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The Norwegian Coastal Express
(Hurtigruten/Pikareitti)
An alternative for the Gulf of Bothnia?

of

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Preface

As part of the Interreg IIIA project *Bothnian ArcAction*, the Centre for Regional and Tourism Research has carried out a case study of the so called Norwegian Coastal Express (*Hurtigruten*), considered to be a source of inspiration for developing cruise tourism in the Gulf of Bothnia.

The report suggests that the concept of a comprehensive tourism product like *Hurtigruten* certainly can be seen as an inspiration. By offering a wide range of activities and products, this type of cruise tourism attracts a large number of passengers, and at the same time secure regular ferry traffic in a remote region with great distances.

The analysis points to a number of possibilities for developing co-operation around developing a cruise route in the Gulf of Bothnia, and thereby positively influence the economic development in the Bothnian Arc.

Peter Billing
December 2005

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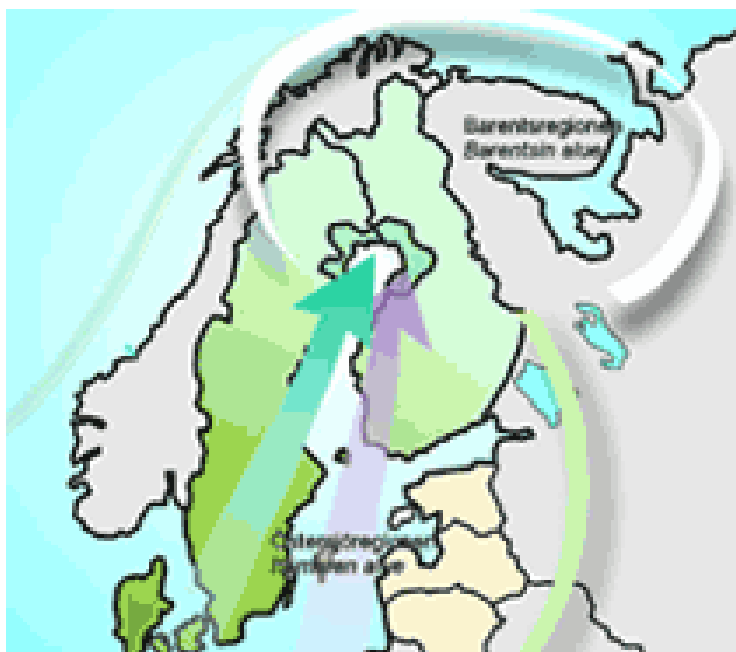
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1 Introduction

This report is one of several outcomes of an EU-financed project called Bothnian ArcAction.

During a previous Bothnian Arc project (1998-2002), a co-operative venture was established in the North Calotte and Barents region. The focus in that project was on infrastructure development. Plans for the improvement of different trails along the Swedish and Finnish coast of the Gulf of Bothnia were discussed. The main interest was in a sailing route from the Baltic Sea to Haparanda/Tornio. Some sort of passenger transportation by sea along the coastline was also discussed.¹ The present Bothnian Arc Project has the Northern Dimension in focus, such as it is expressed in EU by the Finnish government: the extension of the union to the north. The project is encouraging co-operation between the Swedish-Finnish coastal zone and Northern Norway. In this context, *Hurtigruten* (or *Pikareitti* in Finnish), the Norwegian Coastal Express, has been looked upon as a source of inspiration. This report is a study of how *Hurtigruten* operates and what can be learned from it for the benefit of the Bothnian ArcAction project. The author sailed the route between January 16 and 22, 2005. Interviews were made during the trip with passengers, staff and authorities at the destinations where the ship stopped. Findings from a student thesis on the impact of *Hurtigruten* on the destination of Trondheim have also been included (the student was supervised by the author at the Mid-Sweden University of Östersund).

Figure 1. The Northern Dimension²



1 Turismutveckling - utvecklingsinsatser för turismen runt Bottenviksbågen, p. 6.

2 www.bothnianarc.net

2 Background

2.1 Historical background

Hurtigruten – the daily Norwegian Coastal Express between Bergen and Kirkenes - has over a 100-year-old history. In 1891, August Kriegsman Gran, a Norwegian national steamship advisor, came up with the idea of providing an express boat service between Trondheim and Hammerfest. Two companies were offered the route but they turned down the opportunity as they considered sailing during the dark and stormy winters impossible. At that time only two marine charts existed and there were only 28 lighthouses north of Trondheim. *Vesteraalens Dampskibsselskab* (VDS) - later *Ofotens og Vesteraalens Dampskibsselskab* (OFDS) - a relatively young steamship company based in Stokmarknes on Lofoten, eventually took up the challenge. On May 18 1893, the government signed a four-year contract with the company to support a weekly sailing between Trondheim and Hammerfest during summer, and between Trondheim and Tromsø during winter.

First, they sailed at night only during the summer, when it stays light. During the winter, the boats stayed at berth at night. However Captain Richard Witt found it possible to sail at night even during the winter. He kept accurate notes on courses, speeds and times and felt that the service would be viable.

This modest beginning heralded a new era for the remote coastal communities, providing industry and inhabitants with a ready means of transport between the cities, and ultimately to the outside world. Letters, for example, had previously taken up to three weeks to reach Hammerfest from Trondheim during summer, and up to five months during winter, and could now be delivered by *Hurtigruten* in just a few days.

The first vessels carried mostly post and passengers. Cargo eventually became the most important mission for the ships. The route was extended southward to Bergen in 1898 and northward to Vadsø in 1907, and to Kirkenes in 1914. For a short period there were weekly sailings from Stavanger, but from 1936 to the present day a *Hurtigruten* ship has headed north from Bergen daily.

The route from Bergen to Kirkenes is now used by 11 ships. There are two companies sailing the route: OFDS in Narvik and *Troms Fylkes Dampskibsselskab* (TFDS) in Tromsø. There are three generations of ships: new, middle generation and traditional (older). These have been specially equipped with refrigerated compartments, roll on/roll off facilities for loading cargo on pallets, and vehicle holds. In addition the new generation of vessels features extensive single-class public facilities, conference rooms and quality cabins.³ Although the main purpose of the service was to link west-coast communities to each other, attracting tourism to the route was considered a necessary source of additional revenue even in the very earliest days. Brochures in several languages promoted the route, the first in English being printed in 1894.

Today, the 11 ships form *a string of pearls* along the Norwegian coast. Passengers may choose how far they travel and how they spend their time on board. The whole round-trip (Bergen-Kirkenes-Bergen) takes 11 days with 35 stops. There is full catering service and it is possible to bring the car.

3 According to Captain Edgar Solstad, m/s *Nordkapp*, the introduction of stabilisers has been perhaps the most important improvement of the standard of the ships.

Figure 2. Map of calls made by *Hurtigruten*



Source: www.hurtigruten.com

Hurtigruten played an important role in the commercial life of Northern Norway for a long time. Its importance has, however, decreased as other transport means have been developed and constructed. But it is still a popular tourist attraction and transport of local residents and local goods is still highly rated at many destinations along the coast.

Today *Hurtigruten* can not bear its own costs and the Norwegian parliament (Stortinget) subsidised the route with 180 million NOK annually from 1991 to 2001. That means that each passenger is subsidised to the tune of 430-440 NOK compared with 350-650 NOK for alternative transport facilities.⁴ This has been extended in various forms up to 2012.⁵

4 Stortingsmelding 39, 1989-1990.

5 Stortingsmelding 16, 2003-2004, NRK 21.12.2004.

2.2 Facts about *Hurtigruten*

According to Statistisk Sentralbyrå, *Hurtigruten* serves about 500,000 people annually (2001)⁶. In a travel survey among Norwegian passengers on *Hurtigruten*, 75 % of them were visiting a specific place and 10 % were business tourists. The rest, 15 %, were cruise-tourists.⁷ Cruise tourists preferred the southern part of the route, while for the most northern part of the route – Tromsø to Kirkenes - the boats are regarded as an essential transport facility. Especially during the winter, when a lot of the mainland roads are blocked, the route is almost the only alternative.

The survey concludes that, as transport infrastructure, *Hurtigruten* functions as the only comprehensive means of transport for the coastal route from Bergen to Kirkenes. Passengers wanting to travel from A to B with no other purpose dominate the winter season. The survey also concludes that for the main ports, alternative transport facilities are abundant. Most of the intermediate cities have airports but flights from them normally go to the main cities or Oslo. Flights between intermediate cities are not frequent.⁸

Hence the route is not a homogeneous route in a traditional way where cargo, passenger transport and cruise tours are separated on different ships. It offers comprehensive facilities for all these needs. The service is furthermore practical and an experience. In an analysis made by Econ 2004, its homogeneity is, however, considered as the main feature of *Hurtigruten*. The homogeneity concept in the report is, however, more a kind of comprehensiveness. The report states that *Hurtigruten's* homogeneity is underpinned by the following characteristics of:

- It is a unique historical tour following the same route as 100 years ago;
- It is an important transport facility, especially in the north;
- It offers experiences;
- It is a transport facility for a wide range of passenger types;
- All these together provide a service which an ordinary cruise can not encompass;
- It is important as a cargo transporter;
- There are synergetic effects between passenger and cargo transport functions;
- It has a spill-over effect for tourist attractions on land;
- The sailing companies have extraordinary spill-over effects on commercial life in Narvik and Tromsø, where their headquarters are based.

