

The Significance of Transnational Cooperation in Nordic Atlantic Regions*

Týdningurinn av Tvørtjóða Samstarvi í Norðuratlantsøkinum

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Úrtak

Geinin viðger tvey sløg av tvørtjóða samstarvi: The Nordic Atlantic Cooperation/ Norrønt Atlantssamstarv (NORA) og The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR). Hesir felagsskapir eru dømi um tvey sløg av tvørtjóða samstarvi, tann fyrri leggur dent á politikk á lágstigi og tann seinni á politikk á hástigi. Teir fata eisini um sera ymisk øki: NORA fatar um Grønland, Ísland, Føroyar og Noregs strendur, og BEAR fatar um norðaru partarnar av Noregi, Svøríki, Finnlandi og evropiska partin av Russlandi. Dømini verða borin saman í mun til møguligu almannabúskaparligu ávirkanina, ið teir í royndum hava á fiskiskapin. Møguleikarnir verða kannaðir á trimum stigum: Á hástigi verður umrøtt, hvønn týdning lógliga støðan hjá økjunum hevur fyri tvørtjóða samstarv. Á miðstigi verður samstarv viðvíkjandi tilfeingisstýring, háttalagi og marknaðarførslu í fiskiskapi kannað. Og á lágstigi verður umrøtt, hvussu øki stinga seg upp við nýskapin. Royndartilfarið savnar seg fyrst og fremst um tíðarskeiðið fyrst og mitt í 1990-árunum.

Abstract

The article investigates two different cases of transnational cooperation: The Nordic Atlantic Cooperation (NORA) and The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR). The two cases represent different forms of transnational cooperation, the former with emphasis on low politics and the latter on high politics. They also include very different regions: NORA covers Greenland, Iceland, Faroe Islands and coastal Norway, while BEAR includes northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland

and European Russia. The cases are compared in relation to their possible socio-economic effects in practice in fisheries. Possibilities are investigated on three levels: On the macro-level, it is discussed what does the legal status of regions mean to transnational cooperation. On the meso-level, the article investigates cooperation in resource management, processing and marketing in fisheries. And on the micro-level, it is discussed how innovative regions emerge. The empirical material has its main focus on the early and mid 1990s.

Introduction

What is the reality behind the idea of a "Europe of the Regions"? How would it affect the fishing communities of the North Atlantic, and what would the 'face' of a "Europe of the Regions" look like in the North Atlantic?

The main aim of this paper is to investigate and discuss the potential for transnational cooperation, and the barriers facing it, in the regions dependent on fisheries in north-west Russia and the Nordic Atlantic regions, i.e. Northern and Western Norway, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. To this end, the paper evaluates two somewhat different kinds of formalised regional

*) The article is published in the memory of Peter A. Friis, who encouraged the article to be written for a planned publication, before he died in 1999.

cooperation; the initiatives include different areas of the overall region of interest, and are, namely:

– The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR), established in January 1993, which includes the northern regions of Norway, European Russia, Finland and Sweden, but state representatives of the Russian Federation and all Nordic countries and the European Union (EU) are also included in the Barents Council. The Regional Council includes members from the regions involved: Finmark, Troms and Nordland of Norway, Nordbotten and (since 1998) Västerbotten of Sweden, Lapland and (since 1998) Oulu of Finland, and Murmansk Region, Karelian Republic, Arkhangelsk Region and Nenets Autonomous Okrug of Russia.

– The Nordic Atlantic Cooperation (NORA) established in January 1996 as a regional element of the broader Nordic Cooperation. Nordic Atlantic Cooperation has been developed as an extension to the earlier West Nordic Cooperation founded in 1980, originally initiated by the Faroe Islands and Eastern Iceland, incorporating the rest of Iceland in 1980, and extended to include Greenland in 1983. Northern and Western Norway joined this cooperation when the Nordic Atlantic Committee superseded the West Nordic Committee in 1996. The West Nordic Committee/Nordic Atlantic Committee is a function of the Nordic Council of Ministers, or more precisely, the regional ministers and their committee of officials (NERP = Nordic Committee of Officials for Regional Policy).

West Nordic cooperation gave the Faroe

Islands and Greenland a more formal role in the region and their own regional forum as self-governing sectors of the Danish Realm. The Faroe Islands and Greenland are also represented as part of the Danish delegation to the Nordic Council (a cooperation of parliaments), and through the Danish government in the Nordic Council of Ministers (a cooperation of governments).

In 1985, West Nordic Parliamentary Cooperation (The West Nordic Council) was also initiated as an informal supplement to the Nordic Council. There were earlier proposals, however, for the formation of a West Nordic Council of Ministers to give West Nordic Cooperation a higher priority and a more visible status internationally (Aalbu and Sande, 1991). So far this has not been accepted.

As such, the Barents Euro-Arctic Region Cooperation and the Nordic Atlantic Cooperation can at the initial conceptual level already be viewed as two very different approaches, founded in different historical contexts in the overall development of the Nordic countries. The Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation was founded through an energetic initiative by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, which initially represented the combined interests of the Northern regions in an international context after the end of the Cold War and of Nordic EU membership applications. The initiative explicitly tried to implement the concept of a "Europe of the Regions". It was a regional, but fundamentally internationally oriented project from the very beginning, to give the so-called Euro-Arctic Region a more significant role, especially in European integra-

tion. Since Sweden and Finland joined the EU – and Norway did not – the role of BEAR has been extended, as it is now not only a bridge from the EU to Russia, but to Norway as well.

The interests of the original West Nordic Cooperation and the NORA have primarily always been internal, developing cooperation on infrastructure, for example. The Cooperation has not been used to give the fisheries-dependent economies of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland (and with NORA also coastal Norway) a role in the global economy. It was and still is essentially a subdivision of Nordic Cooperation, historically a leftover from when around 1970 negotiations on the more ambitious NORDEK cooperation, vis-à-vis the European Community (EC) failed, prior to the Danish and the first Norwegian applications for EC membership.

New regionalism?

