

MASTER'S THESIS

Course code: ORG 5010

Name: Maja Wolland Blomberg

Population development in Northern
Norway: a study about the Norwegian
High North policy

Date: 23.05.2023

Total number of pages: 71

Sammendrag (summary in Norwegian)

Nord-Norge står ovenfor en stor utfordring når det gjelder negativ befolkningsutvikling. Behovet for flere folk er av nasjonal betydning og har både stor påvirkning på økonomisk utvikling og nasjonal sikkerhet. Dette har imidlertid vist seg å være en vanskelig politisk nøtt å knekke ettersom befolkningsutviklingen fortsatt ikke går riktig vei selv med mangeårig politisk innsats for å snu trenden.

I 20 år har norske regjeringer erklært nordområdene som det viktigste strategiske området i Norge. Fra å være et politikkområde hovedsakelig opptatt av internasjonale relasjoner og sikkerhetspolitikk i Arktis, har nordområdepolitikken siden midten av 2000-tallet sett en endring i innholdet som involverer stadig flere aspekter ved lokal utvikling og befolkningsvekst.

Det har vært lite forskning som tar sikte på å forstå hvordan den nasjonale politikken påvirker befolkningsutviklingen i Nord-Norge. Denne oppgaven har undersøkt hvordan de tre Nordområdemeldingene behandler befolkningsutvikling for å se om det er en sammenheng mellom det som er vedtatt på nasjonalt nivå og utviklingen på lokalt nivå.

Resultatene tyder på at det er en klar tverrpolitisk vilje til å bedre befolkningsutviklingen i Nord-Norge, men politikken samsvarer ikke med handling som kan tolkes gjennom resultatene. Mye tyder på at uforholdsmessig lite innsats har blitt iverksatt i forhold til viktigheten dedikert til nordområdepolitikken.

Preface

This thesis is written as the final requirement for my master's degree completion at the MSc Global Management program at the business school of Nord University (HHN) in Bodø, Norway. The thesis consists of 30 credits with the specialization in "High North knowledge" (Nordområdekunnskap).

This work has been a part of the InnNord-project that seeks to find out how we can become more people in Northern Norway. In InnNord project belongs to the High North Center for Business and Governance at the university, where I have been employed as a research assistant for one year.

Having worked on the InnNord -project has without a doubt been hugely beneficial for my overall understanding of the situation, making it even more interesting to immerse myself in one particular problematic. My supervisor, Frode Mellemvik, who is also the Project Director of InnNord, has been indispensable in this process, providing directions and being available for discussions upon the topic. I am immensely thankful for his assistance and guidance, and especially for his understanding for work/study balance in this very hectic period.

Also a huge thank you to Grete Ellingsen and Karl Eirik Schjøtt-Pedersen for taking the time out of their busy schedules to share their invaluable insight about the content of and the making of the High North Policy in regards to population development. Two different perspectives upon a topic where they share a particular political passion has lifted the analytical possibilities in this thesis to a higher level.

Lastly, a big thank you to my colleagues at the High North Center for their understanding during this time of writing. This thesis would not have been possible without their support.

Abstract

The need for more people in Northern Norway has been a well-known issue for decades. It is of national importance to develop the population in the region: the large potential for value creation in Northern Norway is essential for national economic development in the future, and maintaining sustainable societies is vital to ensure a high level of security. However, this has proven to be a difficult issue to solve as the population development continues to weaken despite political efforts to turn around the trend.

For 20 years Norwegian governments have declared the High North as the most important strategic area of Norway. From being a policy area mainly concerned with international relations and security politics in the Arctic, the High North policy has since the mid-2000s seen a change in the content of High North Policy involving more and more aspects of local development and population growth.

There has been little research aiming to understand how the national policy is influencing the population development in Northern Norway. In an effort to do so, this thesis has investigated how the three white papers dedicated High North Policy treats the issue of population development to see if there are some connection between what has been decided on a national level and the development at a local level. The document analysis has been complemented by two in-depth interviews with two of the most central personalities in High North policy making in Norway, giving valuable insight and nuances to the interpretation. The issue has been analysed through the lens of governance theory to discuss political activity, organisation structure and the correlation between talk, decision and action.

The results indicate that despite a clear political will to improve population development in Northern Norway, the population development does not respond enough to the measures to improve the situation. There is little correlation between decisions and actions, the population development itself seems to be the driver for policy making, and the importance dedicated to High North policy seems unproportional compared to the action and results.

Index

Sammendrag (summary in Norwegian)	i
Preface	ii
Abstract	iii
Index	iv
List of figures and tables	1
1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1 Background: the need for developing the population in Northern Norway	2
1.1.1 Existing research and literature	3
1.1.2 Intention and context: regional solutions to a global challenge	4
1.2 Key concepts: Population development and the High North	6
1.2.1 Population development.....	6
1.2.2 The High North (Nordområdene).....	7
1.3 Research question.....	12
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	13
2.1 Governance: political activity	13
2.2 Governance: different organisation structures	14
1.6.2 Governance: political talk, decisions and actions	17
3. METHODOLOGY	18
2.1 Philosophy and approach: a relativist position and a social constructivist approach.....	19
2.3 Research design: Case study	20
2.4 Data triangulation: document analysis, interviews and statistics	20
2.4.1 Document analysis	21
2.4.2 Qualitative interviews	24
2.4.3 Statistics	26
2.5 Structure of the thesis	27
4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....	28
4.1 Population statistics.....	29
3.1 Document analysis	33
3.1.1 Word count.....	33

3.1.2	Content related to people, population and population development.....	34
3.1.3	Operationalizing the white paper content.....	48
5.	ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION	51
5.1	High North policy influence on political activity.....	51
5.1.1	Population development becoming a part of Norwegian High North Policy	52
5.1.5	Broad political consensus.....	53
5.1.3	Towards a new phase of High North Policy?.....	55
5.2	High North Policy influence on governance structure	56
5.2.1	Larger diversification	57
5.2.2	Strong public sector.....	58
5.2.3	Dependency on personal initiative	60
5.3	High North Policy influence on population development in numbers.....	60
5.3.1	Indication to correspondence between decision and action	61
5.3.2	Indications to little correspondence between decision and action	62
6.	CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH.....	64
	References	67

List of figures and tables

FIGURES:

Figure 1	p.8	The High North based on the government's High North Strategy of 2006. This illustration was published by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI).
Figure 2	p.11	Overview of how the concepts Polar, Arctic and High North will be used.
Figure 3	p.16	Typology of organisational structure, by Røiseland & Vabo (2008)
Figure 4	p.28	Structure of thesis
<i>Population graphs:</i>		
Figure 5	p.29-31	NORDLAND COUNTY (2003-2023)
Figure 6		TROMSØ COUNTY, (2003-2019)
Figure 7		FINNMARK COUNTY (2003-2019)
Figure 8		TROMS OG FINNMARK COUNTY (2019-2023)

TABLES:

Table 1	p.33	Word count results
Table 2	p.48-50	Initiatives and measures according to UN indicators to goal 11.a

1. INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter, I shall begin in chapter 1.1 by describing the background for this research and explain why it is interesting to study population development in Northern Norway. Within this context, chapter 1.1.1 will present the existing research and literature, followed by giving a larger, international contextual frame to the thematic in chapter 1.1.2. Thereafter, in I will explain some important concepts in chapter 1.2, before getting to the research question in chapter 1.3.

1.1 Background: the need for developing the population in Northern Norway

Northern Norway has a long history of being an area of strategic importance. As early as the 800s, stockfish from the Lofoten islands has been traded on European markets and became a major export product of Norway for hundreds of years to follow. In addition to its substantial contribution to Norwegian economic development, the stockfish trade laid the knowledge foundation of today's seafood commerce, one of Norway's largest and most considerable sectors (Dybtsyna & Mellemvik, 2019, p. 191-192). Natural resources continue to make Northern Norway a vector in the Norwegian economy. Today, the maritime sector, petroleum, green energy, minerals, agriculture and space infrastructure has made the region a major contributor to making the economic growth in the region higher compared to national levels (Meld. St. 9 (2020-2021), p. 80).

There is however one big problem. While the region is an economic engine for the rest of the country, it struggles to maintain its population. Northern Norway has experienced a slower population growth since the 2nd world war compared to the rest of the country. As a result, the population the region represents a decreasing part of the national population, from 12,3% in 1946 to only 8,9% in 2022 (Thorsnæs, 2023). While the population in Norway in general has increased by 900 000, Northern Norway has only gotten 19 000 more habitants since 2021 (NTB, 2021).

Because of this the region is facing a considerable challenge in an ageing population and a shortage of competence and work force (High North Center, 2021). In 2022, both counties in Northern Norway reached the top of the list over lacking qualified applicants, 26% and 24%

of local businesses reporting this problem (NAV, 2022, p8). Further, the low population does not only affect economic development, but it could reduce the state's ability to provide security for the communities in the north. Scholars have pointed to the poorly developed infrastructure as a result of small societies in the north, which will suffer under high pressure in times of crisis. From a national security point of view, reassuring sustainable societies in the North is of strategic importance for Norway and NATO because of the Russian border (Gjørsv, 2020). Hence, developing the population in the Northern Norway is a national concern for both in regards to economic development and national security.

1.1.1 Existing research and literature

There are some existing research upon population and societal development in Northern Norway. The High North Center for Business and Governance conducted in 2020 a survey asking young people in the south what they thought about the North. The results showed that only 3,6% of the respondents planned to move North within the next three days. The study also showed which measures the respondents thought could slow down the population decline; free kindergarten, more jobs, student loan benefits, tax-related benefits (High North Center, 2021), to mention some.

Getting a lot of attention in 2019, a doctoral thesis written by Jonas Stein at the University of Tromsø has done a quantitative comparison of the population growth in Northern Sweden and Northern Norway the last 45 years and measured up the development along with national investments. According to an article about Stein's research, the study shows that although Northern Norway receives 12 billion Norwegian kroner for regional development, and Northern Sweden only 0,5 billion Swedish kroner, the development in the population is strikingly similar (Rolland, 2019). My master thesis shall not further look into the economic situation and national subsidies, but rather explore the impact of national politics has possibly had on the population in Northern Norway. More on this in the methodology chapter.

The Northern Norway is an important part of the Norwegian High North policy area. Traditionally, this policy has focused on international affairs and security policy in the Arctic, writes Skagestad (2020, p. 24-25). He has been a central voice in the Norwegian public debate about the High North and wrote in 2020 the scientific article "The Concept of 'The High North' ('nordområdene') and the High North policy initiatives" (Skagestad, 2020), where he explains the development of the concept from the 1970s up until today. Another scholar

dedicated to the content of High North concept, Pedersen makes many similar points in his articles such as “When the High North exist on its own” (“Når Nordområdene lever sitt eget liv”, my translation). Both of them questions the continued use of the term in a modern context, which I will get back to in later analysis.

Another line of discussions about the Norwegian High North, explores the possibilities of development in the region in a considerably more optimistic manner. In one of the articles by Dybtsyna & Mellemvik (2019) they underline the increased attention made by national authorities to development in the High North the massive potential for further value creation in the region (Dybtsyna & Mellemvik, 2019). An other article by scholars also related to the High North Centre at Nord university, how to measure value creation in the North is explored (Timoshenko & Mineev, 2019). This perspective, the focus on finding solutions and opportunities, is more in line with the focus of this thesis as it is being written as part of the InnNord-project, seeking to better understand how we can become more people in Northern Norway.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to contribute to the knowledge creation about how national politics can better benefit population development in Northern Norway. It does not exist, until today, a study taking on explicitly population development in Northern Norway and discussing how this has been treated in national policy and how it relates. Before I give a more thorough explanation to the term “High North” and what exactly I mean by “population development”, there needs to be a clarification regarding the larger research intention. Population development is important on a national level, but it also reflects a problem of global scale.

1.1.2 Intention and context: regional solutions to a global challenge

A low working force is far from an issue specific to Northern Norway. It has been claimed that we are entering the “era of old age” because of the ageing population and especially the markets in Europe and Asia are struck hard (Clemet, 2022). Others point to the same condition in the USA and underlines that events like the pandemic and the war in Ukraine reinforces the tensions in the labour marked (Renå, 2022). The ageing population alone is recognised as a world-wide problem. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declare “*All countries face major challenges to ensure that their health and social systems are ready to make the most of this demographic shift*” (WHO, 2022). They further point out that the

proportion of the world population older than 60 years will have grown from 12% in 2015 to 22% in 2050 (WHO, 2022). Hence, the his population ageing is so dramatic that it will result in a smaller workforce on a global scale.

At the same time, we know that the world population is growing fast, reaching 8 billion people in 2022. The growth is highly disproportionate and is more concentrated in poor countries with high fertility rates, many of them in sub Saharan Africa. Several countries in Europe, on the other hand, are headed towards an overall population decline. Together with low fertility rates, the gains in life expectancy is a major factor in Europe, contributing to the lack of work force. Although less significant than birth and deaths, international migration is an important factor for population change (UN,n.d.a). As I shall come back to later, immigrants has been very important to maintain its population in Northern Norway (Kunnskapsparken, 2022).

Knowing that the world population will continue to both increase and get older for many years to come, it will be important to create more knowledge about building sustainable societies, all across the globe. According to the United Nations (UN), two-thirds of the world population will be urban within 2050 (UNDP, n.d). This means that 6.5 billion people will be affected by the way cities and communities are run. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 11 “Sustainable cities and communities” addresses this particular issue. *“If well-planned and managed, urban development can be sustainable and can generate inclusive prosperity”* (UN, n.d.b). Especially the SDG 11.A stating *“Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning”* (UN, n.d.b), will be relevant for this study and my focus is on national white papers. As I will get into in the methodology chapter, the indicators for SDG 11.a will be used in analysing data from the documents.

The MSc Global Management program aims to find *“regional solutions to global problems and challenges”* (Nord University, n.d.). It goes without saying that the intention of this study is not to solve the global population challenge. However, by gaining a better understanding of population development in one specific region, this study could be a contribution to the overall knowledge creation made to tackle this issue, be it demographic research, smart city development, or regional sustainable development.

1.2 Key concepts: Population development and the High North

The research topic of this thesis is heavily based in a Norwegian context. Because of regulations tied to this specific master program, it is not permitted to write in Norwegian. Hence, there is a need to clarify some central concepts in Norwegian and their translation into English.

1.2.1 Population development

There are many terms in English relevant to the population study this thesis seeks out to do. “Demography” is its own field of study and can be defined as “*the statistical study of human populations especially with reference to size and density, distribution, and vital statistics*” (Miriam-Webster, 2023, b). However, this thesis is not a demographic study focusing on the construction of a population in Northern Norway. It would be interesting to do a more thorough analysis to see if there are certain groups that could be more affected by certain policies, but this would be a research job for a larger project than a master thesis.

Both “population growth” and “population change” are useful terms when studying populations. These are however not adequate terms to describe the concept of study in this theses because they limit the field of study to tracking the number of the population. They are descriptive terms often used to describe tendencies in the population growth, like decline, stagnation, fluctuations and overall tendencies. Although they can be political goals, they are passive in the sense of political influence.

This thesis shall rely on a direct translation from the word “befolkningsutvikling”, made up by the two words “befolkning” meaning population, and “utvikling” meaning development. By choosing to add “development”, it becomes possible to interpret the term as a result of political action. The idea is that political activity is needed to achieve development, which would indicate that population development is the result of intended political activity.

The term lacks a clear definition in Norwegian, but the Great Norwegian Encyclopedia (SNL), explain that knowledge about population development (Befolkningsutvikling), particularly it’s predictions, forms the foundation for societal planning, and is studied within a wide range of disciplines, such as archaeology, anthropology, geography, medicine, history, sociology, and economics (Tønnessen, 2023).

The broad usage also makes it possible to consider the term as more open to interpretation, and can thus include more aspects. This is important because, as explained above, an important consequence of the population deficit in Northern Norway, is that there is a lack of people with relevant competence to fill the need in the job marked. “Needed competence” in this context, does not reflect any specific competence. Rather it is to signify that population development is not only about an increase in population, having a population with a work capacity is in this context essential.

1.2.2 The High North (Nordområdene)

Defining, or at least attempting to define, the High North is important for this study because population development in Northern Norway has become part of the national High North policy.

First, to avoid confusion, it is useful to make clear the distinction between Northern Norway and the High North. Northern Norway, called “Nord-Norge” in Norwegian, refers to the area stretching from the border of Trøndelag county just below the Arctic Circle in the south, and all the way to the Finnish and Russian borders in the north-east. It consists of the two counties Nordland to the south, and Troms og Finnmark to the north and north-east (Thorsnæs, 2023). This thesis will only look at the population on mainland Northern Norway which excludes the population on Svalbard.

The term High North, “Nordområdene” in Norwegian, is a particularly Norwegian term and no other country has a similar concept, according to Skagestad (2020, p. 24). Translating “nordområdene” to another language has not been straight forward, but the English word that won ground in official Norwegian documents the last 20 years, is the High North (Skagestad, 2020, p. 24). Skagestad (2020) claims that there is not one clear definition of what the High North encompasses. He writes that the term refers to an "*extensive and at the same time diffuse matter*" (Skagestad, 2020, p. 24), also adding “elastic” and “dynamic” to explain the concept. The High North is now widely used as a term, but it has been subject to criticism and debate. I shall get back to this in the analysis.



