

Regimes of regional development and growth across Nordic regions: Borderless practices in the making?

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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.

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Preface

This report is a contribution to the discussion on regional regimes in Norden. Regimes can be seen as constellations of practices, problem-solving methods and shared normative understanding that emerge and are at times built around politico-administrative structures, which today – as ever – are faced with reform pressures.

The project is part of the Nordic research programme *Future Challenges and Institutional Preconditions for Regional Development Policy*. The programme is commissioned by The Nordic Council of Ministers / Nordic Senior Officials Committee for Regional Policy (NÄRP). A pilot phase of the programme was reported in 2000 (Nordregio Report 2000:1). This report is one of eight studies in the 2000-2002 phase of the programme. A final phase will start in 2002 and end in 2004.

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1. Introduction

This report is a part of the ongoing research programme being undertaken within the context of the Nordic Research Programme on Future Challenges and Institutional Preconditions for Regional Development Policy. Its basic assumption is that as national policy instruments and their institutional preconditions are adapted to better suit the rigours of international competition and policy effectiveness, regional practices and institutional arrangements aimed as a response to the needs of local and regional constituencies are, in effect, becoming intermediaries that seek to balance such national and international “requirements” with regionally specific institutional, cultural and historical circumstances. This report takes some tentative steps then towards addressing the question of the possibility of identifying regional “regimes” in Norway, Sweden and Finland. Such regimes can be seen as constellations of politico-administrative practices thus formed, which can become factors that either dampen or accentuate the external impact of policy change, as the question becomes one of adapting to the national policy environment, the rules and regulations set within it, as well as the national policy processes and programmes aimed at the promotion of regional development.

The main research question of the project centred on how the administrative and political practices of the regions analysed reflected the goals of balanced development and growth within the regional economy. Another question was whether these practices and methods of shared problem solving were transferable across administrative regions and if so, how is their functioning likely to be affected by changes in these borders (administrative reforms)? The backdrop to the cases studied was thus one of politico-administrative reform, as the question of regional administrative reform and the needs of regional policy are currently undergoing lively debate in all three countries in question.¹

The theoretical and methodological problematic shares some assumptions with that of the “learning regions” –approach prevalent in regional development today, i.e. it builds on ideas related to the need for regional differentiation and uniqueness that regions often adhere to when seeking to promote their competitive positions and when attempting to respond to the needs of their citizens. Less attention is perhaps given to democracy or agenda setting within the “learning regions” – approach

¹ While the debate is ongoing in all three countries, it is true to say that different stages of maturity are involved, as the legislative processes and administrative reforms follow their own, nationally determined, and rather path-dependent process.

however, and that is where the approach here differs, as the whole gist of regional governance is intertwined with questions of regional democracy. As such, a number of questions emerge, the foremost being, is the regime formation emerging from the new governance structures more likely to support the creation of “regional development elites” that do not necessarily contribute to the creation of more responsive and open forms of public participation and democratic governance? And, how far are the regional regimes the result of agenda setting by the administrative elites, not necessarily connected to the needs and grievances of the citizens living in the region in question?

The methodological questions at hand are similar to those found in comparative research projects concerning the institutional and socio-cultural differences of the Nordic sub-national regions, namely, how to balance the apparent similarities with long-lived national and regional specificity? What lessons can be drawn beyond the regionally unique institutional and historical contingencies, and which are simply too locally or regionally specific to maintain their validity beyond that bounded space?

In terms of the methodological underpinnings of the report, the point of departure here is the fact that while regional studies can easily be identified as a field of study with certain multi-disciplinary ambitions, this multi-disciplinary nature poses certain theoretical, epistemological and methodological problems that need to be addressed. The core notion is however that of the strengthened *strategic agency* of regions, gradually emerging, partly as a result of endogenous development (a certain degree of empowerment resulting in the regionalisation of certain functions, as well as – in some cases – of identities) and partly as a result of exogenous development (the administrative reforms undertaken in order to provide for a more rational and efficient means to administer European Structural Fund programmes and in particular of implementing their funding, i.e. administrative regionalisation, increasing the need to manage environmental questions on different levels and provide platforms for public participation in public policy issues). This *strategic agency* can then be approached through a variety of theoretical and methodological avenues, which give it a different status: in most cases as a factor reflecting a certain economic, political, administrative or social bias. Attempts to incorporate a comparative approach that seeks to address both economic and political approaches (rather than assuming that they have been collapsed into a singular pattern of analysis) to institution building, viewing institutions as social and cultural artefacts, may however require particular attention to be paid to its epistemological underpinnings.

The institutional differences referred to in the title thus partly relate to what we could term *administrative* differences, which are common variables in the comparative study of regions. More important however are the institutional differences which relate to differences in *regimes*, that is to say, in the more wide-reaching differences that can be found in institutional practices, organisational forms of co-operation, communicative practices etc. Institutional differences are in turn often the result of cultural differences (particularly where they relate to administrative or political cultures). Focus then is placed on the values attached to certain practices and working methods, e.g. how important is trust or equality of opportunity viewed amongst the persons involved in a certain administrative entity? How high do such persons rate the efficiency or dynamism of the working environment? Has the organisation in question explicitly spelled out its central or "core" values, and if so, what are they? These types of questions (which will be explained in what follows as the elements of regional regimes) provided the survey material collected through elite interviews in the three case regions.²

The institutional and cultural elements of the regional economy are necessarily put under pressure from the environment, which is increasingly seen as a reflexive whole. The report presented here departs from the assumption that the prevailing discourses of regional development and growth is dominated by an ideology presented as a theoretical approach called "New Regionalism". As has been argued for instance by Michael Storper, the reflexive nature of present-day capitalism has increased the importance of institutional learning within the "learning economy" (Storper 1997, 31, Lundvall 1992, Maskell et al. 1998.).³ Learning is very much a part of the new *theoretical approach* (which can also be seen as an *ideology*) to regional development, as it is assumed by a growing number

² The empirical material through which the research question was approached is purely qualitative, as it consists of elite survey material collected for the study, as well as analysis of strategic planning documents as a background-stage of the project (these documents including for instance regional development programmes in the case of Norway and Finland, regional growth agreements in Sweden, documents prepared for the structural funds objective 1 and 2 programmes, as well as URBAN and INTERREG Community Initiatives, where applicable). These were accompanied by a set of interviews with representatives of regional elites central to regional regime-formation and identified through partly the official documents and organisational forms of the policy instruments in question, and partly by the survey undertaken in order to identify the contact networks and their key members in the regions in question.

³ For an introduction to "New Regionalism" see Maskell et al. 1998, Porter 1990, Storper 1997 and Scott 1998.

of people that learning capabilities are in fact the decisive factor in providing a comparative advantage in today's global economy. As globalisation entails making a wider array of production facts ubiquitous, available at more or less the same cost in different parts of the world, these can no longer be sources of regional competitiveness. Instead regions need to achieve differentiation: they are likely to compete on the merits of human resources and social institutions, which do remain regionally (and nationally) differentiated and provide the basis for learning (ranging from forms of technology steering industrial production to organisational learning relevant to the ways in which public policy is implemented in specific local situations). It thus becomes essential for regions to provide competitive learning resources that are both socially and culturally specific.⁴

In some cases the economic differentiation process, itself part and parcel of the regional struggle for competitiveness and growth, is also accompanied by a political process or ideology of regionalism. The connection between the two may not always be obvious: while regional differentiation is required for improved competitiveness, improved economic standing can in fact strengthen the regionalist/separatist aspirations in some regions ("bourgeois regionalism" or the "particularism of the affluent" *à la* Harvie, 1994, 72) where the economic burden of national solidarity has assumed negative connotations. In other regions however increased differentiation and regional competitiveness is viewed – in many cases rightly – as simply one more indication of fragmenting national solidarity and thus as an impediment to the achievement of further cohesion. In the study of "borderless regions" such cases are not present and therefore the ambitions of the project are limited to forms of regional governance, more in line with traditional unitary states and their forms of organisation today: seeking to balance central government powers and regionally devolved powers and responsibilities

The level of "institutional endowment" (Maskell et al., *ibid*, 53-55) is also a major element in building regional/local competitiveness; indeed it is a factor that the economic geographers hold dear. Thus the question of building *regimes* (a concept that we will return to in the following sec-

⁴The interpretation of the concept "culture" used here is borrowed from MacDowell (1994, 148), who sees it as an essentially socially defined and socially determined set of ideas, customs and beliefs shaping people's actions and their production of material artefacts, including the landscape and the built environment. Cultural ideas are expressed in the lives of social groups who articulate, express and challenge these sets of ideas and values, themselves being temporally and spatially specific, while being also partly reflected in the regional regimes in question.

tions), something that could solidify institutional learning processes and provide them with social and cultural support, comes to the fore. The nature of such regimes can also, in part, help us to understand the nature of individual regions in terms of regional learning, as it has been acknowledged that the local and/or regional culture, its openness to change, as well as social capital related issues such as rivalry, trust, the willingness to experiment, and attitudes towards failure and success, are all important characteristics partly determining the region's ability to be open to learning, knowledge creation and innovation (ibid, 184).