In contrast to 19th century nationalist policies, the new regionalism seen in recent regional projects such as the Baltic Cooperation is not oriented towards developing cooperation by territories but to quite different agenda such as cities, firms, universities and social movements (Tunander, 1994: 37-38 and Joenniemi, 1994). In this sense, size of territory or population has no relevance compared to the potential for establishing networks and cooperation within ecological, economic, social and political fields. In principle, the fishing tradition of the West Nordic countries should therefore be a potential starting point for further cooperation and mutual efforts in resource

management, product development and international marketing – but this is not the case (as will be discussed in the next section).

Meanwhile, West Nordic countries are not included in the BEAR. Obviously, the unsettled issues and ongoing conflicts within the rich Barents Sea fisheries are significant reasons for Norway to effectively exclude the Barents Sea and the West Nordic countries from the 'Euro-Arctic' Region. The conflict in the Barents Sea fisheries are also obstacles to the development of the new Nordic Atlantic Cooperation, although this cooperation has no international ambitions for the present.

It is worth noting the necessity to be very precise in discussions on regional cooperation. Often political ambitions and projects only exist on paper, while real cooperation develops 'from below' – as fora and networks between individuals and business partners. It is worthwhile distinguishing between regionalism as the policies of the nation-states (or unified states) and regionalisation as the process of developing civil societies (Käkönen, 1996). With regard to the BEAR, it could be asked whether or not it is right to characterise this cooperation as one of the new post-nationalist -forms, not oriented towards territories and total populations but to cities, infrastructure and enterprises, as already mentioned. With a strong commitment to Norwegian post-Cold War policies, the BEAR may well be seen as a necessary political vehicle to administer the vast differences in standards of living between Russia and Norway (Tunander, 1994: 34). The BEAR can also be com-

pared to the nationalist policy inherent in the historical creation of Norway – i.e. as one based on historical myths or legends. A key person in the BEAR, a Deputy General Director in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, can be quoted on this:

“Nation states made use of history in the last century to establish themselves, and there is a strong similarity between the nation-building of the 19th century and the region-building of today. The regions can draw on historical events that were “forgotten” during the nation-building process, and that were suppressed during the Cold War. The Barents project needs historical symbols.” (Jervell, 1994: 10)

The existence of such an ambition is supported by the fact that the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has funded research on the 18th and 19th century “Pomor trade” between Northern Norway and the White Sea area and the production of thematic (population, resources, environment) maps of the Barents Region. Thereby the region is constructed as a distinct territory with a historical background. Due to this territorial approach to the Barents Region, the development of some kind of mutual political responsibility in the Region must be expected, such as securing a relatively equal distribution of welfare, in the tradition of Nordic nation-building. Such social and political obligations are quite different from the more narrow business networks, as exist within fisheries, which are able to develop with or without Barents Region institutions. To put the question succinctly: is the purpose of the policy to secure standards of living in Northern Norway at the

high nationwide Norwegian level, or is the purpose to secure equality between the inhabitants of Northern Norway and the Murmansk Region through the redistribution of wealth? Of course, the answer should not be one or the other, but both.

In any event, in order to understand the concept of a “Europe of the Regions”, and to discuss what it means in practice to the fishing communities of the Nordic countries, it is necessary to reflect on the main purpose, as well as the real content, of regional cooperation. As will be shown, the role of the nation-states – their political ambitions as well as their social obligations – is still much more important than the pursuit of the idea of a “Europe of the Regions” as a modern-day Hanseatic League, with trading patterns similar to those of the Middle Ages. It could be viewed as an advantage, but also a disadvantage that the political elite of the modern Nordic national democratic states tend to interpret and explain politics with reference to their own national electorates (Icelandic, Danish/Faeroese or Norwegian). Hence, the idea of a new regionalism or regionalisation ‘from below’ might be better suited to Non-Nordic European countries where nation-states (and welfare states) are weaker, regional autonomy drives stronger (e.g. Italy, Spain and United Kingdom), and cultures are to some extent more heterogeneous. Facing up to their position as a minority, some Sami politicians have supported regionalist ideas but this has not changed their position as a minority with little say in the foreign and transnational policies of the strong Nordic nation-states.

North-South European versus East-West European economic relations

The existing regimes of the Northern regions are dominated by economic and political links functioning on a North-South axis. Economic centres of processing, product development and consumption of raw materials from the North, are located in what might, relatively speaking, be called the South. Political centres of national governments as well as the EU are also South-based. This fact could be viewed as a threat to, but also as a motivating force for, the development of circumpolar East-West cooperation.

Experiences gained from the North Calotte Cooperation since 1967, as well as the West Nordic Cooperation, clearly demonstrate the difficulties of a Northern regional strategy based on the intention to develop intra-regional interaction in trade and transport (Wiberg, 1996: 198ff; Oksa and Saastamoinen, 1995). As producers of specialised raw materials and semi-processed products, the East-West trade potential between the regions of the North Calotte is fairly limited, although some additional opportunities exist if the Kola Peninsula (the Murmansk Region in administrative terms) is included. It is interesting to note that after applying abstract trade theory, empirical evidence also gives fish products and ship repairs as industries where trade is actually taking place (Heen and Peshev, 1993: 156-157). Concrete networks relating to sectoral interests are often more important than the possession of general comparative advantages. Another sector of growing inter-Calotte trade has been

forestry – between Finnish Lapland and Swedish Norrbotten in the 1970-80s, and recently between Finland and the Karelian Republic. The dynamics of such trade and cooperation may well be the very unequal relationship between regions rich in raw materials but not in capital, and regions of processing with a stronger concentration of capital. Trade and cooperation are often found within sectors characterised by both rivalry and competition.

Experiences of East-West infrastructure projects clearly illustrate the problems of limited trade and social interaction within these sparsely populated areas. Infrastructural potential is usually concerned with projects that will add access routes to international connections in passenger transport, or for the export of raw materials. Such examples illustrate the dominance of North-South orientation and raw material export from the North of the Northern regions. In this pattern, internal complementary features of economies in the Northern regions only play a subordinate role.

Functional integration into the international division of labour is not the only possible basis for regional cooperation, although certain aspects of such functional integration are necessary to secure the livelihood of a region's inhabitants. In the way that certain place-/region-specific conditions can make production competitive because of location, functional integration is as important as territorial integration (Asheim, 1993).