Figure 1: The High North based on the government's High North Strategy of 2006. This illustration was published by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI).

While Northern Norway is a geographically defined area, this is not the case for the High North, although some suggestions to geographic interpretation has been made (Figure 1.) According to Skagestad (2020), the ambiguity of the High North is linked to the fact that it is a political area which has developed over time in parallel with Norwegian High North policy initiatives. The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) was one of the first to use the term during the discussions about the security situation on and around Svalbard and in the Barents region during the Cold War in the beginning of the 1970s. At this point, The High North was strictly used in relation to security policy. Later it became related to the oil and gas exploitation on the Norwegian continental shelf in the Arctic and also used during talks about fisheries and cooperation with the Soviet Union in the Barents region. By the end of the 1970s, The High North had gained recognition as a distinct area of politics in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), who formed its own working group to deal with High North policy. After the end of the cold war and in 1990s the High North became mostly associated to the cooperation with Russia in the Barents (Skagestad, 2020, p. 24-25).

With the arrival of the first White Paper dedicated to the High North in 2004-2005, the political focus area was broadened (Skagestad, 2020, p 25). Today, the High North can address everything from foreign, national and local policy, to business, energy and environment, to defence and security, research and education, culture, fisheries and transport (Fors, 2012).

It still seems important for the Norwegian governments to not mix the two concepts. In the first whitepaper, “Opportunities and challenges in the North” from 2004-2005, it is stated that *“the government wants to create a comprehensive and offensive Norwegian High North politics”* (St.meld. 30 (2004-2005), p. 5), further precisising that an important aspect in the document will be good conditions for business development in Northern Norway. The latter is described as a part of High North policy. Clearly confirming the difference between Northern Norway and the High North, the second white paper from 2011-2012 states: *“This is not a white paper about Northern Norway, nor is it a rapport about regional politics. The High North policy is about strengthening Norway’s position in the north by building on experience, knowledge and resources from all across the country”* (my translation) (St.meld. 7(2011-2012) p. 9). Further, in the latest white paper from 2020-2021 it is declared: *“The High North policy is both about the international aspect in the Arctic, the relationship with our neighbouring countries in the Barents region and on the northern cap (“Nordkalotten”) and the development in Northern Norway”* (St.meld. 9 (2011-2012), p. 8). Based on the white papers, it seems like the Northern Norway-policies are becoming more and more included in the High North policy.

1.2.2.1 Polar, Arctic, and High North

Taking the discussion about terms to an international level, the High North has also been used interchangeably with “Polar” and “Arctic” in the Norwegian debate. For example, the latest white paper on the High North is called “The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy” in English while sticking to “Nordområdemelding” in Norwegian (Regjeringen, n.d.b). Also, it seems like a term sometimes used as a synonym in the function of language variation, as can be seen in the description of the High North Dialogue conference: *“This annual conference brings together major stakeholders concerned with Arctic development”* (High North Dialogue, n.d). The Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI) has combined all three concepts. They write in their article “Polar and Russian politics”, that *“Research on international law and political cooperation in the Arctic(...) have deep roots at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute”,* followed by *“Norwegian policies and Norwegian-Russian relations in the High North are a major focus of current FNI research”* (FNI, n.d.). This seems to be very common, and little information is given about the difference between arctic politics and polar politics. However, there are some distinctions to be made.

Geographically speaking, the technical definition of the North Pole and the South Pole are at a latitude of 90 degrees North and -90 degrees South respectively (Price, 2023). The polar region, can be a reference to both the “*area around the North Pole or the South Pole*” (Rafferty, 2009). The “Arctic”, although a subject of many different definitions depending on the context of use (Barents Watch, 2015) is more clearly defined geographically than the High North. The Arctic Circle is defined at about 66 degrees North (Britannica, 2023). Curiously, the circle is called Polar Circle (Polarsirkel) in Norwegian (Dale, 2020). It is often used to describe the geographical area being “*the northmost region of the Earth*” (National Geographic, 2022) or “*relating to, or suitable for use at the north pole or the region near it*” (Miriam-Webster, 2023). The Arctic can also be defined by natural borders, such as the landmass which can be divided into zones based on the level vegetation. In the least arctic region, the subarctic, is defined by the tree limit. Most of Northern Norway is considered subarctic according to this definition. The marine borders are literally fluid as the Arctic ice retracts and expands depending on the season, reaching its maximum extension in the month of May (Barents Watch, 2015).

Concerning political context, “Polar” are less used. However, there are certain examples such as the FNI-article mentioned above, but this seems to be primarily a geographical and natural research-based term. The “Arctic” has a political dimension worth mentioning. For instance, Young (2019) studies the status of Arctic governance, largely represented by the activity of the Arctic Council. According to Young (2019), the Arctic Council needs to be modified in order to be better adapted to modern Arctic issues. With the effects of the climate change, an increased interest from non-Arctic states in the region, especially its natural resources, and a power-hungry Russia, Young calls for judicial modifications to allow a more complex Arctic governance (Young, 2019, p. 11-12). Many other examples of the Arctic being used in a political respect could be made here, however this would not serve a purpose for further use.

What is important is to clarify the further usage of the terms discussed above. In the model below (Figure 2), I have divided the terms according to the way I have decided to refer to make it more comprehensible. As both the Arctic and the High North are very often used referring to the same policy area, I will also use both of these two terms when discussing national politics for this area.

	Polar	Arctic	High North
Geographically defined limits	Length coordinates	Nature/length coordinates/politics	Politics
Political focus	Occasionally international relations	Arctic council + other institutions and platforms for cooperation	(Norwegian) international politics

Figure 2. Overview of how the concepts Polar, Arctic and High North will be used

1.2.2.2 The most important strategic area in Norway

Since the beginning of the 2000s, in addition to the three white papers, there has been more national strategies and Official Norwegian Report treating questions related to the High North or simply dedicated to the High North than ever before. Both the quantity and frequency of the publications of these documents (approximately every three years), indicate that this is an area shown a particular political attention by national authorities that the topic benefits from a wide consensus in the Storting (Norwegian National Assembly) (Dybtsyna & Mellempvik, 2019, p. 188).

It is striking how the different Norwegian Governments since the first white paper in 2004-2005, have agreed on the strategic importance of the High North. The initiative to make a white paper on the High North reflect an increased national attention to strengthen the area. However, a year later a very strong strategic declaration was made by the Stoltenberg I government. In their platform (2005–2009), it is stated that “*the High North is the most important strategic area for policy initiatives in the years to come*” (Regjeringen, 2005, p. 6). In the second white paper on the High North in 2011/2012, it is referred to this statement in the Platform for government cooperation, Soria Moria I, as well as the second, Soria Moria II, declaring: “*The northern areas are Norway's most important strategic area of policy initiatives in foreign policy*” (Meld. St. 7 (2011-2012) p. 19). The following Solberg I and II Governments, making the latest white paper on the High North 2020-2021, they state that “*the High North remain Norway's most important strategic area of responsibility*” (Meld. St. 9 (2020-2021), p. 8).

The current government has reverted to the formulation that the High North is Norway's most important “*strategic area of policy initiatives*” (Regjeringen, n.d.a). Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre declared during a speech in Tromsø last February 2022 that a new policy for the northern regions is under way. The new policy, Støre promised, will emphasize sustainability,

welfare services, knowledge development and infrastructure (Regjeringen, 2022), all aspects that can benefit population development and could be another step away from the High North as a pure foreign policy perspective.

I will get back to specifying why the white papers are chosen in the Methodology chapter. For now, it is important to note that as these three documents represent such an important part of High North Policy as they were agreed upon in the Storting, that they shall be treated hereafter as the official Norwegian High North policy. Further, the time span of this study will be based on the time frame of the white papers (2004-2021).

1.3 Research question

It can be considered a paradox that Northern Norway, being part of an area given much political attention for its major strategic importance by different governments for over 20 is experiencing an overall decline in population. This leads to a lack of competence to ensure economic development and security. This master's thesis will therefore seek to find answers to the following research question:

Have the Norwegian High North Policy influenced the population development in Northern Norway during the last 20 years? Eventually how?

Three sub questions have been formulated:

- How has the population development been in this period?
- How does the different white papers on the High North treat the topic of population development?
- How does the population development in Northern Norway correspond with the content of the three white papers?

These three questions shall help handle the research question in the empirical and analysis section.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To handle this research question I will develop a frame of reference based on relevant theory. This frame will be used in the direction of the development as well as the analysis of my thesis. When choosing the framework for this study, it has been crucial to find a theory that enables the analysis of the political decision-making of Norwegian authorities. Hence, the main theoretical framework for this study will be based on “Governance”. Professor Mark Bevir is one of the leading authors when it comes to governance theory (Berkeley, n.d.). I shall use two of his texts “Governance: A Very Short Introduction”(2012) and “Governance as Theory, Practice, and Dilemma” (2010) to establish the basis of the theoretical frame. As we shall see below, this theory base will be useful to understand how High North Policy has played a role in the political activity related to population development.

Further, I shall build on the general approach to governance and turn to a Norwegian study on the topic as this is a very Norwegian-based thesis. Røiseland & Vabo (2008) presents in their article “Governance in Norwegian” (“Governance” på norsk”) a Norwegian take on the governance concept and also provides a typology to use in later in the analysis to evaluate how organisational structures connected to population development has changed, or not.

As a third step, I need a theory to support the discussions about the correspondence between what the policies say and the policies put into place. This is still within the frame of governance, however I shall use “organisational hypocrisy”, specifically. The theory is presented by Professor Nils Brunsson, a leading author in the field of management and organisation studies (Stockholm Centre for Organizational Research, n.d.). The theory treats the relationship between talk, decision and actions which will be very useful to evaluate the accordance between political decision in the white papers, and political implementation.

2.1 Governance: political activity

According to Bevir (2012) the concept of “Governance” grew popular in the 1980’s due to a development in social theories which has affected people to think differently of the world. Most importantly, this change resulted in a “*shift from hierarchy to markets and networks*” (Bevir, 2012, p. 3), he explain, where a plurality of societal actors take a larger part in the

governing process together with the States and international organizations. Today it is common for non-governmental organisations, non-profit service providers and private firms, to be part in the governing activity (Bevir, 2010, p. 2). In other words, the development has moved away from the traditional way of governing based on the concept of “government” referring to the involvement of strictly the state and political institutions in the process.

Governance, on the other hand, refers to the process of governing as multi-institutional activities (Bevir, 2012, p.1-2), thus representing a much larger area of research.

Together with a plurality of stakeholders and hybrid practices and cooperations, the multijurisdictional aspect is a central part of governance theory (Bevir, 2010, p. 2). Bevir observes that the word Governance has become “ubiquitous” (2012, p.1). Different disciplines like economy, international relations, geography, political science and sociology alike, has taken on its use. Governance is also an international concept being used in both the developed and in the developing parts of the world (Bevir, 2012, p. 1, 5), and policy making processes can often happen on local, national and international levels simultaneously (Bevir, 2010, p.2).

The ubiquitous-ness of the term seems to also be a challenge, as the changing nature of the governance concept creates dilemmas for existing theories and practices, Bevir explain. As our understanding of the world is in constant development, theories and practices change and constantly affect each other, which again creates new theories and practices. Governance is a very practical concept, concerning very directly the way people act, claims Bevir, underlining further that “*Governance is about the constantly shifting and contingent nature of practical political activity*” (Bevir, 2010, p. 11). The practical political aspects is also central in other literature about governance, such as Arctic governance (Young, 2019; Rowe, 2018). The change in the practical political activity is also very interesting for the topic of this thesis as the shift of the perception of the concept High North can reflect such a transition. An interesting note, is that the concept of governance has a slightly different perception in Norwegian and Nordic literature, as shall be explained below.

2.2 Governance: different organisation structures

Røiseland & Vabo (2008) has studied “governance” as a word and phenomenon in a Norwegian context. They explain that governance has to a certain degree entered the

Norwegian literature in its original English form (Røiseland & Vabo, 2008, p86). As a phenomenon, however, the translation is not as straight forward. Norway and the other Nordic countries has for a long time had a tradition for including trade unions, companies and other organisations from the private sector in the governing process. This phenomenon is known as corporatism, or societal corporatism, as Røiseland & Vabo (2008, p87) calls it.

There is an important distinction between “corporatism” and “governance”. The former implies a governing model with more hierarchy and a state dominated governance process (Røiseland & Vabo, 2008, p87). “Governance” in English, according to Røiseland & Vabo reflects a larger degree of pluralism (Røiseland & Vabo, 2008, p87) than “corporatism” but does not reflect as large transitions in governing processes in Norway as described in international literature. The fact that elements of governance has existed in Norway for a long time, could have had an effect on the policy implementation of High North Policy.

The point of departure of the Røiseland & Vabo (2008) study is that there is not one single definition to governance and there is a certain confusion related in the term in international literature. This also reflects what Bevir said about the challenge related to the wide use of term. It is because of this attention to the concept of governance in combination with a good Norwegian translation that led Røiseland & Vabo (2008) to create a Norwegian word in order to “*discuss the phenomenon both empirically and analytically - in a Norwegian context*” (Røiseland & Vabo 2008, p. 88).

The authors propose a translation into the word “*samstyring*” as a better alternative than corporatism to replace governance in the Norwegian language. Just for clarification, a direct translation of this word back to English could be co-governance (my translation), as the Norwegian word is made up of two parts: “sam” indicating some sort of “co”-action, and “styring” which translates to management or governance (ordnett, n.d). Røiseland & Vabo (2008) decides to go with the following definition of “*samstyring*”: “*the non-hierarchical process by which public and private actors and resources are coordinated and given common direction and meaning*” (Røiseland & Vabo, 2008, p. 90).

Three main elements are present in “*samstyring*” according to Røiseland & Vabo (2008, p. 91-92): (1) the actors are mutually dependent on each other, reflecting the network aspect; (2) decisions need to be based on discussions or negotiations or both, indicating a non-

hierarchical process; (3) and finally, planned and goal-oriented activity to make sure that efforts are coordinated to pull in the same direction. The coordination role, however, is often handled by public sector actors. In regards to this latter element, the authors point out that the “*samstyring*” implies a certain degree of autonomy because organisational cooperation needs all of the involved parts to be on the same page. This means that in the case of “*samstyring*”, all actors needs to take part in classical organisational processes such as setting goals, choosing measures, creating strategies etc. In the process of negotiating or finding consensus, on the other hand, Røiseland & Vabo (2008) says it can obviously not always be an unequal balance of power and resources between the actors involved. Such power and resources can be subject to, for instance, professional expertise or ideological convictions, which means that social processes during the organisational cooperations are also important to understand the results (Røiseland & Vabo, 2008, p. 92).

In order to create a more practical approach to the concept of “*samstyring*”, Røiseland & Vabo (2008) dedicates a large part of their study to the empirical forms of governance in a Norwegian setting. They explain that a challenge lies in the unclear distinctions often found between the way things are organised and the organisational frames in which the process takes place. Both governance and “*samstyring*” can be associated with network, however, Røiseland & Vabo (2008, p. 93) claims, this is not always the case. as shown below.

	Informal	←————→		Formal	
	Cooperation	Projects	Partnerships/ Inter-municipal cooperation	Councils and committees	Stock based company/ foundations
Possible organisational forms	Network/ organisation	Network/ organisation	Network/ organisation	(Network)/ Organisation	Organisation
Possibility for authoritative governing	Varying	Varying	Depending on contract/share	Relative answer	Depending on share

Figure 3: Typology of organisational structure, by Røiseland & Vabo (2008)

Based on the forms of “*samstyring*” commonly used in Norway, Røiseland & Vabo (2008) makes a typology. In addition to their example above, the authors mention other possible types of “*samstyring*”, such as: program, forum, network, think tank, committee, public-private cooperation and fund. The informal/formal variable, explain Røiseland & Vabo (2008, p. 94), is included to give some background on the intention of public actors when they initiate a cooperation of some sort.

The take on a Norwegian version of governance and different types of governance, or “samstyring”, presented by Røiseland & Vabo (2008) will make an excellent starting point for later analysis about the structure of High North politics.

1.6.2 Governance: political talk, decisions and actions

As explained in the introduction on this chapter, organisational hypocrisy shall be the final perspective of the theoretical framework. The assumption behind using this theory is that the Norwegian authorities have high ambitions for population development in the northern regions on paper, but that the policy is not implemented to the same extent as the white papers about the High North declare.

The three white papers dedicated to the High North that will be studied in this thesis, are declarations of a politics that has been adopted by the Norwegian National Assembly. They can thus be regarded as decisions, supported across the Norwegian political landscape. Brunsson (2007) explain that “*in traditional decision theory, a decision is taken to be indicative of a corresponding action that will occur in the future, or at least the decision is assumed to increase the probability of such an action*” (Brunsson, 2007, p.111). However, Brunsson points out, in reality there are not always a connection between talk, decision and action. One can easily do one and leave out the others, or to say one thing and do another, which goes for both organisations and individuals. According to Brunsson, this is when hypocrisy sets in (Brunsson, 1007, p. 112). Brunsson (2007) refers to the oxford dictionary when defining hypocrisy: “*the assumption or postulation of moral standards to which one’s own behaviour does not conform*” (Brunsson, 2007, p. 112). However, this definition does not fit with his perception that it is not necessarily morally bad that talk, decision and action of actors does not correlate.

