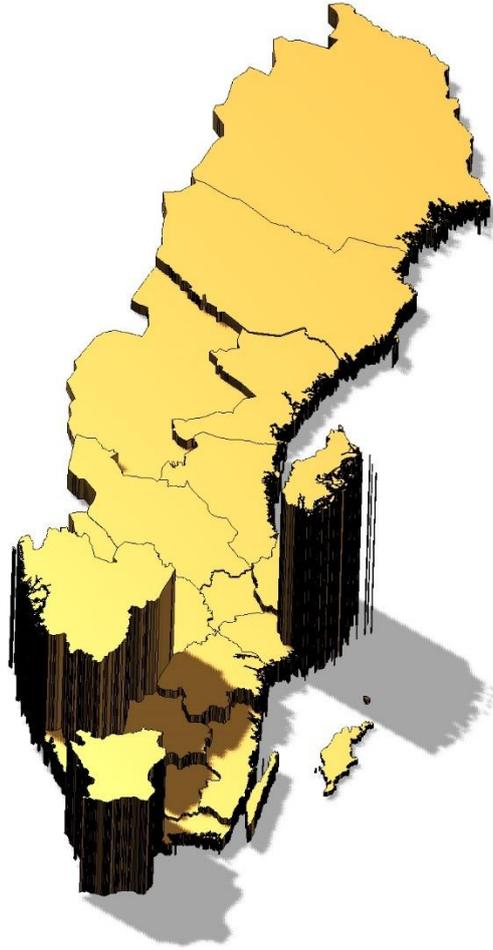




**Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development**



## **D 6.2 National Report Sweden**

**Comparing Västerbotten and Stockholm from a  
spatial justice perspective**

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RELOCAL has received funding from the European Union's  
Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under  
Grant Agreement. N° 727097

## Report Information

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Deliverable 6.2 National Report Sweden: Comparing Västerbotten and Stockholm from a spatial justice perspective</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Linnea Löfving, Thomas Borén, Timothy Heleniak, Gustaf Norlén
<b>Version:</b>	1
<b>Date of Publication:</b>	15.05.2019
<b>Dissemination level:</b>	Public
<b>Front picture:</b>	GRP by Region in Sweden, Wang, S, Nordregio

## Project Information

<b>Project Acronym</b>	RELOCAL
<b>Project Full title:</b>	Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development
<b>Grant Agreement:</b>	727097
<b>Project Duration:</b>	48 months
<b>Project coordinator:</b>	UEF

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## Abbreviations

DELMOS	Delegation against Segregation
EC	European Commission
EIP-AGRI	Agricultural European Innovation Partnership
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMC	Centre for Rural Medicine
GRP	Gross Rating Point
HBTQ	Homosexual, bisexual, trans and queer
LAU	Local Administrative Unit
NSPA	Northern Sparsley Populated Areas
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
R&D	Research and Development
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

## Executive Summary

### Background

Sweden is one of two case study countries in RELOCAL classified as ‘society-based’ welfare regime which has largely been under social democratic political governments since after the second World War. As such, Sweden aims to be inclusive both socially and spatially, though commitment to these goals has been questioned. When discussing the case studies in the Swedish national context, it is pertinent to understand the Swedish administrative system. Municipalities are self-governing entities with extended jurisdictions. The regional level is by comparison small, and the state or national level is again strong, but can in a number of issues only with difficulty interfere in local, municipal affairs. The administrative system has by OECD (2017) been described as an ‘hourglass’, with a strong central government, considerable autonomy for the 290 municipalities, and rather limited responsibilities granted to regional authorities.

### Findings

The concept of spatial justice or its direct Swedish translation ‘*rumslig rättvisa*’ is not used in Swedish national policy discourse. Neither is it used in the respective actions – in Stockholm and Västerbotten – that have been investigated in the case studies. It should also be noted that in both Stockholm and Västerbotten, the term ‘justice’ (*rättvisa*) is politically loaded and would connote leftist politics, whereas words such as ‘equal’ or ‘equal access’ is politically more neutral. Thus, instead of justice or spatial justice, other terms are used in the respective actions.

