



FIRE and Living Labs, Wednesday 1 July 2009
Johan Antti Deputy Governor
County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, Luleå

Conference delegates/Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honour and a pleasure for me to welcome such a learned gathering of guests to Norrbotten.

These two days of discussions deal with one of the most important technologies of the past hundred years.

The internet can be appraised in many different perspectives. It has its advantages and disadvantages. There is no doubt however that the Internet has in many respects given us a more open and transparent world. In particular, it benefits democracy, learning and participation in social development for increasing numbers of people.

These are key areas, which show how important it is to maintain the type of debate that is planned for these days in Luleå. I, and many with me, hope that the conference will lead to even better ways to develop this new technology to the benefit and enjoyment of everybody. It is a vital task and a great number of people are keenly looking forward to the results of this conference.

So I am proud that you have chosen Norrbotten as the arena for this discussion.

Personally, I am sure that this has not come about by chance. On the contrary.

Norrbotten is one of the regions in Sweden and perhaps the whole of Europe that has shown the greatest openness and resolution towards the new technology. Several of the forthcoming presentations will show this.

For those of you who are in Norrbotten for the first time, I would like to say a few words about our proud county.

Many people are struck by the broad contrasts of this vast region.

- Norrbotten covers a quarter of Sweden but has only three per cent of Sweden's population. We have room within our boundaries for Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, along with half of Denmark.



- We have these light, sunny summer nights, as well as the midwinter dark, the snow and the cold.
- We have beautiful and well-planned communities, as well as the largest and most untouched wilderness in Europe, that includes a breathtaking mountain region.
- We have some of the world's leading basic industries and many successful companies, as well as the legendary Sámi heritage with strong elements of its age-old roots.
- We have brilliant research that has enabled state-of-the-art mining operations a thousand metres below ground, as well as international space operations and advanced atmospheric research.

We have a strong feeling for our home region with its characteristic traditions and lifestyle, alongside internationalism and solidarity with people all over the world.

Norrbotten provides a base for Sweden's and Europe's space industry. Our county is the eyes and ears that guide a large number of space satellites in their trajectories across the sky.

The digital revolution is still fairly new. No technology in world history has had such an enormous impact of people's everyday lives in such a short time. Today, data communications infrastructure is perhaps the most important growth factor.

Norrbotten was among the first to invest in a fibre optic broadband network. About a hundred million euro have been invested in the county on three thousand kilometres of cable. Practically every community in the county has broadband.

Today, the network is also connected to several Swedish counties in the south through an initiative called "*Team Norrland*" which comprises over twelve thousand kilometres of cable.

Norrbotten also cooperates with northern Norway and northern Finland to give one of the biggest broadband networks in Europe. Naturally, this gives unique advantages for developing and testing services and for bringing them to the market via the Internet.

And indeed, there is no sector in the community that is not pressing for new digital services.

Education, health- and medical care, the service sector, entertainment, social care, transport, trading, maintenance services, environmental monitoring – in every field, digital services are being developed and demanded.



The common broadband network gives us fantastic commercial opportunities, but the technology in itself cannot save the world.

The technology needs users and developers. It has value only if it can be used as a tool in people's hands and minds.

The broadband initiative means that we are greatly increasing in numbers, we who use and develop it. And those large numbers attract others who are searching for skills or who want to offer utilities.

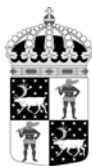
The network gives us unique opportunities to develop our county as a *“testing arena for digital services”*. We have the technologies, we have the infrastructure, we have the behaviourists and we have well-defined test populations.

Norrbotten is developing several fields of activity in which net-based services can revolutionise among other things health- and medical care. Seen internationally, this is today one of the sectors that is facing the greatest challenges. A growing, and in the West aging, population demands new forms of diagnostics and treatment that are independent of distance. Together with Luleå University of Technology, municipalities and the county council in Norrbotten are investing in a Centre of Excellence in E-health. I have high expectations that this is not only going to develop health- and medical care, but will also lead to further improvements in the technological structures for important web-based services.

Another area, which is particular for Norrbotten, is the unique car testing industry. Norrbotten is one of the world's foremost arenas for winter testing of cars and car components. Scores of international players carry out advanced product development here. The Internet has revolutionised testing operations. Research and development divisions all over Europe can now monitor and control in real time the tests carried out on vehicles in motion on the frozen roads of Norrbotten.

My two examples illustrate an important part of the opportunities of the Internet. In a distant corner of the world, the Internet can both develop basic welfare services and create the foundations for significant commercial operations. This creates basic security and freedom of choice for people.

Of course, the list could be made longer, and could include examples from education, community planning, entertainment and basic practical democracy.



Länsstyrelsen
Norrbotten

Datum

Diarienummer

The future makes far-reaching demands on research as well as on the structures required to ensure that the new services are functional and that they are used. In the perspective of regional development, this is vital. In this context, the role of Living Labs is increasing in importance.

The cooperation method in Living Labs does more than guaranteeing strong development clusters. It also gives increasing understanding of the importance of a cross border approach – both across states and regions and across disciplines. I hope that the discussions here in Luleå will lead to a greater number of arenas for cooperation, where our skilled researchers, business leaders and social planners will find complementing contacts among all of you who are visiting us.

In a world with a rapidly-growing population and a number of major challenges in democracy, education, the environment and welfare, ICT and the Internet will gain even greater importance.

Our county wants to contribute to that work. We want to be exemplars that show the importance of trying new solutions and/or seeing change as an opportunity instead of a threat. This requires courage and curiosity and – above all – belief in the future.

I would like to thank Luleå University of Technology for taking this initiative and arranging this conference. It gives us an opportunity to show what people and organisations here can offer to the benefit of everybody. It also gives us an opportunity to broaden our own horizons, and to see and learn from others. There is perhaps no better way to renew and improve.

With these words, I once more welcome you to Norrbotten and wish all of you some rewarding discussions and meetings.

Thank you.