The author’s description of hypocrisy, builds on two main assumptions: the existence of conflict, and what the output of the organisation is. About conflict, Brunsson (2007) explain that hypocrisy is naturally a part of “*a world in which values, ideas or people are in conflict*” (Brunsson, 2007, p. 113). This conflict can occur if different groups want different things. Time can be an important factor if people want different things at different times. The can also be conflict in situations where ideology and practice cannot correspond. Within the same individual, there can also be conflict if the person occupies several roles (Brunsson, 2007, p.

113-114). It is obvious that governments and national authorities in general are organisations experiencing many conflicting demands and expectations, which will be interesting to take a closer look at in the analysis.

The second assumption is that talk and decisions has value for the organisation, not only the action and the result of the action. This is specifically the case for Parliaments, Brunsson (2007) claims, as they “*are conscious about public debate and well-publicized decisions*” (Brunsson, 2007, p. 114). Again, this goes for politics in general and the mass media is usually not uninterested in strategies, policies, plans and programmes launched by public authorities (Brunsson, 2007, p. 114). The white papers about the High North are good examples of talk and decisions.

With both assumptions, the existence of conflict and that talk and decisions is also a valuable output for organisations, Brunsson (2007) believes this enable organisations to satisfy many different expectations and demands even by not having a complete corresponding between the elements of talk, decision and action. They can even meet conflicting demands in a more efficient way, as some demands can be satisfied through talk, others through decisions and some through actions. Brunsson (2007) claim that this model of hypocrisy challenges the traditional models of decision making, because it reverses the causal direction, meaning that if talk and decisions are made, this decrease the probability of the action corresponding. (Brunsson, 2007, p. 115-116). Hence, if using this model, maybe we can say that the decisions made in the white papers do not correspond to the actions of national authorities. But it is not a problem, Brunsson explain. Hypocrisy become the solution because of the conflicting demands and more parts will be satisfied if talk, decision and action does not correspond. In this way, hypocrisy is actually a necessity for the survival of the organisation (Brunsson, 2007, p. 115-116).

3. METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a qualitative study primarily based on non-numeric data collection. With governance and organisational hypocrisy in mind, I have selected a research design with a triangulation of methodological approaches to serve the data creation and interpretation: document analysis to collect data about the political decisions; interviews to get the

perspective of people who has been involved in the policy making and implementation at a national level; and finally, using statistical data to analyse the population development in relation to the policies implemented. In the end of this chapter, I will describe the overall structure of this thesis. But before I go on to describe these elements more in depth, the philosophy behind this research and the research approach will be explained.

2.1 Philosophy and approach: a relativist position and a social constructivist approach

The research question of this thesis, seeking to understand how national politics influence population development in Northern Norway, can be answered in many ways depending on theoretical framework and methodology. Hence, from an ontological point of view, and belonging to the social sciences, this research would best fit within the position of Relativism as there can be “many truths” and the facts are regarded as influenced the viewpoint of the observer (Easterby-Smith et al. , 2021, p. 75).

Epistemologically, this study will largely correspond to a social constructivist approach, as both the object of influence, national policy, is a direct result of human action. Also the object of research itself, population development, is a highly socially shaped concept. Hence, human interests are considered the most essential part in this research. Other characteristics with social constructivism relevant for this study are explanation through theoretical abstraction where this study will use the frameworks of governance and organisational hypocrisy. Also, certain numbers will be collected, most importantly in regards to the development in population statistics which will be explained further down. I will also conduct interviews to enrich the data collection and get stakeholders perspectives. One can also say that the researcher takes part in what is being observed in this case (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p. 78-79), as the thesis is written by someone living in the region of Northern Norway.

I intend to partly take on a hermeneutics approach when studying the white papers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p. 90-91) by taking into consideration the context these documents are written under. Both their political attachment being written by different government and the fact that they are written at different times will be considered highly important for their content.

An important point of departure, also related to the previous point, is that this study assumes the close interlinkage between social structure and individual behaviour. In here lies the core

of this study: that idea that politics, largely influencing social structure in society, has an effect on moving patterns and living preferences, which reflects individual behaviour. As is the case the other way around, individuals play an unquestionable role in the making and implementing of politics. This strong “duality of structure”, this interdependency of social structure and individual behaviour, ties this research to the Structuration theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p. 93). Hence, as a researcher, it is clear I find myself along the constructionist side of the model presented by Easterby-Smith et al (2021, p. 87), maybe slightly more to the engaged side philosophically, because of the interdependence assumed as described above. In practice, the research will be closer to the detached side as the only direct interaction I as a researcher will have are during the interviews.

2.3 Research design: Case study

Because this research investigates the concept of population development in Northern Norway over a specific time period, I will treat it as a case study. The goal is to get a rich understanding of population development in this specific area. It is also an explorative case study and shall not set out to prove causality, or the lack of, between politics and actions. Based on the work of Stake (2006), it will correspond to *expressive* study which means that I seek to get more knowledge about specific characteristics regarding one case without seeking to create standards of a general character (instrumental study) (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p. 127-128). In other words, although there might be similarities between the situation in Northern Norway and for example in Northern Sweden and in Northern Finland, the idea is not to make research applicable to these two neighbouring countries. However, it is plausible to think that parts of the process and/or results of this study could be useful for other regions serving as a point of departure or inspire new ideas for their own knowledge creation.

2.4 Data triangulation: document analysis, interviews and statistics.

To increase credibility of the results in this study, especially since the case is large case, this study collect data through examining information using different methods. Three different methods will be used, the first two are secondary contextual data, the third is primary textual data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p. 190-191). The triangulated data will be collected through document analysis, statistical analysis and qualitative interviews.

As Easterby-Smith et al. (2021, p. 253) warn against, using triangulation can be counterproductive if using different methods, investigators, data or techniques is appropriate. In this research, however, all three methods have been chosen to respond to the theoretical framework. The document analysis of the High North white papers will rely on governance theory for the content analysis and understand of organisational structure of the initiatives and measures. Also, the documents represent the talk and decision-part in the theory of organisational hypocrisy. In analysing decisions against population statistics, it will be interesting to discuss the influence of national policy.

2.4.1 Document analysis

I shall base this research on one secondary textual data Document analysis has been chosen to be the main source for data about national political decisions about population development in the High North. As mentioned in the introduction, the High North has been an important area of policy, to which many official document has been dedicated. This study will focus on the three white papers published about High North. In Norwegian they are commonly referred to as “*Nordområdemeldingene*”, meaning the white paper about the High North, although this is not their official names.

The reason these three documents has been chosen for this study, and not any of the other strategies about the High North, is because the information in the white papers are largely based on the content in the strategies and Norwegian official reports (Meld. St. 30(2004-2005), p. 5) Thus, they become a summary of the other relevant official documents. There are a total of three of these documents published, the first in 2004/2005, the second in 2011/2012 and the latest in 2020/2021.

What is also interesting about the white papers, and what makes them good indicators of national politics, is that they are all treated in the Norwegian National Assembly, meaning that they have a broad political support (Regjeringen, n.d.d) the three documents have been written by three different governments. The first during Bondevik II, consisting of a coalition between the Christian Democrats, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party (Regjeringen, n.d.c) the second and Stoltenberg II, and the third during Solberg II. Hence, the first two was written by the coalition of political parties (Labour Party, Socialist Party and Centre Party (agricultural)) and the later under the constellation of the Conservative Party, the Progress

Party, the Liberal Party and the Christian Democrats. This will make it interesting to see how the content change along with the different governments.

2.4.1.1 Word count

To assist with the analysis, I will conduct a word count. The count is done by using the function, Find (Ctrl+F) in the three downloaded document in Pdf file. As the Find-function also counts words in the index, these has been subtracted from the total. The word count will give an indication to the extent the topic of population development is dedicated attention.

Three worlds will be counted:

- “folk”, meaning people
- “befolkning” , meaning population, and
- “befolkningsutvikling”, meaning population development.

In Norwegian words are often contracted, which means that the word “folk” can also be a part of a larger word. For example, in the first white paper, the largest word group with “folk” (besides “folk” alone), is “folkeretten” which translates into international law in English. As these, and similar word groups are not necessarily directly relevant to the meaning of folk, or people, this study is looking for, it is put in parentheses behind the original word count. Also, it is not excluded because some of the words are more relevant, such as “folkegruppe”, translating to group of people, which could add to the analysis. This will be further addressed in the description of each white paper.

“Befolkning”, although a part of “befolkningsutvikling”, is included in the word count since it is also interesting to observe standing alone or it can be combined with other words and have other grammatical endings such as “Befolkningen”, which translates to *the* population. The words in the documents’ indexes have not been included in the count.

This word count has a disadvantage in the sense that these three words are not an exhaustive selection of words used to address the population issue in Northern Norway. However, it provides a starting point in the content analysis.

2.4.1.2 Content analysis

The content analysis of the three white papers shall be based on what the government writes about the three terms also used in the word count: people, population, and population development.

An important weakness about this method is that it is highly probable that initiatives and measures which can affect population development in Northern Norway gets left out. Other words besides the three selected are used to describe the population issue in Northern Norway. In an effort to compensate for this shortcoming, I will also make one category, “other”. Here I shall put important initiatives and measures not mentioned in direct connection with one of these terms, but that I consider having, or potentially can have, an important impact on population development in Northern Norway.

Another important limitation related to the latter point, is that largely all initiatives can indirectly have an effect on population development. I need to base the selection of measures in the “other”-category on my own judgement. Hence, this is neither an exhaustive count of all measures mentioned in the white paper, nor an objective analysis of the content regarding population development. This last category is also useful to include some points from the interviews, as this data will be presented along with the content of the white papers.

2.4.1.3 Operationalise the content according to UN-indicators

To operationalise the content of the white papers and also to tie this research to the MSc Global Management mission, I shall make a model where I categorise the initiatives and measures directed at population development based on SDG 11.a. To remind the reader of the SDG 11.a, this sub-goal aims to “*Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning*”(UN, n.d.b).

The UN has formulated three indicators to reach SDG 11.a, which are the categories to be used in the model. The indicators are the “*Number of countries that have national urban policies or regional development plans that*
(a) respond to population dynamics;
(b) ensure balanced territorial development; and
(c) increase local fiscal space” (UN, 2021).

The (a) reflects the population composition, tendencies and future expectations. This category will include measures aiming at improving minority cultures and overall balancing of the population regarding for instance age, sex. I assume this will be a particularly important point as one of the main demographic issues are the increasingly older population in Northern Norway. The (b) includes initiatives seeking to better the geographical spread of the population, which could include measures to improve transportation and communication. Finally, the (c) is according to the UN “*understood as the sum of financial resources available for improved delivery of basic social and economic services*” (UN, 2021) which in my interpretation would also include the establishment of industry and other job-creating initiatives. Through this model, it will be possible to draw some indications as to how well the content of the white papers reply to what the UN the SDG considers is important elements in national policy for sustainable urban development.

2.4.2 Qualitative interviews

To get a better understanding of the processes behind making national politics about population development in the High North (governance) and how well the decisions and actions relate (organised hypocrisy), I want to include in my research the perspectives of someone who has hands-on experience (Easterby-Smith et.al, 2021, p. 195). I decided to conduct two qualitative interviews, carefully selecting two people I know through personal connections/supervisor/my network(?) who has a genuine personal engagement for population development in Northern Norway and who has been deeply involved with High North policy making at a national level.

2.4.2.1 The interviewees

The first respondent is Grete Ellingsen, a lawyer and former Mayor of Sortland in Vesterålen (Nordland county). She was State Secretary (2015-2017) for the former Ministry of Municipalities and Modernisation, and represents the Conservative Party. The second respondent is Karl Eirik Schjøtt-Pedersen, originally from Vardø (Finnmark county), who is today the Auditor-General In Norway. As a representative for the Labour Party, he has had many leading roles in the construction of High North policy; Minister of Finance, Minister of Fisheries and State Secretary at the Prime Minister’s office.

Together these two respondents cover a broad set of perspectives important to get an interesting take on the making and implementation of High North policy regarding population growth. First, they each represent the largest political parties in Norway, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, each of which has been the leading Party with the Prime Minister in the time the white paper was written. Thus, they have been involved in making two of the total three white papers about the High North. Secondly, they have been active on the different levels of public administration, from municipality to state-level. In addition the two respondents represent two different regions in Northern Norway: Nordland in the south and Finnmark to the north-east.

2.4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

The interviews will be semi-structured (Easterby-Smith et.al, 2021, p. 195). The topic is clear and I will send the questions in the interview guide to the respondents on beforehand so that they are able to prepare. However, I want to leave room for the respondents to freely talk about the subject if they see fit, and to add aspects they find important beyond the questions provided by me. As the main purpose of the interviews is to obtain their knowledge and experience working with High North policy, this will largely reflect the “expert interview” (Easterby-Smith et.al, 2021, p. 196). At the same time, their personal involvement, not to mention their own personal involvement in population development in Northern Norway is far from irrelevant. Therefore it is tempting to say the interviews also includes some features of “biographical interviews”, but as I am not looking for information about their lives per se, it seems most correct to leave it in the “expert interview”-category.

Since both of the interviewees live in different cities than I do, remote interviews will be the easiest option (Easterby-Smith et.al, 2021, p. 198). The initial idea was to do both interviews on Teams. However, because of a tight schedule for Schjøtt-Pedersen, the interview was finally conducted over the telephone. Both interviews lasted about an hour.

2.4.2.3 Preparations and ethical considerations

It was a relatively long process to ensure the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the respondents. According to new university policy, the project had to be described and evaluated by the Data Protection Services (Sikt). To this purpose I drafted an interview guide

with questions, making sure to get answers that would assist in replying to the research question within in theoretical frame.

Regarding governance, the interviewees were asked to describe their role and actions during the time they has an influential position in making High North policy, what they believed is the most important level of institutions to affect the population development in Northern Norway, and their thought about population development as an element in High North policy which has traditionally been based on geo- and security politics. As for organisational hypocrisy, they were asked which initiatives and policies they believed to be most efficient and to give examples of policies they believed had a particular positive effect on population development. To mention some.

As a part of the GDPR ensuring-process through Sikt, the respondents need to sign a form of informational consent where they agree to the usage of the data and the further storage for continued usage of the data in later phases of the research project. Thus, through Sikt and its standardised procedures for research institutions such as Nord University, the ethical condition regarding privacy, informed consent, and confidentiality has been well taken care of. There are also considerations to be made towards the research community, as Easterby-Smith et.al (2021, p. 173) points out, such as being honest and transparent about results and context. During this research I shall be conscious about basic research ethical considerations, and be as open about the process as possible.

2.4.3 Statistics

As was pointed out further up in this Methodology chapter, this study does not seek to prove causality between political talk, decision and action. To do this takes a completely different research size and data collection. This explorative research will however provide reflections based on the population statistics of the National statistical bureau (SSB). The idea is to use these as indicators of the connection, or lack of, between national High North policy to population development in Northern Norway.

I have chosen not to handle the whole region as one, but to look at the population statistics in each of the three counties. The reason for this is the vast territory that Northern Norway covers so combined statistics would be so inaccurate that the empirical findings will be uninteresting. An important remark to make, is that in 2019 the two counties Troms and

Finnmark were fused, meaning that as of 2019, they represent one common statistical graph. Altogether, this counts for a total of four graphs; one for Nordland (2003-2023), one for Troms (2003-2019), one for Finnmark (2003-2019) and one for Troms og Finnmark (2019-2023)

There are other interesting statistical sources, like the ones provided by Business Index North (BIN), Their Arctic Demographic Index gives many other indicators which would be interesting to include in larger research (BIN, n.d). However, this thesis not being a demographic study of the population, the fact that BIN statistics does not go as far back as 2003 , I shall not rely on this information in this thesis.

2.5 Structure of the thesis

To sum up this introductory part consisting of the development of the research question, theoretical framework and methodological approach, this model below (Figure 4) has been made to give an overview of the structure of this thesis.

The first step is to understand the content of High North Policy which is based on two sets of data collected. The first one is the document analysis of the three whitepapers, where word count, a content analysis and an operationalisation based on the UN formulated indicators to SGD goal 11.a are conducted. The second data set is based on the information drawn from the interviews.

To be able analyse the influence of High North Policy on population development in Northern Norway I shall rely on a theoretical framework which is made up by mainly governance theory but also includes the theory of organisational hypocrisy. The final set of data, gathered from official population statistics, gives very direct information about the status of population development. However, the statistics shall be discussed in relation to the interpretation of High North Policy influence. This will provide me with the foundation to handle the research question.

