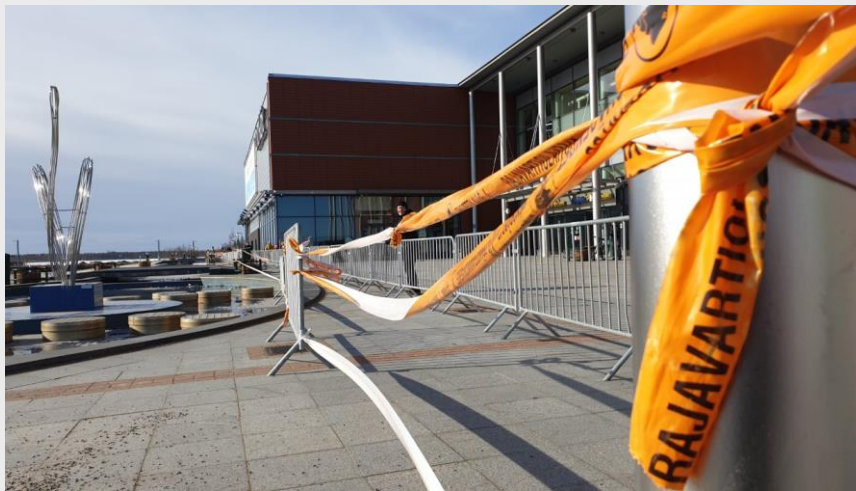


Closed borders and divided communities:

Status report and lessons from COVID-19 in cross-border areas



Pictures by Daniel Falldin and Karin Beate Nøsterud

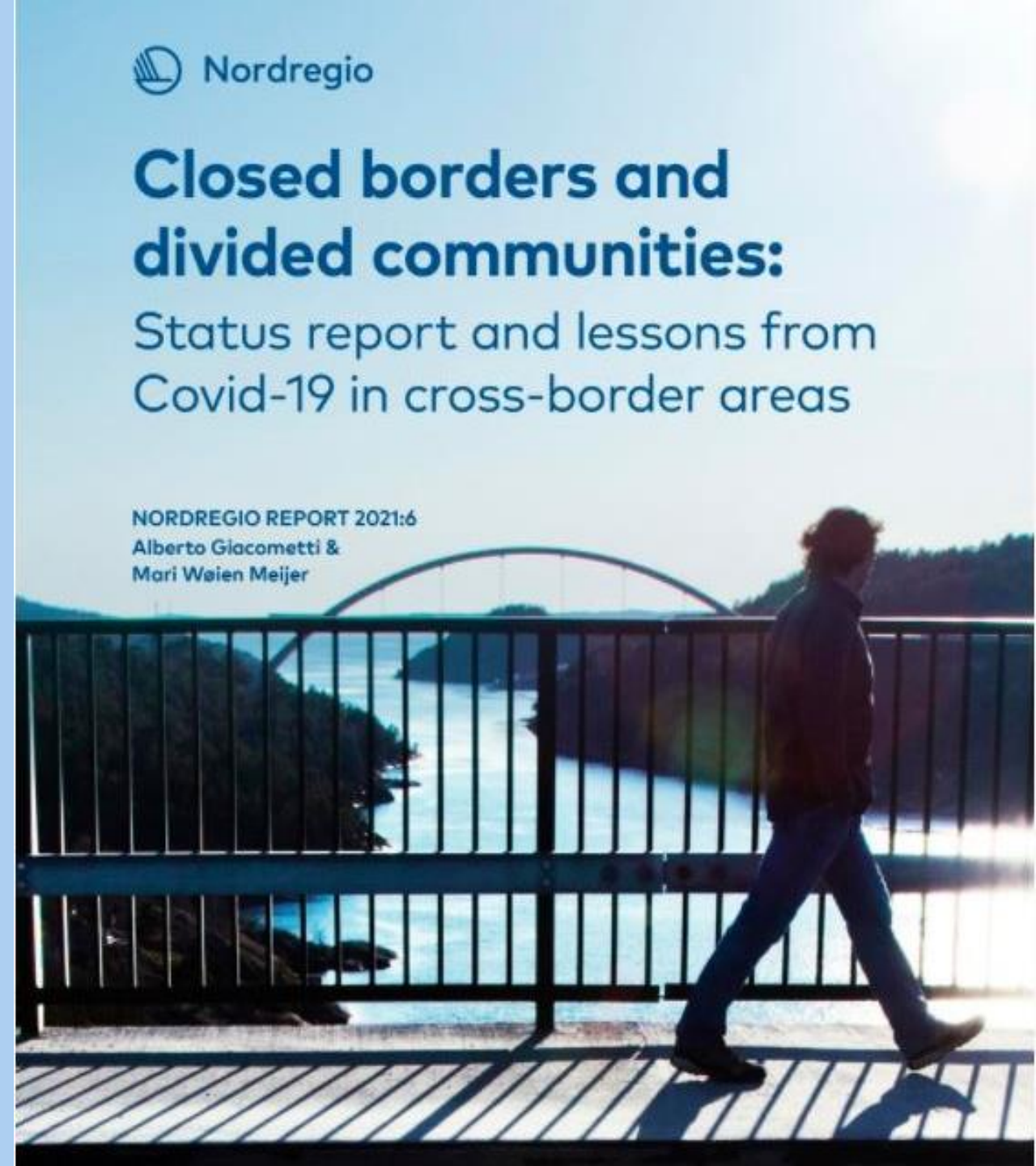
Background and methodology

- Commissioned by Bothnian Arc and the Svinesund Committees – part of the Thematic group for innovative and resilient regions 2017-2020.
- Largely empirical: in-depth interviews with 36 individuals from across the Bothnian Arc, Svinesund, international experts, international border associations.
- NCM survey
- Webconference.
- Cross-case analysis

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Status report and lessons from Covid-19 in cross-border areas

