



Observatory PASCAL

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions

PURE Regional Visit Report (RVR2)

JAMTLAND, SWEDEN

25th – 25th January, 2010

Steve Garlick, Kate Sankey and Peter Billing

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Jämtland region in mid-Sweden has a strong but as yet not fully realised rural enterprise and tourism industry base and an emerging energy production base that sit alongside the more traditional industries such as forestry and logging. The largest city is Östersund located in the centre of the region with a population of around 60,000. The regional population is around 126,000 which has been declining and ageing in recent years. There is a dominance of males in the region's demographic profile and a general 'brain drain', particularly among young women, and a rural-urban population drift. There has been a longstanding issue in the region with males being hesitant to engage in further learning, preferring instead a rural and 'outdoors' lifestyle. The CDG mentioned these various demographic characteristics in Jämtland in its first report. However in a region of slow or declining population growth that is ostensibly rural in nature, these factors are fundamentally important as they represent a significant loss of the endogenous human capital needed to build the region's future from within in a difficult external environment. These demographic issues are also important from social inclusion and higher education participation perspectives. Its in this area of human capital and human capability in Jämtland where we believe significant attention needs to now be focussed by the region.

The Mid-Sweden University, as Sweden's newest university, has around 15,000 students, with around 48 percent of these studying through distance learning. The University is a leading university in Sweden for distance learning. More than 7,000 of the University's students are enrolled at the Östersund campus, although again around half study through distance mode. The University has a stated commitment that its three campuses (also in Sundsvall and Härnösand) engage with the regional communities in which they are located. The key areas of academic focus at the Östersund campus are sport and tourism, health care, social work and public administration. The Östersund campus of Mid-Sweden University is the only university in Jämtland. As a recently established university Mid-Sweden has mostly to this point focused, correctly, on its internal organisation arrangements. As a result engagement with the wider region and in developing learning pathways with other education providers has been nascent to this point. The University is a very important player in any human capital strategy to address the regional concerns the CDG have identified in Jämtland and its engagement with the region can only enhance higher education participation, an objective of the Swedish central government.

The first regional review visit by the PURE Pascal evaluation team occurred 30-31 March 2009. In the report that followed the visit the following interconnected priorities were identified:

- To further pursue on a regional basis small rural enterprise and nature-based tourism initiatives that draw on the specialist expertise of the Mid-Sweden University's research and teaching capability, a range of known tourist business entrepreneurs and the region's institutional leadership
- To ensure regional development strategies take into account changing demographic characteristics (declining overall population, rural – urban drift, an ageing population, 'brain drain', etc)

- To strengthen the connectivity between the teaching, research, innovation and leadership of the University and the region's development agenda
- To enhance coordination between those regional agencies where there are responsibilities for elements that are important for the region's future prospects (eg health, transport).

1.2 Aims of the CDG Second Round Visit

The purpose of the Second Round Visit was twofold. First, to identify:

- what has been achieved since the First Round Visit in terms of the conclusions of the Regional Visit Report (RVR) and the regional Action Plan,
- problems preventing or delaying progress, and
- new aspirations for regional engagement and development that may have occurred in the meanwhile.

Second, to provide feedback on the above and, through discussion and the completion of the benchmarking tool, assist to identify and refine future strategic directions. A particular focus for the region and for its involvement in the PURE project is to further develop tourism as a region-wide all-year round experiential activity with a focus on its rural enterprise, cultural industries as well as its winter and summer sports.

1.3 The CDG Pure Team, key regional leaders and the visit program

The PURE team for the second round visit comprised:

Professor Steve Garlick
Ms Kate Sankey
Mr Peter Billing

The visit program (refer *Appendix 2*) included meetings with Mid-Sweden University leadership, various regional actors, and visits to a rural tourism enterprise, a cultural tourism enterprise, an agricultural related whole product-cycle value-added enterprise (the Wool Forum), and the Jämtland Institute for Rural Development.