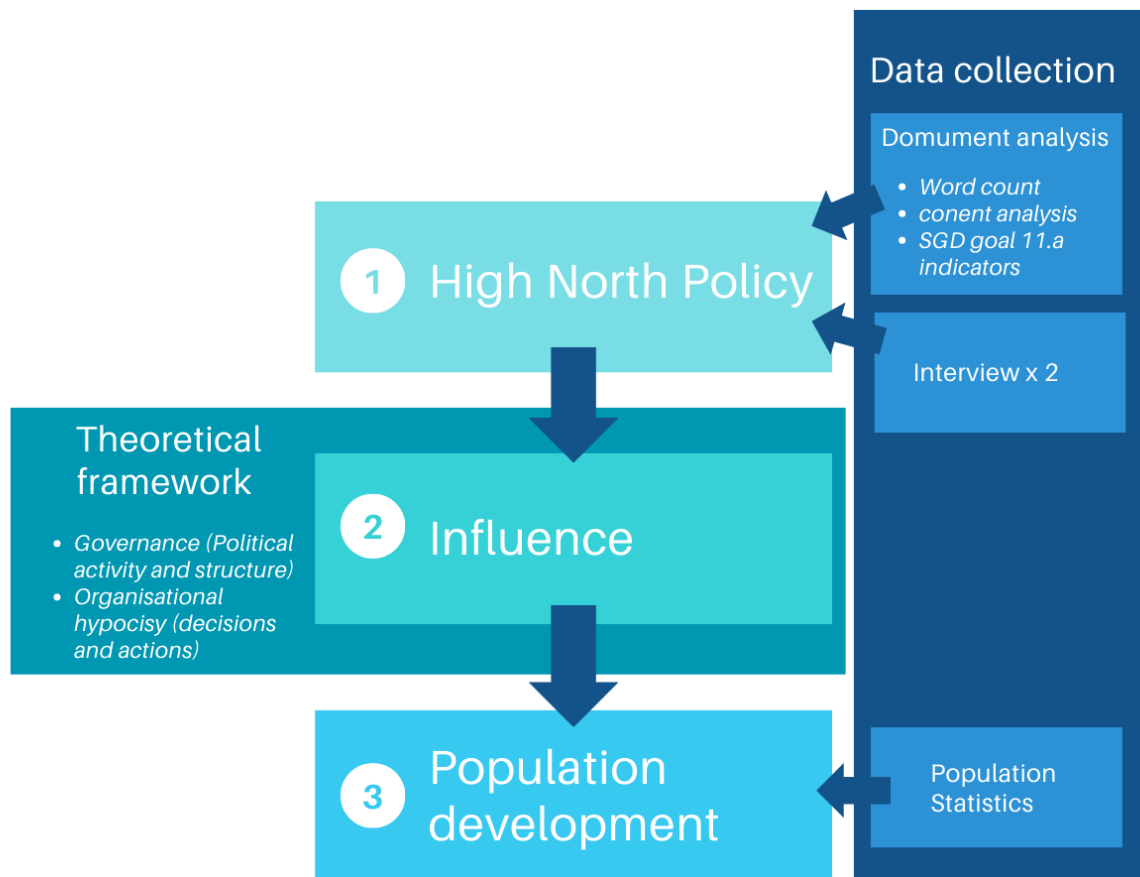


Figure 4: Structure of thesis

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

As a first step towards replying to the main research question, **How has the population development been in Northern Norway during the time of Norwegian High North policy?**, I shall present the main empirical findings from the data collections will be presented.

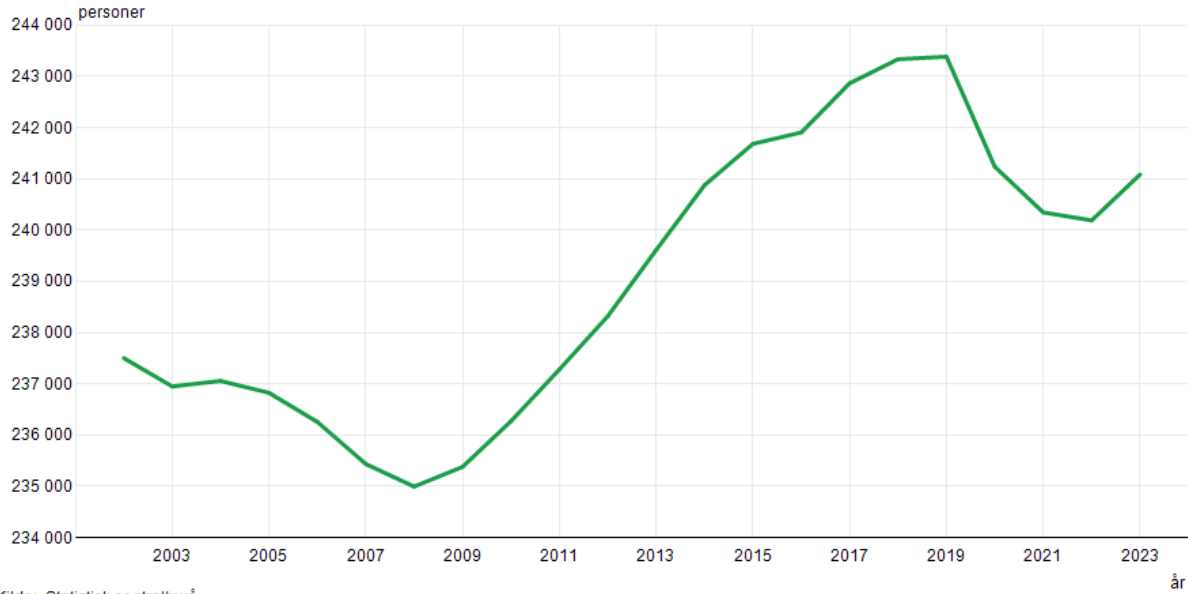
Firstly, in chapter 4.1, the population statistics will be introduced. As a next step, in chapter 4.2, the content of the three white papers about the High North shall be described through the word count and data collection based on what they say about “people”, “population”, and “population development” will be provided. The data collected from the two interviews are

applicable as interpretative or confirming information to add on to the statistics and content analysis and shall be presented where relevant.

4.1 Population statistics

Under follows the four graphs showing the population growth in Northern Norway from 2003 till today, Nordland first, followed by Troms and Finnmark and then these two combined from 2019 in the end. All graphs are retrieved from the population statistics from table 06913 of SSB, Changes in municipalities, counties and the population of the entire country (K) 1951-2023 (SSB, n.d).

06913: Befolkning og endringer, etter år. Befolkning 1. januar, Nordland - Nordlånnda.



Kilde: Statistisk sentralbyrå

Figure 5. NORDLAND COUNTY (2003-2023)

06913: Befolkning og endringer, etter år. Befolkning 1. januar, Troms - Romsa (-2019).

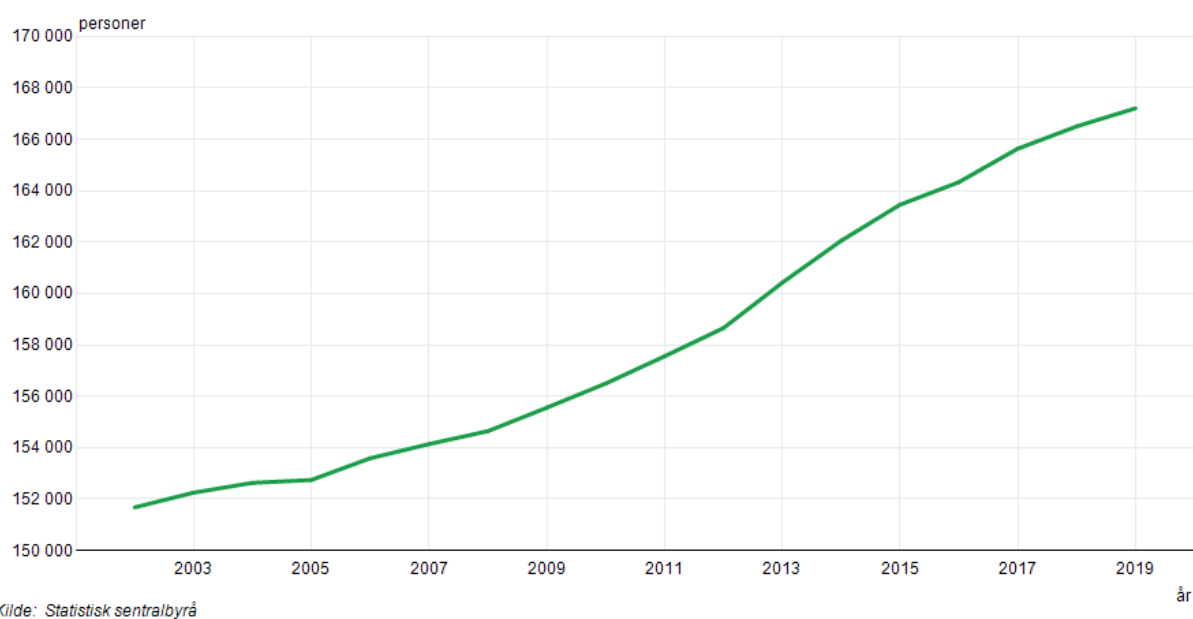


Figure 6. TROMSØ COUNTY, 2003-2019 (SSB,

06913: Befolkning og endringer, etter år. Befolkning 1. januar, Finnmark - Finnmarku (-2019).

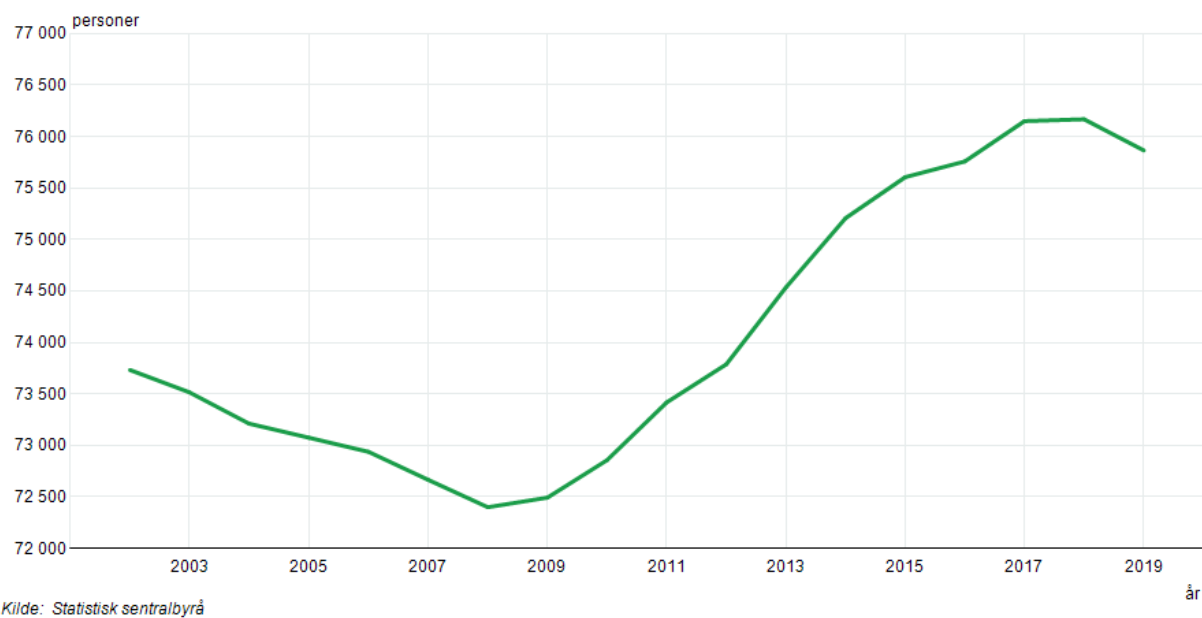


Figure 7. FINNMARK COUNTY (2003-2019)

06913: Befolkning og endringer, etter år. Troms og Finnmark, Befolkning 1. januar.

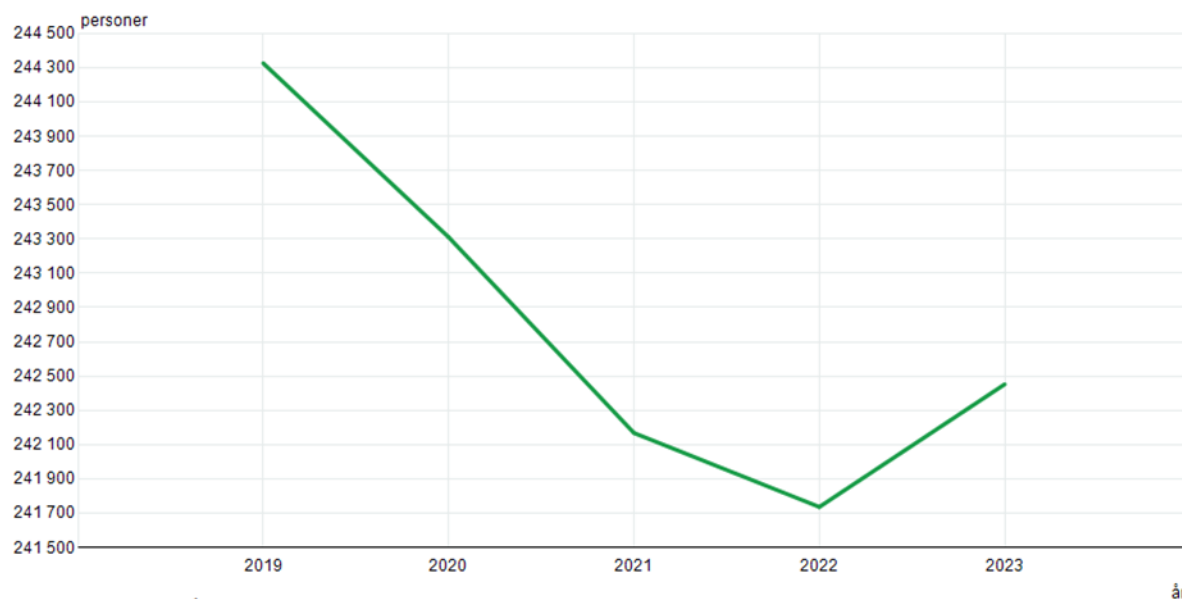


Figure 8. TROMS OG FINNMARK COUNTY (2019-2023)

It is curious to see that although there is a stated need for more people in Northern Norway as described in the introductory chapter, the overall population number has gone up as the statistics above shows. What seems to have been the issue regarding population deficit in the Northern Norway is that the population proportion compared to the rest of the country has been in decline since the 1970s (Meld. St.9 (2021-2022), p. 11). From representing 11,7 per cent (451 000 people) of Norway's total population in 1970 (SSB, n.d.) to 8,9 per cent (481 926 people) in 2022 (Thorsnæs).

What can be even more worrying, is the prognosis which indicates a continued reduction. The latest numbers from Statistics Norway, indicate that by 2050, the whole of Norway will have approximately 600 000 more inhabitants than today. As for Northern Norway the region counts a total of 481 926 people, with an expected increase of only 3822 in 2050. This stabilisation, explain Schjøtt-Pedersen, happens because people live longer, and older people are less likely to move. The county of Troms og Finnmark alone has 242 000 habitants today and is expected to reach almost 250 000 within 2050. The county of Nordland, however, with 240 000 habitants, is the only county in the entire that is expected to a negative population

development. Estimated to reach 236 000 in 2050, the reduction of habitants goes back by almost 4000 people in next 30 years (SSB, 2022, a).

The statistics above also indicate clear change in 2006. Both in Nordland and in Finnmark, the graphs very distinctly shift direction and points upwards after having been in decline. In Troms, however, it seems like the population was already growing before this year but continued, nevertheless. In his interview, Schjøtt-Pedersen, talks very warmly about the High North strategy that was published in 2006, right after the former government had launched the first white paper (2004-2005). The strategy is based on the program of the new government, declaring for the first time that the High North is the most important strategic area of policy investments. This announcement, claims Schjøtt-Pedersen, “*was a very heavy strategic move and the same with the following northern area strategy where we were to concretize the policy*”. Two conditions were particularly important for this change, according to Schjøtt-Pedersen; the launch of the High North Policy which made Northern Norway go from being outskirts to becoming a centre for population politics, and the establishment of the gas field Snøhvit close to the city of Hammerfest. An optimism arose based on these two factors, he concludes, which contributed to increase in population in the mid-2000s.

In 2019 there is a sudden decline again, in what is now both (not three) counties, before slightly coming back up in 2022, presumably a result of the pandemic. Although this is not a demographic study, there is one group of people that have been significant for the population development in Northern Norway that need to be addressed. Research shows that in this period, the number of immigrants settling in the region has almost doubled. The immigration has thus largely been responsible for the population growth and compensating for the people moving away. The immigration is at its most numerous between 2012 and 2016, as was the case for Norway as a whole. The change in immigration numbers, according to the research, are the economic fluctuations and all European countries are fighting over the same workers (kbnn, 2022). This reflects what was written in the introduction about the need for competence in Northern Norway.

Linked to this point, Schjøtt-Pedersen referred to predictions he contributed to as partner in economic consultation company, Menon Economics, and which are even worse than those made by the SSB. These results warn against a population unable to reproduce itself after 2050, where the old people die, and the fertility rates are not close to being able to maintain

the population numbers. “*The dilemma is that it is not enough to keep the young people who are already there, there must be a significant net immigration to compensate for the low birth rates*”, notes Schjøtt-Pedersen.