The question of what makes regions competitive and successful as a politico-administrative environment for action and a living environment for their residents (as competitiveness is perhaps not always the only measure of regional success, where other available measures are also likely to register on economic success indicators) in the "learning economy" of today is thus a complex one. While some of the authors cited above have provided interesting answers to the question, the most important point to remember is perhaps the contingency of regional success as a necessarily path-dependent question: the historical development of a region accounts for a lot, making it difficult if not impossible to come up with generalised solutions for regional success. (See for instance Maskell et al, ibid, 69.) As well as being dependent on historical developments and circumstances, the social construction of the region seldom lends itself to easily marketable solutions for all, as institutional endowments and culturally and socially specific circumstances differ markedly. Instead of universal "solutions" for regional competitiveness we might thus be better advised to search for path-dependent instances of regional success, thus remaining observant of both the material, cultural and social context, not merely paying heed to changes in production systems, though these are clearly important.⁵

It is thus assumed that part of the "learning economy" is the motivation of regions to pursue certain policy-goals designed to support the accumulation of capabilities likely to lead to competence development and thereby to learning. Most regions today seek to promote their image as competitive and dynamic regions (and thus to be called "learning regions")

⁵ Krugman for instance has emphasised the path-dependence of economic geography in terms of the location of production. (Krugman 1991, 80). The concept of path-dependence was however originally developed in a seminar work by Douglas North (1990). Naturally this ongoing debate within regional studies echoes a much wider debate across the social sciences as a whole over fundamental epistemological issues concerning structure and agency, social change and idealism-materialism.

in “new economy” parlance), while at the same time they seek to balance traditional regional cultures and institutional arrangements. The main question here is how these goals and the social contexts within which they emerge can best be understood from the point of view of social and institutional analyses and what theoretical and methodological choices are likely to provide us with the most fruitful findings.

One of the key concepts approached here is that of the *regional regime*, which is understood here in the political science meaning of the term.⁶ Questions emerge as to the nature of such regional regimes as have already been constructed, based on the philosophy of growth and of regional development. Whereas previously emphasis may have been put on cohesion and inter-regional balance, something that was reflected in the form and function of institutions and institutional practices, current rhetoric places more emphasis on dynamic economic processes, in accordance with prevalent “managerialist” ideology.⁷

These dynamic processes are then often seen as fruitful ground for the implementation of *regional benchmarking*, thus drawing lessons on individual success stories and branding these in suitable managerial terms. Benchmarking has in fact become one of the most widely cited instruments of regional – and indeed national – success in the current global

⁶ In International Relations regimes have often be viewed as the “intervening variable” constraining state action that otherwise was interpreted as without constraint, each state seeking to promote its interest without any immediate reason to restrain its egoism in doing so. (Kratochwil 1989, 47.) The most commonly used definition of a regime in International relations views regimes as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors” expectations converge in a given area of international relations. (Krasner 1982, 186.) In the national context of politics the concept of a regime is usually utilised to depict the informal arrangements that surround and complement the formal workings of government authority in order to bring about co-ordinated action in a certain issue area (Stone 1989, 3-4).

⁷ A number of critical voices have however been raised in response, such as for instance that of John Lovering, who argues that “the New Regionalism” approach contains an economic bias derived from an insufficiently critical plundering of the management literature, while the emergence of a stratum of economic development actors concerned primarily with regional “competitiveness” (Lovering 2001, 349) and “The emphasis on building up regional industrial elites and the promulgation of an appropriate value system through structured social interactions and the development of “trust” [...] is not a radical alternative to the mainstream. It is mainstream. The New Regionalism provides a radical gloss on the assimilation of regional economic development policy to the agenda of a cultural transformation oriented to “competitiveness”. (Lovering 1999, 391).

market environment. Yet it does not necessarily fit comfortably with the need for regional *differentiation* which is now seen as *the* key to regional success, neither is it likely to be an area where regional regimes have much to say. Despite its popularity therefore, “benchmarking” may not in fact be the best instrument via which to attain a strategic edge, as the risk of “strategic herding” to use a very *McKinseyan*⁸ term, inevitably leading to the erosion of differentiation effects and a subsequent loss of competitiveness, hovers constantly on the horizon. What makes regions special, and what provides them with a competitive edge may rather be a collection of unique factors and not a few generalised universal characteristics associated with “benchmarking” and “best practice”, only waiting to be uncovered by application of the correct scientific methodology – namely, managerial measuring techniques.

Though general lessons may be difficult to draw, this only amplifies the need to choose the right concepts in the whole endeavour of comparative study (or any academic endeavour for that matter). It is also argued here that some aspects of this choice are deeply methodological, rather than merely theoretical: In the world of “regional studies” (understood as a multi-disciplinary field ranging from economic/political geography to history, political science and sociology), the term “regime” has a variety of alternative meanings and readings, many of which differ from that of mainstream usage in political science for example. Therefore the assumed multi-disciplinary nature of the field of study must be put under closer inspection, and an approach more tailored to the demands of political sociology as a core is thus suggested.

One could also ask what the relationship is between the cultural and institutional dimensions of regional formations, and what emergent regional practices can we view as responses to aspirations reflecting regional identities, as well as growth-oriented goals and functional needs? Are the citizens of such regions able to identify with the new institutional forms and practices? (Though it should be noted that this last question is in fact beyond the bounds of the current project, as this study is limited to focusing on the politico-administrative elites in these regions.)

The democratic accountability of regional governance is often a problematic issue. Naturally countries (and regions) differ in their regional set-ups, i.e. in terms of the centrality of different types of regional constellations. An underlying current of friction is however discernable between

⁸ McKinsey and Company is one of the biggest global management -consulting firms. Moreover, they seek to promulgate their corporate philosophy in their own journal entitled *The McKinsey Quarterly*, which they dub “The Journal for Managers”.

administrative and functional regions, which when added to the pressures of autonomy and identity within the context of globalisation and deep interdependence make co-operation all the more difficult. Indeed though regions aspire to increasing levels of independence in terms of strategic agency, they find themselves economically and politically constrained in a net of inter-dependencies beyond their own control. In addressing the question of the “ideal” type of regional organisation (from the relative points of view of the various actors involved), the project seeks to draw out some tentative conclusions in relation to the ongoing national debates in the Nordic countries (and their position vis-à-vis similar Europe-wide ones) to illustrate the ways in which these concerns are in fact universal rather than national *per se*, but also to suggest ways in which institutional choices could potentially help to strike a balance between the current managerialist trends, and governance alternatives more in line with traditional welfare goals, thus addressing various interests, currently sidelined within regional society. Rather than attempting to offer a socio-political solution at this stage, and reflecting the relatively early stage in the research cycle reached by this project, tentative openings into the ongoing debates coupled perhaps with some constructive confrontations will be suggested.

Regime-formation here thus refers to a process by which a set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area emerges (Krasner 1983, 2).⁹ Within the regional context, such regimes are strategic solutions or discursive instruments adopted in the case of regional or local conundrums, such as those posed by the economic problems of restructuring, out-migration, the lack of economic growth, and the low degree of regional attractiveness etc. In the positive sense, regional regimes can provide a framework within which institutional learning is accumulated and factors possibly hampering learning and straining the building of a positive institutional environment are minimised. In many cases regions approach such problems through the creation of a regional strategy instru-

⁹ See Lähtenmäki-Smith 2000 for a discussion on the theoretical premises of regime theory within International Relations. One particularly fruitful field of regime studies has been that associated with European integration, which has resulted in the emergence of a multitude of theoretical approaches to attempts at this particular type of co-operation and community building. Such approaches also include regime-theory in its inter-governmental form. Here the European Union is viewed simply as a “successful intergovernmental regime designed to manage economic interdependence through negotiated policy co-ordination”. (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 30)

ment of some type, though it is expected that only in cases where a *political space*¹⁰ exists can such strategic instruments be transformed into regimes, and thus reflected in permanent alterations of the regional identity and community, rather than in merely temporary “*ad hoc*” administrative arrangements. The question therefore emerges, to what extent can permanent changes manifest themselves in the ways in which things are done, and in which problems are solved through this currently prevailing strategic-instrumentalist approach?

2. The interaction between individual national debates and wider Nordic concerns

Though the ongoing debates on regional development and regime formation are national and regional in scope, it is clear that many of the key questions transcend national, regional or local contexts and actually allow us to draw, at least preliminary, conclusions on the nature of regional administration, ideal forms and scope of “regionality”, as well as policy recommendations seeking to enhance the democratic accountability of regional administrative structures.

While forms of regional administration, as well as the connected pressures as regards regional reform and the debates within which these are further developed, vary from one country to another, there are some questions relating to the nature of regional organisation and its political and functional principles that can be seen as shared by most Nordic countries. This becomes evident if one looks at the priorities for regional organisation set by almost any of the countries in question. Take the Norwegian case for example.

It was proposed by the Division of responsibilities Commission appointed by the Norwegian government in its report of July 2000 that in determining the ideal division of labour between the national government, regions, and local authorities that the following principles should be followed:

- Responsibility should be assigned to the lowest possible level.
- Responsibilities which demand local political value judgements should rest with popularly elected bodies.
- Responsibilities requiring standardisation, consideration for rules and control, should be national.
- The state should be responsible for tasks that demand a national overview and central decision-making.

¹⁰ This problematic can be further elaborated towards the question of whether local authorities can pursue something akin to “foreign policies”.

- Tasks that need to be co-ordinated should be assigned to the same administrative body.
- Tasks that need to be co-ordinated for the users should be assigned to the same administrative body.
- The decision-making authority in a question should also be responsible for financing the cost of the solution.

The same principles were retained in the governmental proposal on the Division of Responsibilities, published in March 2001, where particular emphasis was placed on the principle that decisions should be taken as close to those most affected by them.

What is interesting here is however the extent to which regional concerns are shared, no matter how different the various particular political and administrative contexts may be. This is a timely reminder of the fact that though structures and institutions may vary on the surface, regional concerns are often universal and local circumstances and experiences always unique.

The political objectives outlined in the Norwegian case above come quite close to the principles outlined in the Finnish administrative reform, some of the key objectives of which can be outlined as follows¹¹:

- Regional administration should be organised in ways that contribute to its coherence, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Responsibilities and division of labour between different levels should be organised in a way that clarifies the tasks of the different actors.
- Reform should support the development of regional administration and the formation of distinctive regions.
- Reform should contribute to the increased profile of regional administration.
- Reform should support municipal autonomy and enhance municipal opportunities of participating in regional forms of co-operation.