Apart from access to local natural resources, the single most important aspect of territorial integration is the population in

terms of a workforce and individual entrepreneurs, their history and social institutions. In this respect, as a basis for territorially integrated regionalisation, regions should, to some extent, possess a common background and regional identity. Foreign Ministries cannot just invent regions year after year, using historical parallels (e.g. Pomor trade). The extraordinary features that make regionalisation possible on such grounds need to have been incorporated into the recent history, experiences and socialisation of people.

A feature common to many communities in the Nordic Atlantic and parts of the Barents Region, is their commitment to fisheries, based on access to some of the same cross-border/mobile marine resources; thus developing certain shared experiences in technologies related to fisheries, social forms of integration related to the uncertainty of fisheries, and relatively well-established social networks across the sea, which in practice has no borders. Fisheries are therefore a field of common interest, 'marine' rather than territorial, and regional integration could, at a more political level, have a basis for activity in this sector. It is apparent that international and transnational cooperation has concentrated its focus, and to a greater extent is founded, on the problems of managing mobile marine resources rather than managing land resources or underground marine resources. These particular problems of – and potential for – cooperation in fisheries management were experienced by Norway during membership negotiations with the EU: "No foreigner pursued claims in the cutting

down of Finnish forests or laid claims to oil quotas in the North Sea." (translated from Norwegian – Bolvåg, 1995: 260)

In order to discuss the possibilities of regionalisation in the context of North Atlantic fishing communities, three issues will be discussed in the following sections:

- a. What does the legal position of a region mean with regard to its power to act as a participant in regional cooperation? This discussion has special reference to the self-governing Faroe Islands, which are neither an autonomous nation-state (as Iceland) nor a fully recognised region of a nation-state (as Northern Norway).
- b. What are the potentials for, and barriers to, regionalisation of fisheries – the prime economic sector of the North Atlantic – within resource management, processing and marketing?
- c. How do innovative regions emerge – what are the factors behind regionalisation as a territorial concentration of distinct forms of entrepreneurship and technological development?

Addressing these questions, the paper moves from a macro general-political and political-economic level (a.), via a meso level of sector-specific characteristics of politics and economy (b.), to a micro – but still important – level of learning processes in economic and social forms of organisation (c.).

a. Regional cooperation between regions of countries, home-rule areas, nation states and the European Union

The different legal positions and roles of participating regions seem crucial, when evaluating cases of transnational regional cooperation. Nordic Atlantic Cooperation (NORA) includes one nation-state (Iceland), two self-governing areas of the Danish Realm (Greenland and the Faroe Islands) and two regions of one country – Northern and Western Norway. Northern and Western Norway is represented by regional bodies (Regional Committee of Northern Norway and Namdalen, and SAVOS), also involving the central Ministry of Municipal and Labour Affairs (Norway).

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) has a new internationally-oriented two-pronged structure. The first is a council comprising the Nordic nation-states, Russia and the EU – in effect a council of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, but each country can also be represented by other ministers (i.e. a meeting of ministers of the environment) or just officials.

The second is a council of the regional bodies directly involved. Here national differences in administration at the regional (county/oblast/republic) level become apparent. For example Norway and parts of the Russian Federation have politically elected regional councils which appoint their own regional political leaders, while regional leaders in Sweden and Finland are officials appointed by the central state administration.

The NORA and BEAR initiatives are hy-

brids of a different type when compared to the two traditional types of trans-national cooperation (Bærenholdt, 1997) which can be broadly described as follows:

- a. Initiatives which encourage cross-border cooperation between regions of different nation-states with common borders (e.g. EU Interreg projects)
- b. Initiatives which encourage transnational cooperation between nation-states within an overall region of the world (e.g. the Arctic Council)

By definition – and in terms of priorities – NORA is type a. and BEAR type b., but there is no doubt that further hybrids of regional and international policies will develop in the future. Nordic Cooperation in itself, which has never been successful in areas of “high politics” such as foreign policy, has had its major impact in areas of “low political” cooperation such as research, education and culture (Schiller, 1995), and is now increasingly oriented towards strengthening its position vis a vis the EU. Nordic cooperation has been given the role of coordinating Nordic viewpoints in relation to the EU, especially as only Denmark, Sweden and Finland are members. But following the traditions of ‘weak’ Nordic cooperation, this background work has been given a somewhat informal status and is by no means a committed cooperation of foreign policies.

Nordic Atlantic Cooperation can be seen in this context: as a way of handling EU and the European Economic Area (EEA) relations on behalf of regions and nations that

are not EU-members (Oliverosson, 1995: 10). As such, Nordic Cooperation – and Nordic Atlantic Cooperation – have always been characterised by low ambitions, both in terms of the amount of financial support received and of the propagation of visions and symbols for the promotion of NORA's identity and viewpoint.

Compared to Nordic Cooperation, Norwegian engagement in the BEAR initiative is much more in the EU-style: Full integration of regional and international affairs, high ambitions, strong financial support, and the production of symbols, maps, history etc., giving the Region an image to project to the outside world. Of course, the risk of having higher ambitions is that it leads to high expectations and therefore a growing feeling of disappointment when projects do not materialise, especially in the Russian Federation. The BEAR is clearly a 'from above' initiative, which is unable to fulfil the demands of neo-regionalism, nor meet the challenges of traditional cross-border regional policy. BEAR is in effect a form of foreign policy, although it has achieved increased awareness of the Region's problems and the legitimacy of further cooperation, through its efforts at discourse to construct the region (Aalbu *et al.*, 1995: 88ff). Whether or not this is an improvement on the West Nordic/Nordic Atlantic initiative, where low ambitions and lack of discursive regional constructive efforts produce almost no expectations at all, can be disputed. But there is no doubt that the stronger international orientation of the BEAR is an advantage. This international orientation has been provided

through Ministries of Foreign Affairs, which have been able to engage member states with the EU. NORA does engage the Norwegian Ministry of Municipal and Labour Affairs, but does not engage in any international relations; their efforts are concentrated on internal relationships.