There are indications of both a strong connection and a weaker connection between the population development and the efforts made in the white paper to contribute to this effect, which will be developed further in the analysis.

3.1 Document analysis

In this chapter, the results of the three approaches used to analyse the white papers and what they say about population development will be presented. First, the results of the word count are represented. Second, the content related to people, population and population development is presented. Lastly, the results of the content analysis is categorised according to the UN indicators of SDG 11.a.

3.1.1 Word count

Counting the words folk (people), befolkning (population), and befolkningsutvikling (population development) gave the following results:

<u>Word count</u>	St.meld. 30 (2004/2005) <i>39 pages</i>	St.meld 7 (2011/2021) <i>132 pages</i>	St.meld 9 (2020/2021) <i>193 pages</i>
“Folk”	13 (18)	23 (35)	33 (66)
“Befolkning”	1 (5)	16 (29)	14 (49)
“Befolkningsutvikling”	-	-	5 (6)

Table 1: Word count results

Based on the word count, it is clear that the white papers write increasingly more about people, population and population development. The result is not striking taking the number of pages of each of the document into consideration. With each new white paper, the volume has become considerably more significant, going from 39 pages in the first, to 193 pages in the latest, representing almost five times as many pages. However, if we look at the difference between the first and the second and then at the difference between the second and the third,

the difference in the first interval is much larger than in the second. The number of pages also increases more in the first interval but the number of words become significantly more important in the second white paper. “Population” is even mentioned more times in the second than in the third white paper if we exclude the combination words in parentheses.

The increase in volume of the documents itself, demonstrate a larger political attention to High North Politics. With the parallel increase in the three words, it looks like that the attention to population development grows along with High North Policy interest.

This can also reflect an increased consciousness in national politics in general towards population growing. However, as we know other words are used in discussions about population development in the North, there is less foundation to make such a claim. Thus, the fact that population development is not used at all in the first two white papers, does not automatically exclude the possibility that this has not been an issue discussed before using other related terms. At the same time, it is a good indicator of an increased political attention and we don't know if other terms would have increased too. More information about the actual content of the white papers comes in the next chapter.

3.1.2 Content related to people, population and population development

In this chapter, there will be a systematic presentation of the content in each of the three whitepapers. They will be presented chronologically and the content related to each of the words people, population and population development will be done separately, and in this order. The “other” category, treating important and relevant content found outside the context of one of the three words, will finish each white paper description. The descriptions will also be complemented by the data collected in the two interviews.

3.1.2.1 First white paper: St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005)

The first white paper about the High North, is titled “Opportunities and challenges in the North” (Muligheter og utfordringer i nord). It was initiated by the Bondevik II government and written by the Norwegian Ministry of foreign Affairs (MFA). It is a relatively short document compared to the later two white papers, ending at page 39 (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005)).

It is clearly stated in the introduction that, during the work on the report, “*emphasis has been put on the foreign policy aspects of High North policy*”, (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 5). Other important aspects are Defence and conditions for business development in Northern Norway.

People (“Folk”)

The first time people is recognised in the text is in the word “folketall” meaning “population number” in the introduction. It is stated that Norway controls a vast ocean area relative to its modest population and political influence. The word is further used to describe the cooperation between people on each side of the Russian border in Finnmark (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 5-6). The “folk-til-folk”, people-to-people, cooperation, is fundamental for developing good relations to Russia, the white paper claims. The municipalities and the Barents secretariat are important institutions to make this a reality (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 8).

“Urfolk”, indigenous population in English, is the most used term regarding population in the document. Chapter 2.10 is dedicated to questions concerning indigenous populations. The government promises to continue to prioritise the rights of the Sami population in Norway as stated by the United Nations (UN) declaration about indigenous peoples, and to contribute to the work the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples |of the UN Human Right Commission. Withing this context, the document also mentions the mobility program already implemented, “north2north”, for student and teachers to go on exchange between partner institutions for indigenous peoples in the High North. Related to higher education, the Government wants to prolong the network for indigenous peoples from 2005. Moving on to reindeer herding, the Government has decided to establish a an international center of expertise and communication in Kautokeino as of 2005. (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 19-20).

In general, the importance of the internationally strong indigenous institutions for High North policy is underlined. The government declares it has a goal that the indigenous populations participate in decision processes regarding protection and development of the territories important to their cultural heritage. It is also mentioned that indigenous people is an important element within the Arctic Council (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 8). The government states that it want to initiate a research fund for the High North dedicated to climate, resources and

indigenous populations, and encourages other countries to contribute (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 9).

Population ("Befolkning")

The only place in the white paper that relates directly to the importance of developing population, however without using the term population development, is in the paragraph presenting the challenges of the High North policy. "*It is important that the utilization of the large resources in the High North benefits the population of Northern Norway*" (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 6), the Bondevik II government states, referring to the large oil and gas resources discovered and which would greatly affect business in Northern Norway.

The population health is mentioned as a concern regarding climate change. The white paper refers to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) showing the major effects on climate change in the Arctic and promises that the government will make sure that future climate agreements become as ambitious as possible (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 15).

Transportation is important for population development. In this white paper, population is brought into context to describe that the scarcely populated areas and business has resulted in poorly developed communication systems. However, the focus on what needs to be improved is on the cross-border communication systems in the High North as a whole, especially the oil and gas transportation with between Russia and Norway. (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 16). No particular measures regarding improving transportation that would improve life for local population are suggested.

Population development ("Befolkningsutvikling")

Not mentioned

Other

Besides the use of "Folk" and "befolkning" the Interreg cooperation organised by the European Union (EU), relates to population development through cross-country cooperation promoting "*social and economic integration*" (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 31). Here, Norwegian and Russian cooperation is regarded as particularly important. Also the Nordic Council of Ministers is important in this context. This cooperation, explain the white paper,

focus on “*the initiatives within democracy and welfare, cultural communication, sustainable development and scholarship activities*” (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 31) However, in this section, the Government highlight the importance of cooperation with Russia, not as much a internal population development. The indigenous population is nevertheless mention in this context as well. The Barents Secretariat is an important platform butting “*Particular emphasis [is placed] on measures within trade and industry, transport, energy, environmental protection, resource management, health, education and culture*” (St.meld. nr. 30 (2004-2005), p. 29), but no specific initiatives are mentioned.

4.1.2.2 Second white paper: Meld. St.7 (2011-2012)

Six years later, the second white paper about the High North was published, “Vision and means” (Visjon og virkemidler). Again, the document was written by the Norwegian MFA. The Stoltenberg II government who is now in charge, writes that this white paper is based on the first one from 2004/2005, but is expanding the perspective and raising the ambitions of a Norwegian High North policy. This expansion is partly reflected in the increased number of pages, this time attaining 134. Although foreign policy remains the main focus area (St.meld. nr.7 (2011-2012), p. 9), the government writes that the High North has become a well-established policy frame for “*both national and foreign policy*”, creating a foundation for initiatives on all levels: international, national, regional and local (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 10). This is an indication of a willingness to move in the direction of more focus on population development as regional and local politics would include an interest in local population.

People (“Folk”)

As in the previous white paper, the usage of “people”(folk) is largely in relation to people-to-people cooperation across the Russian boarder (folk-til-folk samarbeid), international law (Folkeretten) and indigenous people (urfolk). Folkeretten, international law, is also an important word combination with “folk”. However, the judicial regulations and the importance of these does not directly affect population development in Northern Norway (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 55). Indirectly they play an important role for national security, and would be interesting to include, but because of the limitation of the scope of this thesis, it will not be further examined.

Cooperation across the Russian border in Finnmark is underlined as important for Norwegian-Russian relations (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 11). It is not said that this seeks to contribute to population development specifically, but many people-to-people projects has been funded by the Barents Secretariat. Since 1993, a total of 3200 norwegian-russian projects have been financed by the Barents Secretary (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 46). Within the same context, the financing of cultural festivals in Northern Norway, such as Nordlysfestivalen, Tiff (Tromsø) and Barents spektakkel (Kirkenes) is noted (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 27-28). Also financial support to voluntary organisations whose goal is to “stimulate broad participation and strengthening the civil society in the region”(St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p.28) has been done. As for the future prioritization, these financials supports are to be continued (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p.28). The cultural cooperation with Russia is also financed through the project BarentsKult, a cooperation between the MFA and the Ministry of Culture and the counties in the region. The white paper also refers to an action plan for future cultural cooperation withing the frame of BarentsKult (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p.82).

The white paper clarifies that indigenous people’s rights will always be important for the regional cooperation in the High North (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p.17), especially through measures seeking to increase indigenous participation in decision making processes. Frequent meetings with the Sami parliament and the MFA, programmes introduces to ensure Sami involvement in the political processes in both the Barents Council and the Arctic Council, and a signing of a common Russian and Norwegian declaration about maintaining a good quality of life for the Sami populations, has been done declares the document. Other initiatives obtained are the establishment of a science building in Kautokeino, financed the polit project Árbiediehtu which aims at mapping and preservationg Sami traditional knowledge at the Sami Collage, as well as opening a Center for Nordic People in Kåfjord. Concerning future prioritization, there are not formulated particular goals, but sami participation in policy development and decision making about business, as well as a continued effort to strengthen sami knowledge is put forward (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p.27).

Lastly, people are a concern in regards to search and rescue-activity (SAR) in the High North. Work preventing actions is highlighted as important to ensure peoples security. Some initiatives are mentioned related to SAR, but since this is an internationally coordinated part

of High North policy and does not have direct effect on developing the population, I shall not spend more time on these projects (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 101-102).

Population ("Befolkning")

In this white paper, population (befolkning) is largely used in the introductory chapter, giving a general introduction to the composition of the population in the Arctic, presenting numbers about population density, proportion of indigenous people, and proportion of people with a higher education. (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 30-31). Population is also mentioned in the chapter about climate change in the context of increased research activity and a strengthened communication with local populations through the Arctic Council and its Sustained Arctic Observing Networks (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 34).

"Population" is however considerably more important within the context of knowledge and education. The white paper stresses the importance of knowledge creation about the High North since Norway is the country in the world with the largest proportion of its population north of the polar circle. Liked to this, it *"is important to provide relevant education to a dispersed population to cover the need for competence in the region"* (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 37). To achieve this, the government writes, it wants to prioritise the northern universities when launching the program eCampus, which improves the ICT systems for research and education, to strengthen the flexibility and accessibility of higher education. Preserving the Sami languages withing higher education is also a priority, and a national recruiting strategy was launched. The research-strengthening initiative for the Northern Norway, "Forskningsløft Nord-Norge", aims at reinforcing the research competence in the region, especially within technology and tourism. (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 38).

Several agreements with other Arctic countries has been put into place in order to strengthen the international cooperation in higher education. It seems with specifically worth to mention the UArctic, the network of universities as it includes all circumpolar countries (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 38). Three main hubs of knowledge is underlined: Tromsø, Bodø and Kirkenes. The University of Tromsø is a hub of Arctic research through the ICE center and the Fram center. The secretariat of the Arctic Council is also placed in Tromsø. The University of Nordland (Former Nord University) is a hub for knowledge and cooperation with particularity Russia through the establishment of the High North Center in 2007. The city of Bodø is also a priority for development for the government, especially regarding

business cooperation with Russia. The research project “Opplevelser i Nord” is established to increase value for the tourist industry in the whole region, and based in Bodø. Furthermore, the new climate technology of the program “Forskningsløft i Nord” is set to be developed with a base in Narvik. As for Kirkenes, both the Barents institute and the Barents secretariat is located here (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 38-39). Being important institutions for societal development, this could have a positive effect on population development in the area. Cross-boarder cooperation with Russia, especially within the field of mining and the potential for further development with the Russians, the “population” is a potential benefactor of related infrastructure and logistics (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 82-83). This is however not very likely to be further developed in today’s situation, but it might be interesting as a reference point when analysing the next white paper.

The Sami “population” is mentioned a few times, for instance in regard to the cooperation between the Nordic countries, the Sami parliament council, where Russian Sami populations participate as observers (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 87). Further, the “population” is mentioned in regards to the protection of nature in the sense that *“The diversity of species and habitat types is essential you to maintain nature’s ecological pro sists and systems, which in turn form the basis for living, value creation and welfare”* (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 92). Concrete measures regarding the Sami population was for the most part listed under “people”.

Closely linked to the biodiversity, “population” comes up when the white paper talk about the importance of the fishing industry, Norway being the second largest exporting country of seafood after China. The government points to that the fishing industry has a major importance for the settlement patterns in the Northern Norway. *“Norway shall be the leading seafood nation in the world”* (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 105), states the white paper, indicating the need for continued and improved fishing activity and people. To maintain a sustainable fishing activity in the North, and to counter the threat of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, there are some initiative put into place such as The Norwegian national advisory group against organized IUU-fishing (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 107). This is however, not something implemented directly to stimulate population development, but it does support an important industry on which population development is highly dependent upon in the region.

Another important industry that has had large implications on the settling pattern in the region, is the energy sector. According to the white paper, analysis show that the establishment of the platform, Snøhvit, in 2002 has turned around the negative population trend in Hammerfest creating new employments and having major positive ripple effects on the rest of the society. According to a study made in 2010, the fossil production in the Barents region and in the Lofoten islands, can provide increased employment in Northern Norway with 4,000 to 6,000 jobs (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 114).

An interesting observation made according to the white paper, as a fairly large proportion of the Norwegian population has higher education, and these people are relatively cheap to employ compared to other countries, *“it is probable that the future growth in the Norwegian business and job market happens within industries that uses workforce with higher education”* (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 117). Following this logic, the higher education, the better evolved the business gets. However, as the Northern Norway lack both qualified and unqualified workforce, this hinders the development. An important measure is to ensure access to higher education also in the district.

Finally, population is written in a section about the importance of access to air traffic and airports. Avinor, the owner of most airports in Norway, is instructed to conduct a survey to map all local initiatives related to improving the air ports so that national policy can be better fitted (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 119).

Population development (“Befolkningsutvikling”)

Not mentioned.

Other

When it comes to the development of the infrastructure, it is clearly stated that the purpose is to enhance the business development in the region. Amongst the priorities for the future, to improve the electrical structure to support the increasing energy need in the North and to improve communication between the countries in the Barents regions. (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 55). The government announces that there has been an increase of investment in developing the national highways in Northern Norway of 300% in the New National Transport Plan 2010–2019. Especially the E6 connecting Kirkenes with Svinesund gets

particular prioritizing. This is highly important for the “*development of attractive housing and labour market in the region*” (St.meld. 7 (2011-2012), p. 118), the government announces.

4.1.2.3 Third white paper: Meld. St. 9 (2020-2021)

The third white paper, “People, opportunities and Norwegian interests in the North”, (Mennesker, muligheter og norske interesser i Nord) is the longest (193 pages) and most comprehensive of the three white papers. The introduction is followed by 7 main chapters; (2) Foreign and security politics, (3) Climate and environment, (4) societal development, (5) business and knowledge development, (6) infrastructure and communication, and finally (7) societal security. This is a clear step towards a broader conception of Norwegian High North policy, including societal aspects and regional political questions, as well as the traditionally central international and security politics. This step can further be explained by the fact that the white paper is not only written by the MFA as the precious two documents were, but also the Ministry of municipalities and modernisation (KMD), as confirmed by Ellingsen in her interview. It is interesting to note however, the MFA stands alone as “author” on the document’s front page.

Ellingsen explain that this cooperation was established between the two Ministries already during the work of the High North strategy the year before. “We also moved into a new narrative, from being in an international sphere characterized more by the sea and big politics, down to also dealing with the inhabited areas in the Norwegian Arctic” she explain. In the white paper, being based on the strategy, the government Solberg II declares, “*A stated goal of the government's High North policy*” is to contribute to increased living attractiveness and welfare in Northern Norway” (St.meld. 9 2020-2021, s8).

The whole of Chapter 4 is very relevant for this study. Instead of counting the number of times “people” and “population” is counted in this chapter, I shall address the content of the chapter all together under “other”. However, as the main word of research, “population development”, is only mentioned five times, the one time it is mentioned in Chapter 4 will be added under “population development”.

People ("Folk")

People-to-people cooperation across the border with Russia is still an important factor. The Barents Council is mentioned as an essential contributor. (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 19, 26, 29, 30). The government stresses that under the Norwegian presidency of the Barents secretariat from 2019 to 2021, the counties and youth in the region has been a priority, especially with the establishment of the Children and Youth At Risk in the Barents region (CYAR)-program (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 30). In the section about the strategic importance of the High North, the need for having people and robust societies in Northern Norway, is described as a factor of national security, "*Norwegian interests in the Arctic and the northern regions must be asserted through a viable and competent Northern Norway*" (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 24). What is interesting to note about the points made so far under "people" (folk) in this section is that they are all found in the 2nd chapter about Foreign and Security policy, indicating that even within this field, regional and population development is considered natural to include.

