

NORDPLUS GRANT

The Effects of Surf Tourism in Unstad

Being international students devising a unique topic for our final documentary, our team decided to look into Unstad, a small village in the Lofoten Islands of Northern Norway.

The town in recent years has found an increasing amount of interest because of its exceptional surfing conditions, while being in one of the most tranquil yet weather-worn places in the world. But the national and international media have reported on some dramatic changes over the course of the past year, namely the problem that the area doesn't have the waste management and toilet facilities yet to handle the increase in tourism.

It was with this in mind that we wanted to profile those who not only enjoyed the profits related to the tourism industry, but those who have lived in the midst of this sudden onslaught of people. We created a plan to produce a 15 minute documentary capitalizing on the natural setting of the place while getting in-depth with the locals that inhabit the area, in hopes of shedding light on how mass tourism can challenge a town that has been dying out over the years.

It took several flights to move up to Leknes, Norway from our school in Aarhus, Denmark, something we would not have been able to afford had we not received the Nordplus grant to help lower the personal costs. In addition, we were very grateful for the hospitality of one woman, who gave us lodging and a car to get us around the island of Vestvågøya. We drove an hour each day to encapture the beauty and fierceness of Unstad and its residents, and frequently heard from community members an appreciation for telling their story. Each day, the valley gave us new weather conditions to be challenged by, from hurricane-like winds while filming at a sheep farm, to hail as we shot surfers in the snowy waves.

To capture the beauty of Unstad and give sense to how few people are living there, we were aiming to get a drone that could capture the town, ocean and the valley it all resides in. With no personal drone experience and a required license to use one in Norway anyway, we needed to rent a drone and driver to make these idyllic images a reality. Thanks to the Nordplus grant, we could afford to do so. With this footage, the documentary now has an aerial overview of the town, with which we can show the viewer how extraordinary yet small this town is.

With this drone, we were then able to to have a four-camera production, utilizing our school's camera and equipment along with a GoPro and DSLR. We interviewed 12 people in total, from quirky locals descended from Unstad's history in the 1700s, to indignant surf shop owners, and the municipality's apologetic mayor.

In total, the experience was one our team will never forget, and the work something we hope our viewers won't either. We are so appreciative of the generosity of Nordplus. The grant played an essential part to making this project happen, and it wouldn't have been possible to shed light on the community of Unstad it so richly deserves without the help of these funds.

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