NORA must be seen in context of the dominant resistance to the EU in the regions under the Cooperation's umbrella. The Faroe Islands have never been a member of EU, nor of the European Economic Area (EEA). Iceland is a member of EEA – but has never requested EU membership. Greenland was a member of the EC from 1972 – 85 as Greenland, in spite of an internal majority of "no" voters, was forced to join the EC in 1972 as a Danish county. This was an important factor behind the political movements which resulted in the introduction of Greenlandic home rule in 1979, followed by Greenland's subsequent withdrawal from the EC. The "no" majority in the 1994 Norwegian referendum on EU membership was very much a result of strong resistance from Inland and Northern Norway. EU-negative and anti-centralist sentiments in the regions of NORA should not, however, be a barrier to international engagement. In fact, Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Coastal Norway are very much internationally orientated with regard to business activity. Rather, the barrier to international engagement lies in the traditional political-administrative division of responsibility between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs (which includes regional affairs): Institutions and Committees within the Nordic Council of

Ministers cannot engage in foreign policy-making. This was also one reason why the original Finnish Great Calotte initiative to extend North Calotte cooperation (having the same status as West Nordic Cooperation) with the Murmansk Region of Russia was not completed, and the alternative Norwegian Barents initiative – ignoring “weak” Nordic cooperation – was implemented (Aalbu *et al.*, 1995: 18).

In addition, problems associated with establishing regional cooperation ‘from below’ are also related to the formal status and power of the regions directly involved. The different roles of regions and regional policies in different countries “...give unequal starting points for new regional cooperation in different regions” (Kähkönen, 1996: 58). From this statement, it can be expected that a self-governing area would be a favourable position from which to build new forms of regional cooperation, as has been the case within the Inuit Circumpolar Congress (ICC), in which Greenland is a dynamic participant. However, there are several reasons for the rather low priority of West Nordic Cooperation/NORA to date:

- although fisheries and the contacts between Faroese and Greenlanders in this context have provided a starting point for cooperation, differences between the Greenlandic Inuit culture and Faroese/Icelandic West Nordic culture explain to some degree why Greenlanders might take a greater interest in cultural-political cooperation between Inuit and other indigenous people in America, the Russian

Federation and Nordic countries (the Sami).

- although having a common West Nordic culture and language as a starting point, Iceland as an autonomous nation has little to gain from West Nordic cooperation, having been at the forefront of establishing Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) during the cod wars of the 1970s, and today possessing a fairly competitive fisheries sector (see last section). From time to time, Faroese fish products have been sold through Icelandic sales organisations and Iceland is usually quite generous when allocating fish quotas to its Faroese ‘cousin’. But Icelandic visions of West Nordic cooperation appear rather weak (Johansen, 1993). Within NORA, Iceland seems to concentrate its efforts on the ‘big brother’ state of Norway, in spite of serious conflicts over fisheries management.
- although Denmark has demonstrated a rather strong consensus over giving home rule to the Faroe Islands and Greenland, in practice Danish interests have been a barrier to West Nordic Cooperation, for example the Danish Ministry of Traffic protecting the interests SAS (Scandinavian Airlines System) in avoiding competitors in trans-Atlantic routes. Greenland Air did not get permission to flights to Denmark until 1997. As Denmark has bestowed home rule on the Faroe Islands and Greenland, there are no strong Danish political initiatives to support West Nordic/NORA Cooperation, although the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs does represent Greenland and the Faroe Is-

lands in international negotiations i.e. on fish quotas.

These unequal starting points for the regions/nations involved in West Nordic Cooperation explain why the Faroe Islands in particular have been isolated and marginalised from regionalisation by external factors. Although West Nordic and NORA cooperation has been a prime Faroese initiative, it may be asked why the Faroe Islands do not have stronger regionalist policies.

One reason could be that Faroese politics have been mostly oriented towards internal regional issues, because of a cultural orientation and a lack of public political debate, and the Home Rule Government's strong commitment to maintain the way of life and social integration of Faroese villages (Bærenholdt, 1992; 1994b). The ongoing value of the "village world" as a term of reference – but no longer as an organisational principle of society – has been the manifestation of an inadequate and underdeveloped political culture and lack of public involvement (Haldrup and Hoydal, 1994). This is one essential aspect of the full explanation but not sufficient in itself.

The foreign policy pursued by the Faroe Islands and Greenland comes under the auspices of Danish government. International initiatives by the two home rule governments have in fact been questioned by the Danish government, but Greenland in particular continues to challenge the foreign policy monopoly of the Danish government by establishing an office of international relations and foreign policy in the home rule administration. However, the foreign policy interests of the Faroe Islands

and Greenland have not been a subject of major interest to the Danish government, compared to the very strong interest shown in regional policies by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry's BEAR initiative and its funding of projects. In fact, there has been no resistance towards the Faroes' and Greenland's status as non-EU members and the Danish government has not neglected to follow up on Faroese or Greenlandic interests in the EU. In fact, with regard to participation and as parts of the Danish Realm, Greenland and Faroe Islands have effectively been 'stowaways' within Denmark's membership of the EC/EU. Therefore, this leaves the Faroe Islands and Greenland without any possibility of pursuing autonomous monetary policies adapted to the needs of fisheries policy, whereas Iceland has been able to use devaluation to adjust the fisheries sector to the demands of the world market. In the long run, devaluation has been much cheaper than the heavy subsidies to the fisheries sector in the Faroe Islands and Greenland. The subsidies are paid by the Home Rule Governments, which on the other hand receive transfers from the Danish state budget. Therefore, incomplete political competences and cultures have effectively limited the capabilities of the Faroes' and Greenland's power to act effectively within regional initiatives.

The Faroese crisis in the beginning of the 1990s raised several as yet unsettled questions concerning the system apparent of home rule government. Constitutionally unclear delegations of power and responsibility by Denmark to the Faroes is one of the problems that need to be resolved. The

Faroe Islands suffers from its position in-between: It is neither an autonomous nation with its own foreign policy initiatives (as Iceland is) nor a fully recognised region of a nation with strong regional and foreign policies (as Northern Norway is). Of course, the Faroe Islands can pursue alternatives to either Icelandic or Norwegian models – but something may be learnt from both. Perhaps, too, the foreign ministries of Denmark and Iceland have something to learn from Norway:

NORA could develop into the type of organisation more concerned with addressing its role in a global economy rather than just concentrating on internal concerns. A more international forum of ministers, similar to the Barents Council, could be added, including Danish and EU representation and possibly Russian, Canadian and US observers as well. Recognition of the fact that access to markets and product development are as important as the possession of the marine resources themselves is fundamental to its success.

