

International Evaluation of Strategic Research at the University of Lapland

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH EVALUATION PROCESS

University of Lapland key characteristics

The University of Lapland, which is situated in Rovaniemi close to the Arctic Circle, is the Northernmost university of the European Union. The University has 640 employees and 4,700 students who can complete degrees at four faculties: *Art and design*, *Education*, *Law*, and *Social sciences*. The University has an annual budget of 51.2 Million Euros (2013). In the year 2012 altogether 527 bachelor's degrees, 474 master's degrees, 8 licentiate, and 28 doctoral degrees were completed at the University.¹ The share of University of Lapland degrees in comparison to the overall number of higher education degrees completed in Finland varies from 6.6 per cent in the field of education to 24.6 per cent in the field of law (in 2010–2012). In relation to the overall number of university degrees completed in the year 2012, with its 1,037 degrees the University of Lapland ranks 9th among the 14 universities in Finland.² When the size of the annual turnover of Finnish universities is compared based on the financial statements from the year 2012, the University of Lapland ranks 11th.³

In addition to its four Faculties, the University also hosts the *Arctic Centre*, which is an international research institute and science centre focusing on Arctic issues, and the *Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI)*, which engages in research and development activities and combines all levels of tourism education. The MTI operates under the umbrella of the *Lapland University Consortium (LUC)*, which unites the three universities operating in Lapland: the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences, and Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences⁴. The MTI is comprised of tourism research at the University of Lapland, tourism and hospitality management at Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences, and vocational education at Lapland Tourism College. In addition the Consortium has a joint *Institute for Northern Culture*, which operates in Tornio, and promotes networked collaboration in the areas of culture, education, research, and development.

Founded in 1979, the University of Lapland is relatively young. Despite being one of the smaller Finnish universities, it aims to be a strong research university with a distinct research profile. The Arctic Centre aims to become Finland's leading centre of excellence for the Arctic and its research is conducted in three thematic research groups: *Global change group*, *Sustainable development group*,

¹ In addition 57 master's degrees were completed in collaboration with the University of Oulu.

² In the year 2012 a total of 29.225 degrees were completed in Finnish universities. The share of University of Lapland degrees is thus 3.55% of the total. Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, <http://vipunen.csc.fi/fi-fi/yliopistokoulutus/tutkinnot/Pages/default.aspx>

³ Source: Table of comparison published in the Acatiimi 6/2013, 12. Acatiimi is a magazine published by The Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers, The Union for University Teachers and Researchers in Finland, and The Finnish Union of University Professors. http://www.acatiimi.fi/6_2013/06_13_09.php

⁴ The two universities of applied sciences will merge in January 2014 to form the Lapland University of Applied Sciences.

and *Environmental and minority law*. Scientific research is also conducted in the Faculties and at the Multidimensional Tourism institute, which also engages with local businesses and implements development projects related to tourism.

The share of international publications from all scientific publications of the University was 36 per cent in 2011 and 50 per cent in 2012. Below are three charts depicting recent publication trends of the University. The first chart shows the breakdown of scientific publications by field of education in 2012. These fields roughly correspond to the four Faculties of the University. However, the Arctic Centre also produces publications that belong to the social sciences, law, and the natural sciences, and the MTI produces publications in the field of social sciences. The second chart shows a more detailed breakdown of the 2012 publications according to discipline. Many of the publications are interdisciplinary in nature and are therefore classified into up to 3 fields of education and 5 fields of science. The third graph is a stacked column chart which shows the development from 2006 to 2012 in the actual numbers of publications produced, broken down into main publication types⁵.