As in the two former white papers, the indigenous population has a central role in High North policy. What goes for initiatives to strengthen international cooperation, there is the cultural festival Riddu Riddu in Kåfjord which also aim to build competence and a willingness for young people to live in the North. With the goal of strengthening the international network between indigenous artist, the project "Northern People of the Year", was created with support from the Norwegian MFA (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 32). In regards to the international reindeer herding centre previously mentioned, the white paper explain that it has become an important contributor in many projects such as the EALLU in the Arctic Council to maintain Sami food traditions, which also includes the education al program Food Innovation Leadership. Another leadership program, and in cooperation with Harvard University, is Training of Future Arctic Indigenous Leaders, giving young indigenous training in leadership, resilience and crisis management.

Population ("Befolkning")

The population deficit in Northern Norway is dedicated a lot of attention in Chapter 4 "Societal development in the North". Fact bok 4.2 "Population and demographic development" (Befolkning og demografisk utvikling) gives a brief summary of the demographic situation since the beginning of the 2000s (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 54). The

context of the box explains that for almost two decades the population grew in the region before diminishing again in 2019, as was shown in the statistics section above.

Population is also mentioned when describing the strategic importance of the High North, where it is emphasized that the North is home to a significant part of the population and is highly important for national job and value creation (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 34). Further, population is talked about in the context of the fishing industry and how essential this industry has been economically for the region. In this context, and also in regards to the historical traces from the Second World War, the Adapt Northern heritage-project is presented. Its mission is to promote cultural heritage in the High North (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 47).

The Universities are in this context indispensable. When asked the question, “What measures/policies do you think are particularly important to keep people in Northern Norway”, Ellingsen very quickly replies institutions of higher education. She believes the Universities can do a lot more in regards to being visible for the young in the district, so that they know that higher education is an actual option. Having an academic environment through events, cooperations with the municipalities and contact with local communities, it is a lot more likely for young people to know about education opportunities that will strengthen the capacity in the society and maybe make them stay. *“This is also important for my own motivation to stay here”*, she finishes.

Population development (“Befolkningsutvikling”)

Mentioning “population development” five times in the main text, this white paper shows dedication to the issue of a decreasing population in the Northern Norway. The first time it is used is in the introduction where the document sites the most important challenges in the future for the region. *“We are at the same time faced with fundamental challenges related to population development in Northern Norway and the need to ensure the competence necessary utilize the region's potential”* (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 15), the document states. Population development is mentioned once in the fact box described in the previous section here about “population”, where the white paper explain the development has been good the last five year period due to *“strong job- and value creation in private sector”* (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 54). Further down, and still in chapter 4 of the white paper, the term is used claiming that without immigration, the situation for the population development in northern Norway would have been a lot worse (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 67).

The last time population development is mentioned is in another fact box in chapter 5. The box is about the municipality of Hammerfest, who greatly benefited population wise by the establishment of the gas field Snøhvit at Melkøya, (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 95), as was also noted in the previous white paper. It is explained that with a population of approximately 10 500, there is a significant proportion of young people belonging in the group of 20-40 years old as a result of the gas field. There has been important ripple effects because the municipality gets increased tax income, which has strengthened its schools and other public institutions. With the planned Johan Castberg oil field opening, the white paper estimates even more activity based in Hammerfest (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p.95). Hence, the oil and gas production has alone reassured a positive population development in Hammerfest.

The white paper recognises that high cost transportation and dangerous travel paths during winter is an important factor for the population and could hinder the will to settle down in the region. Many measure directed at improving transportation is mentioned which would indirectly benefit population development, but the wish to develop a broad band to all houses is worth mentioning (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 145).

Other

Chapter 4 “Societal development in the North” is particularly important in the context of population development as it treats the issue directly. “A *stated goal for the government's northern area policy is to contribute to increase attractiveness to live and welfare in the North Norway*” (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 52), begins the chapter. It is underlines that young people’s voices has been especially important for the development of this white paper through a youth panel established beforehand and who has made important contribution to the document. The youth contribution is gathered in its own document attached to the white paper at the end, representing the 26 last pages. Being a fairly new contribution, the “A High North policy for youth”-program might not have had the major impact on population development just yet. Also because some of the youth aspects are included in the latest white paper, this study shall not analyse the youth policy in detail. It will, however, be interesting to study the youth-policy document more in depth in a later study.

The white paper enhances the following points made by the youth panel: The young want to be more involved in international cooperation. There is also a strong wish for better inclusion

of the indigenous way of living to become a part of the Norwegian culture and identity. They also want better conditions for entrepreneurship. They also want more attention to mental health, harassing and racism. As a respond to this, the government wants to designate a coordinator for youth in the High North at the secretariat for the High North Forum. (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 54). The idea behind the High North Forum (Nordområdeforumet) explain Ellingsen in the interview, was to create a physical arena where the State, the municipalities, the Sami Parliament and all other interested actors could meet to discuss important issues for the High North. If there were to be a large road project and the concerned municipalities has something to say about it, they could invite the Ministry of Transport to a meeting in the Forum to ask questions and get informed. *“If you think about how to get people who live there (the North) and to enable the very best in our society, local democracy, then you have to make sure that they have a real voice”*, underlines Ellingsen. However, she is not very happy with the development of the Forum, explaining that it have not become as important and used as she had hoped. She wishes for increased attention and more frequent meetings.

As of 2019, it is mandatory for both municipalities and the counties to create Youth Councils. The idea is that these shall serve as platforms for contact between youth and the politicians and other decisionmakers in their local communities.

Next to the fact box about population development presented above, there is another fact box about a specific area where population developments has gotten extra attention: “The action zone” (Tiltakszone) (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 53). Geographically, this area consist of the Northern part of Tromsø and all of the county of Finnmark. It has been an area of particular attention regarding measures to encourage people to stay and to attract new. (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 15). It was established by the Syse government, explain Skjøtt-Pedersen. He point out that this was a conservative government, however several measures had been introduced before the official establishment of the zone, such as exemptions from employer's tax ad reduction in student loans. With the official establishment of the action zone, new tax benefits were introduced, which according to Skjøtt-Pedersen was particularly useful. The white paper refers to an evaluation from 2012, showing that the results of especially the measures directed at people had a positive effect on population development within the zone (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 53).

Besides the cultural arrangements already mentioned, other organisations and events brought forth in the white paper, are the Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra, Sami Easter Festival in Kautokeino, International Sami cultural policy (ISFI), International Sami Film Institute and the Arctic International Film Fund, the Festivals of Northern Norway, the Barents Spectacle in Kirkenes. There is also the international cultural conference Arctic Arts Summit, initiated by Norway, and, of course, Bodø as the European Cultural Capitol in 2024. In addition, many sports events are organised such as Barents Games, Finnmark dog race, Offroad Finnmark, Arctic Winter Games and Arctic Race of Norway.

In the section about diversity, the Sami culture is again an important part. There are not a lot of concrete measures mentioned here besides the initiatives I wrote about under international cooperations, but the location fusion of the Sami national theatre Beaivváš, the Sami secondary school and the reindeer herding school in Keitokeino is mentioned. Other central aspects are the digitalisation can contribute to keep the Sami language alive, if it does not replace the physical arenas for language exchange and learning. The Kven population is also dedicated a section. It is their language which is the main priority in the High North Policy document (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 59).

Access to education and jobs is a central topic the Chapter 4. This reflects the introductory note in this thesis about the importance of needed competence as part of population development. Flexible study options are an important part of this. Through Diku (Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education), several educational programs has been financed: AkvafleKS (Nord), preschool teacher programs (UiT), decentralised nurse program at Helgeland, to mention some. Moreover, Centers for study has been established all over the country and are important in Northern Norway, the white paper claim (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 62-63).

To build strong power centres is important for the region and the government declares it wants to make a national strategy to enhance living conditions, business possibilities and environment in both smaller and larger cities, which will benefit Northern Norway because of its scattered settlements. Through the loan possibilities of the Husbanken (House bank), the government want to lower the demands (St.meld. 9 (2020-2021), p. 65-66). The white paper also consider the municipal merger as a strengthening factor for municipalities to give better services to local population.

Ellingsen also points to the desterilisation of important national institutions, such as the National organisation register in Brønnøysund, the section of the National library in Mo i Rana, and the Civil Aviation Authority Norway in Bodø as important motors in local communities.

3.1.3 Operationalizing the white paper content

In this chapter, the initiatives and measures found in the content analysis in the former chapter has been operationalised into a table where they are sorted according to the indicators to the SDG 11.a. as sown in the table below.

	St.meld. 30 (2004-2005)	St.meld. 7 (2011-2012)	St.meld. 9 (2020-2021)
(a) respond to population dynamics;	<p>Contribute to the work the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples</p> <p>“north2north”</p> <p>Prolong the network for indigenous peoples</p> <p>Establish international center for Reindeer hering in Keitokeino</p> <p>Initiate a research fund for the High North to do research on climate, resources and indigenous peoples.</p> <p>Interreg</p> <p>People-to-people cooperation: Financed and encouraged through Barents secretariat and the municipalities</p>	<p>Meetings between the Sami parliament and the MFA</p> <p>Programs ensuring Sami involvement in the Barents Council and the Arctic Council,</p> <p>Russian and Norwegian declaration about good quality of life for the Sami populations</p> <p>Science building in Kautokeino,</p> <p>Árbediehtu-project</p> <p>People-to-people cooperation across the border with Russia.</p> <p>BarentsKult</p> <p>Center for Nordic People opened in Kålfjord</p>	<p>Riddu Riddu festival</p> <p>"Northern People of the Year"- project</p> <p>EALLU and the Food Innovation Leadership-program</p> <p>Training of Future Arctic Indigenous Leaders</p> <p>Adapt Northern heritage-project</p> <p>People-to-people cooperation with Russia through the Barents Secretariat.</p> <p>Children and Youth At Risk in the Barents region (CYAR)</p> <p>Youth councils: both on county- and on municipality level.</p>

			<p><u>Cultural initiatives:</u> Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra, Sami Easter Festival in Kautokeino, ISFI, International Sami Film Institute, the Arctic International Film Fund, Festivals of Northern Norway Barents Spectacle in Kirkenes Barents Games, Finnmark dog race, Offroad Finnmark, Arctic Winter Games Arctic Race of Norway.</p> <p>Locatoin fusion: Beaivváš, the Sami secondary school and the reindeer herding school</p> <p>Municipal merger</p>
(b) ensure balanced territorial development;	(transportation)	<p>The Action zone (Tiltakssonen)</p> <p>eCampus: ICT technology program.</p> <p>Forskningsløft Nord-Norge: reserach initiative</p> <p>Forskningsløft i Nord: strengthening cooperation between education and business</p> <p>Universities (Nord and UiT)</p> <p>Investments in National highways in the North</p>	<p>The Action zone (Tiltakssonen)</p> <p>High North Forum</p> <p>Universities (Nord and UiT)</p> <p>Flexible study programs (AkvafileKS (Nord), preschool teacher programs (UiT), decentralised nurse program at Helgeland,</p> <p>Centers of study</p> <p>Transportation (broad band development +)</p> <p>Decentralized national institutions</p> <p>National strategy for city development</p>

(c) increase local fiscal space		Financial support to voluntary organisations seeking to strengthen local societies. Snøhvit gas field	Snøhvit gas field Johan Castberg oil field Bodø 2024 Arctic Arts Summit
--	--	--	--

Table 2: Initiatives and measures according to UN indicators to goal 11.a

As was the case with the word count, it is not a big surprise that the number of initiatives and measures in the white papers increase with the increased along with the pages becoming more numerous.

The Sami people gets a large proportion of the attention in all three white papers. This is one of the most important areas in the first category referring to measures that (a) respond to population dynamics, as the UN identifies minorities as an important part in this category. Another policy area that is also an important one in all three white papers, the people-to-people cooperation across the Russian border, essential for people living close to the boarder. This is a very population-based and area-specific cooperation, which is why I understand it as responding to population dynamics. In the third white paper, there are also a lot more cultural initiatives and organisations. I chose to put these in the first category as these cultural events reflect their regional specificities and hence local populations. Measures aiming at young people also belong in this category because they are essential to population dynamics. Strangely enough, the third white paper is the only one addressing this topic despite the importance of keeping the young from leaving.

The second category (b) ensure balanced territorial development, mainly consist of technological development to facilitate distance learning and transportation. Some initiatives to improve research in Northern North is also added to this category, not because they seek to necessarily develop rural areas, but because these are aiming at building and strengthening local research communities in the North in general. The Universities are also important institutions to ensure territorial development, and not population-specific enough to be placed in the first category. Although being established in 1990, the Action Zone is not mentioned in the first white paper (2004-2005).

Looking at initiatives aiming to enhance the local economic situation, the (c) increase local fiscal space- category is largely filled up by industrial measures. The UN emphasizes economic initiatives that strengthens the ability of providing social services, but no clear measures with this particular aim is found. Bodø as a European Capital of Culture in 2024 is in this category because the project has collected a total of 300 Million NOK to enhance local cultural life. Although some money come from local municipalities, 100 Million NOK is financed by the State and some from the private sector (Lysvold, 2023). To fill inn with more relevant information, I could look at the national subsidies to hospitals and other health-related institutions, but this study will not look deep into economic measures, as explained in chapter 3.

As was also stated in the methodology chapter, this list is not exhaustive as the document analysis has mainly used the three words people, population and population development as a point of departure. By rearranging the initiatives that has been identifies based on the methodological approach, however, can be used as an indication to which types of measure gets more political attention.

5. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

This fifth and final section will contain the analysis of the empirical data presented in the previous chapter, and discussions about what these results indicate for the influence the High North Policy has had on population development in Northern Norway. I will structure this chapter based on the three perspectives identified in my theoretical framework: political activity, organisational structure and the product connection between decision and action.

5.1 High North policy influence on political activity

As pointed out in the theory chapter, governance is very practically oriented. It adapts and changes along with the way people act and along practical politics. As a result, governance is also constantly changing, constantly developing (Bevir, 2010, p. 11). It is not easy to generally determine whether it is the High North Policy that influences population development or if it is the population development that lays the guidelines for High North Policy. The easy truth is that it is probably a combination of both. What is more clear, on the

other hand, is that High North policy has expanded and become more diverse, and population development have become an important part of the policy area.

5.1.1 Population development becoming a part of Norwegian High North Policy

From mainly focusing on international relations (IR) and geopolitics, the Norwegian High North policy has become an area of policy where also national and local policy are an important part. This is confirmed by the word count and the content analysis which strongly indicates an increased attention towards population development and related topics in the white papers. These findings themselves are a demonstration of increased political activity.

«Population development form the foundation upon which the High North policy should be built» states Ellingsen, but adds that there has been a shift. She regards the High North policy as very dynamic and observes that there has been many phases. Before, when judicial questions and geographical borders need to be clarified, it was natural that the policy are contained international relations and grand politics. She claims that a new phase was introduced in 2017 with the publication of the High North strategy, which became the first time High North policy was taken to a local and regional level, and where population development become important and there was a focus on local participation. *“At that time this was an overripe transition”* she says.

However, this expansion is not only regarded as a positive change. Skagestad explain that around the time of the arrival of the first White Paper dedicated to the High North in 2004/2005, “new” was added to the policy area. When the Stoltenberg II government was elected a year after, the High North was, for the first time, defined as *“Norway’s most important strategic area of policy initiatives”* (Skagestad, 2020, p 25) which also played an important part of this new comprehension of the High North policy. A few years later, in 2008 researchers Hønneland and Jensen from the Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI) published a book called *“The New High North Policy”* (my translation from *“Den nye Nordområdepolitikken”*) that questioned the “new” addition. They claimed that what was in fact *new*, was simply the existence of a series of official documents and the activity that followed these. They further wondered if the policy related to the High North in the 2000s would be remembered more because of its results in national policy than foreign policy (Skagestad, 2020, p 28-29).

Skagestad supports this notion of the policy in the white paper being in reality a combination of both national and foreign policy, indicating for the most part “*trite declarations of intent*” (Skagestad, 2020, p 29). Both of these critics seem sceptical towards the inclusion of national policy aspects in High North Policy concept, thinking that little political activity has been done besides the making documents. My study, however, clearly indicates that a lot more activity has been created in areas that are linked to population development in the High North, with a growing number of measures and initiatives as shown in Table 2. If these measures has led to more activity, the national policy could be regarded more as an addition to the political activity, instead of at the expense of the international and security policy aspect.

5.1.5 Broad political consensus

Confronted with the accusation that the government does not do enough to ensure population development in Northern Norway, former Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, confirmed in 2021 that a considerable part of the measures described in the latest white paper is made with concern about population growth and an increased work force. It is important that “*this part of the country must get to use the great potential it has to continue to be a dynamo in the economic growth going forward for Norway*”, (Påsche & Bendixen, 2021) she states. Today’s Prime Minister, Jonas Gard Støre said during his opening remarks at the High North Dialogue conference in April this year, that Northern Norway is of key importance to Norway, because of the Arctic, because of the climate, because of the identity, that “*we need to keep people living in the north and even encourage people to come and live in the north, be they Norwegians or be they foreign friend*” (Støre, 2023).

This thesis has also shown that there is a broad support for population development in High North Policies in the Norwegian political landscape. As explained in the methodology chapter, all three white papers have been treated by the Norwegian National Assembly and different governments have initiated and written the white papers.