Key regional leaders the CDG team held discussions with during the visit were:

- Mr Henrik Zipsane, Director of the Jamtli open air cultural and historical museum;
- Mr Erik Andersson, Director of the Jämtland Institute for Rural Development (JiLu), Jämtland County Council;
- Mr Robert Uitto, Chairman, Jämtland County Council;
- Dr Robert Pettersson, European Tourism Research Institute, Mid-Sweden University; and
- Professor Christer Frojdh, Vice-Rector Research, Mid-Sweden University.

The CDG team thank these people, Dr Anna Hansen of Jamtli and others for the time they afforded us in the visit.

1.4 Summary of the Findings of the CDG Second Round Visit

A key focus for the involvement of Jämtland in the PURE initiative is to identify a path of strategic partnership between regional actors and the university. The objective of this is to enhance the region's tourism potential and to bring a greater focus on the region as a whole as a tourist destination, drawing on its rural enterprise, cultural characteristics and all year sporting and recreation activities. We see the focus on tourism having a number of strategic advantages at this



Observatory PASCAL

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions

stage in the region's development given its demographic challenges, the leakage and underutilisation of its human capital and its natural and cultural capital advantages.

The global economic downturn of 2008/9 has had an impact on the region's economic activity and highlighted the fragility of the regional economy to outside shocks. On the positive side however it has also been a stimulus to push forward with more collaborative energy with the region's priorities to further develop its all-year round tourism destination potential and through this strengthen the partnership between region and university to enhance the region's competitiveness and employment growth. Both domestic and international tourism, as industries, are susceptible to changes in consumer incomes and prices and as a result are affected by the economic downturn. This downturn will be a useful reminder of the vulnerability of tourism as a central plank in the region's economic development strategy and of the vulnerability of the economy as a whole in the way it is currently configured. However, given the natural and cultural capital of the region, the enterprising spirit among some of the population, the presence of the University, and an increasing desire for key actor collaboration, a focus on tourism has the added advantage of being a mechanism to address the human capital difficulties of the region.

A second and ongoing constraint that will bring some uncertainty to furthering the university/ region dialogue and its goals in relation to tourism is the central government's agenda for having fewer but larger and more populous designated regions throughout Sweden by 2015. The initial government plan on the table is for Jämtland and part of the neighbouring region of Västernorrland to amalgamate. There may also be implications for the Mid-Sweden University in these regional amalgamations as the Swedish Government has sought to strengthen the smaller universities (through having fewer and larger institutions) so as to reduce the regional disparity in higher education participation between urban and rural areas in Sweden and to generally increase participation rates nationally.

Another difficulty with this agenda for dialogue about regional amalgamation is that Jämtland is trying to define a distinct regionally inclusive destination brand for the all-year tourism experience. Discussions about regional amalgamation bring some uncertainty to identifying a meaningful and cohesive regional brand. Local discussions amongst the municipalities and with the County Council in regard to amalgamation are continuing.

On the positive side it was apparent to the CDG team there was a greater acceptance that the PURE initiative would be helpful in strengthening the tourism-grounded alliance between the University and region. It was also apparent to the CDG that there was now greater regional collaboration amongst key actors and a stronger will by the University to be actively engaged with the region.

We recognise the initiative Tourism 2020 to bring a more strategic and partnership approach between the region and university in the provision of capacity building in tourism entrepreneurship. To enable a more sustainable region-wide impact for tourism and the beginning of a more sustainable approach to the region's economic development as a whole that will address current economic as well as demographic concerns, a human capital plan for the region should be formulated by education providers, including the University, key regional institutions, and key enterprises and enterprise groups. In this regard we suggest the focus on tourism may be a useful beginning model for implementation and evaluation for the wider approach to the region's development at a later date.

2. Current Regional Environment and Engagement

In the first round visit the CDG concluded there was a need for stronger collaboration and coordination among the region's key decision makers about the way the region should move forward with its economic development agenda. A Region Värmland type organisation was suggested and while we are aware

Observatory PASCAL

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions

such a model has been attempted in the past in Jämtland we are still of the view that this is worth pursuing once again, although the proposed regional amalgamation may make this now a difficult or delayed task. We are pleased to now understand, post CDG visit, that indeed this model is being once again considered and would suggest dialogue with the leaders at Region Värmland and Karlstad University to ensure learning from the Värmland experience.

