Implementing smart specialisation in sparsely populated areas

Jukka Teräs, Nordregio

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Nordregio, Stockholm, Sweden - a leading Nordic research institute within the broad field of regional development

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Nordic Co-operation Programme for Regional Development and Planning 2017-2020 (Nordic Council of Ministers)

Thematic Groups (TG):

- Sustainable rural development (TG1)
- **Innovative and resilient regions (TG2), including regional smart specialisation strategies in the Nordics**
- Sustainable cities and urban development (TG3)

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Sparsely populated regions

Gloersen et al. (2006): Areas characterised by e.g.

- low population located in scattered small settlement structure
- long distances to main urban centres
- often harsh climatic conditions together with the abundance of natural resources

Sparsely populated regions to be found e.g. in the northern and eastern parts of the Nordic countries, North Scotland, middle parts of Spain

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Smart specialisation in remote and sparsely populated areas

- 'In theory', the Smart Specialisation policy thinking is supposed to be applicable in any type of regional setting
- 'In practice', much attention to metropolitan and urban contexts – less attention to the applicability of RIS3 in remote regions
- How to apply smart specialisation when the geographical area is huge - but the number of people living in the area is small ?

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Regional S3 strategies in the North

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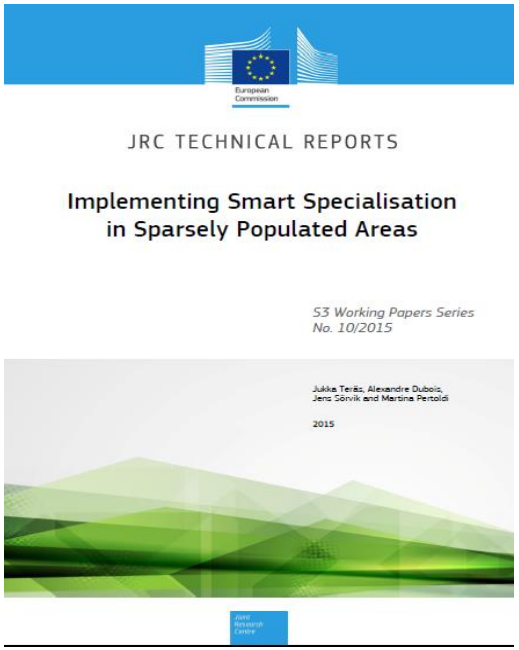
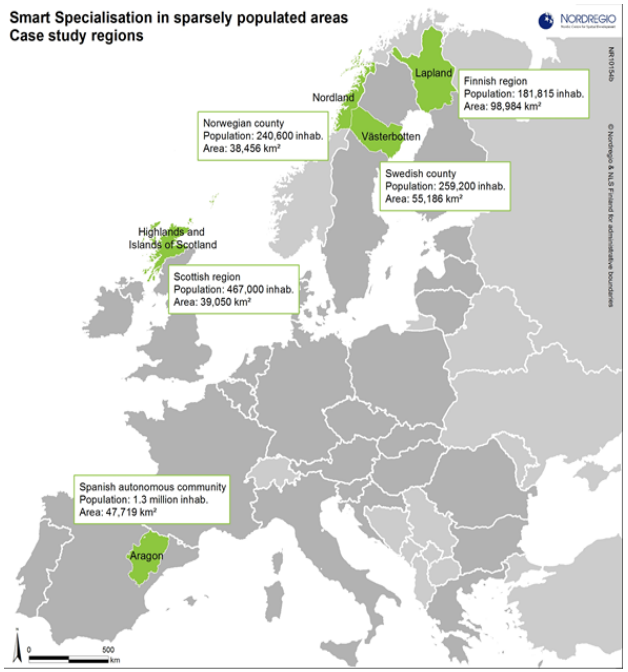
EU JRC WORKING PAPER (2015)





- Case study regions including Lapland, Västerbotten, Nordland, Highlands & Islands
- Rovaniemi EU JRC Workshop 2014 on S3 in sparsely populated regions as the point of departure

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EU JRC Working Paper: Findings and recommendations

- Remote and sparsely populated areas should not be seen as regions lagging behind by definition but as regions with specific characteristics including challenges and opportunities.
- Innovative environments have been created in in sparsely populated and remote areas, too
- Remote areas need extra-regional knowledge and networking pipelines - even more so than other types of areas due to lack of critical mass
- Combination of abundant natural resources and limited human capital needs to be carefully studied.