When *Hurtigruten* was discussed in the Stortinget in 1990, the opinion was that, after 2001, it should not be necessary to continue with subsidies. However, the situation made it necessary to discuss a continuation of the route since it could still not bear its costs.

In discussions with EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA), reference was made to a report by Arthur Andersen, which shows that there has been no over-compensation by the state. The report also showed that new ships (built after 1990) were almost breaking even after a couple of years, while the old ones had a stable deficit. The new ships had better capacity to earn money in summer than the older ones.⁹

The lifespan of the ships is a problem, Solstad admits. The ships built in 1982 (m/s *Narvik* and m/s *Vesterålen*) have no stabilizers and are therefore quite awkward to sail with in stormy weather. The ships built in the 1990s will probably be able to meet the standard demands for another 15 years, he thinks. Development is, however, quite rapid and it is difficult to foresee future demands.¹⁰

6 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Norway, *Hurtigruten* table 3, no. of passengers per port.

7 TØI report 609/2002, pp. 15-18.

8 TØI report 609/2002, pp. 12-14.

9 Letter from ESA to Stortinget, 20.12.2001.

10 Interview with Captain Edgar Solstad, on board m/s *Nordkapp*, 20.01.2005.

The deficit is linked primarily to the winter season and the distance between Tromsø and Kirkenes. According to statistics from the first quarter of 2002, there were just 100 to 150 passengers between Bergen and Tromsø. To Hammerfest there were 80-90 passengers and to Kirkenes only about 60.¹¹

In the discussion about whether *Hurtigruten* should continue or not, the value of the route to Norwegian society was central. A consultancy report made an estimate of the two alternatives.¹² Preservation of the current status of *Hurtigruten* is the reference point for the report and a cancellation of the route is the alternative. In order to understand the impact of the alternative, the report states what the reference point means. The value of *Hurtigruten* today is measured in three dimensions: as a transport infrastructure, as a driving force for tourism and as a driving force for regional development (p. 5).

2.3 Economy

The development of the communication situation in Norway from the 1960s onward has not been favourable for *Hurtigruten*. Airborn transportation of passengers and goods, extended road networks to even peripheral areas and better standard of living for the inhabitants, so they can afford to buy a car of their own, have undermined the basis for the route. An ageing fleet with a bad reputation for low standards exacerbated the situation to a degree almost of hopelessness.

A 1990 government committee proposal to the Stortinget suggested a more market-oriented solution with a split of the route to minor areas, with more chance for them to bear their own costs. The politicians were not in favour, however.¹³ They decided that the route should survive through a support package. The support should, however, subsidise passenger transport, not cargo or tourism. The committee's report showed that in 1988 passengers paid 153 million NOK to *Hurtigruten*. Cruise passengers paid 60 % of these millions. In return, *Hurtigruten* paid:

- 29 million NOK in port taxes;
- 62 million to agents;
- 9 million NOK to stevedores.

2.3.1 The 2001 agreement

In 2001 an agreement was made between the two companies sailing *Hurtigruten* - OFDS and TFDS - and the Ministry of Transport on terms for its continued activity. The agreement concerned the purchase of capacity of the route for the period January 1 2002 to December 31 2004.

The Stortinget decided to give the companies 170 million NOK for the period from 1991 to 2001. This made it possible for them to buy new ships and maintain the old ones. With the new ship *Midnatsol*, delivered in 2003, the fleet consists of nine modern ships, built after 1993, and two modernised ships from the 1980s.¹⁴

The sailing companies are guaranteed a concession by the state for the coastal route Bergen-Kirkenes until 2010. The motive for the Stortinget was a belief that a totally free and market-oriented situation would change the structure of the transport facility negatively for the communities along the coast. There would probably be fewer calls and a more focused cruise activity. That would in turn mean fewer night stops, longer day stops and more detours for tourists.

The ESA decided not to protest against the agreement. They regarded the route as a comprehensive transport facility for a peripheral area for which it was a matter of survival. Not to accept the agreement would have jeopardised the route.¹⁵ During the subsidising period, an analysis of the agreement was to be done as the

11 TØI report 609/2002, p. 53.

12 Econ Notat 2004-028.

13 Stortingsmelding 39, 1989-1990.

14 Innst.S. 125, 2003-2004.

15 Letter from ESA to Stortinget 20.12.2001, refererat i Stortingsmelding 16 (2003-2004) Om transportstandarden og kjøp av transporttjenester på kyststrekningen fra Bergen til Kirkenes, chapter 2 Nærmere om bakgrunn og grunnlag for eventuelt tjenestekjøp etter 2004, 2.1 Sentrale forpliktelser i EØS-avtalen m.h.t. offentlige tjenestekjøp.

basis for new agreements. The general conditions, found in Maritime Cabotage Regulations, accept public purchase of transport service if

- it concerns peripheral areas;
- it is necessary for maintaining the economic development of the area;
- a market oriented service would provide too weak a transport situation.

ESA found that *Hurtigruten* met these qualifications and was especially satisfied with the fact that the summer season subsidises the winter season. The requested analysis was made by the Institute of Transport Economics and included an evaluation of transport supply and demand along the coast from Bergen to Kirkenes, and the impacts on society if *Hurtigruten* should operate on a commercial basis.¹⁶

That evaluation showed that *Hurtigruten* operates on a commercial basis during the period May to September (five months). The deficit for the rest of the year is bigger than the profit gained during the summer season. The summer season subsidises the winter season but the winter deficit is bigger than the government support. The support from the state is NOK 170 million in 1999 value and is index regulated. For 2001 it was NOK 194 million (about euros 22 million in 2004 value).

2.3.2 The 2005 agreement

In December 2004 a new agreement was made between the Ministry of Transport and the two shipping companies. According to that agreement, the Norwegian state will pay NOK 1.9 billion for daily year-round sail-tours for the period 2005 to 2012. The Ministry of Transport announced the tender process on 28.05.2004 and OVDS and TFDS were the only companies to send in a tender for the route. The new agreement presupposes continued operation of comprehensive coastal traffic on the route Bergen-Kirkenes.¹⁷

Transport minister Torild Skogsborg said at a conference in Bodø that ESA had a general consideration in the agreement. ESA said that if there was no transport analysis, showing which routes between Bergen-Kirkenes needed public support, it would be impossible to decide if that principle was valid. ESA accepted the thinking of the department at the end of the day but with the request that a more comprehensive study be undertaken to justify the need for *Hurtigruten* to call at all current ports.¹⁸ The requested analysis was undertaken by Econ.¹⁹

2.4 Transport situation

The number of passengers doubled during the 1990s from 280,000 to 540,000 in 2002. Cabin capacity grew steadily during the years 1992-1997 when the new ships were introduced. Then there was a standstill between 1997 and 2001. With the new ships in 2001 and 2002, the capacity has more than doubled. The sailing companies distinguish between *distance tours* and *round tours*. A round tour is a cruise package tour for a longer trip and includes cabin and meals. All other tours, regardless of motives and destinations are distance tours.

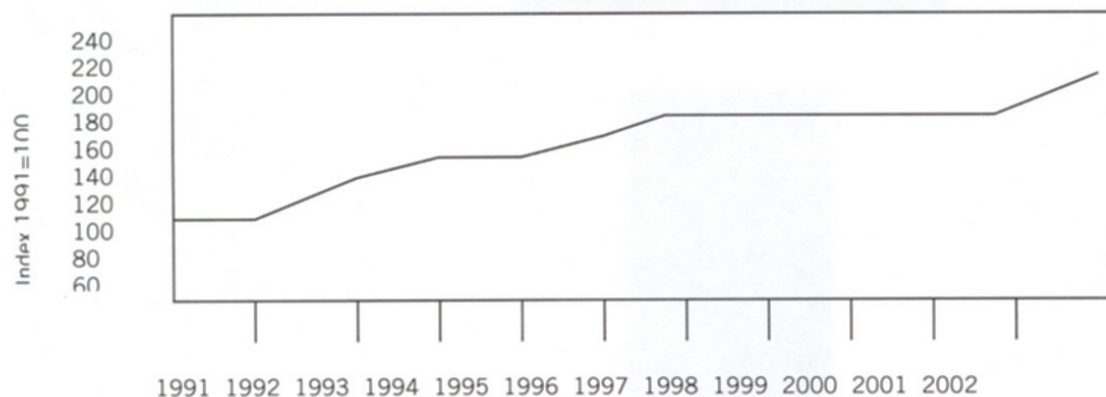
16 TØI report 609/2002 p. 53.