The benchmark assessment carried out for the region in time for the second round CDG visit suggests good collaboration in the region still remains a difficulty. However, what is encouraging is that the benchmarking tool, and the dialogue that accompanied its completion, involved a number of the key regional stakeholder interests. The completion of the tool therefore has created a place for good dialogue for the future about how well the region is progressing on its regional development processes and where improvements can be made.

The CDG met with Mr Robert Uitto, Chairman of the Jämtland County Administrative Board. We were encouraged by the news that the Jämtland Regional Tourist Board 2020 project will be coordinating the small rural tourist enterprises to enable the Mid-Sweden University to gather information about their needs to be able to better respond. A number of responses are envisaged including enhancing marketing and management expertise, web site design, in situ training courses and so on. One area where work has begun at the University through ETOUR is in relation to designing place or destination marketing for tourism.

One difficulty that has been identified in terms of a partnership between the University and the Region in relation to building a regional tourism capacity is the difference in the response time needs of the small business tourist enterprise, which is looking for immediate guidance, and that of the university researcher where the timetable is much longer. Both perspectives understandably meet their respective requirements and in the next section we suggest a way the University might assist, in collaboration with other education providers, in offering professional up-skilling and accredited short courses to assist with this.

Tourism 2020 is run by Jämtland Harjedalen Tourism (JHT), its aim is to attract more national and foreign visitors to the region through destination and product development with a particular focus on environmental sustainability, hostmanship and all-year round tourism. Environmental sustainability is a destination theme that runs through a range of tourism foci. These include nature and culture-based tourism, Indigenous people tourism, ecotourism, local food, as well as the sport and adventure themes. Correctly, Tourism 2020 identifies the creation of tourism industry human capital and destination research as significant. For this, Tourism 2020 looks to ETOUR to assist.

In the first report we highlighted the need for the region to focus on its human capital planning future as a fundamental long term solution to the economic and demographic needs of the Jämtland region. As stated earlier and in the first review report the declining and ageing population, underemployment of skills and 'brain drain' represent a serious leakage of potential enterprise and productivity that needs to be now harnessed (refer schematic diagram at *Appendix 1*). It can have serious consequences for long term regional viability as the diagram at Appendix 1 demonstrates. A human capital plan also offers the possibility of reaching-out and pulling-up through the human capital pyramid those at the margins with unrecognised and unrealised capability. Tourism skills and capabilities are a good place to begin the process of designing and trialling such a plan. Such a plan should involve secondary, technical and university education sectors as well as key industry partners. The plan would include student work placements, problem solving, and student enterprise and innovation learning. There would need to be a range of learning product options to appeal to the broader needs of people in the region.

We note there have been further meetings, post CDG visit, between University leadership and key regional actors about collaborative regional development projects of mutual interest. One of these relates to the region and university becoming partnered members of Observatory Pascal, thereby gaining access

to expertise specialising in university/ regional development processes. A second initiative with reference to regional tourism is the initiative to organise in Jämtland the Heritage, Regional Development and Social Cohesion Conference where one of the themes is heritage tourism and sustainability. For the issues that exist in Jämtland, this international conference represents a timely diagnostic

3. University and the Region

3.1 Background and developments

The University has a stated vision and goal of working closely with its local and regional community in both its education and research programmes and at the same time achieve high quality and international competitiveness.

The connections between university and region have until now been mostly passive and restricted to having university representation on various regional and county boards and committees and several partnership research projects with some of the larger corporations and institutions, particularly in forest industries and with large tourist entities such as Ski Star. The connections into the small enterprise heart of the region embracing the University's teaching, research and innovation have been mediocre. This has been acknowledged by the University in its dialogue with the CDG in completing the PURE benchmarking tool. However as Sweden's newest university, having been established in 2005 from the Mid-Sweden University College, there have been more immediate internal priorities that required attention before the University's orientation could be more fully directed externally to its regional community.

The University has now organised itself into eight departments within three faculties across three campuses (Östersund, Sundsvall and Härnösand). These are: Science, technology and media (the departments of IT, media, natural sciences, engineering, physics and mathematics); Human Sciences (Humanities, Social Sciences, Social Work and Nursing); and Education.