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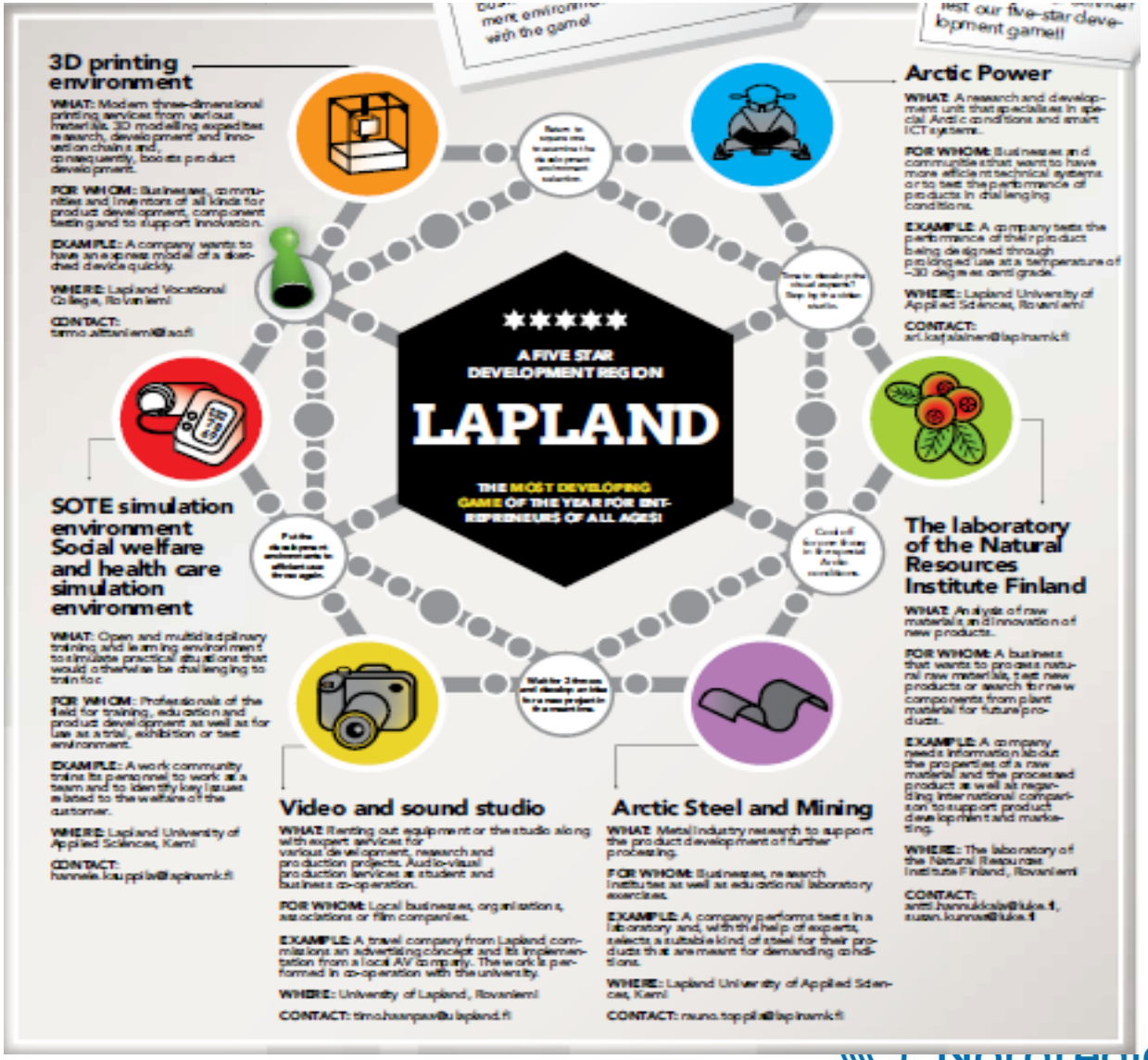
R&D Infrastructure development
Experience from Lapland, Finland



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Arctic Development Environments

(Arctic Smartness Cluster Report 2015)

- *"From 2007 to 2013, up to 70 million euros have been invested in different development environments in Lapland: Development environments are physical and virtual environments, learning and innovation environments, laboratories, research facilities, studios, workshops and simulation environments"*

- *"Due to the sizable investments made in development environments, Lapland has been able to create developed, modern and versatile development environments that serve a wide customer base in many different fields of research."*

- *"Mainly located in connection with educational institutions, the development environments also function as learning environments that produce new skills."*

- *"The development environments and the services they offer are not widely known, and their activity is not yet fully organised"*

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Implementing smart specialisation in Lapland, Finland

- Intensive implementation phase in 2015-2017 after completion of regional smart specialisation strategy in 2013
- Clear leadership of the process – Regional Council of Lapland
- Kemi/Tornio industrial symbiosis as an essential part of the Lapland S3 strategy implementation – "Arctic Smart Cluster", with e.g. an inventory of regional industrial side streams as public-private initiative

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Peripheral regions and local smart specialisation strategies?