The High North Policy in general, not only in regards to population development, has been characterized by a broad support for the High North Policies in the Norwegian political landscape. Maybe this is connected to the traditionally stable and pacific situation which also characterizes Arctic governance. Young explain that traditionally “*The Arctic is a distinctive, low-tension international region with a policy agenda of its own centered on issues of*

environmental protection and sustainable development”(Young, 2019, p. 3), which also would reflect the consensus in Norwegian High North Policy.

The two large political parties in Norway, the Labour party and the Conservative party, have a long history of agreeing upon foreign affairs, as well as oil-and gas, and industrial policy (Takvam, 2023). These two parties have been leading the governments of the two latest white papers, the social democrats (Labour) in 2011-2012 and the conservatives in 2020-2021. Also, although led by the Christian Democrats, the conservatives had the Minister of foreign affairs in the Bondevik II government who made the first white paper. Hence, the political consensus on High North policy can be explained by the fact that leading political parties have traditionally agreed upon the politics that has been in the centre of High North policy, especially foreign policy and oil-and gas production. It is thus logic to assume that there will be less consensus about High North Policy the more it starts entailing other political areas where the dominating political parties disagree more.

On the other side, Schjøtt-Pedersen underlines the fact that both the Right and the Left in Norwegian politics has been very eager to assist in improving the “Action Zone” of Nord-Troms and Finnmark. Also, in all three white papers, many similar institutions and initiatives were made regarding Sami population, and people-to-people cooperation across the Russian border was elaborated in each document as something important to maintain. The existence of the white papers themselves and the increased attention to population development would also point in the direction of a common political perception.

Having been sceptical towards the continued use of the High North concept, Skagestad (2020), claims that one of the reasons the term is still being used by Norwegian authorities, is its strong political status, being “a word of recognition”(my translation from “honnørord”). In this sense, the High North can be regarded more as a phenomenon in Norwegian official policy, than only a concept. The word “North” itself is deeply connected to the Norwegian national identity, he claims, which explains why the High North is such a powerful term to be used by politicians to show their power of action (Skagestad, 2020, p 26, 29). *This is an interesting point and might even explain to some extent the increased volume of the white papers. It might even explain why High North Policy has not succeeded more in regards to population development, if the policies lack the right action. I will get back to this point later.*

5.1.3 Towards a new phase of High North Policy?

Another study that has questioned the continued use of High North as a term, is in a study by Pedersen (2018), which looks at the traditional geopolitical content of the High North concept. Pedersen identified a set of contextual drivers, giving the High North policy a *raison d'être*, since the beginning of the 1970s: (1) major oil and gas discovery north of the polar circle, (2) the cooperation with Russia about the Stockman gas field, (3) the Northern sea route, (4) Norway's wish to keep NATO's attention despite peaceful times between the east and west, (5) questions of international law, especially concerning the maritime border between Norway and Russia. According to Pedersen (2018), none of these drivers can still be considered as such as they have either been resolved or become obsolete as new events have occurred: (1) the search for oil and gas in the Arctic became less profitable than expected for different reasons, (2) the Stockman-project was called off after the collapse of the gas market in 2008, (3) the conditions on the Arctic has proven too hard for a major development of the Nordic sea route as expected, (4) the need to attract NATO's attention does no longer require much efforts as tensions has hardened between the east and the west, (5) the borders in the Barents and Polar sea between Norway and Russian had been formalized (Pedersen 2018, p. 143-152).

As a final point of analysis in his article, Pedersen (2018) opens up the possibility that new events that has come to be since the launch of the first white paper in 2006 could also explain why the term has survived: the race for resources in the polar oceans, an increasing interest in the Arctic by non-Arctic states wanting observatory status in the Arctic Council, the Russian annexation of Crimea, a general increase of Russian military activity in the North (Pedersen, 2018, p. 154). Since 2018, other events could be added to this equation. The war in Ukraine has affected Norwegian High North policy through freezing all types of official cooperation with Russia and supporting the EU sanctions (Regjeringen, 2022). Ellingsen also underlines that the war in Ukraine has gotten a lot of focus which probably has impacted the government's attention to national policy and population development in the North.

Also, Norway took over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council on May 11. The government presents four prioritized thematic: ocean, climate and environment, sustainable economic development and, most importantly, people in the north (Regjeringen, 2023) Yet another

confirmation of the change towards more attention to this issue and leading to more political activity.

Alongside a development towards a more unclear geopolitical future in the both Ellingsen and Schjøtt-Pedersen claim we are in the start of a new phase in Norwegian High North policy regarding population development. “*We need to reorient our policy in todays situations*”, observes Ellingsen. She remarks that the population development moves in the wrong direction, which she calls a worrying situation. Schjøtt-Pedersen, believes that we have now reached a point where we have to recognise that keep today’s population in the North is not enough. “*There needs to be a considerable immigration to be able to maintain a population in Northern Norway*”, he claims.

Ellingsen also adds a point about Svalbard at the end of the interview, making an argument about why the archipelago should be more involved in the “new” phase of High North policy. First, since Northern Norway is geographically relatively close, and a lot of the people who live in the North have close connection with Svalbard through work or family. Second, now with the war in Ukraine, it becomes even more important to maintain a population in Svalbard. She believes that local and regional politics should apply to a larger degree here as well, not only the State getting involved directly through the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of business development, for instance. “*What happens on Svalbard has relevance to Norway beyond the content of the Treaty of Svalbard*”, she claims.

5.2 High North Policy influence on governance structure

Closely linked to the previous chapter about governance and political activity, is the changes in governance structure which affects political activity and vice versa. The main observation based on the empirical findings in this regard is the considerable diversification of High North Policy, going from being an internationally based policy area, to including more areas on a national and local level. Another reflection is about the very strong role of the public sector, and also a final remark will be made about the importance of personal drive.

5.2.1 Larger diversification

The fact that population development has been included in the Norwegian High North Policy area, is itself a sign of diversification. This point very much replies to the networking aspect of governance theory as there is a larger plurality of actors (Bevir 2012, p. 3).

The considerable growth in volume with each of the white papers, as well as the overview of initiatives and measures in Table 2 signals a diversification of policy area and hence a more diversified political activity required. Also, diversification on an organisational level is confirmed by the change in responsible Ministries coordinating the writing of the white papers. From being a task accorded to only the MSF in the first two documents, the Ministry of Municipalities and Modernisation initiated the making of the latest white paper. *“We also moved into a new narrative, from being in an international sphere characterized more by the sea and big politics, down to also dealing with the inhabited areas in the Norwegian Arctic”* confirms Ellingsen in her interview about the process. This diversification clearly favours population development in Northern Norway if it means that more political activity is directed at the area. Whether this is a positive change, on the other hand, has been debated.

Pedersen (2018) asks if the continued use of the High North is mostly symbolic as the concept is strongly connected to people’s feelings and is kept relevant by high expectations and people’s involvement (Pedersen, 2018, s. 142). He further points out that the networks and institutions build around the concept of the High North, such as the High North section in the MFA, the Arctic Frontiers-conference, the Fram Center in Tromsø and the High North Center in Bodø, will through their continued activity create a their own reason for existence.

Further, in the anticipation of the latest white paper on the High North of 2020/2021 Skagestad and Pedersen wrote an article together in 2019 where they recommend that the High North policy should become more targeted and to lower the anticipations. The first point relates to the definition of the High North. As described in the introduction, they claim that the ambiguity of the concept is related to the developing of the policy area of the High North. Skagestad & Pedersen (2019) argue that the term should go back to being used only about the security policy situation in Northern Norway and it’s neighbouring areas. Here the authors become a bit vague. They call for a sharpening of the use of the term High North, both regarding the thematic and the geography, but mention research cooperation with China as an example of area of importance for Norwegian foreign policy (Skagestad & Pedersen, 2019). If

the geographic area and thematic targeting does not coincide, one could argue that bringing clarity to the concept of High North becomes difficult.

The second point of Skagestad & Pedersen (2019) is linked to what is, according to the authors, unrealistically high expectations to what the High North policy can achieve. “*People are still moving away from the region that was to become Europe's most important energy province*” (my translation) (Skagestad & Pedersen, 2019), they write. In addition to creating the sentiment of disappointment within the population, high expectations can attract more attention and interest from foreign countries who demand to get influence, the authors claim. Based on the broader policy areas in the latest white paper compared to the two former, it would not be unlogic to assume that the authors are not too happy by the way it turned out, reaching over 193 pages and having an entire chapter dedicated only to societal development in Northern Norway.

Both Skagestad and Pedersen seems to be more concerned with the consequences of the expansion of the High North policy area, than on solving what is becoming largely recognised as one of the most pressing issues in Norway. An explanation as to how they would like this issue to be addressed in Norwegian national policy would be interesting to read.

5.2.2 Strong public sector

Røiseland & Vabo (2008) translated ”governance” into “samstyring” in Norwegian to make it easier to study the concept in a Norwegian context. “Samstyring” consist of three main characteristics: mutual dependence between the actors, non-hierarchical negotiations and discussions leading to decisions, and a coordinated activity to make sure all parts are pulling in the same direction. However, exactly how this is supposed to facilitate the study and usage of governance in a Norwegian setting is not easy to get a hold of based on their article. The difference between governance and corporatism is clear, however, when they describe the characteristics of word “samstyring”, there is a lack of specificity as to why this only applies to a Norwegian context.

One interpretation of their theory is based on the importance Røiseland & Vabo (2008, p. 92) put on a strong public actor which often takes the role of main coordinator. An explanation to this can be the fact that elements of governance has existed in Norway for a long time in the form of social corporatism, making the transition from government to governance not as

drastic in Norway compared to other countries. Because of this, a strong state becomes very important in Norwegian governance, which is also reflected in the replies of Ellingsen and Schjøtt-Pedersen.

Both interviewees reply that institutions in the public sector are the once with the main responsibility for ensuring population development in the North. Ellingsen, as an previous Mayor of Sortland, claims that the Municipalities are the most important institutions. The State needs to be involved too, of course, but “*Everything happens in a municipality*” she argues. They are the once reassuring the livelihood of companies that creates jobs and strengthens the economy. She mentions the High North Forum as a potentially important actor. Schjøtt-Pedersen, having been deeply involved in the making of national policies for many years, believes it is a task to be solved at a national level. The municipalities will be important actors in making the plans and implement the measures to for instance attract new jobs. “*In addition, the measures needed will demand resources only the State can provide*”, he concludes.

The decision to include the KMD in the work of making the final white paper, represents an important change in the organisations with more formal structures as shown in Røiseland & Vabo’s typology (page 16) Ellingsen reflect about this situation in her interview, telling that new elements came to be because of this cooperation. Amongst other things, “*it became an area of focus that the development should come from below and go upwards, not top-down*”, she explain, stressing the point of creating an arena for including the local societies in the North. This would indicate a move from formal to less formal structures in the Typology. If we look at this point against the Table ... , many initiatives take the form of projects and cooperations which would support the notion of a development towards a less formalised structure.

There is also a need for more structure, claims Ellingsen. She misses an organised way to communicate between local actors ant the state. This should be something that the state should be more interested in, as the local communities are dying. “*I remember when I was a Mayor in Sortland municipality. I was reading the newspaper in my office about a presentation of the results from the search for oil and gas in Lofoten and Vesterålen that was going on at that time. The presentation were to be held at the University of Tromsø the next day and I was not informed about this. And the search was happening almost right outside my*

window!”, she said. She also stresses that the local communities also have a responsibility to take up the space they want, they cannot sit around and wait for someone to ask their opinion. However, she concludes, the arenas for communication should be a lot better than they are today.

5.2.3 Dependency on personal initiative

In the interview with Ellingsen, it becomes clear that she was the one who initiated a new revival of the High North Policy. As State Secretary in KMD, she proposed a new High North Strategy for the Minister of Municipalities at the time, Jan Tore Sanner, who was also the second in command in the Conservative party. Because of this, Ellingsen explain, the suggestion was taken straight to the political leadership and from there became a political priority.

Schjøtt-Pedersen also stresses this point in our talk. “When Jonas Gahr Støre became Minister of Health and Espen Barth Eide became Minister of Foreign Affairs, the push towards more measures to the North went away. So when the Solberg I government took over, this part of national policy was little attended to, relatively speaking”. This “push”, he claims, has been less present ever since its peak in 2006, even though both oceans and onshore affaires are both important areas for Norway.

Hence, there are clear signals pointing to the fact that personal engagement is an essential part of the governance structure forming High North Policy.

5.3 High North Policy influence on population development in numbers

So far, based on governance theory and the empirical data collected in mainly the document analysis and the interviews, there are some indications to be identified: There is an increased political activity related to population development because of the High North Policy, leading to a more diversified and less formal governance structure of this policy. Taking a closer look at the connection between policy and the actual population development in numbers, the results become slightly different.

5.3.1 Indication to correspondence between decision and action

As explained in the Theoretical framework-chapter, the white papers can be interpreted as political decisions. These decisions indicate an intention of action to follow. When this is not the case, and there is little correlation between decision and action, one reaches hypocrisy. This is neither an exclusively bad thing, nor is it uncommon. Using the model of organised hypocrisy as Brunsson (2007) presents it, it is possible to reflect on how the white papers correspond to the population development in real life, which are here represented by the population statistics.

Looking at the population development of the three (now two) counties as presented in the empirical chapter, there seems to be a coherence between the Norwegian High North Policy and the population development after 2006. The turnaround in population development this year can be interpreted as a direct result of increased attention to the High North and the launch of the High North as the most important strategic area of policy investment in Norway. As Schjøtt-Pedersen claims, the confidence of this territory grew as a consequence and created a positive effect on the population development. As a member of the Labour party, he believes that especially the strategy of 2006 his government made the year after had an important impact on the growth.

At the same time, statistics show that a large part of the population responsible for the growth in the mid-2000s are immigrants, as explained before. This can be a coincidence and more dependent on other factors, or it can be a result of a more influential High North Policy.

According to Schjøtt-Pedersen, there are two measures that has been particularly effective: the reduction in student loans because it targets the young, and the removal of employers-tax because it concern so many people. Especially the latter has also contributed to an increase in social welfare, according to Schjøtt-Pedersen who remains optimistic regarding the affect on measures.

Thus, some indication to a direct influence from High North Policy on population development can be made. An important point is also that we do not know what the situation would look like without the measures and initiatives. It is logic to assume it could be even worse.

5.3.2 Indications to little correspondence between decision and action

The statistical analysis in the previous section does not, however, prove anything in regards to population development. Rather, there are also indications to that the influence is the other way around. Population development is becoming such as severe issue that politicians on the national level is forced to make measured and policies to try to counter the development. In this case, the model of organisational hypocrisy would apply.

“Nothing has really been effective, in my opinion”, Ellingsen replies when asked if there are some policies or initiative that has had a particularly positive influence on population development. She is very disappointed by the low levels of effort from the State when it comes to involving other actors in the North besides the larger cities like Bodø, Tromsø and Alta, who already has growing populations. This would mean that there is little correlation between decision and action.

A point should also be made about what type of measures according to the SD 11.a indicators (Table 2), most respond to (a) respond to population dynamics; which mainly consist of cultural initiative, especially targeting at enhancing the Sami population. Living costs and transportation costs, for instance is not mentioned until the third white paper, and the altogether category (c) increase local fiscal space, gets the least amount of initiatives, based on this study. Hence, the measures suggest that more resources are dedicated to maintaining and reinforcing the population already living in the north. If the goal is also to attract more people from the outside, decision and action are not well connected, based on these results.

Schjøtt-Pedersen explain that the efforts towards increasing population in Northern Norway started long before the establishment of the High North Policy area as we know it today. The first measures dates back to the 1950s. At this time, the main focus was on the development of industries to make people stay, he explain in the interview. Despite measures put into place, the population continued to sink, and that’s when, in 1981, that the Nordli government decided to erase the employer’s tax in Nord-Troms and Finnmark. What is interesting about this, is that measures directed at population development was a political priority long before population development became a part of High North Policy. Thus, there is no exclusive correlation between High North Policy and political action and results.

In the interview, Schjøtt-Pedersen shares a story from the time he became the State secretary at the Prime Minister's office and he was given the task to encourage the bureaucrats in the different ministries to contribute with policy suggestions. This had proven to be a difficult task for Jonas Gahr Støre, Minister for Foreign Affairs at that time, who had tried to collect ideas for the Strategy that came out in 2006. He explain that he established a work meeting with all representatives, and there was very few suggestions. *“I said to them, that we shall meet here again in a few weeks, and those who do not have proposals by then, they will not be allowed to take part further in the discussions about which measures are to be implemented. I can tell you there were suggestions the next time!”*, Schjøtt-Pedersen states. This shows that population development is a problem that existed, became worse and that created a need for solutions.

Maybe the High North policy measures are simply not strong enough. A recent evaluation of “the Action Zone”, made on the request from the Ministry of Municipalities and modernisation and published in 2022, shows that the effects of the economic incentives have been weak. The analysis point to two reasons in particular: A lack of index-regulations has failed to adjust the economic benefits over time which makes them less worth valuable. Also, the measures gets less attention and thus seems less important and motivating. In fact, the population in the area covered by the Zone has been reduced by 1200 since the establishment in 1990 (Andreassen & Aarsæther, 2022).