¹¹ These objectives have been compiled from a hierarchically organised data set and one should note that these hierarchies or degrees of centrality have not always been taken into account here. Thus some objectives that may in fact have been prioritised over others are not necessarily given the same centrality here. Equally there may be priorities of a more principal nature that lie behind the objectives outlined here and will become more pronounced once the study delves deeper into the priorities and interests of the different regional actors.

- Reform should enhance the decentralisation of service functions from the counties to the local level.
- Reform should enhance the decentralisation of power from the central level to the regional.
- Steering functions need to be organised in a clear and functional fashion, enhancing both the *functional capacity* (of the county level) and the *coherence of economic and labour policy* through the Employment and Economic Development Centres.
- Service provision within the regional level units is to be taken as close to the citizen as possible and developed into a more versatile and good-quality area (Stenvall & Harisalo 2000, 28 and 31-38.)

The Swedish policy priorities regarding the optimal organisational structure of the regional level as indicated for instance in the recent report by the parliamentary committee on the regions (PARK), emphasised the need to enhance the level of democratisation with regard to regional development work, as well as the need to clarify the division of responsibilities on the regional level (similar themes and priorities also emerge in a number of other policy-documents, such as SOU 2000:85, SOU 1999:103, SOU 1996:119 and SOU 2000:64).

Recent concerns over the need to improve administrative structures in Denmark also reflected similar concerns. Standards to be met when choosing the administrative solutions for regional/local level have for instance included the following goals: ¹²

- Taking decisions as close to the citizen as possible.
- Limiting the number of political levels.
- Giving full competence to those levels responsible for various regional or local administrative tasks.
- Ensuring optimal size for decision-making and effective administration (Sandberg & Ståhlberg 2000, 75-77).

From the separate sets of policy priorities sought through regional reforms an agenda that can be defined as consisting of the following themes thus emerges:

¹² These have been outlined for instance in the work undertaken by the commission set to evaluate the ideal organisational form for the Copenhagen capital region.

- *Democracy* – ensuring that systems of administration and their institutional and organisational principles and practices are based on the decisions of actors that are democratically accountable.
- *Subsidiarity* – taking decision-making and service-provision as close to the citizen as possible.
- *Legitimacy* – ensuring that the regional level service-provision and administrative activities in fact respond to the needs and justified expectations of the citizens and that the division of power is justified in terms of democratic principles.
- *Efficiency* – ensuring that the units and actors within the structures, as well as the practices implemented by them, pursue their goals and manage their tasks in a financially and functionally efficient fashion.
- *Dynamism* – goals of growth and economic prosperity, ensuring the creation and maintenance of an environment that contributes to the creation of innovation and learning.

The core of the issue seems to be the need to strike a balance between autonomy and interdependence. Regional and local units still strive for a certain level of autonomy, but at the same time they are increasingly aware of the fact that any autonomy can in today's internationalised socio-economic climate only be relative. As Michael Keating has rather fittingly put it, in today's world there no longer exists independence, only strategies for managing dependencies (Keating 1998, 25). The formation and management of these strategies within the national and regional context is the crux of the matter here, as administrative borders and (potentially borderless) regimes are balanced together.

Whether these principles enjoy popular support in the regions analysed in this study and whether they in fact are something that is explicitly acknowledged by those working with regional development issues thus becomes an interesting question. How universally accepted these goals in fact are, and how they are reflected in the every-day practices and activities of individuals within the regions thus become practical, indeed potentially measurable questions of some importance. Whether current regional administrative formations in fact fill these criteria (and are perceived as doing so by those working in these organisations) will thus be one of the key questions addressed in what follows.

In addition to such questions that can be taken as reflective of certain values within the organisations' in question, some further questions raised in the survey and interview stage relate to the working methods of

regional organisations in terms of the social capital accumulated and maintained through regional regimes.

- Consultancy – the role and centrality of private consultants in regional development activities of this type has previously been analysed (cf. Putnam, 1993) and it seems to be relevant also for the formation of semi-permanent regimes. How then to assess the role of private individuals? Is their role part of the construction of social capital and therefore also partially responsible for the maintenance of dominant elites and potentially detrimental for public participation on a wider front? Do those directly involved with regional development activities (as civil servants, non-politicians) feel that they have a role similar to consultants, indeed how do they actually perceive their role?
- How do the actors perceive their cognitive social capital – the less tangible aspects of social capital assessed in terms of norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour?

Structural social capital is the main concern in the survey section, as the composition and practices of local level institutions, both formal and informal, serve as instruments of community development. Built through horizontal organizations and networks that have collective and transparent decision making processes, accountable leaders, and practices of collective action and mutual responsibility.

Beyond the International Relations context regime theory has been widely used in urban governance studies (e.g. Dowding 2001, Stone 1989, 1993), though fewer attempts to apply the regime concept in a sub-regional context have, as yet, been undertaken. In urban studies, regimes are understood as “the informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions” (Stone 1989, 6) What is more, such regimes are intended to manage conflict and make adaptive responses to social change (ibid). Thus it can be argued that the motivation here is very similar to that of regional regimes introduced above. Why are “regimes” popular in the case of urban governance? The primary reason seems to be connected to the nature of political life in urban areas: formal politico-institutional arrangements are simply less relevant than the multiplicity of informal networks and arrangements existing between those in power within the urban governance structure. These arrangements made in order to carry out governing decisions are necessarily determined by their institutional scope (sufficient to mobilise resources required to make and implement decisions) and by the extent of co-operation (the need to promote sufficiently

well co-ordinated and extensive co-operative efforts in order to reach decisions and sustain action in support of these decisions by the actors involved) (ibid). In the local political environment the main motivation for regime maintenance is that of re-election: Local politicians need to forge alliances and create coalitions in order to pursue the political goals that they deem are likely to get them re-elected, and therefore the theory of regime formation and maintenance essentially becomes one of coalition politics. Regional regimes are likely to follow an entirely different logic however, at least in cases where structures of democratic accountability are absent, and re-election does not motivate the actions of those involved in the regimes.

For this reason it seems clear that some of the assumptions of the regime theory in its pluralist form (Stone, op. cit.) may need to be re-considered in the regional setting. It is obvious that the political governance structures of the regions are more often than not less formal, and less established in nature than those of government. Though some form of democratically accountable governance does exist in the Nordic countries, the role and status of regional political organs differs greatly from that of urban areas (or municipalities in general). In most cases regions are functionally specific entities that have different delimitations and borders for different purposes and therefore regions are what we might call *shifting entities*, something that is likely to be reflected in the nature of the regimes within them.

In many cases "regions" are made up of entities and organisations that are not directly elected or democratically accountable, which means that the need to create regimes to hold a certain power constellation in place for reasons of political expediency or electoral support is unlikely to emerge in the same way. However, if there are regional regimes, their task of creating some type of governance facilitation becomes even more difficult than in the case of urban regimes or other regimes where the boundaries are stable and well established. This is likely to be one of the reasons for the need to create social capital in the region: as it can in many cases act as a key factor in solidifying a regime and in enabling good (responsive and democratic, as well as efficient) regional governance.

How can the development of shared principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures within a region contribute to the restructuring of competitive regions? What conditions are required for the emergence of such shared conceptions and values? How are they reflected in the competitiveness of the region in question? How is the emergence of various regional regimes influenced by the regions' own attempts to balance the "dynamic" and "traditional" aspects of their character, i.e. seeking to pro-

mote their image as competitive and dynamic regions (or “learning regions”), while at the same time seeking to balance traditional regional cultures and institutional arrangements.

A further important question to be raised in this context is whether regional differences in regime-formation are due to some intrinsic regional characteristics (cf. Putnam) that are likely to explain why some (types of) regions are more capable of forging regional regimes that contribute to both growth and welfare, thus adding to their adaptability and competitiveness, or whether the process of regime-formation follows the same logic in all regions and thus can be forged through external influences.

Regimes are necessarily built in *political space*, which is the forum within which political debate takes place, a space recognised by political actors in which decisions are taken and legitimised, with or without political autonomy and political institutions (on the nature of this space see Keating 1998, Lähteenmäki-Smith 1999, chapter 7). It is important to note that such a space is not necessarily a formal structure, i.e. a structure of government, but can also function as a principle of organisation in civil society. As for instance Putnam’s classic studies have indicated, regional government usually works better in places where civil society is well developed, has a sense of identity, civic traditions, community life and relations of confidence and interface (Putnam 1993). Though the nature of social capital can be indirectly approach in setting the survey questions it is unlikely that the cases discussed here are sufficient to draw more generalised conclusions on the actual *differences* between levels of social capital across the Nordic countries.

The frameworks within which regional learning and growth have been viewed in recent years have been predominately administrative and/or economic (e.g. Maskell and Törnqvist 1999, Hallin and Malmberg 1996, Eskelinen 1997), while political issues within these processes seem to have attracted less interest, or have been predominately viewed through the framework of the structural funds initiatives (cf. Aalbu et al. 1999). Though administrative reforms have become a central focus (e.g. Stenvall & Harisalo 2000, Sandberg & Ståhlberg 2000, Ståhlberg 2000), their connection with the politics of regionalism and regionalisation (e.g. Keating 1998, Jeffery 2000, Lähteenmäki-Smith 1999) has remained a distant one. Though attempts at multi-disciplinary analyses have surfaced, a sufficient level of interaction or dialogue between perspectives has yet to emerge. It is therefore assumed for the purposes of this paper that the concept of “regime” can help to solidify this dialogue and to provide a firmer ground for it to take root in the context of a multi-disciplinary exercise.

