

## Plenary III Reports

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Here is a short overview of the discussed topics in the Summary Session.

The session took up general issues related to the evolution of Northern Dimension (ND) institution, related practices and some future trends. The ND started with Finnish and Swedish agricultural politics and became a part of the EU's external policy in 1997. It was proposed that the activities of the ND should reach further north to connect the Baltic and Arctic areas. At the moment ND is also going through institutional change to provide common policy. The need for a steering group for ND was discussed. There exists a challenge to empower local communities in complex institutional processes through the support of project planning and implementation. The public involvement and information delivery can be improved via regional councils. English can operate as a common language of North to establish positive interdependency between various actors.

Technology came up as one topic of discussion. Wireless technology with related devices is growing. The possible harm of wireless technologies for human health (cognitive capacities) was discussed but there is no clear evidence of this. Additionally trade-offs of sustainable energies that are overlooked by the main trend of "greening" should be considered. Sustainable energies can also be connected closely with local communities. For example, the voices of Saami people have not been sufficiently heard on the stage in discussions of hydro power plant planning. There is a challenge to include local community more actively in the planning process of natural resources. Environmental management also needs to include time horizon and local dimension. Global trends should be translated into local action plans and practices that take into account climate warming and other environmental risks. For example, the City of London has a survival strategy against larger water floods. Local community can also be seen as an active

part of research.

The summary session also considered questions concerning the nature of Nordic Research Forum (NRF). It was proposed that NRF can operate as a think-tank to bring issues to ND meetings. The idea is to engage in dialogue and to represent reports for the ambassadors of different countries. ND shall also include more economic issues integrated with environmental aspects. It is a challenge to change consciousness of people (e.g. through TV) to modify consumption and materialistic habits that can influence climate change. There is need for holistic views and related actions that may have positive environmental impacts.

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### Introduction.

Steven Bigras opened the panel by asking the following twin questions related to both sides of the undergoing rapid change:

- a) are the centre-periphery relations breaking down due to globalization and rationalization?; and
- b) how do we increase human security in the context of climate change?

1. Speaking about human security in Norbotten, **Kent Ögren** raised healthcare and energy as the biggest issues; ones that require political decisions and long-term strategies. He presented the energy politics as closely

tied to global policies as it has a direct impact on greenhouse effect, climate change, and global stability. Energy requires international collaboration, notably on the regional level. He pointed out that Northern Sweden has not only sustainable energy sources such as wood, hydropower, sun and wind energy as well as heat water from the steel industry, but also valuable know-how; network, and genuine popular interest in sustainable energy issues.

**2. Thordur Palsson** took the story of Kaupthing Bank to talk about some effects of globalization on small areas (i.e. countries). He pointed out some public perception paradoxes regarding globalization in Iceland: suspicious perceptions of large companies are often nourished by public and media clichés, while from a global perspective, so-called “large” Icelandic companies look rather tiny. Therefore he strongly recommended participation in global competitive markets in order to assure the economic health and security in the small countries. Pioneering on cross-Arctic flights, *Finnair* should be taken as an inspiring example, he said. Combined with good infrastructural policies in rural areas, this strategy may contribute to avoid out-of-community migrations to larger centres of attraction. In the same perspective, Thordur Palsson advised the privatization of some government banks in order to make them more efficient and competitive. As a conclusion, the moral of the Kaupthing Bank story may be resumed as: “compete abroad!” and “look out for opportunities!”

**3. Tom Hutchinson** made a series of more general statements on the “Pitfalls on the road to modernization”. He stressed the dangers of wireless technology such as TV antennas, towers, cell-phones, Internet, and other products of the information era, but also the ones of climate change. Talking about “political responses and responsibility” towards climate change and global policies, he regretted some largest countries’ (Russia, USA, Canada, China) attitudes towards the Kyoto protocol as well as the “miserable international response” towards an earthquake in Pakistan. As a final point, he deplored the “efficiency-vs.-sustainability tendency” which would consist, according to the speaker, of improving the efficiency of the industry while neglecting the sustainability. Relying on the “precautionary principle” (that things are preventable), his message was “let’s do it sustainable!”

**4. Maimo Henriksson** presented the “Achievements and Future Perspectives” of the EU’s *Northern Dimension* (ND) programme, which has been initiated by Finland in 1997: The “achievements” concern the *Second Action Plan 2004-2006*. On a macro-level, Maimo Henriksson pointed out the setting up of a political strategy

to get EU attention to Northern Europe and especially to North-West Russia. On a micro-level, she outlined some achievements within a number of partnerships and within concrete project activities such as the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (set up on the “small input – big output” principle), the ND Nuclear Clean-Up projects on Kola Peninsula, and the ND Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being. As for the “Future Perspectives”, Director Henriksson highlighted the Finnish Objectives within the *Third Action Plan* (starting in 2007) as follows:

- commitment of all parties,
- strengthen institutional mechanisms,
- additional financing to ND,
- improvement of transport and logistics,
- education and student mobility.

**5. Lassi Heininen** drew our attention to the social impacts of globalization with the question: “What is relevant, what is new in globalization?”. He brought into discussion some global change issues of particular relevance to the North, such as the new dynamics in North-South relations, the consequences of the increased Southern demand for natural resources in the North, the new transportation corridors such as the Northern Sea Route to China, the expanding strategic and military presence to the Arctic Ocean, the new opportunities for doing science in the Arctic in the form of laboratories and workshops, the biological and cultural diversity; and finally, political stability in the North, so crucially relevant for the global system.

### General Discussion

The general discussion following the panel focused on the concept and challenges of sustainability.

Question: What About the Benefits for Northern communities?

According to Tom Hutchinson, sustainability is the key benefit: “Let’s do it sustainable!” Putting the issue into the economic context, Thordur Palsson looks for sustainability towards selling shares (i.e. sustainability might go with economic profit). Against a comment from the audience that local stakeholder’s perspective on this issue might be different, he argued that cultural perceptions might be not so opposite as they are often presented in the common discourse.

Still, a striking example of difference in cultural percep-

tions on “sustainable energy” was brought by the audience with the argument that the western concept of “green energy” is not shared by Sami reindeer-herders.

Question: How are Sami communities involved in EU’s Northern Dimension?

Maimo Henriksson pointed out the special mention on Sami communities in the ND’s Program Document as well as their place in the EU Council’s agenda.

As a final point, a discussion about “the real North” and its geographical and political location raised from the audience with some “Nordic versus Baltic” mapping representations as ideological background. Both Maimo Henriksson and Lassi Heininen reacted in favour of a Northern common policy instead of competition. “No Nordic Bloc” within the Northern Dimension: cooperation is the key-strategy.