17 Samferdseldepartementet: Pressemelding 102/04 of 15.09.2004.

18 Samferdselsminister Torild Skogsholm. Hurtigrutekonferansen, Storkmarknes, 24.06.2002, Taler og artikler, Samferdselsdepartementet, www.odin.no

19 Econ Notat 2004-028.

Figure 3. Cabin capacity 1991-2002, index 1991



Source: TØI report 609/2002, p. 142.

There are 34 ports of call plus detour in summer to Geiranger for tourist reasons. Considering the four main ports (Bergen, Trondheim, Tromsø and Kirkenes), half of all passengers travelled from an intermediate port, with one of these four ports as end-point. A quarter of the passengers travelled only between intermediate ports and not beyond a main port and 17 % travelled beyond one of the main ports. Only a few (7 %) travelled between the main ports. As many as 39 % had their end destination located between Bodø and Tromsø.²⁰

Table 1. Distance travel with *Hurtigruten* Oct 2001 to Sept 2002 on part distances

To/From	Bergen	Betw	Trondheim	Betw	Bodø	Betw	Tromsø	Betw	Kirkenes	Total
Bergen	0	18	10	1	1	3	2	1	1	37
Between	17	26	10	1	0	1	0	0	0	56
Trondheim	10	6	0	10	1	5	3	1	1	38
Between	1	1	7	19	3	7	1	1	0	40
Bodø	2	0	3	5	0	18	1	0	0	29
Between	3	1	5	4	34	37	16	6	1	107
Tromsø	3	0	2	1	4	24	0	17	1	51
Between	1	0	1	0	1	4	15	31	6	60
Kirkenes	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	13	0	19
Total	37	54	39	42	44	100	40	69	11	436

Source: TØI report 609/2002, p. 14.

These figures, which ESA referred to, come from the TØI-report of 2002. A discussion of what should be considered minimum transport standards for a place is conducted in the report. It is concluded that it is impossible to define such a situation. Instead, some examples of different types of transport standards are presented. Characteristics of transport standards encompass such items as time, money, frequency, discounts, comfort and regularity. The report tries to divide the different ports which *Hurtigruten* stops at into five categories:

1. road connections with the rest of the national road network;
2. some sort of collective transport means, covering basic daily needs; for school, labour and shop access, and contacts with public authorities;
3. transport facilities for cargo, post and shop deliveries;
4. compatible fares with other means of transport.

The report incorporates the ports into different categories with regard to the access to rest of Norway:

1. Places which, because of their own capacity can fulfil a position as regional centres, like Bergen, Trondheim, Bodø, Tromsø but also Ålesund, Molde and Kristiansund.
2. Places with an airport, which can therefore compete with *Hurtigruten*, like Florø, Brønnøysund, Svolvær, Hammerfest, Vardø and Kirkenes among others.

20 TØI report 609/2002, p. 2-14.

3. Places with at most one hour accessibility to the nearest airport, like Harstad and Sortland among others.
4. Places with one to two hours accessibility to the nearest airport, like Måløy, Nesna, Øksfjord and Havøysund, among others.

For the first group, *Hurtigruten* has only minor importance. The logistical situation for the transport of goods and people is by Norwegian standards better only in Oslo. For the second group, the introduction of airports for short distance flights, especially during 1968-1974, reduced the passenger base for *Hurtigruten* by 50 % almost overnight. The third group competed with the second group to try to get short distance flights. Since they did not get them, the impact of the loss of *Hurtigruten* would be noticeable but not decisive for their existence. For the fourth group, *Hurtigruten* is an important part of their access to the rest of Norway but the report concluded that it is impossible to estimate if this is lower than a minimum transport standard or not.²¹

There are 16 sub-routes on the whole *Hurtigruten* route, where it can compete on indicators like time, price and to some extent frequency. Otherwise, these indicators are seldom favourable to *Hurtigruten*. The possibility of reaching one's destination overnight is the best competitive argument and if the trip takes part of the daytime as well, this is often compensated for by the experience.²²

2.5 Marketing

The marketing agent for *Hurtigruten* is *Kystopplevelser AS*, a tour operator in Bergen. The business idea is to operate and sell tours in Coastal and Northern Norway and to help *OVDS* and *TFDS* with the marketing of *Hurtigruten*. The company forms a marketing department, jointly run by the two sailing companies. Its headquarters is located in Bodø and it has divisions in Bergen, Oslo and Alvdal.

In order to attract people outside the main season, *Hurtigruten* has launched various actions like offering different prices e.g. a discount of 30 % for low season cruises. *Hurtigruten* does not, however, admit that they have high and low seasons but different products for different periods of the year. High season offers beautiful mountains and idyllic fjords and low season offers the returning sun, the northern lights and whale watching. During low season, the route also offers thematic cruises like navigation courses or Grieg tours.

Cruise passenger packages do not include excursions during low season unless there is a minimum of participants. For many companies, *Hurtigruten* offers useful shorter trips during October to April on which conferences can be held. The second and third generation ships offer these facilities. Cargo and car freight are relatively stable all year round.

Travel agents for *Hurtigruten* operate in Germany (50 % of the market), the UK and the USA.²³ The brand name *Hurtigruten* is crucial for NSA – Norwegische Schifffahrtsagentur GmbH in Hamburg. They offer tours on subjects such as wale watching, Edvard Grieg and astronomy. Also possible are an excursion to a dogsled farm in Tromsø, a visit to a Saami settlement near Hammerfest or a trip to the biggest tidal current in the world. Extended excursions are arranged to Russia, Lapland or to the Barents Sea with its fascinating King Crab.

The UK-based travel agent, Norwegian Coastal Voyages in London, stresses the possibilities offered by *OVDS* to visit some of the world's most amazing destinations like Norway, Chile and Antarctica, the Galapagos Islands, Greenland, Scotland, Ascension Island and Spitzbergen. The agent calls *Hurtigruten* a *niche specialist*. The USA-based travel agent, located in New York and with the same name as the British agent, offers the same product as its British colleague. However, it also offers a special additional tour to Gota Canal.

Other countries have local travel agents. They serve *Hurtigruten* on a lease basis. In Europe, such agents are found in Denmark (DSB Rejsebureau, Copenhagen), Italy (Giver Viaggi e Crociere in Genova and Arctic Team Seiviaggi in Milano), Spain (Eurovacances SA in Barcelona), Switzerland (Reisebüro Glur in Basel), Holland (Norske Turist SERVICE BV in Heemstede) and Belgium (Bureau Scandinavia in Brussels). *Hurtigruten* also has an agent in Australia, Bentours International in Sydney.

21 TØI Rapport 609/2002, p. 9.

22 TØI Rapport 609/2002, pp. 12-13.

23 www.tfds.no

In Sweden, *Hurtigruten* has no travel agent but leases that service from the travel agent Bengt-Martins in Karlstad. Bengt-Martins specialises in ski travel and bus charters in Norway and Sweden.²⁴ The close connection to Norway, both geographically and by tours offered, made it natural for *Hurtigruten* to cooperate with *Bengt-Martins* says Ann Ljungdal, manager of the company.²⁵ She also says that they have 3,000-4,000 passengers annually travelling with *Hurtigruten*. About 1,000 of these take the whole cruise package and arrange their own travel to Bergen. Another 1,000 make shorter cruise tours and the rest combine bus tours, arranged by *Hurtigruten*, with shorter cruise tours, preferably in Lofoten or Geiranger. There was a decrease in travel from Sweden during the 1990s, probably because of the strength of the Norwegian currency, says Ann Ljungdal. She also stresses the image of high-cost travel that attaches to *Hurtigruten* in Sweden. She notices a slight increase in travel from Sweden today.²⁶

In Finland, *Hurtigruten* is of minor interest and marketing efforts are small.

Kystopplevelser is not only the marketing department for *Hurtigruten*. It also has its own activity. Producing and selling cruises on minor vessels in international waters is also part of its activities. OVDS's *Hurtigruten* ships are an element of its tours. *Kystopplevelser* does not offer mass marketed holidays to sandy beaches in temperate climates. It arranges cruises to Chile and the Antarctic. Spring and autumn cruises with *Hurtigruten* ships have for long been established as a popular tradition.²⁷

The activity is controversial, according to Tor Læg Reid, a representative for TFDS. He says that the Narvik-based sailing company is undermining *Hurtigruten* as a product. Læg Reid points to the fact that OVDS sails outside Norway and thereby reduces service for local passengers. He told the Norwegian Broadcasting Company that this means a hollowing of the *Hurtigruten* product.²⁸ The possibility for OVDS to cooperate with *Kystopplevelser* is based upon the fact that the OVDS and TFDS are not obliged to sail every day in winter.

2.6 Passenger typology

The companies distinguish in their statistics between distance passengers and cruise passengers. Cruise passengers buy a package including cabin and meals. Distance passengers have a destination to reach. Motives for travelling differ greatly. Regarding the length of the tour, one third are just traveling to the next harbour, and another third passes one to three harbours before disembarking.