### Outlook

The interpretation from stakeholders in both case studies are that the actions were successful within the scope of the respective project, but that more needs to be done to make an actual impact. Both actions have a realistic and pragmatic approach.

In both cases, the actions rely on place-based strategies for implementation and we argue that the results are achieved, to a large extent, as a function of them being related to localized decision-making and local administrations. In Stockholm, the action is clearly built on a local municipal initiative drawing first on a local mapping of the problem at hand, then drawing on local (and external) expertise to come up with ‘realistic’ suggestions for how to address the issues.

This ‘place-baseness’ is largely related to the national political and administrative context. When comparing the two cases, the Swedish multilevel administrative system stands out as important to understand the opportunities and limitations for the respective actions, and as mentioned above the role of municipalities is crucial. In the Swedish context, municipalities are democratic, self-governing entities with extended rights (and obligations) in a row of policy fields.

## 1. Introduction

This report compares the following two case studies of the RELOCAL project:

Borén, T. (2019) The Stockholm Commission. Measures for an Equal and Socially Sustainable City, Sweden. RELOCAL Case Study N° 30/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

Löfving, L., Norlén, G. and Heleniak, T. (2019) Digital Västerbotten. Promoting Equal Standards of Living for Inland Municipalities through Digital Technologies, Sweden. RELOCAL Case Study N° 29/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

Please find additional details, analyses and material of the cases in the respective reports. The reports are available at: <https://relocal.eu>

The purpose of this report is to compare the results of the two case studies (see above for full bibliographic references) in Sweden of the RELOCAL project and discuss them in light of the national policy context. The respective case studies are analysis of two quite different actions – one in Stockholm and one in Västerbotten. Stockholm is the capital of Sweden and its largest city with a population of nearly one million persons. It has been a major destination of the many immigrants who have come to Sweden during recent decades. The Stockholm case study focus on the work done by the city to come up with grounded suggestions for how the city could become more socially sustainable and to what extent this implies a spatially just development, and the Västerbotten is a large, sparsely-populated region in northern Sweden where the population is increasingly concentrating into a few coastal municipalities making service provision in inland communities a challenge. Västerbotten case focus on digitization of inland, rural, municipalities and how this impacts on a spatially more just development (of e.g. public services).

Nevertheless, when the results of the case studies are compared from a spatial justice perspective, a number of similarities (and differences) arise. The concept of spatial justice is key in the RELOCAL-project and understood as ‘an equitable spatial distribution of resources and opportunities, and fairness in the relations of power that shape and transform the social space’ (Madanipour et al 2017, p.74). Both case studies have moreover been guided by the overall hypothesis that ‘the processes of localisation and place-based public policy can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment’, and by two overarching research questions: ‘Can spatial justice, as a fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them, be achieved through place-based strategies?’ and if so ‘Are these achievements place-bound or can they be also achieved across places and times?’ (ibid.). Both case studies relate to these type of processes and find common ground in their conceptual starting points, but since the actions are carried out from different levels of administration, they have worked under very different administrative conditions – the Stockholm case is more or less a purely municipal

action, whereas the Västerbotten case primarily should be regarded as a regional action.

Thus, when discussing the case studies in the Swedish national context, it is pertinent to understand the Swedish administrative system. Municipalities are self-governing entities with extended jurisdictions. The regional level is by comparison small, and the state or national level is again strong, but can in a number of issues only with difficulty interfere in local, municipal affairs. The administrative system has by OECD (2017) been described as an 'hourglass', with a strong central government, considerable autonomy for the 290 municipalities, and rather limited responsibilities granted to regional authorities. This means that a number of public policy questions have already been 'localised' to the municipal level, which in turn might create difficulties for public policy initiatives reaching 'down' from the national or regional levels to the local level, as municipalities might chose not to implement them.