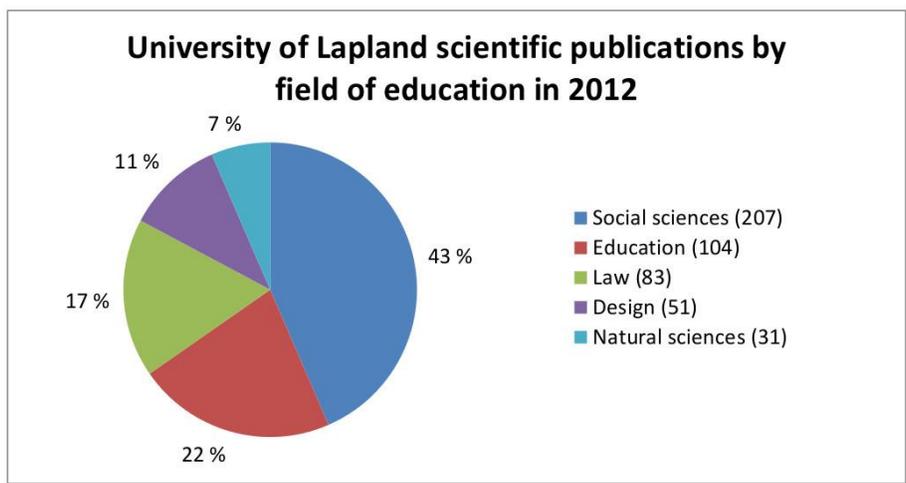
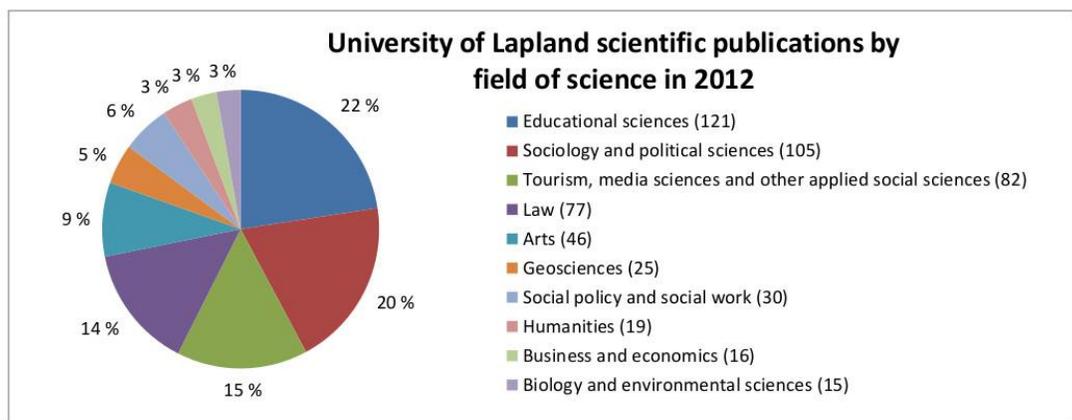


Chart 1: University of Lapland scientific publications by field of education in 2012



⁵ Source: Administrative materials sent to the evaluation team.

Chart 2: University of Lapland Scientific publications by field of science in 2012

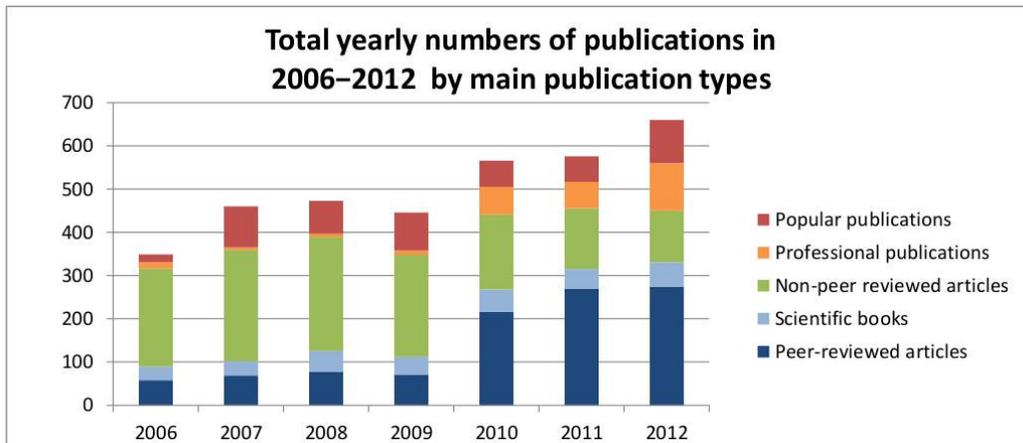


Chart 3: Total yearly numbers of publications in 2006–2012 by main publication types

Introduction to the research evaluation

Universities in Finland are encouraged to have a distinctive academic profile. The University of Lapland 2020 strategy includes the following vision: “In 2020 the University of Lapland will be an international actor in higher education with a distinctive profile in the arts and sciences.” As strategic objectives for research and artistic activity it further states “The University’s research and artistic activity in its stated strengths and focus areas will be recognized and influential at the regional, national, and international levels.”

The University of Lapland has two profile areas:

- 1) Research on the people, societies, and the environment in the Arctic and Northern areas.
- 2) Regionally influential, yet internationally oriented research on tourism.

Three strategic focus areas further specify the research profile:

- 1) Sustainable development, law, and justice.
- 2) Northern welfare and changing work.
- 3) Service design.

In 2011–2012 the University of Lapland conducted an extensive self-assessment exercise on the current status of the strategic focus areas. The focus areas were classified according to the volume and quality of current research activities into different phases of development: launch phase, development phase, and stabilization phase. *Sustainable development, law, and justice* was analysed to be clearly in the stabilization phase and *Northern wellbeing and changing work* is moving into the stabilization phase. *Service design* was classified as being in the interface between launch phase and development phase.