The chosen regions from Norway, Finland and Sweden were included in the study because in two of these countries (Sweden and Norway) ongoing debates on building functional and administrative regions and on regional learning are already taking place, benefiting from the corresponding experiences and debates emanating from Finland over the last few years. The Finnish case does not provide an “ideal type” for regional regime-formation, but as it has been the object, as well as at least a partial source for a number of political, identity-based as well as administrative studies (e.g. Stenvall & Harisalo 2000, Haveri 1997, Häkli 1994, Eskelinen 1991, Karppi 1996), it is already well documented and thus provides a good comparative viewpoint on these issues. The inclusion of the two autonomous regions in the study provides for comparative cases where the term “border” has a completely different meaning, due to both locational and geographic factors and political status. Therefore these particular sub-cases can help us to draw a number of conclusions on the possible changes in the nature of regimes, as well as on the relevance of borders in situations relating to high degrees of autonomy. Thus the main focus of the question posed here is: is autonomy a contributory factor in the creation of effective regimes for growth and regional development?

It could be argued that though administrative reforms demanded by the needs of Europeanisation and globalisation have brought administrative regions (territorial space *à la Keating*) into the limelight, they can be seen as gradually losing meaning as containers of regionality. In the traditional view, there is little room for regions in those countries where there is a tradition of strong and autonomous municipal government in combination with a unitary state, as in the Netherlands or in the Scandinavian countries (Keating 1998, 19). Yet it could be argued that regionalisation in its current European guise is more likely to sever the traditional connection between the dominant political and state tradition and new conceptions of political space, as regional capacities, as well as political resources are expected to be available to support learning mechanisms connected to the European and wider international dimensions of regional competitiveness. In this sense it might also be interesting at a later stage of the project to look at regions with different experiences, such as regions with separatist claims for independence, regions whose status and identity as a “region” differs markedly from the prevalent model. (See e.g. Mørkøre 1999.) This difference and the tensions that it reflects is likely to have a direct impact on the nature of regional regimes, not to mention on the nature of borders (and thus by extension, on “borderless regimes”).

The regimes highlighted in this study include those emerging around the implementation and administration of EU structural funding

processes and/or other national forms of regional support, such as environmental regimes aimed at the better management of local/regional environmental problems, forms of initiating and encouraging regional/local forms of co-operation between the private and public sectors, and novel forms of strategic interaction established for the sake of economic and competitive advancement. The key notions here are regional growth and cohesion, i.e. has a regional regime emerged within any of the cases analysed which provides an informal, though semi-institutionalised set of principles and norms in connection with regional development issues as a whole? What is the core of such a regime, and who are the main actors maintaining it?

3. The study cases in light of changes in regional policy

The case studies include three administrative regions, all of which have undergone, or are currently undergoing, reform processes or are experiencing pressures to do so (Kainuu in Finland, Sør-Trøndelag in Norway, and Västra Götaland in Sweden). The cases are not expected to offer universally applicable conclusions or lessons, but rather provide examples of a path-dependent development within a similar historical contingency in different Nordic countries.¹³ Moreover, it is assumed that in terms of the traditional aspects of regionality, autonomous regions are more stable and less prone to shifting regimes, as their identity is more dependent on the maintenance of traditional values. (This was one of the questions addressed during the survey/interview-phase, as the question of actual tangible cultural difference is central to that of regional identity, which is constructed and maintained through the – either conscious or unconscious – process of regime-formation.)

Entertaining the possibility of emerging “borderless regions” within the Nordic countries entails breaking with the traditional view of strict politico-administrative borders in these countries. This may be connected to the changing nature of the unitary European state system as a whole, though it may also reflect the changing nature of social and political agency. Even more important than changes in national governance structures and institutions is the pressure of basic social change itself. Although populations in Western Europe have become more educated than ever before and are thus better equipped to profit from the existing democratic

¹³ The subject of comparative political analysis and the problems and challenges it faces as a methodology has recently been discussed for instance by Keränen (2001), emphasising the fact that while increased integration requires more comparative studies, the contextuality of even similar or geographically closely situated cases should not be overlooked.

routes to influence, as a consequence of shifting values they have also become less willing to accept such routes at face value. Indeed they have become more willing to question such traditional routes to influence, searching instead for alternatives, thus posing further challenges to current forms of democratic governance. (See for instance Loughlin 2001 and Melucci 1996)

The way in which the regions are approached is directly related to the way in which the regime concept is used in this context. Thus, in the survey of the regions, the following questions were posed:

- What are the most important co-operative and co-ordinating social and professional connections and networks (around regional development)? What explicit and implicit purpose do these serve and is their role viewed similarly by the different actors involved?
- The legal and administrative regime is (or at least should be) unambiguous and clear to everyone. Does the same apply to the “regional regime”: is there a shared view of underlying principles, norms and rules guiding the behaviour of actors within the region? If so, what are they? If not, what (perceived) consequences is this likely to have for the actors and forms of governance involved?
- Is there an explicit willingness amongst the public sector to create forms of co-operation and co-ordination (also between public and private sectors), which could contribute to enhancing learning capabilities within the region?
- Are there *key actors* (that could also be referred to as “regional elites”) that are crucial to regime building and maintenance, and what sectors do they typically represent?
- Regimes are intended to facilitate co-operation by lowering transaction costs, providing information and rendering the behaviour of others more predictable. Which sectors require regimes, or which sectors are likely to benefit most from their emergence?

3.1 Between regional autonomy and administrative window-dressing?

The key differences between the regions in question are their nationally varying politico-administrative structures, and the different functions performed by the regions themselves. The Swedish regions have not traditionally been of great significance, though recent regionalisation trends have been increasingly visible. In those county administrative boards (*länstyrelse*) participating in the ongoing administrative experiment, regional development responsibilities have been shifted away from the county ad-

ministrative boards to the *regional self-governing bodies*. This is also the case for Västra Götaland. The administrative experiment phase will in the next instance be extended further with other regions adapting similar solutions from the beginning of 2003 onwards. The Västra Götaland-model is briefly described below.

The chief executive body in the region is the regional board consisting of 17 members appointed by the regional council with its directly elected 149 members. Elections to these bodies are organised in connection to national and local elections, which take place every four years (next elections in autumn 2002).¹⁴ In addition to the political organisation there is a large administrative body that makes up the “region”, with approximately 48 000 employees, ranging from hospital staff and healthcare workers to civil servants responsible for regional development all of whom work within the cultural establishments of the region. Healthcare and regional development are perhaps the two most strategically important responsibilities of the regional body. As has been argued elsewhere, the region faces special challenges because of its large size and thus in order to avoid over-centralisation the organisation of its administration is in fact devolved into six regional units.

While the “democratically accountable” governance model is now available for a number of Swedish regions, the “regional democracy experiment” will be now be taken further into its second phase, with all regions willing to implement a similar model able to do so from the beginning of 2003. The possibilities of implementing directly elected regional governance solutions seem however more limited for the “new-comers” than for those already “in the process”. Moreover this view has been openly expressed by the Swedish local authorities who essentially remain sceptical as to the current form of the governance experiment.

¹⁴ The political mandates in the regional council are currently (May 2002) distributed on the basis of following share of votes (mandates in parentheses): Social democrats 33,2% (50); The Moderates 20,5% (31); The Christian democrats 11,8% (18); The Left Party 11,3% (17); The Liberals 6,7% (10); The Centre Party 6,2% (10); The Green Party 4,8% (7); the local “Health Care Party” (Sjukvårdspartiet Folkets Vilja) 3,7 % (6).

Regional autonomy experiment

- Second phase launched by the government White Paper "Regional samverkan och statlig länsförvaltning (Prop. 2001/02:7).
- The experiment initially began in 1997, with Kalmar, Skåne, Gotland and Västra Götaland.
- From the beginning of 2003, all regions will have the possibility of implementing a type of regional autonomy –model or launching a new co-operation organ (as it has been recently dubbed), providing that all municipalities are for this. By August 2002 interested regions are expected to have informed the government of their intentions regarding prospective participation.
- The main objective of the initiative is to develop the distribution of powers between the state regional authorities and the democratically accountable local authorities. One of the most interesting dimensions of the initiative to the theme at hand here is the possibility of anchoring regional development more closely to democratic decision-making, making it more a matter of democratically accountable development rather than administration. (Other areas of activity involved include infrastructure, some elements of spatial planning, and (regional) cultural policy).

The scepticism of the local authorities is mainly related to the nature of the institutions or organisational entities implementing the governance model. It is often perceived by the local authorities that whereas the currently implemented "experiment" has entailed an "autonomous body" – implementing real regional autonomy, the legislation allowing for the geographical extension of the model will be limited to "co-operation". Differences have been elaborated in a report by the local authorities (Svenska Kommunförbundet 2002), that seems to suggest that those participating in the "second stage" will not enjoy the same actual autonomy as those who participated in the first.