However this argument remains entirely within a “state-centric” (Kähkönen, 1996) way of thinking, accepting the existing world order and the globalisation of economies. Going beyond foreign policy, therefore, what are the possibilities for a self-governing region to develop – not in terms of the regionalist projects as endorsed by the EU and the US – but regionalisation ‘from below’?

*b. Fisheries as a dynamic factor
in the regionalisation of
the Barents Euro-Arctic Region
and Nordic Atlantic Cooperation.*

A new division of labour has emerged between the fisheries of Norway and North-western Russia, following the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and certain liberalisations in Norwegian laws regarding the right of foreign vessels to land fish in Norwegian harbours. While the BEAR initiative has no direct part in this arrangement, in order to earn foreign currency, Russian vessels are landing large amounts of cod in Norway and other European countries. In the context of the general growth of fish stocks and growing quotas in the Barents Sea fisheries in the mid 1990s, this arrangement has had a positive effect on the economy of North Norwegian fishing communities – especially in eastern Finnmark. In addition, Russian vessels often buy or conclude barter agreements on the servicing and purchase of new equipment for Russian vessels while docked in Norwegian harbours – but to some extent this is also the case in Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Iceland. Northern Norway has only the advantage of being nearer therefore incurring lower fuel costs for Russian vessels.

Several initiatives within the framework of the BEAR – funded by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry – are helping indirectly to develop this new division of labour into intensified regional cooperation on science, technology transfer and fisheries control. Norwegians are well aware of the fact that if they do not buy Russian cod, others

(Denmark, Iceland et al) will. In fact, landings of Russian cod are already a significant addition to the processing industries in several fishing communities in the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland as well as Denmark, Portugal etc.

For Norway, this new division of labour brings problems: firstly, the Norwegian fishermen are sometimes crowded out of local landings and secondly, the processing industries lose motivation to develop new products, and instead simply carry on with traditional semi-processing (frozen fillets in blocks) (Bærenholdt, 1994a). For Russia, the problem could lie in the too closely-bound relations with the Norwegian fishing sector, thereby reducing the potential to become involved in other cooperations, especially with the innovative Icelandic fishing sector. Managers in the Murmansk Region fisheries sector are clearly disappointed that (BEAR) cooperation with Norway has not resulted in investments in the Murmansk Region (Bærenholdt, 1995), particularly when several factory ships for direct exports to distant markets have been ordered from Danish and German shipyards. Existing relations with Norway allow the outdated Murmansk processing industry very few opportunities of development of processing in Murmansk, a development which would also be against the interests of the Norwegian fishing sector (Bærenholdt, 1994a).

Networks related to innovation in the fisheries sector already exist in the North Atlantic. The main centres of innovation seem to be in Iceland but also at the Fisheries College of the University of Tromsø

in Northern Norway (Eliassen, 1994). To North Norwegian fisheries, outside ownership by Southern as well as Tromsø-related firms is a barrier to innovation in local *milieux*, as innovation is not a question of advancing the development of existing technology in the narrowest sense of the word. Instead is a question of social innovation in the organisation of communication and work. Until now, cooperation on innovation with Russia has mostly been in the field of technology transfer. Of course, technology transfer ought always to imply certain innovations, i.e. adapting technologies to new circumstances, and also for the producer to learn from the experience of having contact with new users. The Russian fisheries sector of Murmansk is well equipped in terms of science, but the competences are often purely theoretical compared with the predominance of practical approaches in Norwegian fisheries science and technology.

Cooperation in marine biological research has been advancing for years (Davidsen *et al.*, 1994), and can only become more important. Cooperation in resource management has also developed traditions since the Soviet/Russian-Norwegian Fisheries Committee began work in the 1970s. In recent years, cooperation in fisheries control has been developed, a process directly linked to the BEAR initiative.

On a macro-regional level, the possibilities of regionalising fisheries are quite obvious – but also most problematic – within resource management. Until now resource management has been a strictly national issue, and that is why the existing (also dur-

ing the Cold War) cooperation in the Barents Sea fisheries should not be termed regional cooperation, but cooperation between nation-states. The post-Cold War setting of the BEAR initiative could change this pattern and thereby threaten the existing regime of this fisheries sector which effectively functions as a 'closed shop' (Hoel, 1994: 125). Under the BEAR, regional as well as foreign players could legitimise their future plans as well as their current activities in these fisheries.

The claiming of regional quotas within Norway has been raised by several. The North Norwegian Regional Cooperation (Landsdelsutvalget for Nord-Norge) has stated its interests in resource management and direct fisheries cooperation with Northern Russia. At the same time the Icelandic, Faroese and other fisheries in the Loophole (Smuthullet), which do not belong to any country, highlight the need for a new system of resource management for high seas fishing (outside the 200 nautical mile EEZs). Clarification is also needed in the case of the Svalbard Zone (EEZ) fisheries, claimed by Norway to be under Norwegian jurisdiction with reference to the Svalbard Treaty, which ostensibly guarantees access to Svalbard resources by all signatories of the treaty (signed by Iceland in 1994). However, it appears difficult to resolve the conflicts related to 'third-country fishing' via the BEAR initiative, as EU and states represented distinctly disagree on the question of extension of management power of coastal states beyond 200 nautical miles (Hoel, 1994: 127).

Within processing and marketing, the

potential for regionalisation seems less obvious as dominant trends include an increasing number of direct links between North Atlantic specialised producers and supermarket chains. Closer links on the organisational and social fronts between producer and consumer appear to be important if the North Atlantic fisheries industries intend to develop specialised high quality products from first class raw materials based mainly on North Atlantic cod and haddock. The producers could then escape the dead end of price competition on the white fish market and in relation to e.g. Pacific Alaskan pollack and similar cheaper fish species (Jónsson, 1994b). Establishing a genuine North Atlantic fish cartel could have negative effects on innovation, because cartel organization might undermine direct producer-user-relations and competition on innovation between firms. On the other hand, today's intra-North Atlantic price competition for fish also undermines innovation, as fish sold in large quantities for low prices obstructs product development and capital accumulation in the processing industries. Therefore political initiatives are also needed to reduce internal competition on the world market. Since such initiatives must include Russia, the BEAR could provide a suitable starting point. In addition, it is important that West Nordic countries are also included, as to persuade North Atlantic fishermen about the rationality of resource management; it seems essential to include the achievement of better prices as a part of the same drive.