Having now established its various teaching and research programmes the University is now more able to be actively involved in building knowledge-based partnerships with key actors in the Jämtland regional community in concert with its stated engagement objectives. This increased interest was noticeable in discussions with the Vice-Rector Research. Tourism is one area where the University has been recently building its teaching and research strength at Östersund through ETOUR (the European Tourism Research Institute) which is opportune given the strategic importance the region has placed on tourism for its future. In addition, ETOUR now offers a new PhD programme in tourism; we understand a first for such a programme in Scandinavia.

Dialogue around the completion of the PURE project benchmarking tool has been useful in highlighting areas where the University might build more of its efforts in engaging with the regional community. The benchmarking analysis undertaken by the University suggests the University saw itself as a significant contributor to building a skilled labour market in the region, including by working with employers in developing course curriculum. The University however also recognised it could be outreaching more in this regard by tailoring courses to specific employer needs and working with local schools, and vocational education colleges to improve pathways to the local university. As there are no data kept on the geography of graduate destination it is difficult to know how many graduates from the Östersund campus become employed in the region or make their way south to the larger cities and become another element of the region's 'brain drain'.

At an industry level, the University is engaging more with larger enterprises, but again the connection is still rather passive mostly taking the form of contracted research arrangements. There is yet to be a strategic connection to business at a regional scale across a broad front, thereby enabling small and medium enterprises to benefit from university knowledge generation. We would also suggest

Observatory PASCAL

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions

stronger connections between relevant research and teaching interests within the Mid-Sweden University and the Jämtland Institute for Rural Development (JiLu). JiLu is close to the County Council and works very much at the practical or applied level as we saw in a visit to the JiLu Wool Forum.

3.2 Some further ways forward

To date outreach by the University into Jämtland has been limited to large business and institution-specific connections rather than regionally strategic connections that embrace all of the region's natural, economic, social and cultural distinctiveness. This is also the case in tourism and it is now suggested that a regional approach be taken by the University in this area.

In the first report twelve initiatives that the University could implement to boost engagement were suggested covering management, teaching and learning, research and support for innovation (refer first report for detail). The discussions held between the CDG team and the Vice-Rector Research suggests the University is now considering a number of these initiatives and there are now the beginnings of ongoing discussions between University leadership and key regional actors to build specific alliances. We are encouraged by this and suggest that the University consider trialling some of these approaches to address the human capital issue in the region using the region's priority of tourism as an area to target and evaluate for its engagement. The following is suggested:

- Partnering with key regional actors in the preparation of a region-wide tourism strategic plan that highlights priorities, resources and timescales. Such a strategy could explicitly include areas where university teaching, research and innovation can add value. The focus of the plan and the responsiveness of the University would need to embrace a region-wide approach; the all-year tourism experience; and the role of small rural enterprise and cultural themes. Significantly, there would need to be an overall focus on the human capital question including the development of a human capital strategic plan for the region as it might relate to tourism.
- The University might consider beyond its formal degree programs also graduate certificate and diploma programs in areas that contribute to professional up-skilling in ways that will be attractive for those inside the region but also from further a field.
- Partnership pathways with the secondary and technical education sectors with a focus around building human capital skills in entrepreneurship in tourism and in tourism support services

One of the difficulties with the implementation of the PURE initiative to date is that there has been limited opportunity for ongoing consultation between CDG visits by CDG members and the key university and region actors. Jämtland is now probably at the stage where there is a need for more interaction/ consultancy to ensure the project moves from the internal regional situation to external networking through the cluster arrangement. While there are considerable potential benefits to be gained from stronger university/ region engagement within the regional situation, the real benefits will flow when this engagement is used as a lever to network with regions and universities internationally via the PURE cluster arrangements. The PURE project web site and the benchmarking tool are two mechanisms that are useful in this regard as is the recent new arrangements within PURE administration to establish knowledge managers attached to each region. Östersund is hosting the PASCAL and PURE conference in June this year and this should provide an in-depth opportunity to showcase issues and share experiences with other regions.