<i>Autonomy model (during the experiment until 2003)</i> <i>(SJÄLVSTYRELSEORGAN)</i>	<i>Co-operation organ model (from 2003 onwards)</i> <i>(SAMVERKANSORGAN)</i>
Independent legal role	No independent legal role, more of a co-ordinating body
Stable position, the whole region participates, dissolved only with central-government decision	Unstable position – consensus requirement among the municipalities
<i>Landsting</i> (the regional level that is democratically accountable) participates	<i>Landsting</i> may participate, though not necessarily
Central government retains decision-making power over business support funding, EU-co-financing and of other regional project funding (total in 2001 approx. 1600 million SEK)	Only a small share of regional development funding decided upon by the new organ (sum equivalent to approximately 220 million SEK in 2003)
Decides independently upon the forms of monitoring and evaluation	Central government decides upon the forms of monitoring and evaluation
Regional state authorities (i.e. länsstyrelse) only responsible for a small part of regional development instruments	Regional state authorities (i.e. länsstyrelse) responsible for most of the regional development instruments

The experiences of Västra Götaland seem to have been largely positive and encouraging in terms of regional democracy, though it is acknowledged that the region itself may simply be too large to form a single unified region. It is more likely that the sub-regions that make up the Regional Growth Agreements (8 in total) are eventually seen to be more relevant as co-operative regions with shared regimes and working practices, rather than the whole of the Västra Götaland region, which may thus be limited to “administrative region” status. In some areas though the shared “idea” steering the work in the region seems to have become more focused with the experiment, awareness of strategic issues has improved and the motivation for working towards regional development has become increasingly strongly felt. It thus seems likely that the regime-formation of the region has changed in recent years to reflect this administrative change, and that forms of intra- and inter-regional co-operation are thus central to the current regime. As such, Västra Götaland can be seen as a region where the regional regime has, quite consciously, been under con-

struction, though because of the geographical size of the region this has at times occurred in a rather fragmented fashion.

As with Sweden, where the most important administrative reform was the shifting of regional development responsibilities to the new self-governing bodies, the Finnish regions also gained this responsibility after the 1994 reform process was completed. The difference between the two countries however lies in the nature of the approach to democratic accountability, as Finnish regions are not directly accountable to the electorate, though increased democracy and accountability was among the guiding principles behind the administrative reform of 1994.¹⁵ Though the regions acquired the additional task of being responsible for regional development functions, the political reality of their indirectly accountable nature is likely to see the continuance of many of the previous working practices and power structures, as well as of the traditional regional regime formation structures.¹⁶

It is not however necessarily the case that the mere observance of political accountability provides for a “better” (more stable, responsive, efficient) regional regime. It may even be the case that where political accountability provides an automatic system of “checks and balances” in regional governance, that less attention is paid to regional regime-formation in its more informal guises. It may also be that informal and formal regimes have different goals and purposes, requiring different inputs from the actors within them. Instead of the traditional activities associated with political behaviour (organisational affiliation, party membership, electoral activity) the informal regimes that we are interested in here are likely to require less standardised action, though no doubt they will require concomitant levels of mobilisation and strategic awareness. As such, we can ask, are those involved in building and maintaining regional regimes acting in a strategically aware and goal-oriented way? And, what are the instruments that allow them to pursue such strategic goals?¹⁷

¹⁵ Regional reforms generally seek to promote similar values, ranging from democratic accountability and subsidiarity to legitimacy, efficiency and dynamism in the sense of “good governance” at the regional level. (For the Finnish case see Stenvall and Harisalo 2000, 28.)

¹⁶ Though this question is beyond the scope of this project, it would also be interesting to view regime formation and maintenance from the perspective of elite formation, i.e. analysing the status maintenance of regional elites from the point of view of institutional learning (or rather the lack thereof) as done by for instance Stone (1989, 242-244).

¹⁷ It is undoubtedly the case that awareness of strategic agency within the regions has improved, as it is necessitated by the administration of Structural Funds and other current regional policy instruments. Yet strategic agency could also be im-

The learning aspects of regional development are central to the strategic planning documents in the regions and expertise is presented as a key focus in most of them. Learning and expertise are however more often than not viewed in a limited fashion, thus consisting mainly of the availability and quality of traditional institutions and resources connected to expertise (R&D investments, industrial innovations and university education). As such, little attention appears to be paid to the institutional learning aspects of the regional regimes and regionally relevant organisations themselves (see also Karppi, Lähteenmäki-Smith and Kokkonen 2001). Therefore this has been one of the main points of enquiry: is institutional learning promoted (explicitly or implicitly) within the regional regime, and can regional/national variations in this respect be explained by cultural, institutional (or other) reasons?

Though intra-regional co-operation is essential to the establishment of a regional regime, it is the level of inter-regional co-operation and contacts that must be seen to be essential in the present day political *milieu*, and in fact it is they that form a significant part of the regional regime, as in some cases the connections across regional borders can become more important than those within the region itself. Thus inter-regional co-operation can be seen as an intrinsic part of the regional regime that emerges in response to the pressures of a competitive international environment in which regions in particular need to motivate their actions in response to the need for economic and administrative efficiency.

In some cases of inter-regional co-operation, pressure can be detected towards the establishment of larger regional entities (see for example the case of North and South Trøndelag in Norway who recently formed a co-operative council, Trøndelagrådet). In the Norwegian case the whole regional level has at one and the same time come under pressure, first with regard to one of the main responsibilities (hospitals) becoming centralised, i.e. taken away from the regional level of *fylkeskommune*. These tensions and the fact that no final solutions have been made in this respect were visible throughout the case study on Norway. No final conclusions are as yet available with regard to how these tensions will finally be articulated in respect of possibly deep-felt repercussions on regional governance as a whole and how the new role of the *fylkeskommune* can be developed outside its traditional one.

The need to forge forms of co-operation in order to counter a number of potential and often unwanted administrative reforms is one possible motivation for forging new organisational forms of co-operation, though it

proved by placing more emphasis on institutional learning within the regions. (Karppi, Lähteenmäki-Smith & Kokkonen 2001)

is not the only one. Regimes are also forged and maintained in order to implement key policy innovations and new practices (e.g. in the case of EU membership the regions forged formal and informal regimes in order to implement the Structural Funds programmes; e.g. Aalbu, Hallin and Mariussen 1999), as well as to promote learning and communication within the region, which can thus be seen as a natural part of a wider “good governance” process.

Good governance has in recent years been widely discussed both nationally, regionally and in the European sphere. The main principles of “good governance” as outlined by the European Commission in its recent White Paper on governance (European Commission 2001) are *openness* (of institutions and decision-making, using more accessible language to ensure that decisions are both accessible and understandable with regard to the general public); *participation* (ensuring inclusion and the widest participation possible throughout the policy-making as a whole from conception to implementation); *accountability* (ensuring that roles and responsibilities in the legislative and executive processes are clear); *effectiveness* (ensuring that the policies implemented are effective and timely, delivering what is needed on the basis of clear objectives, an evaluation of future impact and, where available, of past experience, making sure also that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level); *coherence* (despite the great diversity within the member states and the institutions involved, it has to be ensured that policies and actions must be coherent and easily understood). These principles are not only a European concern, but are also still relevant and worth pursuing within the national and the regional contexts, such as those discussed here. They can be seen as pre-requisites for regimes that deliver policies and services that are in line with good governance and are thus in themselves democratically desirable.

It was suggested here that a form of regime analysis could provide us with a useful tool for the analysis of regional (politico-administrative, but also – and more importantly – institutional and cultural) differences, which result in differences in learning and economic performance (seen here as the dominant aspirations according to the prevailing ideology of *learning regions/economy/institutions...*). It was argued here that the nature of comparative studies needs to be further discussed in order to allow for sufficient path-dependency to prevail, rather than seeking universal generalisations that often provide less interesting information for further study. It is assumed here that the approach broadly identifiable as “New Regionalism” can only benefit from a more sociologically oriented and context-sensitive epistemology that does not assume to provide policy solutions for all regions, but rather a tool of analysis for regionally specific

conditions and their relevance in the historical development of such particular circumstances.

3.2 The impact of “new regional policy” on Kainuu region

Finnish regional policy has often been referred to as “programme-based” and indeed since Finland joined the European Union one can say that the phrase has been marked by the introduction of policy instruments that are indicative of this. The new initiatives have however also been embedded in the tradition of Finnish regional policy, i.e. in the tension and seeking of balance between the unitary state and its often quite centralised structures and the need for more regionalisation allowing for the country’s polycentricity to be maintained.

The Finnish regional policy complex has become an increasingly multi-faceted whole, with various programmes and policy initiatives addressing similar policy objectives, though with few people really grasping the nature of the co-ordination structure at all times. As part of the national policy folder addressing regional policy objectives, the Regional Centre Development Programme is based on the Governmental Programme. Other relevant national level policy instruments include for instance The Centre of Expertise Programme, developing internationally competitive fields of expertise; The support project for sub-regional cooperation (SEUTU), which expands voluntary forms of sub-regional cooperation between municipalities (economic regions) and develops cooperation and negotiation procedures both between economic regions and the central government and among the economic regions; as well as the Rural Policy Programme, seeking to strengthen the viability of rural areas.

The logic behind the introduction of the regional centres programme in Finland in 2000 and the subsequent selection of a total of 34 regionally based programmes was very clearly based on the attempt to promote a more polycentric and balanced spatial structure. As such, the programme was launched in part as a response to the centralisation of Finnish economic development in a few urban areas during the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century, with the expressed intention of promoting the development of urban regions of different sizes into stronger regional centres and of promoting cooperation between municipalities, enterprises, educational institutions and research centres, and non-governmental organisations. The key focus is placed on innovation policy and its promotion as an important urban policy resource, as well as on better co-ordination between the existing policy instruments (national and European), as well as on novel forms of inter-municipal co-operation in the area of public services.

In the case of the Kainuu region, the programme was closely connected to the region's ambition of qualifying as one of the new centres to be included in the national Centre of Expertise Programme, which seeks to foster innovation and expertise in chosen areas. Areas of expertise have been clustered around electronics and measuring techniques and the one thing that is seen as decisive is the availability of university-level education. Kainuu is one of those few Finnish regions without a university and this has been seen as one of the major reasons behind the lagging nature of its regional development, as expertise, high technology and higher education have been the pillars upon which national success stories have been built. While the current primary funding source may be the European Union, national policy initiatives and national policy programme-based regional development ideology make it essential that Kainuu be included in the national policy programme as such programmes tend to have certain synergy advantages and by-products that are worth having, not least due to the effects that they have on the image of the regions in question.