Moreover, the Swedish multi-level system of governance is currently going through major changes, and both the Stockholm County District (*landsting*) and the Västerbotten County District (*landsting*) have from January 2019 formed 'Regions'. This means that a number of responsibilities that before belonged to the state Counties, now have been transferred to the self-governing County Districts, which in the process take the name of 'Region'. Regions, County Districts and Counties are all regional administrative structures, and the most important change from a RELOCAL perspective is that the Regions, which are self-governing, now have responsibilities for regional development (which thus up to 2018 was a state responsibility carried out via the state Counties). The change thus represents a further localization of public policy decision making as regional development now is a matter for a self-governing entity ruled by a democratically elected regional council. Since the change is very recent it is not possible to say to what extent this further localization might affect spatial justice initiatives. It does however, not seem to affect the municipalities or their jurisdictions in any direct sense.

In the RELOCAL project, Sweden and Finland represent the society based/social democratic welfare regimes. Since the financial crisis in the late 1980s, beginning of the 1990s several neoliberal policies were introduced. This continued well into the 2000s and authors argue that this is the main reasons for the large inequalities that has grown in Sweden the last 30 years (Hedin, Clark, Malmberg, 2011; Thörn, Letell, Larsson, 2012). It is argued that Sweden no longer should be considered a typical social democratic welfare stat (Bengtsson and Jacobsson, 2018). This will be discussed further when framing the cases in the national context.

## 2. The Case Studies in a National Context

### 2.1 Spatial justice in a national context

The concept of spatial justice (Madanipour et al., 2017), or its direct Swedish translation 'rumslig rättvisa' is not used in Swedish national policy discourse. Neither is it used in the respective actions – in Stockholm and Västerbotten – that have been investigated in the case studies. It should also be noted that in both Stockholm and Västerbotten, the term 'justice' (*rättvisa*) is politically loaded and would connote leftist politics, whereas words such as 'equal' or 'equal access' is politically more neutral. Thus, instead of justice or spatial justice, other terms are used in the respective actions.

In the Stockholm case 'social sustainability' (*social hållbarhet*) is used in a way that have clear overlaps with 'spatial justice'. Social sustainability is regarded as relational, and it focus both on distributive and procedural aspects, as is spatial justice, of trying to level out differences between neighborhoods in Stockholm. The action in Stockholm has a clear conceptual grounding in the founding report of the action (Skillnadernas Stockholm, 2015) where the concept of social sustainability is discussed in relation to academic literature. In short, social sustainability is in the action taken to mean:

[S]ocial sustainability is about the distribution of life conditions (*livsvillkor*) that contribute to well-being and the integrated (*sammanvägda*) grade of well-being in society. A socially sustainable development means that society's resources are distributed (*fördelas*) in such a way that it creates possibilities for more people to realize their lives through education, work and a residency (*boende*) with access to wished for qualities. It also means that the social cohesion and affinity (*samhörigheten*) with society are strengthened by way of that more people are made part (*delaktiga*) in the development of society. And it means that people's needs of safety (*trygghet*) is secured. (Skillnadernas Stockholm, 2015: 10)

In the Västerbotten case there is no clear substitute, as in the Stockholm case, of a concept that overlaps with spatial justice and is directly used in the action. Rather, the stakeholders relate to 'regional differences' and sometimes also 'regional inequalities' when discussing spatial justice. This primarily relates to differences in life conditions between the coastal urban municipalities and the inland more rural municipalities. But it is also evident that the stakeholders when discussing spatial justice relate the term to age inequalities where older people risk lagging behind the technical development and digitization of commercial and public services.

In the project description of the action Digital Västerbotten it states that the

overarching aim of the project is to develop and increase access to digital services for citizens, companies and visitors in Västerbotten och by that increase the region's growth, development, attractiveness and competitiveness. In this sense 'access to' is the closest related to spatial justice. The conceptual framing of the action comes from the Digital Agenda (Region Västerbotten, 2014a) and is more detailed described in the Regional Development strategy (Region Västerbotten, 2014b). Even though the concept spatial justice is not mentioned directly, the strategy points to the *differences* between municipalities when it comes to demographics, education level, attractiveness and competence. It emphasises the need to reduce differences, and that digital solutions are one of the tools to do that.