- *"We have the feeling that our region is geographically too big and that there are major regional differences within our region e.g. between coastal and inland areas . "One-S3 strategy–fits–all" maybe does not apply to our region"* (S3 event Luleå, Sweden 3/2016)
- The regional S3 strategy may lack sufficient involvement of actors in more peripheral areas. Opportunities for growth from more peripheral areas could be missed
- Would there be room for **local S3 Strategies** for geographically big, remote regions, to complement regional S3 Strategies?

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CASE: REGINA 2015-2018 (NPA Programme)
Local Smart Specialisation Strategies

Partners:

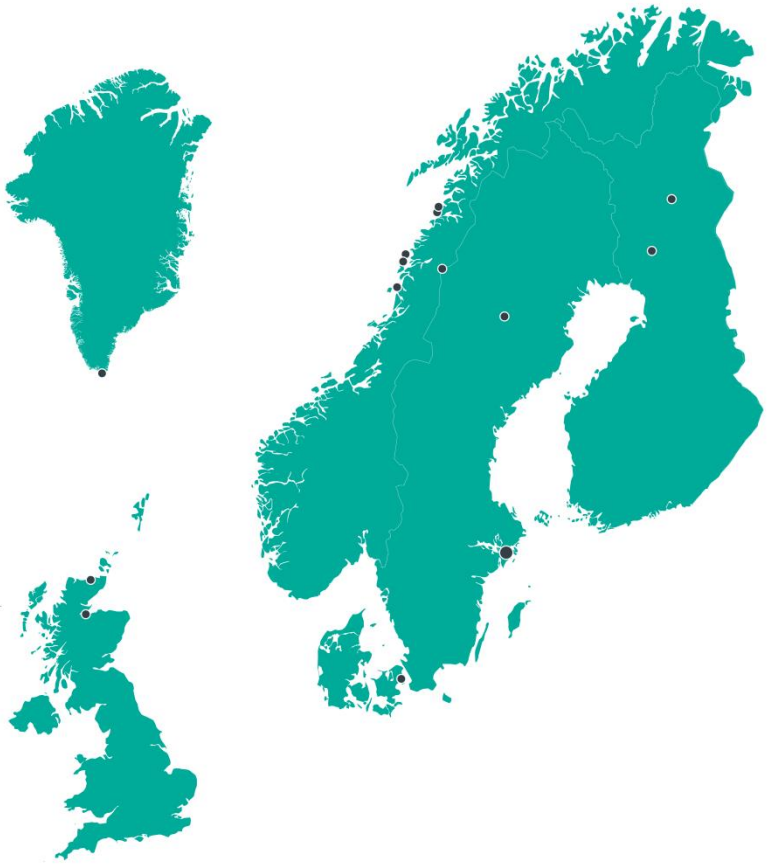
Nordregio (Lead Partner)
University of Lapland
MidtSkandia Sweden
MidtSkandia Norway
Sodankylä Municipality
Storuman Municipality
Nordland Research Institute
BioForsk
Alstahaug Municipality
Brønnøy Municipality
Kommune Kujalleq
North Highland College

Associated Partners

Highland &Islands Enterprise
Nordlands FylkeKommune
Nordic Council of Ministers

Total Budget

€2 M



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REGINA 2015-2018 and local smart specialisation

- The 6 local partners produce their own S3 strategies with a focus on maximising local benefits associated with large scale resource-based industries

- The regional S3 strategies provide a broader framework for the local S3 strategies. The design of local S3 strategies follows the philosophy and guidelines of regional S3 strategies – with a local geographic focus

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Conclusion

- Several peripheral regions in Northern Europe have taken a promising start in adopting the smart specialisation concept
- Regional smart specialisation strategies especially in peripheral regions - might be complemented with local S_3 approaches ?

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Photo: Kjell Nilsson

Thank you!

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