This year, new measures have been introduced. The reduction in student loans has been increased from 10% to 20% and as of the 1st of August 2023 the municipalities involved in the Action Zone offer free kindergarten (Troms og Finnmark fylkeskommune, 2022). These initiatives are very much in line with the suggested measures from what the young people in the south responded in 2020 in the survey developed by amongst other, the High North Center. Free kindergarten was the top suggestion, and an elimination of a 100% of the student with the condition that the person stays in Northern Norway for five years, comes in at third place (High North Center, 2021). Although the incentive regarding student loan introduced is not as generous as the one suggested in the survey, this is a signal of action. However, this point to like High north policy is not the motor in the relationship between decision and action. AS was pointed also pointed out above, there seems to be a need for a severe situation detected before policy is made and implemented.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The population challenge in Northern Norway is enormous. Even though the population statistics from the last 20 years show a positive development, the results become a lot more worrying when put into a larger context. Compared to national levels and the population development is in overall decline since the 1970s. Also, future prognoses point to a stabilisation towards 2050, where the slight growth in Troms og Finnmark compensates for the reduction of the population in Nordland. To be able to exploit the potential value creation and ensure the security situation, it is not enough to keep a stable population. As Schjøtt-Pedersen stressed, Northern Norway is now at in state where it is not able to reproduce on its own and is absolutely dependent on immigration to obtain sustainable societies in the future.

Having studied the three white papers on High North policy, it is clear that there a strong political will to counter the population deficit. Population development and related areas become increasingly important with each document. They also indicate an improvement in regards to sustainability as gradually more initiatives and measures that fit with the indicators of SDG goal 11.a can be identified in the white papers. They also give the impression of a more diversified governance structure as more actors are mentioned, which could indicate more activity related to population development.

Briefly summing up the statistical readings and the content of the white papers, it makes it very clear that High North policy does not correspond very well with population development in general if the goal has been population growth.

The lack of correspondence shows a great disproportion between the importance accorded to “the most important strategic area in Norway”, and the results attained. One reason to this, could be that the High North Policy has been a area of policy with very little tension and political disagreements. The empirical findings point to a broad political consensus in regards to High North policy in general, also when it comes to national and local issues such as population development. If we assume that disagreements create political engagement and action, the fact that there has been a broad consensus to High North policy might explain why the results are so disappointing. It might be that the lack of political competition and friction within this policy area, has resulted in weaker measures not living up to the task.

This in turn would also reflect why it seems like individual initiative is so important for High North policy to become prioritised, as was described in both interviews. The major impact individual efforts have had in High North Policy making in Norway, could be a symptom of a generally low political activity related to the area in general. Being so dependent on individual initiative, is also highly disproportionate compared to the importance dedicated to the area, being most important strategic area in Norway for 20 years.

If decisions do not affect action which again creates result, but we do have a lot of decision, this could suggest that the situation is reversed. This would mean that the increase in attention devoted to population development, is as a result of an increased awareness of the population issue. The logic behind this observation would be, the more exposed we become to the population issue, the more attention it gets. In this sense, instead of policy leading to population development, it is the population development that leads to the making of High North policy. Again this takes the discussion back to the prestige dedicated to High North policy. One would think that when an area is regarded as so important, this ideology-based perception would be sufficient to be the source of policy. The findings in this thesis would suggest that this is not the case, as it seems like it is the population development that influence High North policy, not the other way around.

This being said, it is a good thing that severe issues are addressed independent on the direction along the decision-action dimension. It will be interesting to see if there is a new phase of High North policy on the way, as indicated in the discussions above, and if the addition of local politics can spike some political debate which create better results.

The analysis also point to a strong presence of the public sector, which is not a surprise as this is a study about national politics. What is interesting, on the other hand, is that the important role of the public sector will, in theory, create distance to “governance” or “samstyring” and bring High North policy structure closer to the more traditional “government”. This might be explained by the traditions of corporatism in Norway which would legitimate a more hierarchical role of the State. In hindsight, this might not be a negative thing. It will be important to maintain high involvement from the State to achieve results. This is, as Schjøtt-Pedersen explain, due to the large scale of the issue needing larger resources.

A further observation on this point, is that the less governance, does contradict my analysis of a larger diversification. This can be explained by two different levels of analysis. The central role of the state is governance on mainly national level, and the increased plurality of actors reflects on a local level. Studying the effects of governance of High North policy on different levels in society, would be interesting as a topic for more in-depth research which takes me to the final paragraph.

This final conclusion leaves a lot of questions open. What are the actual effects of the measured implemented? How does the State involve local actors in the action, and is it sufficient? How can State measures become more effective? Therefore, it is clear we need more research on the field. There needs to be a better understanding of what is being done to be able to make better conclusions to the actual effect the measures and initiatives have. We need to create more knowledge about the activity on all levels of High North policy making: local, national and even international to see if there are valuable experience that can be drawn from other countries.

References

- Andreassen R. N. & Aarsæther, A., (December 5, 2022). Lukrative lokkemidler har ikke vært nok i nord: – Alvorlig utvikling. *NRK*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/fordelene-i-tiltakssonen-for-nord-troms-og-finnmark-har-hatt-begrenset-effekt--viser-analyse-1.16208336>
- Barents Watch (October 1, 2015). *What is the Arctic?* Retrieved from: <https://www.barentswatch.no/en/articles/Hva-er-Arktis/>
- Berkeley (n.d) *Mark Bevir*. Retrieved on May 13, 2023, from: <https://polisci.berkeley.edu/people/person/mark-bevir>
- Bevir, M. (2010). Governance as Theory, Practice, and Dilemma. In M. Bevir (Ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of Governance* (pp. 1-16). SAGE Publications
- Bevir, M., (2012). *Governance: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199606412.001.0001>
- Britannica (April 19, 2023). *Arctic Circle*. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Arctic-Circle>
- Brunsson, N., (2007). The consequences of Decision-Making. *Oxford University press*, pp. 111-134. Retrieved from: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nord/reader.action?pq-origsite=primo&ppg=120&docID=415847>
- Business Index North (n.d.) *Arctic Demographic Index*. Retrieved on May 17, 2023, from: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYTdhZDY5OTItMWE3NC00YWVlLWFjMzUtYzdiZjBkNjA2ZWVlIiwidCI6IjhhNjZkOTA2LWQ3NzEtNDA4MS1iM2NmLWI4Y2E2ZTE4YTUyMyIsImMiOiJ9&pageName=ReportSection9ef06a9fe40c7814954e>
- Clemet, K., (July 31, 2022). Vi er på vei inn i alderdommens tidsalder. *Aftenposten*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kommentar/i/V9Ww2l/vi-er-paa-vei-inn-i-alderdommens-tidsalder>
- Dale, H. (Juni 15, 2020). Polarsirkel. *Store Norske Leksikon*. Retrieved from: <https://snl.no/polarsirkel>
- Easterby-Smith, M., Jaspersen, L. J., Thorpe R., Valizade, D., (2021). *Management and Business Research*. UK: SAGE Publishing.
- Fors, B. S., (2012). Bokmelding: Nordområdene – Hva nå? *Nordisk Østforum*, 25(4). 402-405. Retrieved from: <https://www.idunn.no/doi/full/10.18261/ISSN1891-1773-2011-04-11>
- Gjørsv, H. G. (2020). Sikkerhet i nord er Norges sikkerhet. *Utsyn*. Retrieved from: <https://www.prosjektutsyn.no/sikkerhet-i-nord-er-norges-sikkerhet/>
- Grønmo, S., (2020, 05.10). *innholdsanalyse*. Retrieved from: <https://snl.no/innholdsanalyse>

High North Center (2021, 17.02), *Hva mener unge voksne i sør om Nord?* Retrieved from: <https://www.nho.no/siteassets/nho-regioner-filer/nho-nordland/rapport-om-sporreundersokelsen-sor-om-nord.pdf>

High North Dialogue (n.d.). *About High North Dialogue*. Retrieved on April 1, 2023, from: <https://www.highnorthdialogue.no/about/>

Kunnskapsbanken (November 11, 2019). *Nordnorsk demografi: er vi forberedt på hva som venter oss?* Retrieved from: <https://www.kbnn.no/artikkel/nordnorsk-demografi-er-vi-forberedt-pa-hva-som-venter-oss>

Kunnskapsparken (November 8, 2022). *Innvandrere opprettholder befolkningen*. Retrieved from: <https://www.kbnn.no/artikkel/innvandrere-oppretholder-befolkningen>

Leknes, S., (2020, 18.08). *Voksende byer og aldrende bygder*. SSB. Retrieved from: <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/voksende-byer-og-aldrende-bygder>

Lysvold, S., S. (May 11, 2023). *Dronning Sonja kommer til åpningen av Bodø2024*. NRK Retrieved from: <https://www.nrk.no/nordland/dronning-sonja-kommer-til-apningen-av-bodo2024-1.16406282>

Meld. St. 9. (2020-2021). *Mennesker, muligheter og norske interesser i Nord*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/268c112ec4ad4b1eb6e486b0280ff8a0/no/pdfs/stm202020210009000dddpdfs.pdf>

Meld. St. 30. (2004-2005). *Muligheter og utfordringer i nord*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/30b734023f6649ee94a10b69d0586afa/no/pdfs/stm200420050030000dddpdfs.pdf>

Meld. St. 7. (2011-2012). *Visjon og virkemidler*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/a0140460a8d04e4ba9c4af449b5fa06d/no/pdfs/stm201120120007000dddpdfs.pdf>

Merriam-Webster (March 4, 2023, a) *Arctic*. Retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/arctic>

Merriam-Webster (April 10, 2023, b). *Demography*. Retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/demography>

National Geographic (n.d.) *Arctic*. Retrieved on March 3, 2023, from: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/arctic/>

NAV (2022). NAVs Bedriftsundersøking 2022. *Stor mangel på arbeidskraft*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nav.no/no/nav-og-samfunn/kunnskap/analyser-fra-nav/arbeid-og-velferd/arbeid-og-velferd/bedriftsundersokelsen>

NTB (February 27, 2020). Folketallet faller i Nord-Norge – øker kraftig på Østlandet. *Nettavisen*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nettavisen.no/nyheter/innenriks/folketallet-faller-i-nord-norge-okerkraftig-pa-ostlandet/s/12-95-3423929443>

Pedersen, T. (2018). Når nordområdene lever sitt eget liv. *Internasjonal Politikk*, 3(78), 140-158. <https://doi.org/10.23865/intpol.v76.1122>

Pederen, T. & Skagestad, O. G., (December 29, 2019). To upopulære grep kan redde nordområdepolitikken. *Aftenposten*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikk/i/vQprdX/to-upopulaere-grep-kan-redde-nordomraadepolitikken-pedersen-og-skagestad>

Pettegrew, L. S. (1991) .Reviewed Work(s): The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions, and Action in Organizations by Nils Brunsson and Nancy Adler. *The Academy of Management Review* 2(16), 483-486. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258876>

Price, C. (March 1, 2023), The Polar Regions. *World Atlas*. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldatlas.com/geography/the-polar-regions.html>

Rafferty, J.P. (March 17, 2009). polar region. *Britannica*. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/science/polar-region>

Regjeringen (March 3, 2023). *War against Ukraine affects relations with Russia*. Retrieved from: https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/relations_with_russia/id2903146/

Regjeringen (May 5, 2023). *Norges lederskap i Arktisk råd 2023-2025*. Retrieved from: https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/nordomradene/arktisk-rad/norges-lederskap-i-arktisk-rad-2023-2025/id2976511/?utm_source=regjeringen.no&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=nyhetsvasselVeke%2020

Regjeringen (2022). *Hurdalsplattformen. For en regjering utgått fra Arbeiderpartiet og Senterpartiet, 2021-2025*. Retrieved from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/hurdalsplattformen/id2877252/>

Regjeringen (2005). *Plattform for regjeringssamarbeidet mellom Arbeiderpartiet, Sosialistisk Venstreparti og Senterpartiet 2005-09*. Retrieved from: https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/smk/vedlegg/2005/regjeringsplattform_soriamoria.pdf

Regjeringen (n.d.b). *The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy*. Retrieved on April 1, 2023, from: https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/arctic_policy/id2830120/

Regjeringen (n.d.c). *Kjell Magne Bondevik' Second Government*. Retrieved on April 10, 2023, from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/the-government/previous-governments/regjeringer-siden-1814/historiske-regjeringer/governments-since-1945/kjell-magne-bondeviks-second-government-/id438739/>

Regjeringen (n.d.d.). *White Papers*. Retrieved May 19, 2023, from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/find-document/white-papers-/id1754/>

Renå, Anne S. (2022, 11. August). Hele verden mangler arbeidsfolk. Her er tre viktige grunner. *Frifagbevegelse.no*. Hentet fra: <https://frifagbevegelse.no/loaktuelt/hele-verden-mangler-arbeidsfolk-her-er-tre-viktige-grunner-6.158.893554.ecc88a9425>

Rolland, T. (November 8, 2019). Hva skjedde med Nord-Norge? *Forskning.no*. Retrieved from: <https://forskning.no/demografi-partner-politikk/hva-skjedde-med-nord-norge/1587546>

Rowe, E. W., (2018). *Arctic governance : power in cross-border cooperation*. Manchester University Press.

Røiseland, A. & Vabo, S. I. (2008). Governance på norsk. Samstyring som empirisk og analytisk fenomen. *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift* 24(1-2), 86-107. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1504-2936-2008-01-02-05>

Skagestad, O. G., (2020) Nordområdebegrepet og nordområdesatsingen. *Norsk statsvitenskapelig tidsskrift*, 2020, (36), 22-33. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1504-2936-2020-01-02>

SSB (2022, a). *Regionale befolkningsframskrivinger*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/befolkningsframskrivinger/statistikk/regionale-befolkningsframskrivinger>

SSB (n.d.a) *Tabell 3.2 Hjemmehørende folkemengde, etter fylke*. Retrieved on April 27, 2023 from: <https://www.ssb.no/a/histstat/tabeller/3-2.html>

SSB (n.d.b) *Befolkning*. Retrieved on May 2, 2023, from: <https://www.ssb.no/statbank/table/06913>

Stockholm Centre for Organizational Research (n.d.). *Nils Brunsson*. Retrieved May 13, 2023, from: <https://www.score.su.se/english/staff/staff-a-%C3%B6/nils-brunsson-1.54324>

Stor norsk ordbok (n.d.). *Styring*. Retrieved on March 3rd, from: <https://www.ordnett.no/search?language=en&phrase=styring>

Sparebank 1, (2020, 07.09) *De representerer framtiden, men hva vet vi egentlig om unge i nord?* Retrieved from: <https://www.sparebank1.no/nb/nord-norge/om-oss/nyheter/de-representerer-framtiden--men-hva-vet-vi-egentlig-om-unge-i-no.html>

Stoa, V. W. & Venberget, H. (16.juli, 2021) Nordområdene: muligheter og utfordringer. *Folkogforsvar.no*. <https://folkogforsvar.no/nordomradene-muligheter-og-utfordringer/>

Støre, J., G. (April 19, 2023). Opening remarks by the Prime Minister at The High North Dialogue conference in Bodø. *Regjeringen.no*. Retrieved from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/the-high-north-dialogue-conference-at-the-high-north-centre/id2975403/>

Takvam, M. (January 22, 2023), Høyre. *Store Norske Leksikon*. Retrieved from: <https://snl.no/H%C3%B8yre>

Thorsnæs, G. (2023). Nord-Norge. *Store Norske Leksikon*. Retrieved from: <https://snl.no/Nord-Norge>

Tonhaugen, M., (2017, 06.09). De unge flytter fra Nord-Norge – redaktør mener løsningen er større byer i nord. *NRK*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nrk.no/nordland/de-unge-flytter-fra-nord-norge--redaktor-mener-losningen-er-storre-byer-i-nord-1.13675349>

Troms og Finnmark fylkeskommune (September 30, 2022). *Tiltakssonen i Finnmark og Nord-Troms*. Retrieved from: <https://www.tffk.no/om-oss/tiltakssonen/>

Tønnessen, M. (2023, February 26). Befolkning. *Store Norske Leksikon*. Retrieved from: <https://snl.no/befolkning#-Befolkningsutvikling>

United Nations (December 20, 2021). *SDG indicator metadata*. Retrieved from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-11-0a-01.pdf#:~:text=Increase%20local%20fiscal%20space%3A%20Local%20fiscal%20space%20is,to%20the%20sustainability%20of%20a%20government%E2%80%99s%20financial%20position.>

United Nations (n.d.a) *Population*. Retrieved on May 8, 2023, from: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/population#:~:text=Population%201%20Our%20growing%20population%20The%20world%E2%80%99s%20population,role%20in%20population%20issues%20...%205%20Resources%20>

United Nations (n.d.b) *Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*. Retrieved on March 29, 2023, from: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

Utenriksdepartementet (2020), *En nordområdepolitikk for ungdom*, Retrieved from: https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/vedlegg/nord/nord_ungdom.pdf

World Health Organization (October 1st, 2022). *Ageing and health*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>