Table 2. Distance travel with *Hurtigruten* Oct 2001 to Sept 2002 according to number of ports passed

Number of passed ports	Number of tours	Percentage
All tours	436,449	100
0 stops	142,419	33
1-3 stops	145,706	33
4-6 stops	61,896	14
7-10 stops	43,836	10
More than 10 stops	42,592	10

Source: TØI report 609/2002, p. 13.

According to a study from 2002²⁹ half the passengers say that their motive for the trip is holiday or visiting relatives and friends. Just 14 % use the route for business purposes and 10 % are attending conferences.

24 www.bengt-martins.se, 02.02.2005.

25 Telephone interview with Ann Ljungdal, manager of Bengt-Martins, 02.02.2005.

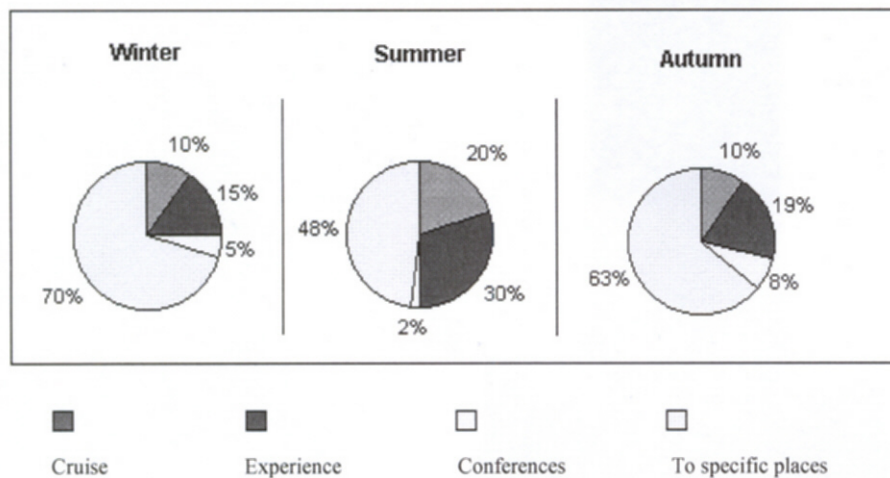
26 Interview with Ragnar Norum, marketing manager, *Hurtigruten*, Trondheim.

27 www.kystoppvelser.no, 17.01.2005.

28 Radio 3 Bodø, 13.11.2003.

29 TØI Rapport 609/2002.

Figure 4. Types of passengers over seasons. Source: Econ Notat 2004-028



Source: Econ Notat 2004-028.

The average age passengers is 45, with the most frequent age 35 and the oldest passenger 95. It is noticeable that the average age for all types of motives is between 45 and 47 years. Only commuters, where students are included, are younger. It is also noticeable that the motive for most women is visiting to relatives and friends. Women are also in the majority for holiday trips and onboard conferences. Since there is a considerable difference with regard to women between business travel and conferences, it probably has something to do with the character of the conferences. Only 20 % of the passengers took *Hurtigruten* because it was more exhausting to use a different mode of travel.

Table 3. Most important motive for travel

Most important motive	%	Women %	Average age
All tours	100	49	45
Holiday	28	54	47
Visiting relatives and friends	25	61	46
Other private motive	13	49	45
Commuting	10	35	34
Business or study	14	28	45
Onboard conference	10	52	44

Source: TØI report 609/2002, p. 17.

2.7 Cargo

Northbound cargo to Tromsø and Finnmark Fylke consists mainly of consumer goods for households and industry. Southbound cargo consists mainly of fish, especially frozen fish. The cold store capacity of *Hurtigruten* is of major importance for the distribution of goods to the north and of frozen fish for outbound deliveries.

Table 4. Goods handled in total and by *Hurtigruten* at ports served by *Hurtigruten*, Finnmark, 2001

Port	Goods handled in total	Goods handled by <i>Hurtigruten</i>	Share of <i>Hurtigruten</i> %
Øksfjord	3,972	3,575	90
Hammerfest	95,000	12,700	13
Havøysund	26,390	10,490	40
Honningsvåg	7,000	2,000	28
Kjøllefjord	7,000	6,500	93
Mehamn	4,187	2,950	71
Berlevåg	4,810	3,694	77
Båtsfjord	38,000	20,176	53
Vardø	22,000	4,218	19
Vadsø	12,000	6,489	54
Kirkenes	61,000	11,396	19
Total	281,359	84,188	30

The biggest port in Finnmark is Hammerfest and for that town *Hurtigruten* has the least importance. Places like Kjøllefjord and Øksfjord are on the edge of the road network and, for them, *Hurtigruten* is crucial to for survival. These places are small and have low port activity. While even the ports of Mehamn and Berlevåg are small, they are less upon *Hurtigruten* since accessibility to the road network is better, if not good.

Fish and minerals are important goods for Finnmark's trade balance both for export and import. Fish imports counts for 48 % of volume and 77 % of value. They come mainly from Russia. Fish exports count for 25 % of volume and 85 % of value. Small harbours in Northern Norway send 90 % of their goods by *Hurtigruten* while big harbours send about 20 % or less. The export of fresh fish is mainly done by road.

If *Hurtigruten* disappears, substantial structural changes to the transport of goods will occur in Northern Norway.

When the government buys transport services from *Hurtigruten*, it contributes to the financing of its transport function and not to cruise activity. At the same time, it is important to state that the transport function is the material base for the cruise service. It provides mutual benefit for both local residents and tourists.³⁰

2.8 Staff

There are about 50 people employed on each ship. In winter there are 37 people employed on m/s *Nordkapp*, according to Captain Edgar Solstad. In summer, the catering department requires another 21 people so the total number employed in summer is 58. They work 22 days in shifts. For the commando-bridge, this means six hours on duty and six hours off but 24-hour availability. Then workers are free for 22 days. Captain Solstad considers this a good arrangement and he says that his family is also in favour of it.³¹

The rest of the staff also seems to be in favour of the system. Living on board for 22 days requires a good standard of living and this is confirmed by assistant purser Berit Meiselbach. She has an outer cabin of 12 square meters and she finds the food, like conditions overall, excellent.³² The excellent food may be due to the fact that the restaurant also serves as a training ground for practitioners from different restaurant schools. Sometimes it can even be a bit embarrassing for the passengers, two girls from the service staff admit. On one

30 Econ Notat 2004-028.

31 Interview with Captain Edgar Solstad, on board m/s *Nordkapp*, 20.01.2005.

32 Interview with assistant purser Berit Meiselbach, m/s *Nordkapp*, 20.01.2005.

tour, they had just one cruise passenger but they had to fulfill their practice program anyway so she had to accept all kinds of ways to cook and serve a meal.³³

Solstad is convinced that cruise passengers are necessary for the survival of *Hurtigruten*. They pay a lot and therefore they also demand good comfort and standards, which is good for the rest of the passengers. He also talks about the comprehensive concept of *Hurtigruten*. What he stresses is the *coastal culture*. This is an expression found in many statements and descriptions of *Hurtigruten*. What it means is the close relation between cruise and distance traffic and the connections to everyday life. These cruise ships also transport fish, raw materials, groceries, sick people, dead bodies and so on.

33 Interview with service staff Tine and Merit, m/s Nordkapp, 20.01.2005.

3 Ports of call

3.1 Bergen, departure 22.30

Hurtigruten's berth is at Frieleneskaaien, close to Puddefjorsbroen, just on the outskirts of central Bergen. It has moved from the centre of Bergen and although still a central location, it is not very easy to find. There is no terminal building and the passengers are supposed to board the ship when it arrives as a southbound ship at 14.30. From March 1 2005 a new terminal opened at Nøstekaien in Bergen, a little bit more in the centre of the city. It is open for passengers daily from 13.00 for baggage delivery. Reception starts at 13.30 and check in at 18.00.³⁴

The total number of passengers who boarded at Bergen in 2001 was 71,456, while 59,197 came into the city on the ship.³⁵

Bergen, *The Fjord Capital* and *The Gateway to the Fjords of Norway*, is a well-established cruise port. More than 220 international cruise ships with a total number of over 150,000 passengers visit Bergen from May to the end of September. In addition receives Bergen regular calls by cruise ferries from England, Denmark, Iceland and the Faroe Islands.³⁶

There is no real car deck on the ships so the cars are mixed in with other types of cargo and handled by the staff. At the ship's reception, passengers can register directly and once the cabins are tidied up, it is possible to get into them. Dinner is served at 19.00 and a welcome meeting is held at 21.00. So when the ship leaves the quay at 22.30, most passengers are already acquainted with the ship and the trip.

The *Bergen Tourist Board* is the body that promotes the City of Bergen in Norway and abroad and its activities cover information, media services, marketing (conferences, holiday and leisure market), product co-ordination and development, management of Tourist Information Offices, and promotion of guide services. The Board has approximately 400 members, including almost every company within the tourist trade in Bergen. There are 146 restaurants, 95 activity companies and 93 shops among the members. Bergen Tourist Board is also the main shareholder of Fjord Norge AS (Fjord Norway), a sailing company with destinations in Denmark and Norway.