The University is currently formulating a number of research programs that will operationalize work done in the strategic profile areas and draw from the expertise of the professors and researchers in the various Faculties and institutes. The Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the University of Lapland (2013–2016) includes certain follow-up indicators that are used to monitor progress in realizing the University's strategy. Three of these are directly linked with strategic research:

- 1) Among all scientific publications the share of publications related to the university's profile and focus areas (publication forum levels 2 and 3) is 20 per cent in 2016 (2011: 10%).
- 2) Among total funding received from Academy of Finland and Tekes, the share directed towards the university's profile and strategic focus areas is 45 per cent in 2016 (2011: 30%).
- 3) Among all dissertations made at the university, the share related to the university's profile areas and strategic focus areas is 45 per cent in 2016 (2011: 40%).

The University of Lapland and the Ministry of Education and Culture agreed that an external evaluation of the strategic research conducted at the University of Lapland should be organized in 2013. The University Board held a discussion in its meeting on the 28th of February about the scope, aims, and approach of the oncoming evaluation and approved the guidelines for the evaluation in its meeting on 4th of March 2013. The external evaluation will not focus on research conducted in any single faculty, unit, graduate school, or discipline, but will rather examine the research policies and strategic choices made at the University of Lapland as a whole. The objective of the evaluation is thus to assess the interaction between basic and applied research, the availability and scope of external funding, the potential for interdisciplinary research, and the current situation of research in the University's profile areas.

The aim of the research evaluation exercise is to provide a fresh view on the current volume and quality of research conducted at the University and to provide tools for strategic development of the University's research environment so that it may achieve the highest national and even international standards in the selected profile areas. The evaluation should therefore assess the relevance of the chosen profile areas, as well as give information on the quality of research currently conducted in these areas.

The overall purpose of the evaluation is:

- to produce information about the current status and quality of University of Lapland research in relation to the international standard of research conducted in the profile areas
- to assess the relevance of the selected profile areas while taking into account the nature of the research and operational environment of the University of Lapland
- to help recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the University of Lapland as a research and operational environment in its selected profile areas

- to note the improvements that are required and to provide guidance on how to secure the quality of research in the profile areas in the future
- to review the needs for graduate schools and researcher training in the two profile areas, taking into account also the three strategic focus areas.

The assessment criteria to be used during the evaluation are:

- the scientific innovativeness, topicality, and potential for creative thinking
- the exploitability of research results and knowledge in European and global decision-making processes
- the requirements for acquiring national and international research funding
- the suitability of the scientific and artistic methods used
- the scientific and artistic visibility of the researchers and their publications
- the international partnerships that promote the strategic profile of the university

Rector Mauri Ylä-Kotola and Chair of the University Board Raimo Väyrynen appointed the evaluation team on 13th May 2013. The chair of the evaluation team is Professor Jorma Sipilä (University of Tampere) and its members are Professor Tim Ingold (University of Aberdeen, UK), Professor Chris Southcott (Lakehead University, Canada), Professor Annette Pritchard (Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK), Rector Anna Valtonen (Umeå Institute of Design, Umeå University, Sweden), and Professor Arlie Hochschild (University of California, Berkeley, USA). Researcher, doctoral candidate Saara Koikkalainen (University of Lapland) was appointed as the co-ordinator of the evaluation and asked to serve as the secretary to the evaluation team.

The evaluation team received a package that included relevant administrative information from the University of Lapland and two sets of materials focusing on *Arctic and Northern research* and on *Tourism research* at the end of June 2013. The evaluation team visited Rovaniemi⁶ in the first week of October 2013 and met with key university personnel. The first meeting was with the Deans and Vice Deans of the Faculties: Timo Jokela from the Faculty of Art and Design, Matti Niemivuo and Juha Karhu from Law, Päivi Naskali from Education, and Juha Perttula, Susan Meriläinen and Pia Skaffari from Social Sciences. Also Johan Edelheim, the Director of the MTI, took part in the discussion. The evaluation team also met with 32 members of University of Lapland staff, who were chosen from the different Faculties and institutes based on their expertise in either Arctic and Northern research or tourism research. In all six discussions were held: one for professors, one for post-doctoral researchers and lecturers, and one for graduate students of each profile area. The evaluation team also discussed with the university leadership, Rector Mauri Ylä-Kotola, Chairman of the University Board Raimo Väyrynen, and Vice rector in charge of research Minna Uotila.

⁶ Professor Annette Pritchard and Professor Arlie Hochschild took part in the discussions via an online video link.

Materials provided to the evaluation team

The research evaluation package sent to the evaluation team included the following items:

- **Administrative materials**

E.g. General presentation of the University, University of Lapland 2020 strategy, Agreement with the Ministry of Education and Culture 2013–2016, Results of the Audit of the quality assurance system in 2009, Annual Report of the University 2011, Self-assessment of the strategic focus areas of the University 2011–2012, Information on research funding, and the Internationalisation programme 2013–2016.