As cooperation in science and technology is a central and apparently already fruit-

ful aim of the BEAR initiative, one must ask why there has not been stronger encouragement of science and technology cooperation within the West Nordic Cooperation. Evidently, there is not a particularly high level of scientific and technological activity in the West Nordic Countries, at least looked at per capita (Jónsson, 1994a). The (national) systems of innovation are weak, and the many examples of innovations in the Icelandic fisheries-related industries are typically more directly related to small-scale and direct producer/user-oriented development. This kind of more local and sector-specific innovation is perhaps not registered in the official statistics, but even so, a higher degree of dependence on foreign (i.e. Danish and Norwegian) institutes of research and education in fisheries, could pose a problem in the long run.

West Nordic participation in the BEAR initiative's marine science and technology cooperation could mean new perspectives for both West Nordic, Norwegian and Russian fisheries, as the networks already exist and the amount of competition from Icelandic partners would be neither too little nor too much. For the Faroe Islands and Greenland especially, such an agenda would represent new possibilities – including opportunities for new Faroese and Greenlandic entrepreneurs to act on a broader agenda, outside the traditional social control of small societies. NORA could also contribute to the building of new networks and institutions between Greenland, Iceland, Faroe Islands and Norway.

The formalised and general Nordic Cooperation on fisheries has developed since

the first Nordic Fisheries Conference in 1949, followed by several cooperative efforts within the framework of first the Nordic Council, and later the Nordic Council of Ministers (Bergman, 1994). So far, it has been a cooperation of governments, representatives from the fishing industry and research bodies. These activities have without doubt developed the existing networks within the Nordic fisheries sector, and not least among these, research institutes related to fisheries. This is certainly the case with the projects supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers (Fisheries Ministers) and the Nordic Committee of Officials for Fisheries; these projects and conferences have been documented in several NORD and TemaNORD publications in recent years.

The 1993-96 programme for Nordic Fisheries Cooperation, decided upon by the Fisheries Ministries in 1992, clearly states an ambition to participate in the building of stronger Nordic institutions and networks in order to enable the Nordic fishing sectors able to meet the challenges presented by EU integration (Nordic Council of Ministers, 1992: 65, 72). These cooperation efforts are undoubtedly most successful in coordinating the national public research sectors, and less successful in coordinating a more regionalised effort, i.e. in the Baltic Sea or the North Atlantic, or in informal and as yet un-institutionalised innovative *milieux*. Nordic fisheries cooperation has more internal cooperation as a main objective, and this has had a substantial positive effect on the development of know-how in the North Atlantic fisheries. On the other

hand, these efforts have not yet been powerful enough to build Nordic institutions that are visible and which carry some weight in an international context.

In the 1990s, Nordic cooperation increasingly has been directed towards participation in the EU context. This work may be decisive, especially for the Nordic Atlantic regions dependent on fisheries and non-EU members, but the obvious trend of division of the Nordic countries into:

- a Baltic region which is part of the EU and oriented towards trade and cooperation with East-Central Europe

versus

- a Nordic Atlantic region which is not a part of the EU and possibly oriented towards trade and cooperation with North Russia and North America

once again illustrates that Nordic cooperation has more to do with a shared culture than with common economic and geopolitical interests.

The discussion above has focused mainly on regionalisation at the fisheries sector-specific meso level. The possibilities for regionalisation outlined above are in large part concerned with national/Nordic and regional institutional political players, more than with regionalisation at the micro-firm or network level. This may have something to do with scale, as regional cooperation on fisheries in the Barents and West Nordic Regions is obviously implemented on a larger scale than any possible regionalisation initiatives would be in prosperous 'industrial districts'. This will be

discussed further in the following section.

Regional cooperation in resource management, price policy and science and technology can all be approached from both a state-centric regionalist angle, and from a more civic and economic view of regionalisation. But to implement such cooperation, from a more civic and economic angle, there is a need for competent political entrepreneurs at the regional level, and for a certain degree of delegation of control, and responsible management, of resources to the Murmansk Region, Northern Norway and the Faroe Islands/Greenland by the political centres of Moscow, Oslo and Copenhagen. From a fisheries perspective, in order to be a success, Northern self-government or regional autonomy might presuppose the existence of regionalisation initiatives and vice versa. In this respect, the BEAR and NORA initiatives might make progress, especially if combined.

c. Regionalisation as a process of localised learning

Regionalisation functioning as a network and a form of business cooperation has to be based on a certain balance between functional and territorial integration. With regard to the regionalisation of larger regions, functional integration concerns both external relations towards the world market/international division of labour and internal relations regarding a regional division of labour. However, the regional division of labour should not be a clean external pattern of exchange, for example producing wines in exchange for textiles, as found in classical and neo-classical trade

theory of comparative advantages. Even the comparative disadvantages of being located far from resources have been conquered by new technologies within the fisheries sector, e.g. through developments in transport technology and of onboard processing. Developing region-specific competitive advantages within certain clusters of production based on user-producer-relations (Lundvall, 1992) provides the opportunity to develop innovative *milieux* based on a particular form of social and territorial integration (Storper, 1995; Asheim, 1993).

In a global economy, many factors determining optimum production conditions are no longer bound to specific locations, other than by the presence of a labour force with certain qualifications, and existing *milieux* of innovation. In this approach, regionalisation is concerned with understanding the function of certain types of agglomerations of growth industries (viz. Third Italy, Silicon Valley etc. as recent 'classic' examples of industrial districts). These agglomerations seem to be related not only to IO (Input-Output) relations – but also to 'untrad-ed interdependencies'. If localised, such interdependencies make certain regions of learning and innovation significant (Storper, 1995).

Among people involved in the development of new products and new ways of production and organisation, informal relations seem to make an important contribution to the dynamism of the specific *milieu*. In this way, an understanding of the necessary balance between functional and territorial integration may be specified (Asheim, 1993). The necessary territorial as-

pect has not only to be a matter of historical traditions etc., but also seen as an integral part of innovation, in itself shaping regions as a pre-condition of innovation, etc.