There are no special activities run by *Bergen Tourist Board* for tourists arriving in Bergen for a *Hurtigruten* trip, says Siri Gill Roland, information and marketing coordinator.³⁷ *Hurtigruten* has its own office, *Kystopp-plevelser*, which handles activities ashore along the route. The *Bergen Tourist Board* assists the operators with what it is possible to do.

Visit Bergen is the destination company in Bergen. It is the main contact for sightseeing and harbour excursions in the city and also sells tickets for all the recommended roundtrips on the fjords that start from the city.³⁸

3.2 Ålesund

In Ålesund the northbound stop is between 12.00 and 15.00 and the southbound stop is at midnight. The benefit for the city is hence the passengers on the northbound vessels. The total amount of passengers leaving Ålesund in 2001 was 16,740 while 11,001 arrived in the city.³⁹

The incoming agent is *Destination Ålesund & Sundmøre*. The normal option for *Hurtigruten* passengers is a city tour. Ålesund is famous for its Art Nouveau architecture and the guides focus upon that. The town was

34 www.hurtigruten.com, 26.03.2005.

35 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Norway, *Hurtigruten* table 3, no. of passengers per port (see appendix 1).

36 www.visitBergen.com/info, 26.03.2005.

37 Letter to the author, 10.01.2005.

38 www.visitBergen.com/info, 12.02.2005.

39 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Norway, *Hurtigruten* table 3, no. of passengers per port.

almost totally burnt down in 1904 and rebuilt in Art Nouveau style, which gives it its specific character. This is described on its homepage as known far and wide with a myriad of turrets, spires and beautiful ornamentation that give the town fairytale appearance.⁴⁰

In the general plan for Ålesund, the municipality is mostly concerned with the fishing industry. It is noted that tourism has lately become a more important industry but there are no strategies in the plan for further developing it. *Hurtigruten* is not mentioned.⁴¹

The stop occurs during the ship's lunch period (13.00-14.30) and this is a disadvantage. The *Hurtigruten* reception can, however, split the groups into one tour at 12 and one at 13.30. The cruise passengers are predominantly Germans. In one group, there may be 10 Germans, 5-6 English-speakers, two Norwegians and two Swedes. My interviewee had never met a Finnish passenger. Finns come in a greater numbers once each summer on the *Kristina Regina*, owned by Kristina Cruise in Helsinki. At this time, the Finns are met by Finnish-speaking guides.⁴²

There are about 8,000 annual Swedish bednights in the Ålesund region. The number has differed little during the past six years without any trends upwards or downwards.⁴³

Destination Ålesund & Sundmøre is a cooperative venture among tourism entrepreneurs in the region and is owned by 170 members, of which 13 are communities. Almost all tourism entrepreneurs are members and none of the large companies, is not a member. Members include 63 restaurants, 51 accommodation companies, 27 shops and 25 activity companies.⁴⁴

Hurtigruten is not very important to Ålesund as a business idea and it generates very few bed-nights. Sometimes parties come from Bergen to Ålesund with *Hurtigruten* and then stay overnight before going back.⁴⁵

3.3 Trondheim⁴⁶

In Trondheim the northbound stop is between 06.00 to 12.00 and the southbound stop is from 05.00 to 10.00. The benefit for the city is hence from both stops. The total number of passengers leaving Trondheim in 2001 was 32,389 with 37,923 arriving.⁴⁷

The incoming agent is *Trondheim Aktivum* and it delivers all guide- and sightseeing services in Trondheim to *Hurtigruten* passengers. Partners in the Trondheim network which cater to *Hurtigruten* passengers are Nidaros Domen (Trondheim Cathedral), Sans & Samling, Ringve Museum, Trøndelag Folkmuseum Sverresborg and Gauldal Billag Transport company. *Kystoplevselser* has chosen many subcontractors instead of a single actor for financial reasons.⁴⁸

The cruise passengers are mainly offered city tours by bus, delivered by Gauldal Billag. The aim of *Trondheim Aktivum* is to give the tourists a positive view of Trondheim, which will encourage them to revisit the town. When the ships arrive, city residents meet and demonstrate a vivid city life. Packaging of the product is done jointly by the partners, with a package put together just for the cruise customer. Otherwise, the different companies do not actively cooperate other than on an *ad hoc* basis. All guides get together in December in order to provide a comprehensive view of all the guided tours in Trondheim.⁴⁹

40 www.visitalesund.com, 26.03.2005.

41 Kommuneplanen, Ålesund, 2003.

42 Interview with Anita Vadset, Destination Ålesund & Sundmøre, 16.01.2005.

43 Mail from Terje Devold Destination Ålesund & Sundmøre, 19.01.2005.

44 www.visitalesund.com, 26.03.2005.

45 Interview with Anita Vadset, Destination Ålesund & Sundmøre, 16.01.2005.

46 This chapter is mainly based upon findings of a thesis produced for a bachelor's degree in tourism science at Mid Sweden University, autumn semester 2004.

47 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Norway, *Hurtigruten*, table 3, no. of passengers per port.

48 Interview with Anna Popova, sales promotor, and Svein Solid administrative manager of Offshore *Hurtigruten*.

49 Interview with Fredrikk von der Lippe, Trondheim Aktivum.

Gauldal Billag provides transport from the quay to the attractions. The company has no other association with *Trondheim Aktivum*. The impact of the tours is of minor importance to the company. It has a contract with *Hurtigruten* but that does not mean that *Hurtigruten* invests money in or interferes with the management of the company. Neither does the company conduct any activities of a marketing character for *Hurtigruten*.⁵⁰

Trondheim, originally called Nidaros, was founded in 998 by King Olav Trygvasson, who made it the first capital of Norway. Nidaros Cathedral is the northernmost cathedral in the world and located in the centre of Trondheim. The church is said to have been built upon the grave of Saint Olaf and it was a pilgrimage site during the middle ages, comparable to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Norwegian kings have traditionally been crowned or blessed in the cathedral. After several fires, restoration work started in 1869 and is still in progress. *Hurtigruten* has booked a one-hour visit in the morning every day during the peak season. Initially this was only available for northbound ships, but since there has been a demand from southbound passengers, all ships are offered this service. A further reason for this is that many cruise passengers go only one way. The cathedral has decided to use its own guides since it runs a special training course for them.⁵¹

Ringve Museum is located ten minutes by car from Trondheim City. It is a national museum of music and musical instruments with collections from all over the world. The museum is divided into two parts: *The Great House*, which has guided tours with music demonstrations during the summer season and the new building *The Museum in the Barn*, which is open all year round. The museum has some 1,800 instruments, of which 700 are classical instruments from Europe, 25,000 items of sheet music, an exclusive collection of photos and a sound archive. Ringve Estate was the birthplace of Peter Wessel Tordenskjold (1690-1720) and he has left his mark on the museum.⁵²

Trøndelag Folkmuseum Sverresborg is a museum of culture and history and one of the biggest such museums in Norway. It consists of a collection of buildings, prehistoric items, archive material, and a photo archive. The museum was established in 1914 on the remnants of the medieval fortress of King Sverre. Sverresborg is not part of the normal *Hurtigruten* package but, if there is enough demand, special tours are arranged. The museum wants to be incorporated into the ordinary package and is currently negotiating involvement in the of 2005 season.⁵³

3.4 Bodø

In Bodø the northbound stop is between 12.30 and 15.00 and the southbound stop is at midnight. The benefit for the city is hence from passengers on the northbound vessels. The total amount of passengers leaving Bodø in 2001 was 39,875 with 24,308 arrivals. This indicates that *Hurtigruten* plays an important role for Bodø. This may be a result of cruise passenger frequency but is probably more related to distance passenger frequency.⁵⁴

Bodø municipality has decided to formulate a plan for the port since it has maintained its status as a national port. The goals of this strategy start with the ambition to become the central port for passengers and cargo transport in Northern Norway. It is also supposed to be an *intermodal node for international transport and logistic chains*. Next the fishing industry and offshore industry is stressed. Finally, the desire for Bodø Port to become a turn-over port for cruise tourism is expressed.⁵⁵

The incoming agent is *Destinasjon Bodø*, a public company with the aim of developing and marketing Bodø as a travel destination. It has seven employees and offers package-tour tailored programmes. It coordinates the extensive host services of the municipality. The team of guides offers information in the following languages: English, German, French, Finnish, Russian, Spanish, Italian and Norwegian. Bodø and the surrounding area is particularly well-organized for the holiday- and leisure market, with speciality products like sports angling, diving and glacier walks but also meeting, incentive and conference programmes. Cruise ship calls and turn-

50 Interview with Reidar Horsberg, Gauldal Billag.

51 Interview with Britt Kristin Aune, Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider.

52 Interview with Torbjørn Selven, Ringve Museum.

53 Interview with Anne Siri Garberg, Trøndelag Folkemuseum Sverresborg.

54 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Norway, *Hurtigruten*, table 3, no. of passengers per port.