The commuting criteria set by the national steering group for the programme implied that the extensive regional approach originally intended (with the whole region participating in the programme) was reduced to the five municipalities closest to Kajaani, the core (i.e. Kajaani, Paltamo, Ristijärvi, Sotkamo, and Vuolijoki). This was in line with the Kajaani functional region, as Kainuu in itself was seen as simply too large to form one functional region. Kajaani was the natural core of the region as it also hosts the national authorities placed in the region. This is understandably seen as something of a problem by the more rural parts of the region excluded from the functional region that would be likely to receive most external support in the shape of funding. While the geographical area itself was thus not easily delimited, the areas of activity were much more easily identifiable, largely because they were developed in line with previous strategy documents and regional plans. (The area of developing regional expertise and new forms of inter-municipal co-operation). Funding for 2002 was 235 000 euros. Among the selected activities are a number of projects aiming to develop the "critical mass" referred to above. One such example being a shared project by different public authorities, regional actors and municipalities that seek to recruit new "key personnel" in a more coherent and consistent fashion.

How then is this programme and its regional relevance viewed by those involved in regional development activities and strategy formation? Moreover, what does the programme itself contribute with regard to the creation of a functional and institutional complex that could be referred to as a regional regime? Views on this question can be divided into three

main groups: the pro-active, the re-active and the indifferent, each presented in the following sub-sections.

It is worth noting first that the strengths and weaknesses, institutional limitations and co-ordination challenges in Kainuu are naturally not unique, rather they reflect widespread trends. In this sense the biggest challenges are likely to remain in the area of sectoral policy and its ever-problematic co-ordination. Other problems are equally familiar from other predominately rural regions, i.e. the weakness of the industrial base, reliance on traditional areas of industry and on a few large companies rather than on a larger number of SMEs. Developments within the areas of migration and employment have been particularly problematic in Kainuu, something that has naturally necessitated much debate on possible ways of addressing such problems. In some cases there has been apparent consensus as to these instruments and the policies required, though there are also often differences in the approaches taken to regional development activities. These approaches can also be found in the other regions included in the survey section, though there the phase of discussion seemed to be rather different, as Västra Götaland was rather far into the implementation stages of its “autonomy experiment” and Sør-Trøndelag at the time of the interviews in the winter of 2002 was still mired in uncertainty, as the final form of the administrative reform was yet then to be established.

The case of Finland seems clear-cut in the sense that though the legislative framework was actually undergoing changes during the writing of this report (resulting in the new legislative proposal for regional development in February 2002), the situation with regard to the regional policy regime on the national level, at least in terms of the prevailing programme-orientation, was clear and straightforward. There is little doubt that the current programme-based regional policy implemented in Finland since the attainment of EU membership is going to be pursued as a “rule-of thumb” working method, at least until the onset of the reforms to be implemented across the whole of European regional policy by 2007. Yet debates on the objectives, working methods and practices within these programmes of course continue to recur. It could be said that the recent focus on expertise as a tool for regional development has become increasingly accompanied by a concern for service provision, and these two in fact are central in the regional centres development programme. The focus as regards Sør-Trøndelag and Västra Götaland are slightly different, partly also reflecting national differences over regional development programming as a whole.

Sør-Trøndelag perhaps places most emphasis on quality of life factors, while providing a safe living environment for children is emphasised

over and above the more economically targeted programmes dealing with competence development and provision to be found in Finland and Sweden. Maintaining the current settlement structure is also something that is less explicitly prioritised beyond the Sør-Trøndelag case, reflecting the stronger Norwegian national priority setting around this issue. The economy is of course not completely absent from Norwegian priority-setting however, as marine resources, fish and oil are central to the programme's priority-setting, and thus provide the economic base upon which the laudable social objectives can be pursued.

Sweden perhaps comes closer to the prevalent regional development philosophy in Finland than does Norway, as considerable emphasis is based on competence development, industrial renewal and the accessibility of services. Perhaps the one issue that stands out in the Swedish case as compared to the other two is the centrality of "equality of opportunity" concerns. While Norway and Finland seem to pay relatively little attention to the gender issue in relation to regional development, it plays quite an important role in the Regional Growth Agreement of Västra Götaland, as Västra Götaland is one of the pilot regions for "equal growth agreements" and specific attention is paid to this theme in the whole programme process. In the case of Finland this is not a prioritised theme in the regional centres development programme and the visibility of women in the decision-making process is largely dependent on the presence of women in key posts within the regional and local administration. In the case of Kainuu, few women are present: in the steering group only one member and the co-ordinator of the programme are women. In Norway on the other hand equality of opportunity is not a central theme in regional development programme work in general, though the women working within the programme management have their own networks and remain in close contact when it comes to relevant projects.

4. Attitudes to regime-change

Despite the differences in emphasis and working methods in all of the cases included in the study however there are similarities in terms of the different types of attitudes and practices that have emerged as responses to administrative reform pressures. These can be typified in three different types, which have been discussed in particular as relating to the Finnish case, but can in many cases also be applied to the situations pertaining to Sweden and Norway.

4.1 The indifferent view

We might best start by considering the view labelled here as “indifference”. This may sound a rather negative viewpoint, though it is in fact more to do with the fact that some organisations do not stand as close to the programme preparation process and may only be affected by the programme itself in an indirect fashion. Hence the “indifferent” view is the view of those who have not been intimately involved in the programme preparation and who consider the regional centres development programme to be merely one policy tool among many, thus possibly of great significance to some sectors and some actors within the regional development complex, while at the same time not infringing in any significant way on other on-going policy processes taking place in the area of regional development within the Kainuu region.

This view was perhaps most apparent within the rural policy field, though at times it may in fact come closer to the divisional view with underlying tension between regional growth and cohesion. In terms of the “indifference” itself however some interviewees put it appropriately when they responded to the question, “what does this programme mean for you and the regional development work within which you are active”, by saying that the (regional centre development) programme did not interfere with their activities. Scepticism did however sometimes become apparent, as some of the interviewees saw that this situation is in fact indicative of a more general dualism in Finnish regional policy, where regional urban centres and their development, and the rural policy for more peripheral regions, seldom meet in terms of the preparation of Finnish policy. Within some national regional policy circles rural policy is in fact prioritised and actively promoted (particularly by the Ministry of Agriculture) and novel policy content for rural development is encouraged, even in path-breaking forms, while at the same time within the regions attitudes are more clearly dualist: those that are in charge of regional policy as a whole however tend to hold rural policy in quite low esteem. Since the organisation of regional policy instruments within the regions is adminis-

tered (in view of some) in a rather hierarchical fashion, the two (regional development for the region as a whole, increasingly circled around the leading role of urban growth centres within the regions and rural policy for peripheral regions) are not developed in an integrated fashion and the priority setting tends to reflect the interests of the centres rather than the region as a whole. Rural policy may at times seem fragmentary in its approach, as the individual projects do not necessarily become embedded in the whole regional policy complex, but rather are developed on a case-by-case basis. The municipalities within the region seldom view rural policy as a priority area and thus they are more likely to seek to adhere to policies that further strengthen the (very few) regional growth centres (=Kajaani and its surrounding area). This is in line with the oft-expressed need to develop the one regional centre Kainuu has, as the region as a whole lags behind in regional development terms.

The strengths of the regional regimes are more often based on the personal commitment and strong motivation of those involved in project activities than on institutional construction. As such, the assumption that regional strengths are based on “uniqueness” and therefore are difficult to replicate was confirmed. The individual commitment and networks should however be more deeply embedded in their regional environment and the institutional resources instead of relying too strongly on individual resources. Once a person changes his or her position it seemed he or she also takes his networks with him/her and little organisational learning takes place in this regard. This was a recurrent theme with the interviewees, who felt that it is too often the case that personal resources and commitment are not met by sufficient support from the administrative structures and organisational representatives.

The weaknesses of the institutional structure in Kainuu echo similar experiences of other peripheral regions with insufficient levels of “critical mass” to introduce novel and perhaps at times even more “daring” policy choices, and where historical path-dependency has never really allowed for innovative and pro-active policy lines, but have rather reflected a more reactive approach to development and exogenous sources of development. In such cases the inter-municipal and regional forms of co-operation and a certain regional consensus are to be seen as a major advantage.

In the discussion with the regional representatives from the different organisations around the regional complex of Kainuu, it soon became apparent that institutional and organisational structures are likely to profit from a mix of stability and dynamism: as the actors' capabilities to respond to policy challenges may improve with time and experience, becoming more firmly embedded into their regional environment and accumulating

more institutional capacities, the institutional capacity is sometimes also strengthened and promoted by new ideas and new network resources following the new recruits into the regional constellation. Indifference is however a relatively rare stance, with, as we shall see, the reactive and pro-active approaches tending to predominate.

4.2 The pro-active view

The need to stir the organisational and institutional constellation at times in order to achieve a new dynamic in the structures and among the relevant actors applies both to personal resources and recruitment, as well as to institutional “new-comers”. A typical example of the latter is “Kainuun Etu”, a relatively new entrant into the regional development complex as an inter-municipal organisation promoting business co-operation and development. The model of a business development centre is familiar from the international context, though it is more of a newcomer in the Finnish regional policy sphere. “Kainuun Etu” acts as a business development corporation and it is jointly owned by the municipalities of the region. The role of the company is defined as “contributing to regional growth and assisting companies within regionally determined key sectors in developing their business operations, competitiveness, growth and cooperative activities; as well as developing key clusters and realising the preconditions for their operation; and promoting the development of the regional commercial structure”. With a small staff and relatively limited project portfolio (approx. ten projects on-going / year), the organisation has contributed to making industrial policy a more high-priority issue within the municipalities taking part and this in itself can be seen as an achievement. In particular the relevance of improving information transfer between the different actors and of creating a functioning link between businesses and project organisations have been seen as presenting positive opportunities.

