

## Foreword

### Greg Halseth

I am very pleased to have attended the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary International Conference hosted by the University of the Arctic's Thematic Network on Local and Regional Development. The opportunities created through these annual meetings in the Norwegian communities of Gargia and Tana over the past 10 years illustrate the best of international collaboration. I have been involved in community development work on six continents and rarely do I see an international network that has the success, the participation, the work on the ground, as well as the ongoing conversations that this one has achieved. International networks are at their best when they accomplish multiple goals – and this is something that the UArctic Thematic Network on Local and Regional Development has succeeded with.

My participation this year is part of an ongoing commitment by the conference to bring in academic researchers who specialize in studying various aspects of community and economic development in small northern communities and regions. Over the years, researchers from a wide number of institutions, and with a wide range of expertise, have contributed to the conference and its many themes. In this year's conference, much was shared and learned from Russian, Scandinavian, and Canadian experiences. Each time, the academic researchers contribute a great deal and also learn a great deal.

In addition, there is also participation by people interested in policy matters. Over the years this participation has come from government, community, and various non-profit organizations. Again this year, there was tremendous participation by a wide range of non-profit and government representatives. The information and perspectives they contributed was critical and helped to widen and improve the dialogue of the conference.

But community development and economic change happens “on the ground” and in communities. That is why one of the key strengths of the international conference is that it also brings representatives from communities so that they can share their stories, listen to the presentations, and participate in the discussion. Again this year, the most valuable part was to



hear from community speakers about the projects they are working on and the successes they are creating.

Together, this range of participation helps not only to broaden our awareness and understanding about matters critical to northern community and economic development, but the creation of this knowledge base is a key tool for successfully dealing with the challenges of change and for taking up the opportunities that they present. In addition, the international conference and the conversations it supports help to foster the creation of new friendships, new relationships, and better understandings. Many projects have been created out of the international conference and its conversations between researchers, policy advocates, and community representatives. Again this year, the excitement created by the conversations is leading to serious discussions about future projects to help better understand the opportunities and challenges facing northern communities and regions.

I must mention the active work of the Network in mobilizing applied projects in Norway and a number of Russian Republics. Applied work on the ground, bringing together the best of the lessons from the international Network conversations, has helped communities develop for the better. It has helped in workshops where they learn to reimagine and re-bundle their assets so as to create opportunities that fit with local aspirations for themselves, their children, their community, and their region. This is the legacy of the Network to date and a terrific foundation from which to start its next era of activity.

It was a great pleasure to attend the 10th anniversary International Conference. I learned a great deal that will help with my own work and I hope my contribution was also of value. But the 10th anniversary meeting also marks a time for growth and change within the Network. I would like to use this opportunity to extend my personal thanks to Tor Gjertsen who has created a foundation of collaboration and action that is unrivaled in international research networks. I know that it has taken a great deal of work and personal sacrifice, but this is a legacy of which he should be very proud. I also wish to extend my congratulations to Oksana Romanova, Vice-Director of the Institute of Finance and Economics at the Northeastern Federal University in Yakutsk, who now assumes leadership of the Network. Times are always changing and there are always challenges to maintaining an international collaborative network. However, I know that in your capable hands the Network will explore new opportunities and



will build upon its successful foundation to create a next generation of legacies and impacts. I look forward to working with you in the future.

We all seek resilient and sustainable communities, economies, cultures, and environments. The success of the Network stands as its own tremendous testament to the leadership and to all its participants. As it moves to new and capable hands, I look forward to its continued success and to its international leadership role within the UArctic as the Network takes up opportunities to share its success and teach others about what can be accomplished by working together.

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