- **Presentation of Activities in the Arctic and Northern Research Profile Area**

E.g. list of research and development projects, abstracts of on-going and completed doctoral dissertations, significant academic activities and positions of trust held by researchers in this profile area and information on their international mobility.

- **The most significant international publications: Arctic and Northern Research profile Area, 1–73.**

A list of the selected journal articles and book chapters and the full-text versions of these texts.

- **Presentation of Activities in the Tourism Research Profile Area**

E.g. list of research and development projects, abstracts of on-going and completed doctoral dissertations, significant academic activities and positions of trust held by researchers in this profile area and information on their international mobility.

- **The most significant international publications: Tourism research profile area, 1–29.**

A list of the selected journal articles and book chapters and the full-text versions of these texts.

- **Other relevant materials**

E.g. The 2020 Strategy of the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland international brochure, Report from the University of the Arctic's External Review Team, and the Arctic Calls: Finland, the European Union and the Arctic Region – book written for the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (by Markku Heikkilä and Marjo Laukkanen).

- In addition **an exhibition of books** written or edited in English by University of Lapland faculty was on display during the evaluation visit.

2. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH EVALUATION TEAM

Introductory remarks

The University of Lapland is relatively young and is changing from being a teaching-led university towards being a research-led institution. There are two poles of research: one located in the Arctic Centre and one in the Faculties that also carry a heavy teaching load. The role of the MTI in research is vital for the profile area of tourism, but as a new institute its role is not so established as that of the Arctic Centre. (The MTI was founded in 2009, while the Arctic Centre was established already in 1989.)

It is important to note the limitations of the task set for the evaluation team. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the international (English-language) research conducted within the two strategic profile areas of the University of Lapland: *Arctic and Northern Research* and *Tourism research*. The materials sent to the evaluation team and the meetings with University faculty centred on these two topics, and therefore the evaluation team cannot comment on the overall quality or level of research conducted on topics that are not related to the profile areas. Research materials in the Finnish language were also left outside the scope of the evaluation.

Before proceeding to the actual analysis of the situation of the two profile areas we would like to note a few strengths of the University of Lapland that make it unique to Finland. These are qualities that we feel could be presented openly in the materials produced by the University, for example.

The University of Lapland:

- Is focused on art, societal, and environmental issues
- Conducts research in and for the North
- Combines teaching and research
- Has an openly collaborative culture
- Is situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty and cultural interest

2.1 ARCTIC AND NORTHERN RESEARCH

Observations

The North, here, is taken to refer to the northern circumpolar world, which is more or less coextensive with the arctic and sub-arctic regions of the globe. While the concept of the Arctic reflects the global perspective of geopolitics and mainstream natural science, the idea of the North comes closer to the perspective of those who live and work there, denoting a world that is continually brought forth through the engagements of scholars of many disciplines and people of

many cultures with animals and plants, and with the land. In bringing the Arctic and the North together, under a single rubric, the University of Lapland has been effective in combining these global and inhabitant perspectives, and in demonstrating their complementarity. It has shown, moreover, that northern research is not for the North or for the Arctic alone, but carries implications for people and environments everywhere, for example as it concerns the themes of indigenous empowerment and land rights, the effects of extractive industries and climate change. But of course, research into the specific conditions and issues connected to living in the northern circumpolar region is vital to its inhabitants as well.

Internationally, the University of Lapland has been able to profile itself as a leading university in the North based on its strong focus on the Arctic and through its association with the University of the Arctic. Led by the Arctic Centre, the research done in this field is among the best in the world. It is clear that this profile area is the most prominent at the University of Lapland, and that this is widely accepted in the scholarly community at large. The high impact of publications in this area, provided for the evaluation, confirms this.

The Arctic Centre is well-known in the circumpolar world and has clearly been at the forefront of promoting research in this field. It has a strong culture of research collaboration and good connections with the University's Faculties of Social Sciences and Law. As of now, however, the Faculties of Education and of Art and Design have not yet benefitted from co-operation with the Arctic Centre as much as they could.

The University's particular strengths in Arctic and northern research currently lie in the fields of law, education, art and design, and social and environmental science. Law is rather a special case, since the Law Faculty is one of only four in the whole of Finland, and it has been a key constituent of the University ever since its foundation. Within the context of the North, the Faculty has been able to carve out a distinctive profile in areas such as environmental law, intellectual property rights, and the rights of indigenous minorities. The quality of the research and resulting publications is of a high international standard.

Education faces similar challenges to those encountered by other education faculties not just in Finland but in many other countries, because of the time and effort that have to be put into teacher training. Practitioners in the field have little remaining time or resources for research. In this, the University of Lapland is no exception. However in recent years the Faculty has improved its publication record and encouraged junior scholars to publish internationally. In particular, the Faculty's research on issues of education in the North gives it a strong and unique profile.