NORDREGIO REPORT 2021:6
Alberto Giacometti &
Mari Weien Meijer



Theoretical framework

Institutionalism

- Testing institutions
- Re-emergence of the state

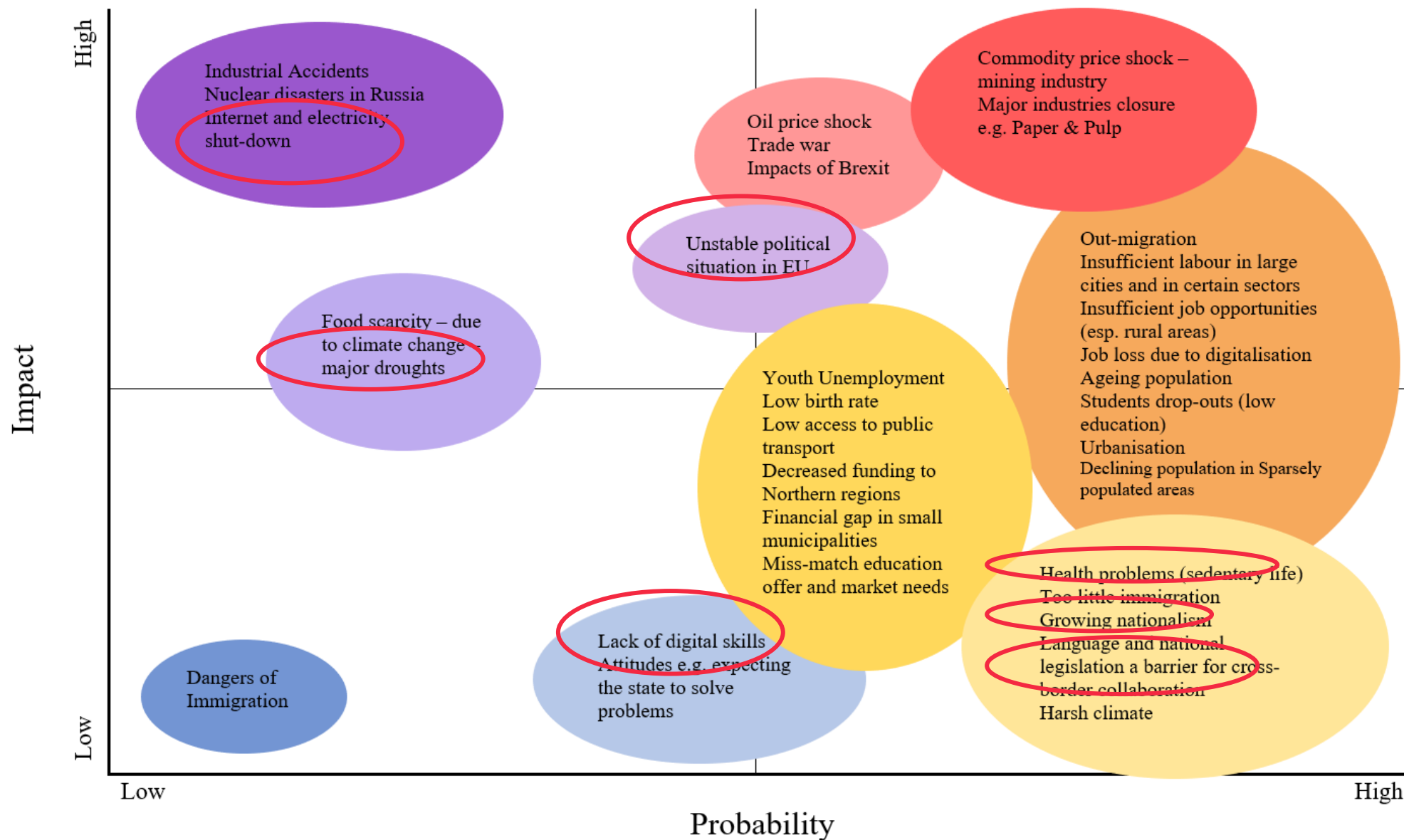
Multilevel governance and soft MLG

- Role of soft structures (e.g. cross-border committees & NCM)