55 Bodø Nasjonalhavn Utviklingsprogram 2004-2007 Prosjektplan, June 2004, p. 2.

over operations are important activities. One speciality is open-air (or wharf-side) meals for hundreds of people, preferably on one of the attractive islands near Bodø. Well-known sights and attractions are Saltstraumen and the Norwegian Aviation Museum.⁵⁶

In summer, tourists make a so-called *land based tour*. They are picked up at Ørnes, the stop before Bodø, and are offered a guided tour of the Svartisen glacier. After that, they are driven by bus to the *Hurtigruten* berth at Bodø.

This means that they do not spend any money in Bodø, according to Torild Kartfjord at *Destinasjon Bodø*. Thus *Hurtigruten* is both good and bad for the region.⁵⁷

The number of distance passengers sailing between Bodø and Lofoten is the highest for all ports along the route.⁵⁸ The number of Swedes, including *Hurtigruten* passengers, visiting *Destinasjon Bodø* was 442 in July 2004 and 14 in December 2004, which means 8 % of the total visitors in July and 3 % of the total visitors in December. February has the lowest frequency with five visitors (0.8 %). For the same periods, Finnish visitors were one in December (0.5 %), 60 in July (9 %) and zero in February. The total frequency for Bodø is highest in July with 5,573 visitors and lowest in December with 496 visitors.⁵⁹

Guide Bodø arranges sightseeing tours. In winter, this is the only option for tourists, while the *land-based tour*, arranged by *Destinasjon Bodø*, dominates in summer. The former is by bus and the latter by a special train. It is possible to buy fresh fish and shrimps during the peak season. The tours last for two hours and can have an unlimited number of participants.

3.5 Svolvær

In Svolvær the northbound stop is between 21.00 and 22.00 and the southbound stop is at 18.30, leaving at 19.30. This creates the possibility of hosting passengers from two ships within four hours. The two tours meet just south of Svolvær.

The total amount of passengers leaving Svolvær in 2001 was 19,192 with 32,042 arriving in the city. Thus *Hurtigruten* plays an important role for Svolvær. For the other ports of the Lofoten region during the same year the figures are: Stamsund 17,260 and 25,453, Stokmarknes 10,309 and 6,766 and finally Sortland to far north 6 391 and 6 453. This is a further indication of the importance to *Hurtigruten* for the Bodø to Tromsø route.⁶⁰

The incoming agent is *Destination Lofoten*, which is the joint promotional body for the entire.⁶¹ Svolvær is one of six places where the company has information centres. *Hurtigruten* spends an hour there on both northbound and southbound tours.

The stop is mainly used to visit the Svolvær ice bar: *Magic Ice*. It is located in the harbour, quite close to the *Hurtigruten* berth. The bar was opened in March 2004 and has had 14,000 visitors since then. The whole attraction was inspired by the Jukkasjärvi Ice Hotel in Sweden. Some of the artists work both in Jukkasjärvi and Svolvær. The bar is, however, independent from its inspiration as a commercial event.⁶²

56 www.bodoe.com/e/v2/velkommen.shtml, 26.12.2004.

57 Interview with Torild Kartfjord, *Destinasjon Bodø*, 19.01.2005.

58 TØI Rapport 609/2002, p. 30.

59 Statistics from *Destinasjon Bodø*.

60 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Norway, *Hurtigruten tabell 3, antall passegerer per havn*.

61 www.lofoten-tourist.no

62 Interview with Ann Mari Danielsen, bartender and guide, *Magic Bar*, Svolvær 19.01.2005.

3.6 Tromsø

In Tromsø the northbound stop is between 14.30 and 18.30 and the southbound ships stop for almost two hours at midnight. The total number of passengers leaving Tromsø in 2001 was 35,160 with 44,528 arrivals. This makes Tromsø the most important port for *Hurtigruten* apart from the end destinations of Bergen and Kirkenes.⁶³

The incoming agent is *Destinasjon Tromsø*. It is owned by the Tromsø and Lyngen communities together with 200 tourism enterprises in the region. *Destination Tromsø* arranges activities for visitors. It plans and coordinates both arrangements and the activities themselves, such as incentive holidays, team-building, kick-offs, seminars, congresses, annual events, dinners and group excursions.⁶⁴ During winter a dog (husky)-sled tour is organised. In summer there is a midnight concert in the Ice Cathedral.⁶⁵

Tromsø is a popular cruise town which received 99 calls in 2004, which is an all-time high for the city. This put it in sixth position in Norway with regard to number of calls. In northern Norway it is outdone only by Honningsvåg. *Destinasjon Tromsø* has attracted 250 journalists, many from international magazines, by offering them free travel and accommodation in return for an article.⁶⁶

In a strategy document, Tromsø municipality acknowledges that the city has a long tradition as a port and as a centre for regional development in Northern Norway. New challenges and demands from the market (and the EU) will require changes in infrastructure and logistics. The strategy is to develop the city as an international maritime node for traffic in the Arctic rim.⁶⁷

3.7 Honningsvåg

In Honningsvåg the northbound stop is between 11.45 and 15.15 while the southbound ships make a minor stop in the morning. The total number of passengers leaving Honningsvåg in 2001 was 10,619 with 10,738 arrivals.⁶⁸ The flagship attraction is the North Cape promontory, which is said to be the northernmost point of Europe. Although this is not technically correct, it is the place people expect to visit. The northernmost point has to be reached by foot and it takes a couple of hours to do so.

There is no community-based destination organisation in Honningsvåg or in the Nordkapp kommune, which is the name of the municipality which includes the whole of Magerøya Island where both North Cape and Honningsvåg are located. The municipality centre is situated in Honningsvåg. The destination is marketed by *Nordkapp Reiseliv*.⁶⁹

In winter it is dark and *Hurtigruten* is a lifeline. Without it *Nordkapp Reiseliv* would be closed from November to May. During winter they organise tours to North Cape (once a day) and in summer they organise 60 to 70 tours. The North Cape Hall on the cliffs can take 6,000 tourists per day. Cruise tourism is very important and 114 calls were made in 2004. Two to three per season have a Swedish guide. No one had required a Finnish guide during 2004 although a Finnish guide available. She had to guide in English instead.⁷⁰

Hurtigruten has a slogan on its website which sums up the experience: *We could have been on cruise in the Caribbean but it is so dark at night down there.*

63 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Norway, *Hurtigruten*, table 3, no. of passengers per port.

64 www.destinasjon troms.no, 13.02.2005.

65 Interview with Bente Hagland, convention manager, *Destinasjon Tromsø*, 20.01.2005.

66 Interview with Heidi Johansen, sales manager, *Destinasjon Tromsø*, 20.01.2005.

67 *Det meste er nord*, Tromsø kommune 2001, p. 23f.

68 Statistisk Sentralbyrå, Norway, *Hurtigruten*, table 3, no. of passengers per port.

69 www.northcape.no

70 Interview with Renate Olsen, sales manager, *Nordkapp Reiseliv*, Honningsvåg, 21.01.2005.

3.8 Vadsø

Hurtigruten stops only on its northbound journey. The total number of passengers stopping at Vadsø in 2001 was 5,730 to and 1,409 from the town. The impact of *Hurtigruten* is not great and the town's homepage has no reference to tourism. There are no recommended excursions.⁷¹ Finnmark county, however, has great tourism potential on Varanger Peninsula and Fiord.⁷²

Vadsø is situated on the Varanger Peninsula and it has about 5,500 inhabitants, dispersed over 1,252 square km. It is the administration centre of Finnmark Fylke. Vadsø experienced considerable immigration from Finland in the 19th century. The town was called the Capital of Norwegian Finns. In 1875, 62% of the inhabitants were Finnish-speaking. The city burnt down in 1944 after Soviet-Russian bombardments. Part of the old settlement of Vadsø was preserved, since Hitler's order of destruction was received after the German forces were driven away by the Red Army and the Soviet Northern Fleet. Many still speak Finnish here and Finnish traditions are found side by side with Norwegian traditions.⁷³

71 www.vadso.kommune.no, 13.02.2005.

72 www.finnmark-f.kommune.no, 13.02.2005.

73 www.den-norske-turguiden.com/nor/byer/fylke/finnmark/vadsoe.htm

4 Passengers

Passengers were interviewed during two different periods. Students interviewed the first sample during work on their BA thesis. Samples 2 were 4 interviewed by the author on a *Hurtigruten* trip from 16 to 22 January 2005. There were also four German groups on that trip, travelling the whole round-trip. They were experienced travellers who were making the trip because it fitted in with their general time schedule. In Tromsø about 10 British tourists embarked. They just wanted to go to Kirkenes and then back. Their only aim was to see the Northern lights. Most of them had travelled in order to see the Northern lights before.

