



School of Business,  
Economics and Law  
GÖTEBORG UNIVERSITY

## **Project work at Tokai University in Sapporo/Spring 2008**

### **"Roles of regional core cities in Hokkaido and Sweden"**

#### **Background**

In order to give you the possibility to get a deeper understanding of the Japanese society, a project work is conducted during your visit to Hokkaido Tokai University. During the project, the aim is to give you experience of how fieldwork is conducted in Japan and prepare you for later larger projects within your education. Your "senpai" have been working on the following themes of the knowledge-based industry and society in Sapporo during the last 5 years.

*2003* Hokkaido in the age of the knowledge economy

- can business service be the area for the future?-

*2004* Comparison of industrial structure in Hokkaido and West Sweden

– with special emphasis on knowledge factors

*2005* Tourism industry – a case study of the knowledge industry in Hokkaido

*2006* Geography of creativity - 3T Talent, Technology and Tolerance

*2007* Education to promote creativity in the elementary and secondary education

#### **Why regional core cities?**

The theme of your project work in Sapporo this year is "roles of regional core cities" in Hokkaido and Sweden.

On Hokkaido it is only the Sapporo area where population is not decreasing. All the other regions and regional core cities like Asahikawa, Hakodate, Obihiro, Kitami and Kushiro have problems of decreasing population, industrial production, social infrastructure etc.

*Handelshögskolan vid Göteborgs universitet  
Civilekonomprogrammet  
Projektarbete i Japan  
2008-02-20  
Patrik Ström/Kazuhiko Kawasaki*



The city of Yubari went bankrupt with huge debt and is now under supervision of the state. There are increasing numbers of “marginal villages” where more than half of the inhabitants are over 65 years old and are likely to disappear soon. Hokkaido Government has also serious financial problems and has been cutting down the salaries of the civil servants by 10% annually recently. Yubari is not alone and there is a serious concern that more municipalities may face the same situation.

“Hokkaido Long-term Comprehensive Plan Fourth term: 2008 – 2017” was disclosed last December and put high expectations on regional core cities. The same applies to the Noastec Foundation which is carrying out projects to create industrial clusters on Hokkaido.

Some problems areas currently discussed here in Hokkaido are as follows.

1) vitalizing regions

- R&D, cluster networks, collaborations between industry and universities
- infrastructure as medical care and care for the elderly, culture, schools and library etc.

2) sustainable regions

- sustainable financial structures
- how to cope with decreasing population by keeping young people in the regions
- roles of regional core cities, collaborations in the regions with several municipalities
- promoting active participation by citizens, NPO and companies

3) systems and frameworks

- decentralization to municipalities and regions
- comparisons with similar problems in Sweden



School of Business,  
Economics and Law  
GÖTEBORG UNIVERSITY

## Your task and examination

Your task is to analyze the roles of regional core cities in the era of knowledge-based society. What can be done to create and sustain a positive regional economic development? Comparisons with Sweden and Scandinavia are highly recommended. There are similarities with the debate in Sweden of how to balance larger city-regions and the importance of more peripheral centers of economic activity. You will produce one paper together and make a final presentation of the project work at the Northern Regions Center in Sapporo.

### Methods:

Besides secondary information sources you will have possibilities to visit several regions to study and to meet researchers and specialists there.

### Time tables:

Upon your arrivals in Sapporo you will begin research in parallel with the study of Japanese. During the last three weeks in June you will work only with the project work. Discussions on division of responsibility in the group are recommended as soon as possible. June 24th: Your presentation of the findings in collaboration with the Northern Regions Center. You will have assistance from Professor Kawasaki on location in Sapporo and distant tutoring from Dr. Patrik Ström. Dr. Ström will also come to Japan in the end of June to be present at the final presentation.

### References:

Hokkaido Government

<http://www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/foreign/english.htm>



School of Business,  
Economics and Law  
GÖTEBORG UNIVERSITY

Hokkaido Long-term Comprehensive Plan Third term : 1998 - 2007

[http://www.pref.hokkaido.jp/skikaku/sk-shyok/HP/keikaku/gaiyo/index\\_e.html](http://www.pref.hokkaido.jp/skikaku/sk-shyok/HP/keikaku/gaiyo/index_e.html)

Hokkaido Toyako G8 Summit Preparation Council

<http://www.do-summit.jp/en/> ,

<http://www.do-summit.jp/en/hokkaido/databook.php>

Business Investment Hokkaido

<http://www.pref.hokkaido.jp/keizai/kz-krkyt/eng/index.html>

Noastec Cluster Project <http://www.noastec.jp/project1.html>

JETRO Japan External Trade Organization <http://www.jetro.go.jp/>

**Your contacts:**

Professor

Dr. Patrik Ström

Kazuhiko Kawasaki

Kulturgeografiska institutionen

Tokai University

Handelshögskolan

Minamisawa 5-1-1

Fax. +46 31 786 13 98

Minami-ku, Sapporo

Phone. +46 31 786 14 04

005-8601 JAPAN

E-mail. [patrik.strom@geography.gu.se](mailto:patrik.strom@geography.gu.se)

E-mail: [kawasaki@dn.htokai.ac.jp](mailto:kawasaki@dn.htokai.ac.jp)

Fax. +81 11 571 7879

Phone. +81 11 571 5112 - 416

Mobile. (090) 6444-0474

*Handelshögskolan vid Göteborgs universitet  
Civilekonomprogrammet  
Projektarbete i Japan  
2008-02-20  
Patrik Ström/Kazuhiko Kawasaki*