In the fields of art and design there exists much potential for development. Along with many institutions in a similar position, the Faculty of Art and Design is torn between the sometimes conflicting demands of artistic and professional practice on the one hand, and on the other, the critical objectives of art history or visual culture studies. Whereas the focus of the former is on the creative process, the latter is more typically concerned with the retrospective and critical analysis of

created objects or works. The problem is to arrive at a viable definition of practice-based research. However, despite its being a relatively young field, research in the area of art and design at the University of Lapland has opened up new insights and, in particular, has established a significant profile in the emergent field of service design. There would be considerable scope, nevertheless, to develop the Faculty's research by linking it more explicitly with environmental and societal issues.

The University's research in the social sciences is heavily concentrated in particular areas such as the sociology of work, labour mobility and migration, and ageing and well-being. By and large, it has been qualitative in method, but it could perhaps benefit in the future from giving greater weight to quantitative perspectives. In environmental science, the University's contributions are distinctive in the extent to which they include a social science perspective, and make real efforts to cross the boundaries between research on 'nature' and research on 'society'. This is a strength on which the University can build. However, the proportion of Arctic and northern research publications sent to the evaluation panel from the Faculty of Social Sciences was small compared to the size of the Faculty and to the volume of publications produced in this field.

Challenges

Arctic research is undertaken by several universities and research institutes in Finland but the University of Lapland is unique in that it has the only purpose-built unit tasked exclusively with Arctic research and outreach. However, due to the absence of teaching or research in the natural sciences at the University of Lapland, some of the high-quality research conducted at the Arctic Centre does not easily communicate with the work done in the rest of the University. Disciplinary conventions may thus limit the possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration. As is typical for research in the natural sciences, the publications listed in the fields of ecology and environmental sciences are often attributed to a large number of co-authors. One challenge is therefore how to make the contribution of the Arctic Centre researchers more visible in cases where the research involves collaboration with multiple institutions, and where the Centre is just one partner among many.

The Arctic Centre differs from other units of the University in that its staff has very limited teaching obligations, compared with the majority of the Faculty personnel who are expected to both teach and publish research. This can pose a challenge, especially in a context of university funding for research which heavily emphasises the number of publications in high-ranked international journals, and in which the numbers of publications produced are also used as one factor in calculating the division of funds within the University.

The Arctic Centre has a supportive, collaborative and research oriented culture, which was much appreciated by the staff interviewed. One of the challenges facing the University is how to expand this collaborative culture to the Faculties and how to extend it to other research-oriented networks and international publication fora.

Another challenge is how to balance obligations to the region with the requirement to produce high-impact publications targeted to international scholarly audiences. The University of Lapland can be an important asset to the region, but how can regionally relevant research and outreach be given the value it deserves? Research that has an impact locally or regionally may differ from what is considered high-impact research academically, or from the viewpoint of the university funding system.

Recommendations

The evaluation team recommends that the relationship between the Arctic Centre and the Faculties be re-examined with the following points in mind:

- While co-operation now exists with the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Law, The Arctic Centre should expand its remit to include not only legal and social scientific research but also research in the fields of education and of art and design that addresses indigenous and environmental issues in the Arctic and the North. In this way, the Centre should strengthen its co-operation with the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Art and Design.
- Mobility between the Arctic Centre and the Faculties should be encouraged by creating a system of “internal sabbaticals” whereby Faculty members can focus on research, and Arctic Centre researchers can teach and become more involved in the University of Lapland research community. This would make the Arctic Centre less exclusive, and open to incorporating faculty who have interests in both Arctic and northern research.
- To enhance the regional role of the University of Lapland, the Arctic Centre should take the lead in assisting residents of the region in making their voices and interests heard and, where appropriate, in challenging techno-scientific agendas that do not sufficiently take these voices and interests into account. The Centre should promote and disseminate research that enhances the value of northern environments and the wellbeing of its inhabitants. This would make the Centre’s research results relevant and tangible to the local population, and not only to other scholars.
- The University of Lapland could make fuller use of the thematic networks of the University of the Arctic as bases for everyday research collaboration, so as to facilitate networking with other researchers interested in similar topics. The University should consider whether other international networks, forums or ranking lists might be available in which its particular strengths in northern and Arctic research would be valued.
- Arctic and northern themes should be included in the doctoral training programmes of the University, but the selection of research topics should not be limited to these themes. Finding

and supporting doctoral students and researchers who are passionate about their research is a sustainable way to increase the research impact of the University.