When attempting to evaluate North Atlantic fisheries communities in these terms, it seems first of all obvious that due to the mobility of fisheries communities, the way in which this 'localised learning' takes place is not specifically localised to certain areas. Taking the relatively innovative Icelandic fisheries sector as an example, it is quite clear that the development of products such as fish tubs and visual weighing equipment very much depends on the strength of user-producer relations within the total Icelandic home market, as very local untraded interdependencies between innovative firms are not widely found. It is important for innovative Icelandic firms – such as Sæplast, producers of fish tubs (Dalvík, Northern Iceland) – initially to base the innovation process on a strong home market, and fisheries are so dominant in the Icelandic economy that the home market is substantial. To be localised in a prosperous and entrepreneurial community would appear to be important (Bærenholdt, 1998). But at the same time, perhaps the most remarkable feature of Icelandic entrepreneurship is its global orientation. Although the status of a micro-society apparently implies weakly formalised systems of innovation (Jónsson, 1994a), the advantage of Iceland's position as a nation with its own unique aspirations in culture, education and research, is that Icelanders are not as narrowly orientated towards the old colonial centres of education in Denmark

or Southern Norway, as are the Faroese, Greenlanders and to a lesser extent the North Norwegians, who have their own regional university in Tromsø. Icelanders are able to travel anywhere to be educated and to experience life in Sweden, the UK or the US etc. This open-mindedness towards the world appears to be a significant benefit, especially when it is found even in remote villages, as ex-migrant Icelanders tend to return to their roots, even to the smaller villages, bringing their knowledge back with them. It is important to stress here that having a global orientation has nothing to do with being a global individual. Global orientation in this case is the viewpoint of an Icelander who possesses a strong sense of national identity. A certain balance between global orientation, national identity and the sense of belonging to a local community, seems decisive in mastering innovation in all its aspects. Social interaction between experienced 'locals' and educated 'mobiles' is required (Bærenholdt, 1993: 150-151; 1998).

Apparently, Icelandic fish processing industries have been quite successful in adjusting their production of frozen fillets to new segments on the consumer markets as a reponse to the introduction on a massive scale of cheaper species such as Alaskan pollack. These are not 'ready-made' meals which skimp on the fish but high quality pieces of fish fillet which are either sold individually, frozen or fresh (transported by air). This would appear to be the trend of innovative Icelandic fish processors (Jónsson, 1994b). This kind of specialisation is, of course, not unique to Icelanders – but has

very much been essential for survival in a market characterised by intensified international competition. Furthermore, compared with the increased fish stocks in the Barents Sea fisheries in the mid 1990s, the decline of fish stocks in the Icelandic EEZ has been another motivation to achieve more value for less fish. This should be compared to the North Norwegian case where increasing fish stocks and increased landings, including those from Russia, effectively delayed a move towards real value-added processing. However, in recent years Finnmark fish processing industries have been restructured, in part through the introduction of Icelandic technologies. Meanwhile, there has also been a growth in North Norwegian exports of herring, cod and salmon to Central Russia, a sign of further cross-border economic integration (Sneve, 1996).

Many Icelandic and Norwegian examples of successful integration seem to document the importance of certain key persons working as entrepreneurs, i.e. as transacting persons, willing to take risks and able to establish a network of relationships in non-institutional fields (Barth, 1972). Such entrepreneurs are often localised in the sense that their networks operate from a certain social and spatial position. Therefore, it must be assumed that there are close links between entrepreneurs and their localised social *milieux*. Localised processes of learning, regional production culture and innovative *milieux* (Storper, 1995) are necessary elements for thriving innovation and regionalisation.

The presence of a strong tradition of social integration might be an interesting en-

vironment for regionalisation of innovation. But the exact nature of that social integration is important. For instance, the crisis in Southern Italy (compared to the prosperous 'Third Italy') might in some ways be related to the lack of a 'civic culture' which could perhaps have secured a degree of efficient economic action instead of the prevalent "Mistrust, fear, (and) the retreat to particularistic social groupings..." (Storper, 1995). In this and other cases of underdeveloped EU regions, the regional policy of nation-states and a European Union which provides general purpose civic facilities (in terms of infrastructure etc.) has failed. Existing forms of local social organisation lack certain collective capacities to handle and use the European environment in the way that national governments and the EU assumed they would.

The similar distance found between local forms of social control and national political forms can also be found in the Faroese separation of the interests of national politics from the concerns of the "village world", which is a socio-cultural ideal reflecting traditional communities of Faroese villages. This was particularly apparent just after the 1992 economic crisis. It is simply not enough to legitimise politics by naming it 'village development' (bygdamenning), if politicians are unable to mobilise the capabilities of people.

There are few current examples of regional policies as positive forces for regionalisation. Regionalisation as the development of innovative regions is normally the case where regional policy was not required. Perhaps regional policy might be

needed to cope with the consequences of innovative regionalisation in the regions *excluded* from any initiative, to regulate in favour of the losers in the process. Therefore, as long as regional cooperation and regionalist policies are no more than regional policy conducted at a higher level, as it is in most North Atlantic cases, regionalisation as a socio-economic process of the development of dynamic regions is only relevant in cases very different from most North Atlantic localities.

Conclusion – the challenge of regionalisation in North Atlantic fisheries

A "Europe of the Regions" is, as yet, by no means a reality, although in some cases the concept may anticipate future developments. From the beginning, the BEAR initiative has been conceptualised and presented as being a part of the larger plan for a "Europe of the Regions". Therefore, BEAR will also potentially contribute to new forms of regional cooperation within Europe, but in what ways are these forms of regional cooperation new?

