

7.2 Afterword/closing message

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Dear reader!

This publication comprises selected scholarly works that reflect the results of a 10-year international cooperation, the goal of which is the sustainable development of circumpolar regions in the North (in Norway, Canada, and Russia). These works are the result of a long-term partnership of researchers and practitioners who came together under the framework of the University of the Arctic's "Thematic Network for Local and Regional Development in the North" under the leadership of Professor Tor Gjertsen.

International cooperation expressed itself in scholarly research, multiple conferences, seminars, exchanges of experience, and the workshops that supported the elaboration of development plans for northern municipalities. Effective cooperation with representatives of legislative and executive authorities of regions, districts, and settlements across the northern territories of Norway, Canada, and Russia was organized.

In our continuing collaboration, we extensively present and discuss the practical development experiences of many circumpolar cities and rural settlements; we identify problems that are common to all northern settlements; and we develop sustainable development strategies for municipalities. The exchange of international experience by citizens – leaders of local communities – was performed under practical cooperation with local self-governance authorities from different countries as well as business representatives. Today, leaders of these local communities are pioneers in creating new small enterprises and implementing social innovations, and they produce an activating effect in their societies.

In cooperation with the University of the Arctic, the member-country universities such as the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø (Finnmark Faculty), University of Northern British

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Columbia (Canada), North-Eastern Federal University (Russia), Syktyvkar State University (Russia), and others, acted as educational platforms for business-schools on entrepreneurship as well as other social projects for inhabitants of northern municipalities.

The most important result of 10-year experience of international cooperation on sustainable development of Northern circumpolar regions in the Thematic Network member-countries is the creation, maintenance, and further development of a space for actual international cooperation. We will enhance this international partnership with the aim of supporting sustainable development in northern municipalities, and the preservation and support of the traditional lifestyle of Aboriginal people in the North.

Our global strategy for the next 10 years is to actively develop and implement an innovative component for developing northern territories. To this end we will develop cooperation with government institutions; business, scientific, and educational organizations; we will hold conferences and seminars; we will organize business schools; and we will develop and implement social projects with innovative potential.

We have identified three strategic directions for developing the thematic network:

- First, will be the elaboration of joint educational programs between partner universities, including the creation of network-based Master's programs in the area of local and regional development. It will also include training courses and traineeships for heads of municipalities, university professors, students, entrepreneurs, teachers, and local leaders.
- Second, will be the development of joint scholarly research, publication of articles, and textbooks for Master's students. To achieve this, it is necessary to come up with joint research teams different research project areas focused on the North. For example, this may include individual or combined chapters on comparative analyses or forecasts for development in northern territories.
- Third, will be the organization and development of a mobility program for students and university professors, lasting from 2 weeks to one semester. The mobility program can



include Russian regions (universities of Yakutia, Komi Republic, Arkhangelskaya oblast, and others), and also foreign partner universities from across the thematic network.

Through these three strategic directions, our international partnership on the sustainable development of northern territories will contribute to new knowledge and to the development of human capital for future innovations.

In conclusion, I express my gratitude to Tor Gjertsen, who led our friendly network for 10 years, and all participants of the international partnership, for the energy and efforts that they dedicated to the development of northern communities. I sincerely believe that our international partnership provides real support and help to the people of the Far North in their self-realization and adaptation to the changing world. I wish all of us successful cooperation, new ideas, and new meetings!

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