

Finnmark as a learning region in an international salted fish market - perspectives on the elaboration of positive path dependency in nature resource based regions.

1. Name of research leader and project members:

Project leader Torbjørn Schei

2. Project objectives

To contribute to value adding activities and to give an overview of institutional bottlenecks and possibilities of encouraging production of salted fish through new learning and innovation systems in Finnmark. And to examine the relationship between access to knowledge, and, use of knowledge and development of incentive institutional frameworks at actor as well as system level.

3. Background

In order to understand lack of innovative capability in the Norwegian salted fish industry - as a localised nature resource-based industry-, analysis of codification, adaptation, and re-negotiation of knowledge at actor, as well as institutional -level will be important. In order to establish positive development processes, the interaction between the actor and system level need to be scrutinized because the behaviour at both industry and individual level is regulated and affected by a series of different institutions.

4. Research problems

What are the strengths and weaknesses in the innovation system of the salted fish industries regionally and nationally? Then, how may possible weaknesses be transformed to realize the immanent potential in nature with its access to raw material of the best quality? What role is played by learning and reflexivity to change production practices in the salted fish industries? Practically, how may for instance the handling of less good raw material be changed to realize the potential of the resources?

5. Theory and methodology

Theory: Institutional and evolutionary economy, especially focusing on the concepts of norms, habituation and path dependency. Institutional economy attaches these concepts to development and fixation of different institutions. Institutional rigid activities and forces of change are central within the evolutionary aspects of economy. The same is reflexivity. If contents of rigid structures may change through learning, the phenomenon of rigidity may have a positive function by keeping a new and positive development on track. This research project is action oriented and it becomes natural to begin with theories regarding regional innovation strategy, and thereafter move onwards to analysis of functionality and dynamic in the localised innovation system. Analyses of weaknesses and potentials of value chains are then a natural starting point.

Method: Pragmatic realism, qualitative data collection, abduction, action research.
This project will be carried out in interaction with other projects.

6. Relation to the main project

Tasks 2.1-2.3

7. Time schedule

2009