Part of the pro-active view is clearly the pragmatic idea of any regional policy and governance instrument and initiative being positive, however vague or distant the final outcome of the activity may be. In this respect it is also worth noting that Kainuu as a region with specific development problems has been catching the public eye in recent months due to discussion on the possibility of implementing new forms of regional governance and funding structures, most apparent in Prime-Minister Lipponen’s call for new openings as regards regional governance for the region (“siniset ajatukset”). These have now resulted in a proposal being made for an administrative experiment to be run for eight years, which would set up a directly elected democratic regional governance structure and devolve and re-reorganise regional development funding. Other initiatives include proposals for developing the education and innovation environ-

ment (e.g. the establishment of a risk investment fund and increasing university-level education in technical sciences) (Sisäasiainministeriö 2002, 19-27, 41 and 47).

Though such new openings into regional issues are indeed required, the initiatives implemented thus far could also lead us to the next approach with regard to regional development activities, familiar elsewhere from peripheral or marginalized regions in centralised states, i.e. the *reactive view*. This view is often rather sceptical of devolving powers to the regions, because this is actually seen as implying less, not more partiality among the different actors within the region. This is basically the view of those regions that have in the past been eager to surpass the national centre and lobby Brussels instead, as the distance was seen as allowing for the kind of partiality not available closer to home.

A typical area for the pro-active approach is the area of international relations, as the agenda of the peripheral regions has become determined by the role and activity in this sphere, the capability of setting strategic objectives and pursuing them, of identifying and mobilising new project partners etc becomes ever more crucial. One may think that the more peripheral regions in particular tend to have a reactive approach when it comes to international relations, but this is rarely the case. As the importance of international issues and networking has increased, the mere availability of funding opportunities requires a pro-active stance. Moreover, in the traditional administrative structure of regional development, international issues were not seen as high priority concerns. Notwithstanding this however – and often intimately connected with EU membership – a new generation of civil servants and consultants has emerged with the need to make their mark in the sometimes quite conservative administrative environment. Regionally speaking, international relations tend to be dealt with in a devolved or decentralised fashion, as most civil servants dealing with regional development come across, and need to deal with, international issues on a day-to-day basis. The same also applies to the municipalities: in fact in the case of Kainuu there is a secretary for international relations, who also partly deals with the central municipality's, i.e. Kajaani's international relations activities. There may at times be a need to address issues of international relations more directly within the municipalities themselves, as many opportunities can remain untapped if individual municipalities need to rely solely on intermediary organisations. The problem with international activities as such however tends to be that while there may be a genuine wish to achieve a more goal-oriented strategic approach, the level of commitment among the actors within the region may not always be very high, as so many issues tend to override

such national “international” concerns, which often themselves remain viewed as a “luxury” or “extra” area of activity.

4.3 *The reactive view*

There is naturally a certain degree of reactivity involved in dealing with international activities. *The reactive view* becomes however most apparent among those *municipalities* left outside the regional development programme or policy initiative (in this case the Regional Centre Development Programme), though it may also be indicative of the tensions underlying the urban centre view and of the peripheries viewing the predominant urban policy orientation as a threat.

The new forms of co-operation are still however rather fragmented, moreover, in a process of learning the best examples and experiences are the ones most likely to survive the move to the next programming period. There are a number of long-lasting contacts with Sweden (Norrbotten region), as well as with Murmansk in Russia and the northern-most regions of Norway, as well as to Scotland. Within Finland there is a perceived need to forge closer forms of co-operation between the regions as well, e.g. in the area of tourism, where Lapland is a major actor, or vis-à-vis Oulu and Northern Ostrobothnia when it comes to the ICT field). One specific priority area that was often referred to was that of higher education, as national priority setting and a focus in recent years on education has resurrected the question of the regional impact of higher education. The need to better target the limited R&D resources also requires co-operation instead of competition between the regions, and the inclusion of Measurepolis – an initiative in the Oulu-based Multipolis – network is a positive example in this regard. (See <http://www.technopolis.fi/orce/> on the Multipolis-network).

The problems of Kainuu seem to be similar to those of other Nordic regions, particularly with regard to the perceived bureaucracy of the project-management cycle (especially EU project funding, though it is acknowledged that by 2006 the possible loss of European funding is unlikely to make a difference in this respect, as the national practices will by then have been completely re-adjusted to the EU management styles). There is also a lack of available investment; indeed, the overall availability of “seed” and “risk” financing seems quite limited. The persons interviewed acknowledged the need to compete for external funding and were equally cognizant of the fact that the local and regional strengths are those that one must build upon (proximity to nature, food safety, security, and sustainability were the strengths most often referred to). The question is then, who can best commercialise these regional strengths, and how best can this be done; whether they *should* be internationally commercialised was

really no longer an issue. Internationalisation was actually seen very positively and it was acknowledged that the EU provides certain lobbying leverage vis-à-vis national central government, as the EU looks more favourably upon the Finnish periphery regions and their development (particularly with regard to rural development) than does central government. Indeed such optimism was referred to on number of occasions, though paradoxically perhaps few respondents could actually put a finger on the sources of such optimism.

5. The role of the public sector in regime-building

Branch organisations within business development are quite active in regime-building, though their working method differs somewhat from the public sector, i.e. the regimes built tend to be more informal, with perhaps less permanency involved (though forms of co-operation, networks and working methods can be quite long-standing, they do tend to shift in terms of forms and with regard to the constellation of participants) and quite dependent on the individuals involved (though the “personalisation” of public sector regimes is not rare either). The main goal is the building of a good business environment. All co-operative attempts are built on social capital and trust, but few are able to define what this actually consists of, or – more importantly – how it is achieved. In most cases the regional representatives interviewed felt that trust is something that can only be built with time: it either exists or not, there is thus either a “tradition of co-operation” or not, and there is very little one can do to change the status quo in this respect.

Forms of formal co-operation or programme-based development such as the Regional Growth Agreements, Regional Development Programmes and Regional Centres are still viewed with a certain scepticism within the business community, many of whom feel that they have contributed little that is new to the area of regional development or regional growth policy. As the public sector however still sees the participation of business representatives in different partnership constellations as important, more attention should perhaps be paid to the motivation of such people and in encouraging them to lend their presence in these types of activities.

The public sector organisations across all of the Nordic countries have a very central role in regional development as a whole and hence also in building regional regimes. They work differently in different countries however and thus it was necessary to ask what if any are the requirements for the emergence of functioning regional regimes. The questions thus posed was, *what is required of a regime and what constitutes a good regime?*

5.1 Factors enabling regime-building

Most interviewees agree that having all the key actors participating in any form of regional development activity is a requirement for regime building, as well as for reaching the goals set for it. Having all the relevant actors under the co-operative umbrella, and ensuring that each key organisation is represented by a person with sufficient standing within his or her organisation in order to be able to deliver on actions once they are decided upon is also seen to be of the utmost importance. The regime is thus built on both the formal and informal power and responsibility of the organisations and individuals that participate in any co-operative endeavour. Whether this is also a democratically accountable organisation may however differ and this does not seem to be the main issue for regime-building as such, though it is important in order to anchor it among the citizens (*If this is seen as a requirement*).

There are different views on whether the general public should be involved, whether it should be made aware of, and perhaps even be allowed to participate in regional development activity within the region. In many cases concerns were expressed with regard to the public not viewing regional development as a priority issue, though its effects are directly felt in terms of job-creation, business development, general prosperity and the availability of educational opportunities. This was largely attributed to the media's lack of interest in regional development. On the other hand it was felt in each of the three case regions that the general public was involved in different project activities and local schemes, and that it was aware of possibilities for supporting regional development within their own local communities. The local level however (as opposed to the regional level) seemed to be the most fruitful level for any awareness-raising or activation campaigns to be implemented.

Social capital, informal association and good working relations between actors in different organisations and in the political sphere are also among the most important requirements for regime-building, as human interaction and organisational co-operation are needed for any type of regime to emerge. In this regard the role of regional development instruments can be important. Having all activity built upon partnership constellations and wide organisational participation is an important change, as in many cases shared arenas for co-operation has previously been more fragmented. The business representatives were at times more sceptical of the relevance of regional development instruments in this regard however, as they felt that they have already worked together in different partnership constellations, and that the Regional growth Agreement has brought little new in this regard. Yet the participation of business representatives, as

well as third sector participants, in formal forms of regional development co-operation is more extensive today than it was only ten years ago, and this in itself has implied the fundamental change.

In terms of building social capital, the availability of sufficient informal meeting places for the representatives of the relevant organisations remains important. It was felt by some of the interviewees that there should be a more concerted attempt to promote these types of activities. Perhaps not surprisingly the business community seems to be in the best position in this regard, as they have a variety of informal meeting places (e.g. in the case of Västra Götaland the “MIG”, and the Göteborg Marketing Association as well as a variety of other professional and *alumni* associations exist and are actively used for networking purposes).

It is actually quite difficult to put a finger on what type of norms and values would be best suited to support regime-building or even to more informal or less permanent co-operative structures. Some of the interviewees did elaborate on these questions and found values such as flexibility, tolerance and magnanimity important on an individual level. As organisations are made up of individuals, building organisational co-operation on individuals who share such values and norms would then most likely lead to positive results. Magnanimity and tolerance are interesting values in this respect, as they are more evocative of the language of those seeking regional balance and the spreading of wealth evenly rather than seeking to maximise the absolute regional growth figures. In many cases the actors representing both public sector organisations and the business community felt that generosity has come to have a negative connotation within regional development, as it is at times seen as having to divide regional development resources too thinly when regional balance is sought for and democratic decision-making sets requirements on how the resources are distributed: Each municipality must receive their “rightful share”, though this may lead to inefficiency and to not channelling regional development resources into the activities with the best economic potentials. As far as project funding and other development resources are concerned, the notion of distribution according to democratic principles is likely to persist, though as personnel become better accustomed to project funding methods and European management practices this has changed funding practices quite considerably, creating a new awareness of the “thinning out”-problem.