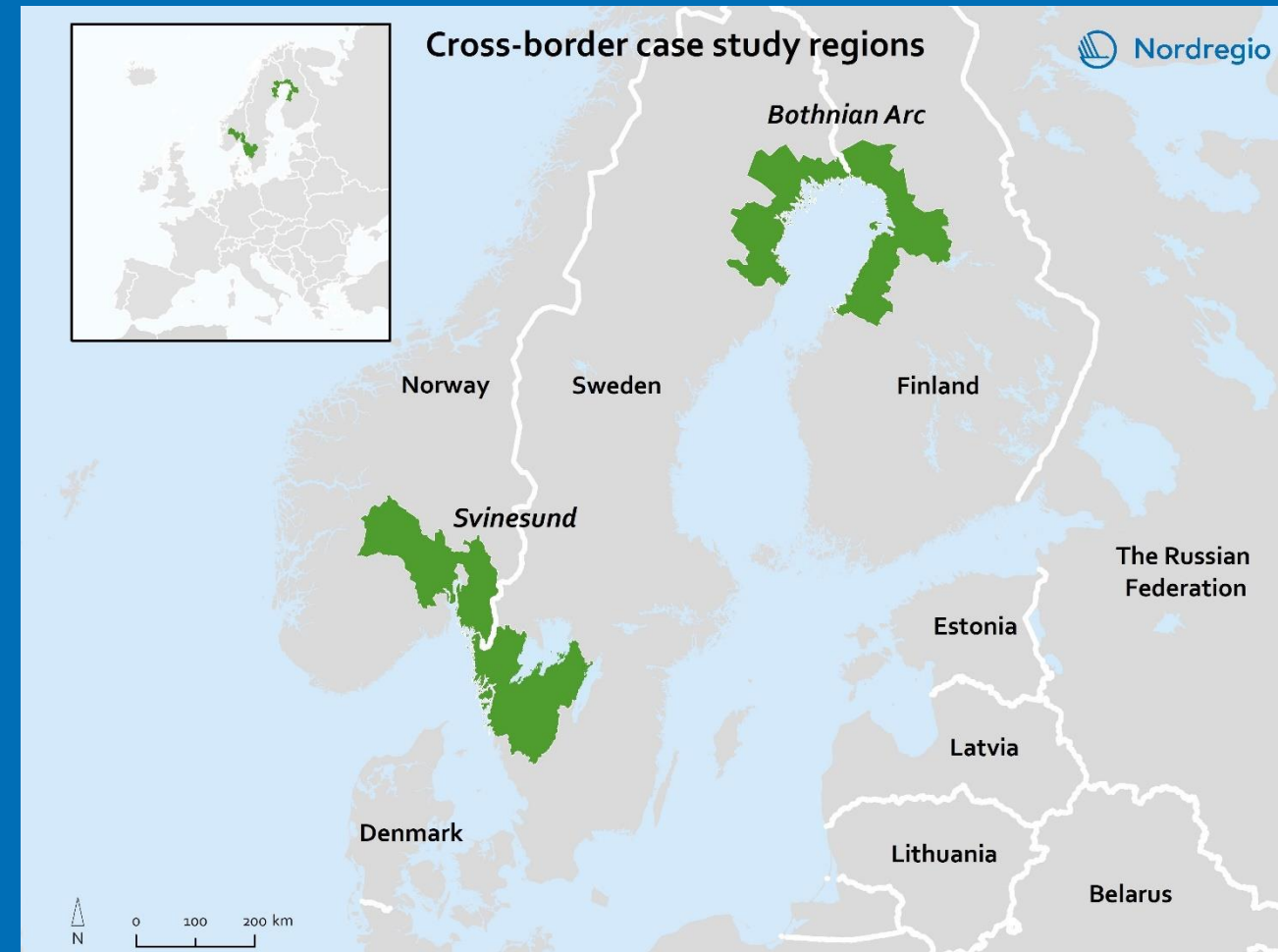
Resilience

What are border communities at risk of?

Figure 5. Workshop results - Question 1: What risks, threats and long-term challenges can be identified in the Bothnian Arc?



Empirical research



Key findings – cross border communities

- The effects of the pandemic have been grave, both from societal and economic perspectives, in border communities → not just a health crisis.
- «Problems originate from outside the country»- thinking (us v. them)
- Cross-border communities often build on mutual dependencies across the border and often seem to have a narrow economic base (these ties were not just 'left to happen' but are actively encouraged).
- The nature of border communities seem to be poorly understood at the national level

Key findings – Nordic institutions

- Nordic Vision 2030: The most integrated region in the world – but to what extent are Nordic authorities committed to this vision?
- Lack of coordination between Nordic countries exacerbates the situation in cross-border areas
→ Weak Nordic institutions = weaker cross-border areas
- Nordic institutions seem ill-equipped to tackle crises, but it was also seemingly not considered an option as a platform for Nordic coordination. What role do/should Nordic institutions play?
- Soft / MLG structures/approches offer many opportunities to address one-size-fits-all policies
– Yet, national governments reduce these opportunities during perceived threats to national security
- Where do we go from here? Opportunities to strengthen the institutions

Key findings - Resilience

- Structural change – planning for the future
- «New normal» rather than going back to what once was.
- Roles at different levels – also depend on whether we can guarantee free mobility
- Border communities should focus on de-escalating fears and 'us and them' sentiments, in order to re-unite people and rebuild trust.
- Border committees (actors) need to work closer with national governments

Our key message to you:

Apart from the dominating role to play by national authorities...

.... resilience of border communities in the aftermath of the pandemic depends on the ability of local and regional authorities to re-establish cross-border cooperation and to rebuild trust and a sense of belonging.

It will be your role to ensure that there is knowledge and awareness of border areas in national policy arenas (as it is clear that this does not currently exist).

The border areas should be seen as a micro-laboratory to test the feasibility of the Nordic vision. So far, this does not seem to be strong enough to withstand crises, and it shows the fragility not only for the cross-border regions, but also for the Nordic institutions.



Questions?

Links - output

- Publication: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1536649/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Podcast: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6oWhDIEewjNLSgkISXg4zJ?si=Mr7LTAxoSPebUewn3NehoQ&nd=1>
- Policy Brief: *forthcoming*

Takk for
oppmerksomheten!

