

SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT:

Harnessing HVL's global connections to drive public service innovation in Sogndal

10am 16th August 2019, Department of Business Administration, Sogndal Campus.

Location to be confirmed

Norwegian municipalities are under huge pressure to innovate in their service delivery to ensure that they can more efficiently meet their citizens' needs in the most cost effective way. Municipalities face a challenge of dealing with a variety of different kinds of complexity. Services are delivered in increasingly complex networks underpinned by sophisticated infrastructures that create intense interdependencies. Citizens have increasing expectations on what public sector providers can offer in terms of the quality, the timeliness and the bespoke nature of services delivered to them. Municipalities are comprised of different groups of professionals who must communicate to construct shared service offers for citizens in ways that may create tensions for their professional identities and experience. But most of all, innovation in public service delivery is a complex knowledge combination process where innovators must identify, access and creatively combine a wide range of knowledge resources under time and budgetary pressures and with often only partial knowledge of where those knowledge resources can be accessed.

Remote rural municipalities face the challenge of innovating without the benefits of access to a metropolitan knowledge infrastructure available to metro municipalities around Norway's principal cities. These municipalities have responded to date with a variety of *local* sourcing strategies, working with local colleges, regional research organisations and other public service organisations to access that knowledge. But these public sector organisations are in a state of flux, most visibly through public sector merger programmes in which higher education institutions, regional research organisations and counties were merged to drive efficiency. These mergers pose both a threat and an opportunity for Norwegian municipalities dependent on local organisations for knowledge for public service innovation.

The threat is that merged organisations see their interests diverge from these municipalities, deterritorialising in various ways from focusing on topics of extra-regional interest to the closure of regional sites. There is an opportunity in these mergers to make the knowledge present in these larger merged organisations available to remote rural municipalities, allowing them to 'borrow' the metropolitan size of knowledge workers located elsewhere as well as tapping into the wider knowledge networks within which these expanded knowledge communities operate. But to realise that opportunity requires addressing a fundamental characteristic of knowledge transfer, that the alignment and coordination of knowledge activities requires various kinds of proximity and is influenced by institutional architectures. The capacity of HVL to contribute to municipalities across its hinterland using its full knowledge capacity is constrained by

organisational structures and ways of working, and what can be delivered in the future is constrained by activities, contacts and interactions currently underway.

The potential HVL offers at the level of the institution as a whole is the alignment of three kinds of knowledge actor to create a (metaphorical) pipeline for local actors to access global knowledge resources:

- Local (Sogndal) academics have contacts with local partners, know their knowledge needs and collaborate with them on discrete knowledge activities
- Academics elsewhere in HVL have contacts with local academics and capacity to collaborate on joint knowledge activities such as teaching, research and consultancy.
- Academics beyond HVL contribute to wider epistemic communities creating knowledge assets that HVL staff draw upon in their local knowledge activities

We are therefore organising a seminar as a first step towards understanding the way that HVL as a five-campus institution with four faculties could possibly ensure that all its knowledge potential is used for the benefit of public sector innovation in Sogndal. In this seminar, we seek to understand the capacity for creating a HVL-wide knowledge portal to support the Sogndal region by mapping these existing activities, contracts and interactions. This will be used to develop a funding proposal to pilot a regional support office that can help the whole of HVL's knowledge potential be aligned and deployed to drive public sector innovation in Sogndal region.

10.00-10.05 *Introduction to the seminar*, Tom Skauge, Head of Department, Department of Business Administration

10.05-10.25 *Creating local buzz in rural Norwegian municipalities: the role of multi-campus HEIs*, Paul Benneworth, Professor of Innovation & Regional Development (Bergen)

10.25-10.45 *Tour de table* of participants mapping connections to local partners, connections within HVL and connections to epistemic knowledge communities

10.45-11.00 Next steps: towards a [proposal to RFF](#) for an experiment in using HVL to create a global knowledge pipeline for public services in Sogndal (deadline 21.08.19).

All staff at the Sogndal campus are therefore invited to attend the seminar, and contribute to this mapping exercise. Any questions regarding the seminar may be addressed to Paul Benneworth (pabe@hvl.no).