1. Otto and Heike Müller were cruise passengers on board the southbound ship *Nordkapp*. They had sailed with *Hurtigruten* before and the reason for their trip was their great fascination with nature and culture in Norway. During the stop, they went by themselves to Trondheim City and visited the cathedral. The early stop (06:15) did not make it possible to get a comprehensive picture of Trondheim and they found it too short. They found information about the cruise line on the Internet and they found information about the excursion in brochures on board. The couple was very satisfied with the trip and especially with the nature-based experiences.⁷⁴

2. Michel and Monique Guillard were cruise passengers on board the northbound ship *Nordkapp*. They came from Le Mans in France and had never sailed with *Hurtigruten* before. They found information about the trip in newspapers in France. They had visited Scandinavia once before on a tour to Rovaniemi and Santa Claus. They love winter and if they do not go to the north they visit the Alps. They have also been to Moscow and St Petersburg in wintertime. He is an electrician and she is a secretary. They had enjoyed the experience of the tour so far (Bodø) but were looking forward to the far north and some bigger cities like Tromsø.⁷⁵

3. James Gronberg was a retired American cruise passenger. He had a background as an enlisted marine with experiences from the seven seas but also of service on the Carrier *Kitty Hawk* during the Vietnam War. During his active service he heard about *Hurtigruten* and, since both his ancestors and his wife's ancestors were from Norway, they decided to sail with it. Unfortunately, his wife died before they could make the trip and, after a couple of years, he decided to go by himself. During his first trip he learned about the music festival in Tromsø. *Hurtigruten* offered a special deal for that event and he decided to use it. He was now on his fourth trip, just in order to listen to the music at the festival. The weather was no obstacle for him and he enjoyed travelling in winter.⁷⁶

4. Werner Wettstein and Felix Mathis were cruise passengers on the northbound ship *Nordkapp*. They were from Schlieren and Dübendorf in Switzerland. Both had been camping together in Scandinavia for many years and Wettstein had sailed with *Hurtigruten* twice before, both times in winter: he found it too crowded in the summer. *The first time I went, we were 14 and next time we were just seven cruise passengers.* Wettstein was retired and Mathis was 61 and still working but about to have a by-pass operation. He was using the waiting period to travel with his good friend, who was also *supervising* him during the trip.⁷⁷

74 Interview at Trondheim with Otto and Heike Müller, from Munich, Germany, 13.11.2004.

75 Interview onboard m/s Nordkapp with Michel and Monique Guillard, from Le Mans, France, 19.01.2005.

76 Interview onboard m/s Nordkapp with James Gronberg, Wisconsin, USA, 19.01.2005.

77 Interview onboard m/s Nordkapp with Werner Wettstein, from Schlieren, Switzerland and Felix Mathis, from Dübendorf, Switzerland, 20.01.2005.

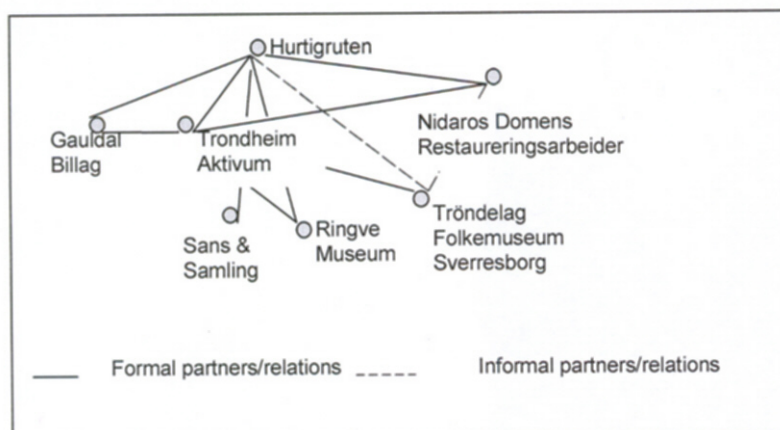
5 Reflections

5.1 A cluster discussion

Hurtigruten provides a comprehensive transport facility for coastal Norway north of Bergen. That is the image fostered by the two sailing companies (OVDS and TFDS) which maintain the service, but also by the government of Norway. *Hurtigruten* is an abstraction of the route and does not exist as a company. It exists as the name of a sailing route and the name of the joint marketing department of the two sailing companies. The comprehensiveness exists thanks to cooperation with the land-based companies along the route. These are primarily private commercial enterprises covering the whole spectrum of commercial life along the coast but there are also some public companies, especially within tourism and port service. In other words, *Hurtigruten* could be seen as part of a cluster, combining the different links of the coastal route chain. A cluster is, according to Porter ...a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities.⁷⁸ It is arguable here whether the interconnected companies are proximate but, on the other hand, they are connected to each other twice daily is perhaps more than geographically more proximate companies are in a cluster.

Hurtigruten has a formal cooperative arrangement with its sub-deliverers. Together they offer year-round attractions. The company does not however, collaborate with the land-based companies. According to Getz & Jamal, the stakeholders at a cluster encompass the joint desire of a region or destination to develop by collaboration, where the different actors have a transforming impact on the structure of each company.⁷⁹ This is not the case with *Hurtigruten*.

Figure 5. Network relations between Trondheim as a destination and *Hurtigruten*



Source: Lindström-Swahn-Åndal, 2005.

If we take a look at Trondheim, it is obvious that *Trondheim Aktivum* plays a specific role in a cooperative arrangement. They deliver excursions, sightseeing services, brochures, and city maps to passengers on board the ships. Both *Trondheim Aktivum* and *Hurtigruten* strive for a common goal: to make Trondheim attractive to tourists and get them to take part in activities offered. In this way they fulfil the criteria for participating in a network. Cooperation is formal and it is well planned.

The relationship is not really symmetrical, however, since the actors are not equal in influence and dependent on each other. *Hurtigruten* does not invest in any of the six partners in the Trondheim network. They have no real collaboration. If they did so, the network would change character and become more hierarchical. Studies show that such corporate structures have more development power than in non-hierarchical structures.⁸⁰ The

78 Porter, 1998, p. 199.

79 Getz & Jamal, 1994, pp. 198-199.

80 Flagestad, 2002.

drawback is considerable dominance by one actor and thus fewer incentives for creativity on the part of other actors.

5.2 Factors making cruising important for destinations

It is not possible to compare *Hurtigruten* with other forms of cruise activities. Its comprehensiveness has made it unique so far and this has also had an impact upon the land-based destinations. The share of cruise passengers using *Hurtigruten* is definitely lower than that of distance passengers but the importance for the sailing companies is almost the reverse. The cruise passengers have a much higher price tolerance than the distance passengers.

This is not the case ashore. The cruise passengers do not spend very much money during the stops and they are not especially frequent visitors compared with the total number of tourists at most ports. On the other hand, the intense efforts made to create networks in order to welcome the cruise passengers of *Hurtigruten* make it clear that cruising is considered important and has a unique ability to unite different resources at the destination.

Cruising is an activity which it is difficult for actors other than the cruise lines to influence. The annual meeting in Miami, where routes are more or less settled, provides some possibility for some of the biggest destinations to influence the plans of the sailing companies. But at the end of the day, the companies decide themselves. A decision to include a certain destination in the route schedule is a sign of significance for the destination. It puts the place on the map. It adds a deeper dimension to the image of the destination.

For the tourism industry this is not of a crucial importance but it means value added to the destination. Excursions for cruise passengers do not require much additional work since they are the same as what is offered to other visitors. They more or less come from *heaven*. And it is not a matter of either-or. Cruise passengers do not compete with other tourists. The passengers will show up even if all the accommodation in town is occupied.

Since the passengers arrive at a scheduled time and also stay for a scheduled time, it is possible to tailor a joint package for them. A destination company is the most suitable (and necessary) to coordinate the excursions. Some of the destinations have a company with considerable public interests; others have a joint venture between the municipality and tourism entrepreneurs. It is also possible to have a private company as the destination coordinator. In any case, this forces the different entrepreneurs to cooperate. Time is too limited for free riding. You have to be in or out of the package and if you are out, there is no time for you.