4. Future Directions: Summary

Focusing on developing the region's tourism industry around rural enterprise, cultural industries and sporting activities in ways that are all year round and region-wide does, if planned well, provide a mechanism for enhancing economic outcomes at the same time as it begins to address the demographic and human capital concerns of the region. The exigencies of the global and national markets will always

Observatory PASCAL

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions

challenge industries like tourism that are dependent on consumer income levels. However, the increase in university/ region community engagement is a pleasing development which, if twinned with a comprehensive region plan to build human capital in tourism that involves industry enterprise and learning, then a sustainable approach to this industry and to the region's long term future should occur. Such an approach would help to realise regional enterprise, address issues of social inclusion and help in boosting higher education participation. With this in mind we have identified some initiatives that we hope might assist with such a direction.

- The development of a regional human capital plan for Jämtland embracing all education sector provision and business and institutional enterprise. This plan would be focussed around education pathways, product differentiation and modes of delivery in education provision, engagement with regional enterprise and, in the first instance, an explicit connection with tourism. The plan will have a social inclusion dimension and will aim to reach-out to those at the margins of the learning process. This early focus on tourism could then be evaluated for its effectiveness with a view to its wider application to other areas.
- Education sector provision will give greater impetus to fostering an enterprising culture in its teaching programmes that will fit with the needs and aspirations of the micro and small business concentration in the region.
- The focus on tourism should be used as a test bed for wider application of a human capital approach to other aspects of the region's development.
- The human capital approach to the region's development would necessarily reach out and pull up and through the region's learning framework those who might otherwise be lost to the task of realising the region's development potential such as those comprising the 'brain drain', males, older ages, micro enterprises operating in the rural areas and others in the underemployed category of the labour market.
- Liaise with Region Varmland and the University of Karlstad to better understand the engaged way they are working, to share experiences and to take on good practice initiatives that have some relevance in Jämtland.

