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Game Village Jörn – A game collective as a driver for rural inclusion and creative industry

Table of Contents

1	Good practice description.....	3
1.1	General Information	3
1.2	Summary of the Good Practice.....	3
1.3	Context and Challenges Addressed.....	3
1.4	Objectives.....	4
1.5	Description of the Practice	4
1.5.1	Activities Implemented.....	4
1.5.2	Stakeholders Involved.....	5
1.5.3	Resources Used	5
1.6	Thematic Categorisation (Tick all that apply)	6
4.1	Results and Impact	7
4.1.1	Quantitative Results (if available)	7
4.1.2	Qualitative Results	7
4.2	Innovation and Added Value.....	8
4.3	Lessons Learned	8
4.4	Transferability and Scalability.....	9
4.5	Links and Supporting Materials	10

1 Good practice description

1.1 General Information

- Title of the Good Practice: Game Village Jörn – A game collective as a driver for rural inclusion and creative industry
- Region / City / Municipality: Jörn, Skellefteå municipality, Västerbotten
- Country: Sweden
- Contact Organisation: Creative Crowd AB
- Contact Person & Role: Johan Linder, CEO Creative Crowd AB
- Email / Website: johan.linder@creativecrowd.se / creativecrowd.se
- Date of Implementation: September 2025 – ongoing

1.2 Summary of the Good Practice

Jörn is a small community in Skellefteå municipality where an ageing population, outmigration and a lack of opportunities for young adults have long been central challenges.

Within the InnoGS project, Creative Crowd AB has worked strategically to establish a sustainable game collective in Jörn. The social enterprise GameDev Lodge Jörn AB (svb) was founded and has, supported by a private donation in the millions (SEK) from a prominent founder in the Nordic games industry, acquired a large property in the community. Two employees are now conducting an inventory of the premises ahead of the next phase of applications and renovation.

The venture is supported by a confirmed partnership with Spelkollektivet (the Swedish Game Collective) and a network consisting of the association Witchcraft Society, Arctic Game, Skellefteå municipality and Region Västerbotten. An Interreg Aurora application focused on youth culture linked to a physical place has been submitted. The plan is to have 5 game devs living in Jörn from August and then scaling up until we, around 2029, have 30 game devs living there.

The project demonstrates how the pull of the games industry can serve as a counterforce to rural depopulation and a generator of new vitality in northern Sweden.

1.3 Context and Challenges Addressed

- What territorial challenge or opportunity did the region face?

Jörn and similar small communities in northern Sweden are characterised by a structural loss of population: young people leave for education and rarely

return, the average age rises and local services decline. The long-term survival of these communities as living places requires new in-migration and new economic activity. The challenge is not only to provide employment, but to make the place itself attractive to people who feel they can pursue their passions and preferred lifestyle there.

- Why was digital innovation relevant in this context?

The games industry is by nature location-independent and digital. This makes it uniquely suited as a base for a rural creative enterprise: work happens online, products are distributed digitally and networks are international. By creating a physical collective for game and technology developers in Jörn, the community's low cost of living and high quality of life are combined with the need for a long runway and the global reach of the digital industry. Digital innovation is here both the product and the precondition.

- What specific community or stakeholder needs were identified?

Local stakeholders – the municipality, the region and civil society organisations – have identified the need for new models to retain and attract young adults to rural areas. Active actors in the games industry such as Arctic Game have identified a need for community infrastructure and physical meeting places outside of cities. Young game developers and creative entrepreneurs are looking for an environment where they can live more affordably to get more time to develop their product and at the same time collaborate with like-minded people. The project meets these needs with a concrete offer: a shared living and working environment in a community with genuine character and natural qualities.

1.4 Objectives

- Attract young creative entrepreneurs and game developers to rural areas through an appealing collective environment
- Establish a self-sustaining social enterprise that owns and operates the property without long-term dependence on project grants
- Build an ecosystem of collaborations with regional, national and Nordic actors in games, culture and youth engagement

1.5 Description of the Practice

1.5.1 Activities Implemented

Strategic planning and business model development: Creative Crowd AB has during period 2 (September 2025 onwards) worked to design a sustainable structure for how the property in Jörn can be acquired, renovated and operated as a game collective in the long term without requiring continuous project funding.

Founding of a social enterprise: GameDev Lodge Jörn AB (svb) has been established with board documents, rules of procedure and governance structure in place. The social enterprise received a private donation in the millions (sek) and used the funds to acquire the property in Jörn and to start operations.

Inventory and preparation for renovation: Two employees of the social enterprise are conducting an inventory of the premises and preparing documentation for the next phase of applications and renovation work.

Partnership development and applications: A collaboration with Spelkollektivet (the Swedish Game Collective) has been confirmed. The association Witchcraft Society has submitted an Interreg Aurora application focused on youth culture linked to a physical place in Jörn. Dialogues with Skellefteå municipality, Region Västerbotten and Arctic Game are ongoing.

1.5.2 Stakeholders Involved

- Local/regional authorities
- Civil society organisations
- Youth organisations
- Businesses / SMEs
- Universities / research centres
- Digital innovation hubs
- Other) successful game developers investing in the future.