5.3 Factors which may improve the benefit of cruising for destinations

Easy access to the city centre is crucial for cruise passengers. Long trips on a tender may be appreciated as added sightseeing tours. Shuttle buses may be convenient transport facilities to the city centre. But the passengers are always bound by timetables. What cruise passengers fear more than anything else is to be left behind when the ship has gone. To have control over your time ashore is a necessity. If the ship anchors close to the town centre and is visible passengers to all the time when they stroll ashore, it feels very safe. About 20 % to 30 % of cruise passengers go ashore on their own and do not join any excursions. For them proximity to the city centre is especially important.⁸¹

For those who do not follow a guided tour and for those who have been on a guided tour and have spare time before the boat leaves, a tour in the city is the normal activity. This is often undertaken at random. To establish a special *cruise square* could therefore be a good idea. Such a square could be a place (with arrows showing the way) where passengers and entrepreneurs and public representatives could meet informally. It should be located so it is easy for passengers to go off on a smaller tour and find attractive streets in the neighbourhood.⁸²

81 Nilsson, 2005, Cruise tourism in the Baltic Sea.

82 Notes from seminar on cruise tourism, Kemi, Finland, 22-23 February 2005.

Local restaurant owners often complain that passengers always want to eat their meals onboard. That is, of course, because they have paid for the meals. *Smart cards* could make it possible for local restaurants to cooperate with cruise ships. The passengers get a dining card and can use it at special places which cooperate with the sailing companies. This has not been practised so far. The nearest thing to it is what in the Caribbean is called *flexible* dining where you can decide when you want to have some of your meals and *alternative* dining when you can choose different restaurants on board from the ones included in the price.⁸³

5.3.1 The new tourist – some considerations

Auliana Poon described already in 1993 a new type of tourist she found emerging during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.⁸⁴ This new traveller is:

- independent-minded;
- prefers flexible and spontaneous itineraries;
- keen to have a positive impact on the destination;
- searching for physically and mentally challenging experiences;
- sensitive to local cultures;
- a green consumer;
- conscious of social justice concerns;
- a careful assessor tourism products in advance
- searching for authentic and meaningful experiences;
- motivated by a desire for self-fulfilment and learning.

The question is how this *new tourist* fits in with the cruise concept. The real advantage of cruise tourism has been said to be the full-service package concept, which does not correspond very well with the first three indicators above.⁸⁵ Poon outlines an independent and flexible tourist with an interest in having an impact on the tour. The fifth indicator also seems to be contrary to the feeling of security, a feeling that the cruise companies find absolutely necessary to foster among the customers.

The disadvantage of cruise tourism has been said to be the negative social and environmental impact on visited destinations.⁸⁶ The great number of tourists pouring out of a ship at the same time leaves tracks on both the natural environment and the culture of the destinations. Numbers six and seven of the characteristics suggest that the *new tourist* has a clear opinion of these disadvantages with cruising.

The rest of the list may very well be in accordance with cruise tourists and their desires.

Against this background, it is possible to make two different judgements. One is that cruise tourism is a special niche for a special type of tourist, who does not fit in with the *new tourist*. Furthermore, the *new tourist* may also be a special type of tourist, who will never dominate the market. Cruise tourism has to keep its niche itself and the inclusive package tour is a fruitful one, not too dependent on trends and fashions.

Another judgement is that cruise tourism as an inclusive package deal has become more and more obsolete. The concept of *inclusive* has also somewhat lost its character after the 11 September attacks on the United States. Ward (2004) describes the situation in the following way: *Many cruise lines had to redeploy their ships, while others saw passenger numbers drop dramatically. With fixed operating costs, several had cash flow problems as new bookings dried up.* Passengers are today asked to pay extra for all sorts of things that were formerly included.⁸⁷

83 Ward, 2004, p. 12.

84 Poon, 1993.

85 Ward, 2004, defines a cruise as ..a hassle-free, and, more importantly, a crime-free vacation. You never have to make blind choices, p. 8.

86 Franz, 1999.

87 Ward, pp. 7-8.

The flexible tourists are here to stay and they are not willing to be *hospitalised* on board. They want more flexible excursions, activities on board, possibilities to eat and socialise ashore and so on. The new mobility of tourists has to be met by greater flexibility from the operator.⁸⁸

Perhaps a more fruitful direction would be a diversification of the cruise industry with different niches and approaches. Probably there is space for many forms of cruising.

88 Urry, 2001.

6 *Hurtigruten* and the Gulf of Bothnia

6.1 Comparisons

There conditions in coastal Norway and the Gulf of Bothnia are different in several ways:

- The Gulf of Bothnia encompasses two countries.
- Accessibility to the coastal area via the regional and national infrastructure (road network and railways) is much better than in coastal Norway.
- For this reason, and because of the minor importance of the fishing industry, the ports along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia are less significant.
- Historically, sea route traffic reached its peak during the first half of the 20th century and had almost totally stopped by the end of the century, while sea route traffic has continued for over a century in Norway

As these facts indicate natural factors have provided a basis for *Hurtigruten* to continue its traffic along the Norwegian coast. These factors have provided a *raison d'être* for the route. Such factors do not exist in the Gulf of Bothnia.

On the other hand, these factors declined in importance during the 1980s and 1990s even in Norway and would have taken away the basis for the route if the Norwegian government and the Stortinget had not decided to support it. The result of that support has created an increase in cruise tourism. By doing so and simultaneously giving cruise traffic a chance by supporting the purchase of new ships, the authorities made it possible for the sailing companies to continue plying their trade.

In this context it seems necessary for the actors and stakeholders along the Gulf of Bothnia coastline to focus upon a range of activity, not something that is dependent only on cargo transport or distance or cruise passengers. The concept of a comprehensive product like *Hurtigruten* seems more fruitful. The development of the ferry traffic between Stockholm and Helsinki underpins that assumption. Today, both Silja Line and Viking Line offer cruise packages to their customers, including full service on board and excursions during the day stop in Stockholm or Helsinki. Silja Line offers cruise tours with amusements on board, including an orchestra, catwalk, gourmet-dining, spa treatment and dancing. They also offer tours to Tallin, Mariehamn, Åbo and Nådendal.⁸⁹

6.2 Special conditions for the Gulf of Bothnia

Even if the need does not exist in the Gulf of Bothnia for a route that daily combines different settlements along the coast as in Norway, there is a need to connect Finnish outbound transport to the Swedish coast for access to destinations away from the Bothnian region. Because of the existing infrastructure patterns, this outbound transport goes via Stockholm. Ferry lines using other ports have not been successful and even if they can maintain a profitable traffic, they cannot replace the traffic to Stockholm.

There is also a potential for transregional traffic in the Bothnian Gulf and Sea. This traffic is today of minor importance and difficult to implement. Although there is a ferry connection between Vaasa and Umeå, it is in many cases not an alternative to taking the road via Tornio and Haparanda or to the ferries between Turku and Stockholm. This means that Swedes have to head south to get to Vaasa, while on the Finnish side the route to Umeå goes all the way round the north. This is logistically a real drawback.

All these facts are well known in the region and they are obviously a result or perhaps a cause the poor transnational bonds between the two regions. Haparanda and Tornio have good connections, even if they probably not are as good as they are said to be. The benefits of and interest in connections between the two regions decrease with the distance from these communities.⁹⁰ In other words, the potentials for connection increase with the distance.

89 www.siljaline.se

90 See for instance Badur, 2003.

A route along the coastline of the Gulf of Bothnia must of course meet people's needs. Judging by the lack of cooperation today between the two regions, there is obviously a potential need. The idea of a route must take as its departure a creative discussion of what such potential really is. According to Badur, both sides of the Gulf deal with the same things and are therefore competing, not cooperating or collaborating. Reasons for cooperation must hence be discovered.

Repeated crossings of the Gulf may be more useful than a coastline tour. A zigzag route from Umeå to Vaasa and then to Skellefteå and Kemi and Luleå and then back the same way would be one possibility. The needs of cargo, distance passengers and cruise passengers must be revealed, appraised and scheduled. They will certainly require a complex and flexible route and timetable. At the end of the day, the stakeholders with an interest in these transport facilities are the ones who must see the potential and have the will to invest their money in a route.

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8 Appendix I. Number of passengers on the *Hurtigruten* using ports between Bergen and Kirkenes

Port	From	To
Total	446,684	446,684
Bergen	71,456	59,197
Florø	3,316	2,159
Måløy	1,187	2,623
Torvik	2,944	3,519
Ålesund	16,740	11,001
Geiranger	3,137	2,638
Ålesund	2,952	8,101
Molde	7,285	8,055
Kristiansund	4,951	8,737
Trondheim	32,389	37,923
Rørvik	10,329	10,554
Brønnøysund	6,274	8,864
Sandnessjøen	7,841	6,035
Nesna	5,063	3,610
Ørnes	4,559	3,418
Bodø	39,875	24,308
Stamsund	17,260	25,453
Svolvær	19,192	32,042
Stokmarknes	10,309	6,766
Sortland	6,391	6,453
Risøyhamn	3,161	3,139
Harstad	17,459	12,532
Finnsnes	8,543	4,948
Tromsø	35,160	44,528
Skjervøy	8,348	6,568
Øksfjord	3,574	4,280
Hammerfest	14,517	13,211
Havøysund	3,565	3,332
Honningsvåg	10,619	10,738
Kjøllefjord	3,804	3,766
Mehamn	1,973	2,033
Berlevåg	1,452	1,507
Båtsfjord	2,221	2,151
Vardø	3,581	3,820
Vadsø	5,730	1,409
Kirkenes	49,527	57,266

Source: Tabel 3 of Hurtigruten Bergen-Kirkenes. Antall passasjerer Aper havn, 2001. 2003 © Statistisk sentralbyrå.

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