuse production • Waste water/sewage • Emissions • Noise • Odour
Create employment and enhance local economy	• The area's tourism supply • The area's tourism demand • Tourism-generated economy • Tourism generated employment • Tourist perception of the destination
Promote sustainable development of tourism products and related business areas	• Sustainable tourism products and business areas • Sustainability budget

Source: Ramm, 2001.

APPENDIX 5

Beach and marina criteria – fee blue flag campaign

The Blue Flag Campaign is owned and run by the independent non-profit organisation Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). The Campaign brings together the tourism and environment sectors at local, regional and national level in 24 countries. More than 2,750 beaches and marinas participate in the Blue Flag Campaign, which has the following aims:

- To promote clean and safe beaches and marinas.
- To educate the whole community in protecting the coastal environment.
- To encourage voluntary involvement in environmental action.

The programme's principal objectives are:

- To ensure and advertise clean and safe beaches and marinas for the public.
- To educate local authorities, private tourism operations and the public about the need and the means to protect the environment, in particular coastal and lacustrine environments.
- To create a basis for voluntary environmental action in communities.
- To bring about co-operation between the sectors of tourism, environment and education at local, regional and national levels.

The activities of the European Campaign revolve around the awarding of the widely recognised and respected eco-label – the Blue Flag. This is given to beaches and marinas where environmental protection is a high priority in site management, and where information encourages care for the environment.

The award is granted for one season at a time on the basis of compliance with 27 criteria for beaches and 15 for marinas. These criteria cover the same four areas for both beaches and marinas: water quality; environmental management; safety, services and facilities; and environmental education and information. Some criteria are imperative while others are guidelines.

The Blue Flag Campaign has a website on the Internet at the address: www.blueflag.org. The website contains maps and lists of Blue Flag sites, and detailed information about the criteria, application procedure, national Blue Flag Operators, national and international newsletters, and history of the Campaign.

Blue Flag Beach Criteria

- Water Quality Compliance.
- No industrial sewage related waste.
- Local and regional emergency plans to cope with pollution accidents.
- Environmental plan for the development and use of the coast area.
- No signs of gross pollution from oil, human waste or other sources.
- No visible hydrocarbon pollution.
- No algal or other vegetation left to decay on beach.
- Prompt public warnings in case of gross pollution or other dangers.
- Information posted on protected sites or species in the area of the beach.
- Bathing water quality and Blue Flag information published on the beach.
- Environmental education activities offered to the public.
- Beach regulations and code of conduct posted on the beach.
- Environmental Interpretation Centre/Ecology Centre offered.
- Sufficient litterbins on the beach to keep it clean.
- Beach cleaned on a regular basis.
- No camping/unauthorised driving/dumping on the beach.
- The beach must have easy and safe access.
- Recreational activities in the beach area must not endanger any beach user.
- Sufficient and clean public toilets with controlled sewage disposal.
- Sufficient lifeguards or lifesaving equipment.
- First Aid must be available on the beach.
- Access of dogs and domestic animals must be restricted and controlled.
- There should be a free source of drinking water.
- There should be public telephones available by the beach.

- There should be access and facilities for people with disabilities.
- Beach facilities should be properly maintained.

Blue Flag Marina Criteria

- There must be a resource person who can be contacted for enquiries about the Blue Flag and environmental matters.
- The marina should provide its users with environmental information.
- The marina should post or otherwise publish an environmental Code of Conduct.
- The marina should provide information about the Blue Flag Campaign.
- There must be adequate and well-managed garbage containers.
- There must be accessible and sign-posted waste oil reception facilities.
- There must be special waste facilities for paints, solvents, cleaners and other hazardous waste.
- The marina should be well integrated into both the natural and built environment.
- The marina should be able to receive toilet tank waste and bilge water.
- The water and surroundings of the marina must be clean without any signs of oil, sewage or litter.
- There must not be any sewage released into the marina from the mooring boats or the marina facilities.
- There must be adequate and clean sanitary facilities, including washing facilities and access to drinking water.
- The marina must be equipped with lifesaving equipment.
- The marina must be equipped for fire fighting and other emergencies.
- There should be public lighting and power available in the marina.
- There should be public transport between the marina and the nearest town when the distance is more than 1 km.