2.2. TOURISM RESEARCH

Observations

The University of Lapland has a unique strategic advantage over its Finnish counterparts, in that it is the only institution able to award degrees in the field of tourism; all other universities and polytechnics only offer tourism as an element of other disciplinary degree programs. It is thus the only university in Finland which employs researchers in the academic discipline of tourism research. This has significant consequences for its place in the wider international tourism research community. For instance, its researchers (unlike others who favour their parent disciplines) tend to target journals in tourism and cognate fields.

Among the articles sent to the evaluation team are several examples of work that is on the cutting edge in terms of both subject area and research approach, with fascinating explorations of, for example: the relationship between people and nature and our cultural imaginary; the development of sustainable marketing; nation branding; rural nature-based tourism; hospitality; pedagogy and learning environment; and Arctic indigenous peoples.

The 29 articles sent to the evaluation team include evidence of significant research: thus around 20 per cent are published in the “top-four” tourism journals *Annals of Tourism Research* and *Tourism Management*; of the remaining 80 per cent, half are of international significance, and half involve work of national significance. Members of staff in the discipline of tourism are also frequent reviewers for international journals and hold a number of editorial board/advisory board positions.

Three research themes clearly emerge from the material provided to the evaluation team: pedagogy, creative design, and sustainability. Many of the publications on tourism have been co-authored, and are indicative of a prevailing collaborative research environment within the University of Lapland. There are opportunities for networking across the profile areas on themes such as indigenous people, climatic and social change, and Arctic design. As of now, however, the activities in this profile area are heavily concentrated in the Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI). Many non-MTI staff interviewed in the tourism panels during the evaluation visit saw research in this field as marginal to their own research interests.

The University of Lapland and especially the MTI has a chance to develop into the first “port of call” for international researchers seeking to forge partnerships with Finnish Arctic/northern tourism researchers. The Institute is particularly well placed to become *the centre* for tourism research in Finland, but this is contingent on researchers’ continuing to build international networks and

partnerships and targeting international journals to cement these strategic advantages. The doctoral projects completed at the University of Lapland demonstrate creative and critical thinking and there seems to be a willingness to “step outside the box” in order to explore issues from new and exciting perspectives that have so far rarely featured in tourism research, which is often dominated by business and management cultures.

Challenges

As one of the two main profile areas of the University of Lapland, tourism is an obvious choice from the point of view of the regional role of the University of Lapland, but appears problematic in light of the depth of research shown in the evaluation materials and in the discussions with University faculty. The publications sent to the evaluation team included 73 articles from the Arctic and northern profile area, but only 29 publications that fall within the tourism profile area.

During the evaluation visit it became clear that tourism research in the University is strongly concentrated in the hands of only a few individual Faculty members. For many researchers at the University, although not irrelevant, tourism is felt as somewhat marginal to their principal research interests. While the interviewed doctoral students and researchers in tourism had a strong background in the discipline, and will naturally continue their research careers in the field, it is difficult for researchers trained in other disciplines to feel ownership of the term “tourism research” or indeed the desire to publish in this field.

Many of the interviewed faculty were of the view that they could better connect their work with the profile area of tourism if it were defined more broadly. However, they struggled with what this broader definition might be. There is a clear perception that tourism is a discipline, rather than a broad research area shared by members of the University community. The faculty also stressed that new organizational lines should not be created within the University. The creation of MTI has brought benefits of synergy for the discipline of tourism, but from the point of view of the other Faculties it has tended to imply that research on phenomena related to tourism are now the responsibility and prerogative of the MTI. In the profile area of Arctic and northern research the situation is more balanced: while the Arctic Centre plays a leading role in this profile area, research is also done independently in all of the Faculties.

Within the University there is an interest in examining the challenges of tourism and its regional impact, and the collaboration works particularly well on the educational side. The work done at the MTI also shows an innovative approach towards the task of combining several levels of education, research and links to the local tourism industry. Yet this is also one of the major challenges of this profile area: The MTI has to serve many different audiences including academic, industry, government, and media, and this makes it difficult if not impossible to focus solely on competing for international research funding and publishing in high-ranking journals. This, in turn, makes it hard to

generate sufficient academic impact to warrant the retention of tourism as one of the two main research profile areas of the University of Lapland.

Recommendations

The evaluation team recommends that when contemplating the future of its research activities in the tourism field the University of Lapland should take into account the following points:

- Tourism is one of the few sectors of the economy of Lapland that is growing. In addition to its relevance for the local economy, tourism is also a significant social, cultural, and environmental phenomenon and therefore an important object of research for the University of Lapland. Tourism is a specific degree program where degrees can be completed at the bachelor's and master's levels, so the University can educate young graduates who may continue to doctoral research in that discipline.
- The University of Lapland can become the main generator of research on Arctic and northern tourism and has the potential to play an important role internationally in the field of tourism research. One interesting additional focus could be environmentally-sensitive eco-tourism.
- Currently, tourism is an emerging discipline of its own, but as the situation on the ground shows, it does not work as a profile area for the university as a whole. There is a challenge in formulating a research strategy that would respond to the social and environmental dynamics of northern regions, establish an internationally recognised identity for University of Lapland tourism research, and still meet the demands coming from the local tourism industry. The MTI currently tries to manage this difficult task, but within the other Faculties there does not seem to be enough interest in and enthusiasm for tourism research.
- The evaluation team is not therefore convinced that the University should highlight tourism as one of its principal profile areas. Instead it felt that *Responsible tourism* would be better placed as one of the University's strategic focus areas, alongside *Sustainable development, law, and justice, Well-being and the changing nature of work, and Service design*.
- Changing the research strategy of the University of Lapland to focus on one main profile area, Arctic and northern research, with four interdisciplinary strategic focus areas linking research done at the various Faculties and institutes, would also make for a better match with the University's motto *For the North – For the World*. Making this change would not signify a reduction in the importance of tourism research for the University of Lapland, but would better reflect its current form and stress its importance as a real interdisciplinary research focus with potential to create international as well as regional impacts.

2.3. STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

The University of Lapland currently has three strategic focus areas: *Sustainable development, law, and justice*; *Northern well-being and the changing nature of work*; and *Service design*. The evaluation team was asked to focus mainly on the two profile areas, but also to take into account the three strategic focus areas whenever possible. The focus areas were sometimes mentioned during discussions with University personnel, but do not yet appear as distinct research collectives with clearly defined goals. The team finds that the self-evaluation regarding the focus areas, carried out in 2011–2012, describes the situation rather accurately. Of the three areas, *Service design* is clearly the least developed so far, but it is also an area which holds great potential for interdisciplinarity and innovative research that can benefit from interaction between the Faculty of Art and Design and the other three Faculties.

The University of Lapland is rather small and it is wise that it should position itself as a university of the North, but the focus areas that complement the research profile of the University should nevertheless be bold in their approach. Since real innovation comes from the researchers themselves, the strategic management of research should be careful and done with a light touch. We recognize that the three (or possibly four, after the addition of tourism) focus areas are themselves flexibly defined, and should be seen as facilitating rather than constraining the freedom of research. The aim of creating multidisciplinary, topical research groups is commendable; moreover in research carried out both at doctoral and post-doctoral levels there are opportunities for collaboration between the University and non-academic sites of knowledge-production.

Northern research should not be considered of significance only for the North, since the knowledge it generates can be applied in other geographical, social, and cultural contexts. For the University to be able to make a wider impact on research the system informing and supporting researchers in applying for external funding should be improved, as it is unlikely that growth in the University's budget and possibilities to invest in research can be significantly increased through funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Having a vibrant post-doctoral community is vital for furthering the research aims of the university, and supporting the efforts of early-career researchers in securing funding can help in turning the focus areas into real, active research groups. There are important links between the University's focus areas and the goals of the Horizon 2020 Societal challenges⁷ program, which should be explored.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm?pg=better-society

2.4. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A great university thrives on quality and the impact it makes, not on quantity. A university such as the University of Lapland is well positioned to have an impact on the region and to give a voice to its people. Moreover the University's concentration in the social sciences, in a broad sense, gives it a more direct relationship with the concerns of local and regional communities. As in many universities worldwide there is a tendency for the university management to carry the main burden of defining and implementing the institution's research strategy, but in order for research to succeed it has to be based on the real strengths of existing Faculty members. The University of Lapland currently has four Faculties, two of which are strongly linked to professional fields: law and teacher education. The simple bibliometric system for measuring research output, derived from the natural sciences, is problematic for a university with such a profile. This was evident in the materials that the evaluation team received: the only research group to which a bibliometric assessment of the quality and impact of research might be applicable was the Arctic Centre's Global Change research group, which publishes in the natural sciences.

The University of Lapland Annual report from 2011 clearly identifies the need to promote international publishing as a strategic target. University staff has been set the challenging target of doubling the publication outputs of the University by 2016. This kind of simple push to produce more publications, of which we have seen many examples elsewhere, is not the best way to increase the quality and impact of research. While there have been impressive increases in the numbers of publications produced (see Chart 3 on p. 5), these numbers cannot continue to grow exponentially.

Besides quality that can be measured in publications, there can also be quality in societal impact: research that is answerable to the concerns of people and communities in the region can, and often does, have far wider application in addressing problems of a comparable nature worldwide. While aiming for top-quality journals and publishers in disseminating research results, innovative ways of communicating research outside the scholarly journals are also needed. Researchers should be encouraged to explore multiple ways of ensuring that the results of their research are of benefit to the widest audience possible. One example of such outreach is the *Yale environment 360* online magazine of Yale University, which is an exciting venue for reporting and debating global environmental issues.⁸ In addition to aiming to increase the numbers of publications, the University could also set itself the goal of obtaining funding for at least one Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence or Academy of Finland Professor in the next few years.