1.5.3 Resources Used

- Human resources

CEO of Creative Crowd AB (strategic management and project coordination), two employees at GameDev Lodge Jörn AB (svb) (inventory and operational work), board members and collaboration partners from Witchcraft Society, Arctic Game, Spelkollektivet, and representatives from Skellefteå municipality and Region Västerbotten.

- Technical resources

The property in Jörn (acquired by GameDev Lodge Jörn AB). Digital tools for project management, communication and application work. Expertise in the games industry, EU funding and business development.

- Funding sources (EU, national, regional, private sector)

Private sector: a private donation in the millions (sek) from a founder in the Nordic games industry enabled the property acquisition. EU: Interreg Aurora application submitted by Witchcraft Society focused on youth culture linked to a physical place. Interreg NPA: the InnoGS project has funded the strategic development work within the framework of Creative Crowd's participation. National and regional funding is being sought for the renovation phase.

1.6 Thematic Categorisation (Tick all that apply)

2 Digital Technologies

- Digital platforms for participation
- Open data solutions
- Digital twins / GIS / mapping tools
- AI supported
- Immersive tech (VR/AR) for community engagement
- Gamification
- Other (please, name)

3 Co Creation Methodologies

- Digital platforms for participation
- Participatory design
- Living labs
- Citizen assemblies
- Hackathons
- Digital consultation tools
- Collaborative prototyping
- Other As it will be a collective for game devs it will be a co-created creative space.

4 Youth / Minority Groups Engagement

- Digi Tailored outreach to youth tal platforms for participation
- Inclusion of minority or marginalized communities
- Capacity-building for underrepresented groups
- Mentorship or ambassador programmes
- Co creation activities specifically targeting these groups
- Other (please, name)

4.1 Results and Impact

4.1.1 Quantitative Results (if available)

- Number of participants
- Number/percentage of youth or minority participants
- Digital tools deployed
- Data/outputs generated

4.1.2 Qualitative Results

Describe how the initiative improved territorial governance, participation, empowerment, or inclusiveness.

The project has demonstrated a new model for rural inclusion where the pull of a creative industry is used to attract in-migration to a rural community. By establishing a social enterprise that owns the property, a lasting institutional presence is created that is not dependent on project funding.

The network around the project – with active actors from industry, civil society and the public sector – demonstrates broad support for the model and that it is seen as relevant by many stakeholders in northern Sweden. The partnership with Spelkollektivet gives the project a direct connection to a national network of game developers and lends the community credibility as a destination for professionals in the industry.

4.2 Innovation and Added Value

- What is innovative about the approach or technology?

Game Village Jörn combines three elements that rarely come together: the games industry as a pull factor for rural areas, social enterprise as an ownership structure, and a lifestyle-driven in-migration model. Rather than recruiting residents through jobs, an environment is created where people want to live because they share a passion and a lifestyle. The social enterprise's ownership of the property ensures that value stays in the community and that the project cannot be bought out or privatised.

- How does it differ from traditional community engagement?

Traditional community engagement in rural areas focuses on mobilising existing residents. Game Village Jörn reverses the logic and uses gaming culture's inherent sense of community and identity to recruit new people to the place. The engagement is not top-down but built on participants being co-creators of the place and community themselves. The social enterprise also gives participants a form of ownership that traditional housing models do not offer.

- What elements could inspire replication by other EU regions?

The model with a social enterprise owning the property is replicable across the EU. The methodology of using a passion-driven industry as a pull factor for rural in-migration can be adapted to different creative sectors. The combination of private capital and EU support (Interreg) to build initial infrastructure is directly transferable. The partnership model with a national network as a legitimacy anchor can inspire similar partnerships in other countries.

4.3 Lessons Learned

- What worked well?

The combination of a strong industry profile (games), a credible anchor name (a well-known industry founder as donor) and a clear legal structure (svb) quickly generated legitimacy and made both the donation and the property acquisition possible within a short time. The strategic work of defining the sustainability model before the individual funding solutions proved valuable: the project has from the outset had a logic that extends beyond the next application.

- What challenges were encountered?

The renovation phase requires significant capital that has not yet been secured. Navigating between multiple funding sources (EU, regional, private, national) demands high administrative capacity for a small team.

- What would you do differently?

Nothing

4.4 Transferability and Scalability

- Which aspects can be replicated elsewhere?

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- What conditions (resources, policy environment, partnerships) are needed for transfer?

Successful transfer requires: (1) a legal structure that guarantees value stays in the community (e.g. social enterprise or cooperative); (2) initial risk capital or private donations for property acquisition; (3) an existing industry community with sufficient pull to attract in-migrants; (4) municipal or regional support for the housing and establishment process; (5) access to EU funding for infrastructure and youth-related activities through programmes such as Interreg (6) individuals with skills in game dev and community building prepared to walk that extra mile to make this happen.

4.5 Links and Supporting Materials

- Website
- Video
- Tools/datasets
- Reports, publications
<https://www.canva.com/design/DAHEMyIZV7Q/DYiR3cK8X6pIUITBDkbihQ/edit>
- <https://www.norran.se/nyheter/jorn/artikel/ny-satsning-pa-spelutveckling-i-jorn-med-jorniverse/rk3e5qe1>
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- Photos/images