5.2 Factors hampering regime-building

It may be difficult to build solid, formal regimes in regions such as Västra Götaland, as they are too big to function as one region. In such cases there are more likely to be regimes emerging within the “Greater Göteborg” region and some other smaller sub-regions that genuinely constitute functional regions, even though the whole region exists only as an administrative entity. The question of “what constitutes an ideal region” was discussed in the interviews and the answers largely differed based on what part of the region the person happened to represent. This is an indication of the tensions between the core urban area(s) and the peripheral (rural) areas that do exist in some cases. As such, the perceived goals of regional development, as well as the best ways of achieving these goals are seen differently in the regional urban growth centres and outside them.

The different parties to such co-operative efforts within regional development may have rather divergent ideas on what constitutes positive regional development. Many of the business representatives felt that in the area of regional development there is too much emphasis on pleasing everyone, on being “lagom” (“just right”, rather “middle-of-the-road”) thus also being based on moderate, smallest common denominator objectives rather than aiming for the absolute maximum). Some even felt that regional development, when it in fact equates with business development should be more elite-driven, based on attracting the “crème de la crème” rather than aiming to address the needs of the region as a whole.

5.3 The relevance of (administrative) borders for regime-formation

The interviewees generally tended to see administrative borders as increasingly irrelevant. Co-operation is required and pursued with those partners that share the goals and interests involved and the question of administrative borders thus becomes irrelevant. There are at times shifting alliances based on the particular policy issue in hand, and forms of co-operation differ according to the actual policy area in question. This was apparent in particular in the case of Kajaani region, where strategic alliances were built at the same time across the whole of Northern Finland (e.g. the shared development strategy), with Oulu (e.g. /Northern Ostrobothnia region, particularly in the area of ICT development and the university) and Joensuu (e.g. co-operation in developing industrial and business alliances and educational structures) and Lapland/Rovaniemi (e.g. tourism). While such shifting co-operative constellations are both understandable and desirable (in light of the differentiation of regions and the “learning regions” philosophy emphasising the need for each region to concentrate on those areas where it has a genuine comparative advantage,

seeking to focus regional resources better and creating forms of co-operation in order to create the critical mass required for regional development).

6. Conclusions

One of the key conclusions of the cases considered here was that regional borders *do* make a difference, as many of the project management structures are premised on the existence of such borders and initiating projects that could disregard regional borders is often impossible to achieve. Yet in terms of strategy formulation, co-operation and the building of alliances across administrative borders are of key relevance, and administrative borders *do* as such decrease in relevance. Yet the fact that these two do not always coincide (i.e. strategies are developed for one – possibly a wider – region, while actual projects can be implemented in the confines of the administrative region alone) can be a major problem. Funding and management structures thus have an impact on the nature of the regimes that emerge, though this may be unintended.

There is thus a deeply felt need to integrate the external and internal networks into one, more multifaceted and strategically efficient whole. While the region seems to be able to show a relatively united face to the outside, more work needs to be done to do the same within the regions and to overcome inter-municipal rivalry. In some cases this undoubtedly is natural as municipalities of different sizes necessarily have different views on spending priorities etc. Yet the more unified strategic thinking could be one of the areas where administrative reforms make a difference (this can be seen to have been the case with Västra Götaland). Being more aware of the existence of shared working practices *as* regional regimes may *in itself* contribute to achieving this end, as the administrative and democratic sides of regional development come to overlap more closely.

The one area of public policy that carries the most weight both nationally and regionally in all of the three cases included in the study was that of industrial policy. In addition to this there were nationally and regionally specific differences in emphasis, as higher education and R&D were seen as decisive in Finland, fisheries in Norway, while in the case of Sweden priorities are much more regionally specific, as for example, the Västra Götaland region is seen as too large to allow for a shared priority-setting.

“Form follows function” thus seems to be a valid argument when looking at the regional development sphere across the Nordic countries. This means that many of the opportunities in the area of regional development that need to be addressed can only be addressed by better targeted priority-setting and through the sharper focus of public policies, and this is

something that is tacitly acknowledged by the regions themselves. Uncovering the best form of administrative organisation and policy practice is however a more exacting task. There is a general agreement on the need for growth centres: urban centres need to be used as engines of development, though they should not be over-burdened either. Devolved structures of decision-making and democratic regional structures are more likely to allow for priority setting that is both regionally equitable and on the whole, feasible.

To talk of “regional regimes” at this stage may be taking the case a step too far. Rather, there is a regime-building process taking place, which can be taken to form a central part of the whole regional development philosophy as it currently exists. We can however see tangible proof of the existence of extensive co-operation and networking, attempts at establishing better working practices and communication methods between the different actors and organisations involved. To think of these cooperative attempts in terms of regimes might however bring an extra element into the process, something that could be useful: highlighting, as it does social and cultural aspects, norms and values, rendering them more transparent and thus contributing to the smoother flow of information, communication and learning within the whole regional development complex.

There is perhaps an unnecessary distinction made between the legal and administrative regime and what could be called the socio-cultural or organisational regime. While it is agreed that the legal/administrative regime is unambiguous and clear to everyone, the same does not apply to the “regional regime” in socio-cultural/organisational terms. If there is a shared view of underlying principles, norms and rules guiding the behaviour of actors within the region, there is, as yet, not sufficient awareness as to what these are, and how they could be utilised in regional development activities. This can be a weakness, as the socio-cultural and organisational characteristics of the region are more likely to be decisive when it comes to creating a good working environment and strengthening the human and organisational resources required for business development and entrepreneurship. The nature of social capital is therefore a question that should be addressed more vigorously.

One of the questions set out at the beginning of this report centred on whether there was an explicit willingness within the public sector to create forms of co-operation and co-ordination (also between public and private sectors), which could contribute to enhancing learning capabilities within the region. This question we can now answer in the affirmative. The problem here is (rather unsurprisingly) that those working in key positions within the regional development complex feel that they do not have

enough time to pursue these types of goals: thus reaction tends to prevail over and above pro-action. This may also be one of the reasons why so much regional development activity takes place without much public attention and interest.

While many of the questions addressed within these projects and programmes are of key relevance for the inhabitants of the regions in question, they are seen as “bureaucratic exercises” with little relevance for the general public. The media unfortunately does not relay a different view, and as such, very few regional development issues make the national headlines; while those that do are mostly those having direct financial repercussions. This is an area where the “regional policy elite” should make a more concerted effort: the media needs much more information and exposure to regional policy issues before the relevant issues can be identified and made visible in public debates. It is thus the assumption of the current author that addressing regional development from the perspective of seeking to build a more coherent regime could be one of the instruments by which this could be more effectively accomplished. As far as regional development resources and management practices are dependent upon administrative borders, this is where regime building should focus most. Even in policy areas of national relevance, working within the region could ensure the better flow of information, transparency and problem-solving.

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Interviews conducted during the project:

Kainuu region (20-22 February 2002):

- Antti Toivanen, Managing Director, Kainuun Etu, regional development Company
- Tapani Karjalainen, Managing Director, Kainuu Rural Advisory Centre
- Virve Vimpari-Savvides, Secretary for International Affairs, The Regional Council of Kainuu
- Juhani Kärkkäinen, Development Manager, The Regional Council of Kainuu
- Airi Härkönen, Project manager, Kajaani Regional Centre Development Programme
- Anssi Tuominen, Principal of Edukai (Professional training and education centre within services and industries)
- Risto Brunou, Kajaani municipality
- Kari Juntunen, Principal, Kajaani Polytechnic
- Pentti Malinen, Director Research and Development Centre of Kajaani
- Tarja Lukkari, Researcher, Research and Development Centre of Kajaani
- The steering group of the Regional Development Centre Programme in Kajaani (Present in the meeting were representatives of the following organisations: Kajaani Business Centre, Kainuu Economic and Development Centre, “Kajaanin IT-pooli”, i.e. association set up for the promotion of IT entrepreneurship in the region, Kainuu Regional Council, Kajaani municipality, Paltamo municipality, Sotkamo municipality, Vuolijoki municipality, Ristijärvi municipality)

Västra Götaland (20-21 februari 2002):

- Anders Källström, CEO, Västsvenska Handelskammaren
- Lars Ekberg, project development, Business Region Göteborg
- Claes Ekdahl, co-ordinator of EU-programgroup, VG-regionen

- Lars Carolusson, Objective 2 Program (*Mål 2-Öarna*), VG-regionen
- Elisabet Litsmark, CEO, ALMI Väst
- Bert-Ivan Nilsson, regional head of ESF-Council in Göteborg

Trondheim (12-14 februari 2002):

- Lill-Connie Furu, The directorate of Fisheries in Trøndelag Region
- Ragnhild Nisja, Sør-Trøndelag fylkeskommune
- Heidi Fosslund, Sør-Trøndelag fylkeskommune
- Pål Ranes, Sør-Trøndelag fylkeskommune
- Magnar Rønstad, Sør-Trøndelag fylkeskommune
- Jan Yngvar Kiel, Fylkesmannen i Sør-Trøndelag
- Kjell Dalen, SND Sør-Trøndelag
- Magnar Volden, SND Sør-Trøndelag
- Lovise Landsem, Sør-Trøndelag fylkeskommune

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