### **Spatial justice and related concepts in national policy**

As mentioned above, spatial justice as a concept is not used in the policy discourse in Sweden. However, the various national programmes and policies that we have singled out below (see 1.2 Capturing policies promoting spatial justice in a national context) are conceptually based on terms that can be related to spatial justice. These policies will be further described later on.

#### *Reforms to reduce segregation (Prop. 2017:1085)*

In the founding strategy (Strategy 2018) of the long-term reform program against segregation (see further below), the conceptual base could be said to be built up of three parts. The first part concerns the concept of segregation which is related to research conceptualizations and theorizing on the topic (cf. Vetenskapsrådet, 2018), and segregation is thus regarded as a spatial and relational phenomenon (e.g. a place is not segregated in itself but only in relation to other places). It moreover focus on socio-economic segregation (rather than ethnic or demographic segregation) and also relates to 'areas with socio-economic challenges' which are areas characterized by high unemployment incl. long term unemployment, high grade of people in social support, poor results in school and low grade of voter turnout (in relation to the mean in the country). Secondly the strategy's conceptual base include 'points of departure' which include statements regarding the need for long term, sector-overarching and coordinated efforts based on experiences and (research) knowledge. Importantly it also states that efforts and viewpoints of local and regional levels should be included (see further below). Thirdly, the strategy's conceptual base relates to 'perspectives'. The perspective is clearly grounded in human rights and democracy in which '[a] lack of equality (*jämlikhet*) is ... a risk for democracy and rule of law (*rättssäkerhet*)' (Strategy 2018, p.4). The perspectives also include statements regarding non-discrimination, children and youth rights, gender equality (*jämställdhet*) and equality in general (*jämlikhet*), as well as a to a number of goals in the UN Agenda 2030. The strategy does not mention spatial justice, but especially the relational aspect of the conceptualization of segregation aligns it with how spatial justice is understood in the RELOCAL project (see Madanipour 2017). Actions relating to the aforementioned strategy also include both procedural and distributional aspects in mitigating segregation,

which are thus another point of contact between the strategy and the concept of spatial justice.

*Good and equal health – a developed policy for public health. (2017/18:249)*

The aim of the policy is to ‘create societal conditions for good and equal health for the entirety of the population and stop the affectable health divisions within one generation’ (Socialdepartementet, 2017/18:249). In the health policy the concept spatial justice is best equated to ‘equal’ public health or a ‘reduction of divisions’ regarding health between different groups in society. The framing is relational, which means that the differences between groups and areas are central. Groups that are mentioned as particularly vulnerable are women, people with disabilities, people born outside of Sweden, hbtq persons and people belonging to one of the five minority language groups in Sweden. The proposition also emphasizes the spatial dimension. It states that public health is generally better in the south of Sweden than in the north and also better in urban areas in comparison to rural. However, within cities there are big divisions, as also shown in the Stockholm case study. People have the best health in rich suburbs with close connection to urban areas. From this policy a pilot that provides the County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelsen) in Stockholm and Västerbotten with a mission to develop methods for coordinating an interdisciplinary regional work for equal public health. This policy is interesting in the RELOCAL project since it has specific focus on the two Swedish case study areas- Stockholm and Västerbotten (County Administrative Board Västerbotten, 2019).

*Coherent policies for Swedish rural areas – for a united Sweden (2017/18:179)*

The overarching goal of ‘The proposition for rural area’ (Prop. 2017/18:179) is that ‘coherent rural politics promote viable rural areas with equal opportunities for business development, work, housing and welfare which will lead to a more long term sustainable development in the entire country’ (Näringsdepartementet, 2017/18:179). The connection to the concept of spatial justice is implicit as the proposition relates to ‘equal opportunities’. The policy is however also conceptualised in the framework of Sweden’s economy. It states that Sweden’s growth and development is dependent on the values that exist and are produced in rural areas and that rural areas provide energy, resources and food but also innovative solutions which are necessary for future challenges (Regeringskansliet, 2017).