The ongoing participation of nation-states as players in regional cooperation seems to be a fact of life. The BEAR initiative should be conceptualised as a new form of energetic foreign policy, which has been integrated with regional policy. However, in several respects West Nordic/Nordic Atlantic Cooperation has found nation-states to be barriers to its development plans. In spite of the differences between them, both the BEAR and NORA initiatives do contain certain, broadly speaking,

common potentials, notably to develop networks through funding and interaction 'from below'. To what extent these potentials can be realised very much depends on the specific economic and social organisation within the relevant sectors. In resource-based regions, such as the North Atlantic, such networks and interaction may well follow a very different pattern, compared with the so-called 'Blue Banana' of European centres (from London to Milan)

Policies related to the concept of a "Europe of the Regions" are dominated by the attitude of the nation-states, where in practice subsidiarity is often a matter of preferring national (not regional) to EU management. Subsidiarity is a concept of politics and administration – not of economic and social interaction. Of course, actual regionalisation as a process of innovation can be supported by regionalist policies, but the content of the approach to regionalism within the EU seems more appropriate to the European centres, than to the more peripheral regions of Europe, with economies based on natural resources. In the North Atlantic, just a few players dominate business activity and this business is very much within a North-South orientation as there are few commercial opportunities within the North itself. Close cooperation and networks between these persons is needed to overcome some of the fundamental conflicts over resource management and price politics that continue to hinder development within the North.

Within fisheries, cooperation and interaction have already existed for centuries within what is known today as the Barents

Region and Nordic Atlantic countries. New possibilities for innovative and knowledge-based economic activities related to fisheries – such as the transfer of technology to the internationally growing fisheries sector – must be utilised. The Icelandic example indicates that diminishing resources have actually stimulated such a development, rather than the reverse. An innovative technology and services sector can even bring in new supplies of raw fish, as in the case of Russian landings at Nordic ports, which in recent years have increased as a result of the disintegration of the Russian economy. To encourage cooperation and the growth of networks in knowledge-based sectors, support and funding from regional cooperation can help, but are by no means the most important factors. Generally speaking, the most decisive factor seems to be the mobility and interaction of young people which allows them to acquire new knowledge, skills and contacts through education abroad, before they return to their own countries. The fisheries education at the University of Tromsø seems to play a pivotal role in this.

On the face of it, the meso-level of concrete initiatives in regional cooperation within the fisheries sector is the most interesting agenda in the North Atlantic. Regional cooperation in science and technology, e.g. joint North Atlantic institutes with local branches, could help to create better infrastructures for systems of innovation. This is a project Norway, Iceland and the Danish Realm should look into further, in particular to reconsider the funding levels required. Obviously, the total budget of all

Nordic Atlantic projects is much too small, compared to the level of Norwegian funding for BEAR projects.

In the high quality catch and production of cod products in particular, combined fisheries cooperation in resource management and price politics could be of fundamental importance. It is essential to both the BEAR and NORA Cooperations, seen in a European context, that the non-rational outcomes of intra-North Atlantic competition for resources and on prices should be tackled. Within this lie some potentials of regionalisation. Internally, a sense of regional identity already exists, and externally as well from the perspective of fish consumers. Cooperation in fisheries does not have to incorporate the silent Finnish and Swedish participants in the Barents Region but it certainly must include West Nordic countries, due to their access to fish resources. Therefore, the threat to fisheries of BEAR policies, is the danger of concentrating solely on Norwegian-Russian cooperation, which is a cooperation of limited perspectives. How the Barents Region and Nordic Atlantic Cooperation can be interlinked, although placed in different institutional spaces, is an open question.

At the same time, the Norwegian BEAR policy should be recognised for its understanding of the importance of political discourse today. If an idea is suggested often enough, perhaps someone will carry it through or finance it! It appears to be a problem of the BEAR that it seems to consist of so much talking, but apparently regionalisation through discussion and consultation is important. The well-developed

and regionally founded Norwegian political culture produces a very different level of public debate to that found in other West Nordic countries. Using the tradition of Pomor trade (between Northern Norway and the White Sea area in the 18th and 19th century) in particular in regionalisation, has already been quite successful in the BEAR initiative. But earlier Viking trade actually extended from 'Vineland' (America/Newfoundland) and Greenland in the west, to 'Bjarmaland' and Novgorod in the east (and to Normandy in the south, as well!). The Viking Age was characterised by the dynamic and externally oriented activities of the North towards continental Europe. More energetic politics in trade and cooperation are also needed today to advance Nordic Atlantic Cooperation!

The comparative analysis of the Nordic Atlantic Cooperation versus the Barents Euro-Arctic Region Cooperations reveals a principal local/global dilemma: should regional policies first of all involve and coordinate already locally established institutions and businesses, thereby risking failure to create and build any new development or institutions, or should regional policies meet the challenges of globalisation by pursuing ambitious new transnational initiatives involving foreign policy, thereby risking the raising of high expectations which cannot be fulfilled by concrete activities?

To find a way to manage this dilemma involves a more concrete formulation of the objectives of regional cooperation policies in relation to a specific analysis of the problems faced by the regions involved (and here the role of security policy objectives

must also be considered). It can also be stated that this dilemma has been brought about through the division of responsibility within the political system between foreign policies, where governments hold power, and domestic policies including municipal, industrial and labour affairs, which are more in the control of parliaments. As domestic policies are increasingly governed by international organisations such as the EU, this division of responsibility is a barrier to national participation in transnational development (see also Lindström, 1996). The new forms of transnational regional cooperation involve highly differentiated participants, but until now cooperation initiatives have typically been pursued without any network of communication between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the specific Ministries of the Interior, nor between the EU and the Nordic Council of Ministers (cf. fig., Aalbu *et.al.*, 1995: 89). Foreign Affairs/EU issues and Internal Affairs/Nordic cooperation belong in two separate domains.

Nordic cooperation between regions dependent on fisheries necessarily involves several organisational bodies, but the existing Nordic institutions are weak structures only constructed for the purpose of conducting 'low political' cooperation. The *strength* of these weak institutions and networks is clearly their absence of bureaucracy of the type and scale found in the much more formalised institutions of the EU. But weak Nordic institutions limited to the concerns of 'low politics' will not be able to pursue major transnational projects such as the BEAR and NORA initiatives, which in-

volve the Nordic Atlantic countries and perhaps eventually Scotland and Newfoundland as well.

As in the case of the BEAR, Nordic cooperation is not able to take initiatives of international scope, but when established as a framework by energetic national governments within an EU context, Nordic cooperation can enter later, supporting and funding projects, in a subordinate role. In 1996 Sweden and Finland entered the EU, and the EU entered the North Calotte and the BEAR initiatives with substantial INTERREG programmes. Although using the names of North Calotte and Barents, it is clear that new Euro-political structures have been introduced.

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