The University of the Arctic has been, and continues to be, an excellent forum for networking in the circumpolar area and for positioning the University of Lapland, and it can be developed further. It is now time to take the lessons from this process and move from *For the North* towards the greater

⁸ <http://e360.yale.edu/>

ambition of *For the World*. The university should be proactive in forging connections beyond the North in fields where the northern experience can contribute materially to knowledge and understanding elsewhere.

The evaluation team offers three recommendations of a general nature, and continues with ten more specific recommendations.

First, the University of Lapland as whole should align itself under one mission:
For the North – For the World.

Second, tourism research has specific academic potential and regional interest, but should be reframed as a strategic focus area rather than a profile area for the University of Lapland.

Third, the university should strengthen its research focus on environmental education and on art and design, linked with the priorities of sustainable development.

- 1) Good recruitment is the first priority of a successful university. The quality of the university depends on the quality of its students and faculty. In order to meet the research needs of the University of Lapland it is necessary that new positions (including those that are short-term or temporary) are open to competition. The University needs to offer good career prospects through such mechanisms as a proper tenure track system and support for potential international recruits. It is important to recognize the role of key individuals at different levels, and to provide opportunities for them to thrive at the University.
- 2) There should be flexibility in combining teaching and research, so as to enable teaching staff to spend more time on research, and vice versa, by way of research-led teaching, teaching-light semesters, teaching buyouts, and sabbaticals.
- 3) Research groups inspire new initiatives and should be promoted to ensure that every researcher feels part of a community. In a small university doctoral students need the contacts, supervision, and peer-support provided by national and international doctoral schools and programs. The national doctoral schools, which are currently under threat, should be supported and further internationalization of existing programs should be encouraged.
- 4) An international visiting scholar program should be established. This would be useful in increasing the volume of international publications and in strengthening networks with partner universities. It is also important to support the international mobility of the academic staff of the university. Ideally every academic should spend at least a part of their career abroad. This could be facilitated, for example by reinvigorating the Northtrex -program of the University of the Arctic. Not only would this increase the opportunities for international co-publishing; it would also provide faculty with a perspective on how to position their own university and research internationally.
- 5) The small size of the University of Lapland can also be a strength. Interaction across disciplinary boundaries is easy and the particular mix of Faculties and disciplines provides for interesting possibilities of multidisciplinary research and education. Staff are less confined by institutional

structures than in larger universities and entering the community from the outside is easier. This particular asset of the University could be exploited more fully.

- 6) The University can encourage its researchers to take central positions in international networks: editing journals, becoming presidents of academic organisations, and organizing international events. These are ways to increase the influence of the University's research and networks. A few individuals are already doing remarkably well in this respect, but more can be done.
- 7) One part of the quality of any publication is the quality of the language. Free and readily available proofreading services should be available to all researchers, including doctoral students working on foundation grants.
- 8) Researchers need to be deeply immersed in their own fields to produce high-quality research, but seeing the views and perspectives of other fields can also give an edge in succeeding in one's own field. For this reason, a stronger emphasis on history and philosophy is needed for realizing the research aims of the University.
- 9) The University should make organizational changes only when absolutely necessary. Research requires continuity and long-term commitment.
- 10) It is good that the University of Lapland has been able to define strategic approaches and focus areas, but care must be taken to ensure that future potential areas are not suffocated by the existing strategic approach. The chosen profile area(s) or strategic focus areas may not necessarily be the areas in which future excellence is to be found, or where the strengths of the University of Lapland will lie in years to come.

The history of the North and of the Arctic offers a unique, concrete possibility to understand human history and the history of nature with its tensions, changes and conflicts. At its best, research conducted at the University of Lapland can introduce new ingredients into this story of change, opening windows into the most central questions of the existence of humankind. At this moment these questions have come to converge on the relationship between humans and the environment, and the University of Lapland has an excellent possibility to tackle them in the light, for example, of its research on encounters in northern tourism and its exhibitions based on northern research. With the increased interest in exploiting the natural reserves of the Arctic, there is a demand for research that focuses on the people, environment and nature of the North, and that does not see the Arctic only as a potential reserve of minerals and energy.

Due to the risk posed by climate change humans can no longer avoid the question of the sustainability of our current lifestyles. Research conducted at the University of Lapland can play its part in helping to resolve this fundamental question. The importance of this research could be flagged up by profiling the University of Lapland as an expert on the North and as an environmental educator of the world. Perhaps this could be made clear to the general public by displaying a Global Warming Thermometer at the science exhibitions of the Arctic Centre – if successfully promoted this would add another reason for international tourists to travel to Lapland, and to visit the wonderful town of Rovaniemi.