APPENDIX 6

Sustainability themes and indicators – greater Bergen sdtp

<i>LAND USE MANAGEMENT</i>	
1	Geographic overview of planned and prepared housing/business development areas.
2	Coastal areas with user conflicts.
3	Areas that are converted from agricultural use.
4	Earmarking of area per annum for transportation system development.
<i>TRANSPORT</i>	
5	The number of citizens residing in noisy areas that do not conform to current legislation. The number of days with “unsatisfactory” air quality as required under current legislation.
6	The emission of CO ₂ from vehicles in tonnes per year.
7	The number of recorded traffic accidents with personal injuries per year.
8	Development in percentage of work related travel in the region undertaken by collective transport.
<i>CONSUMPTION PATTERNS</i>	
9	The development in total energy consumption in households, trade & industry and the public sector.
10	The degree of conversion to alternative and more environmentally friendly forms of energy divided into the sectors: Households, trade & industry and the public sector
11	The total volume of refuse that is not recycled divided into the sectors: Households, trade & industry and the public sector /year

<i>STRUCTURE OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY /PRODUCTION METHODS</i>	
12	The total number of companies with environmental production control system certificates.
13	The number of new companies with production methods that meet the standards for sustainable development.
14	The number of unemployed at all levels of education.
<i>EDUCATION and EXPERTISE</i>	
15	Growth in the number of people having completed their education at various levels domiciled in the different areas of the region.
16	The lack of sufficient numbers of qualified expertise in the business sector slit into educational categories.
17	Development in the use of IT tools and aids; the number of PC's in private hands and in the school system, the number of Internet users, split into the categories, private households, companies.

Source: Regional Council Greater Bergen, 1999.

APPENDIX 7

Core indicators for sustainability – Sogn and Fjordane

From an 8-page document describing sustainability indicators for Sogn and Fjordane, the following table lists core indicators for use in all of the municipalities. There are 41 more specific supplementary indicators that can be applied to differing extents amongst the individual municipalities.

Theme	Indicator
Quality of life	Expected average lifetime
Local pollution	Emission of phosphorous and nitrogen from households and municipal sewage systems
Resource management	Amount of household waste per inhabitant
Biodiversity	Percentage of planning and development projects that have affected vulnerable or rare species negatively
Energy and climate	Emissions of CO ₂ or equivalent per inhabitant
Sustainable production and consumption	Percentage of private and municipal companies that have environmental management certification
Municipal management	Percentage of staff in the County Council that have participated in a course on environmental awareness

APPENDIX 8

Progressing sustainable regional development: appraising institutional innovation and tools appropriate for Nordic practice

Within the programme addressing Institutional Preconditions for Regional Policy, Nordregio is currently engaged in a third project in the SRD series. The aim of the project is to shed light on, give perspective to, and critically assess the Nordic situation concerning the implementation of sustainable development at the regional level with a special focus on institutional issues. With this overall aim, the project has four inter-related objectives:

- Explore and critically review Nordic institutions and policy tools currently involved in implementing sustainable regional development
- Shed light on the actual and possible role of tools such as SWOT-analysis, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Sustainability Impact Appraisal (SIA) and Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) in relation to turning the goal of SD into practice in regional growth and development programming.
- Identify and appraise institutional frameworks in Canada and tools not currently used in the Nordic context that may hold potential for significantly improving Nordic practice.
- Discuss and evaluate the Nordic situation in relation to the politically expected performance of the regional level in sustainable development and also in relation to experiences in Canada concerning institutional issues and tools. Finally, draw conclusions concerning the scope for utilising or modifying these innovations for use in the Nordic countries.

In practical terms, the project is being conducted in a sequence of four parts. The first part is a desk study systematizing the regional economic growth and development programming forms in the Nordic countries. The second part comprises a tools study based partly on regional growth and development programs selected from at least three Nordic countries, assessing the tools for their capacities to integrate SD into those programmes, their effects on the programming process, and what potential the different tools contain.

The third part comprises fieldwork in Canada to investigate the operation of the Canadian CESD, identifying how sectoral and regional integration of SD principles are approached and achieved in its activities, and reviewing progress in implementing and measuring SRD. The fourth part of the project will utilise the results from the different studies to beneficial effect, as each of the institutional and methodological innovations is considered for its suitability for application in the Nordic countries.

Publication of the project report is expected in spring 2004.

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The legacy of these institutions includes a widespread network of researchers and civil servants in all the Nordic countries as well as in Europe, a network which has been incorporated in Nordregio and upon whose experience Nordregio will continue to build.

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