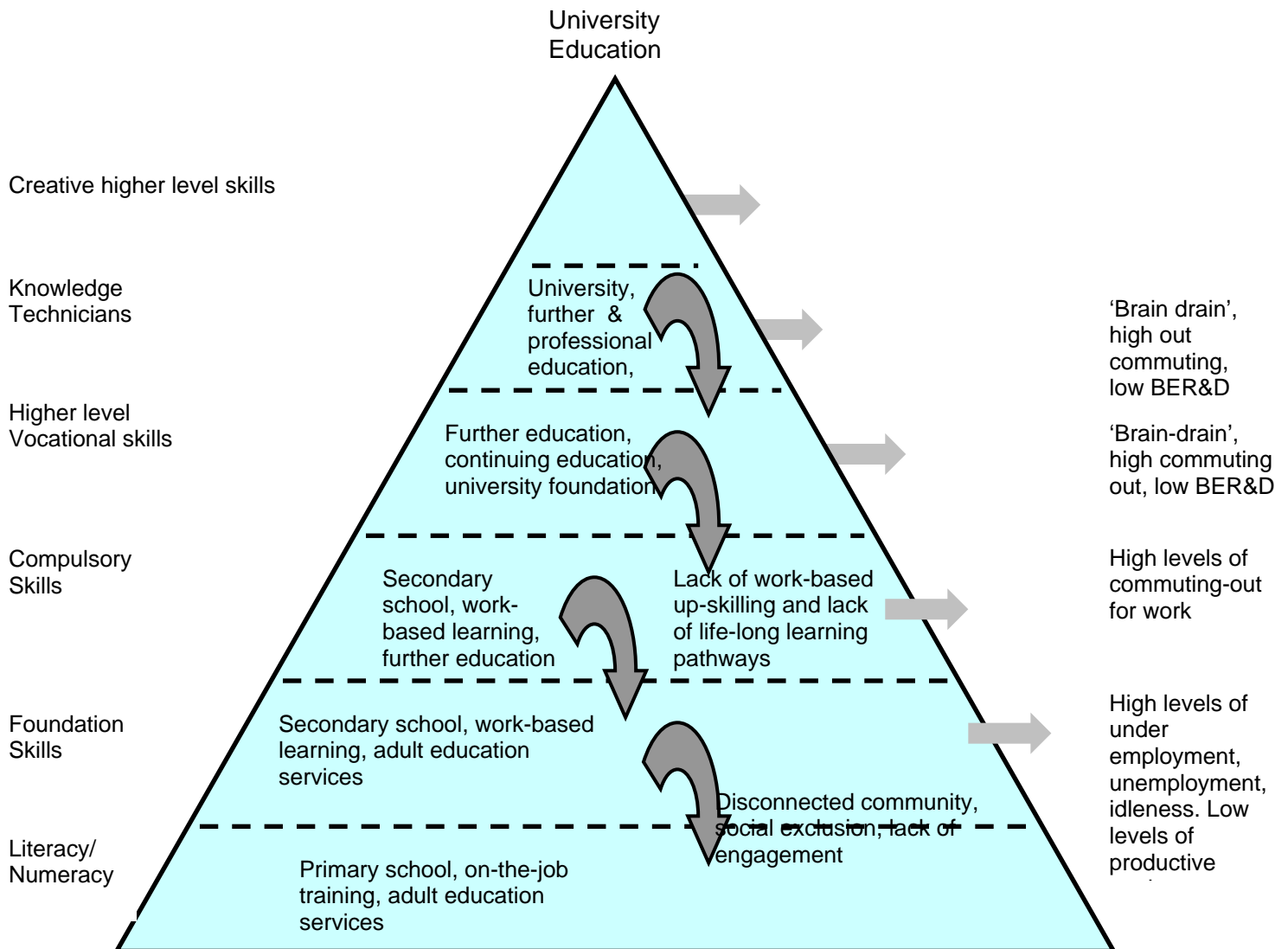
5. Conclusion

Since the first review visit one year ago there have been some positive developments in the way the region and the University in Jämtland see the need to build collaborative associations to not only benefit the region's future, but to enhance University teaching, research and innovation outcomes. At one level the economic downturn and central government consideration of region amalgamation have slowed and muddied the agenda somewhat, nevertheless there does appear to be a stronger commitment to collaboratively address various matters.

The focus on destination tourism as an all-year, whole of region activity is well founded, based on the region's rural enterprise, nature and cultural assets and sports and exercise attractions. However, our view is that this focus must be a lead into a wider agenda to enhance the region's human capital requirements and thereby address real endogenous concerns about shifts in population and demographic changes – particularly as it relates to economic potential and social inclusion. We have noted some initial movements in this direction with the Tourism 2020 initiative, the holding of the Pascal international conference mid this year, and expected membership of Observatory Pascal.

With such an agenda underway, the Jämtland region could gain much from the cluster process and other national and international partnerships. Similarly, as an engaged partner with the region in these processes, the University will be able to form various connections with higher education institutions in these other regions nationally and internationally.

Appendix one: Human Capital Pyramid





Observatory PASCAL

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions

Appendix two: Visit in Jamtland 25-27 of January 2010

Review team: Steve Garlick, Kate Sankey, Peter Billing

Monday 25 of January

Participants: Anna Hansen (Jamtli), Henrik Zipsane (Jamtli), Christer Fröjdh (morning) (Mid Sweden University), Carsten Magnusson (Jamtland institute of rural development), Erik Andersson (Jamtland institute of rural development).

09 - 12 Introduction to what has been done since the last visit and the results of the Benchmarking of the university.

12 - 13 Lunch

13 - 15 The results of the benchmarking of the region.

15 - 17 Discussion on how to progress from the results of the benchmarking.

Dinner

Tuesday 26 of January

Participants: Anna Hansen (Jamtli), Henrik Zipsane (Jamtli), Carsten Magnusson (JiLU), Erik Andersson (JiLU), Rober Uitto (morning) (Jamtland county council), Robert Pettersson (Mid Sweden University).

09 - 11 Continued discussion of the benchmarking – focusing on tourism.

11 - 12 Tour of Jamtli – presentation of how Jamtli works with tourism and with the region.

12 - 13 Lunch

13 - 15 Excursion

15 - 17 Discussion on how tourism can be improved in the region by deepened cooperation between university and region.

Dinner

Wednesday 27 of January

Participants: Anna Hansen (Jamtli), Henrik Zipsane (Jamtli), Carsten Magnusson (JiLU), Erik Andersson (JiLU).

09 - 12 Summing up, the review team's reflections.