### **Spatial justice in academic discourse**

Concerning the topics of the three programmes singled out and discussed above, there are considerable academic literature from various disciplines and perspectives. Regarding segregation, see e.g. Vetenskapsrådet (2018); health issues, see e.g. (Fritzell & Lundberg, 2007), and rural areas, see e.g. (Antonson and Jansson, 2011; Elmqvist, 2014). However, spatial justice as a concept is not surfacing as an important tool to understand or describe these topics in the

Swedish academic context. Moreover, and maybe more relevant, is that there is only a very limited literature drawing on spatial justice as a concept that relate to the topics of the two case studies discussed more in detail in this report.

Although justice as a concept and field of research has an established position in geography and planning as academic disciplines, with leading researchers such as David Harvey, Peter Marcuse, Don Mitchell, Edward Soja, Susan Fainstein, and Henri Lefebvre (see also Madanipour 2017), the more particular concept 'spatial justice' (*rumslig rättvisa*) has not settled with research in Swedish. A literature search in the Diva-portal ([www.diva-portal.org](http://www.diva-portal.org), 6-7 May 2019), which is a digital data base for research at 49 Swedish universities and research institutes, shows only four hits with the search entry 'rumslig rättvisa' (spatial justice), three of which are undergraduate student theses. The remaining research publication is a book by Moa Tunström, Ulrika Gunnarsson-Östling and Karin Bradley that discuss how to 'link ecological concerns with social considerations in local urban development' (2015, p. 3) and that argue that social sustainability measures in urban planning is not a guarantee for spatial justice. Rather, '[a]n expressly stated justice perspective is required in order to make sure this does not lead to exclusion, expensive housing or services only for the well off' (2015, p.46).

A broader literature search in the same database, for comparison, on the concept of 'spatial justice' (i.e searching for Swedish based research in English) give 47 hits of research texts (i.e. excluding student works). These are thus texts produced in Sweden, or with some kind of fairly strong affiliation to Sweden, but published in English and the topics cover a large spectrum of disciplines and approaches. Although all texts somehow relate to spatial justice, very few if any (as judged by titles and in some cases also abstracts) are directly related to the topic of any of the two case studies (Stockholm and Västerbotten) discussed in this report. Further broadening of the literature search and the search terms gives at hand, obviously, a longer list of relevant titles. If 'social rättvisa' (social justice) is used instead of 'rumslig rättvisa' (spatial justice), there are 660 hits in the same database, of which 267 are research publications. And with the English 'social justice' there are 2399 hits (excluding student works).

Thus, based on these exercises, it is with certainty we can conclude that 'rumslig rättvisa' (spatial justice) is used only to a very limited extent in research in Swedish. For texts in English from researchers based in Sweden or clearly related to the Swedish academic context there are more research texts but these are mainly covering other aspects than the issues of concern in the two case studies. To more fully include research related to justice based on research in Sweden, therefore, would need to consider related concepts such as 'social justice' in which there is a much larger Swedish literature in both Swedish and English.

## 2.2 Policies Promoting Spatial Justice in a National Context

### Selected national policies that addresses spatial justice

In this section, three current policies addressing spatial justice are selected and presented. The policies are also discussed in relation to EU policies.

#### *Reforms to reduce segregation (Prop. 2017:1085)*

In July 2016 the Swedish prime minister Stefan Löfven announced a 'long term program of reforms to reduce segregation 2017-2025'. The purpose with the program is to 'lift socially exposed areas and to structurally break the mechanisms of segregation' (Promemoria, n.d., p. 2). It focus on five policy areas: 1) Fight crime, 2) Break long term unemployment, 3) Lift schools and the results of the pupils, 4) Strengthen social services and reduce housing segregation and cramped living conditions, 5) Support civil society and the work for democratic values.

The reform program mentions 10 reforms in some more detail within these policy areas and specifies that a new authority – the 'Delegation against segregation' (*Delegationen mot segregation, Delmos*), from hereafter 'Delmos' – will get the responsibility to coordinate the program. Delmos got 50 million SEK (c. 4.8 million EURO) for 2017 and 100 million SEK (c. 9.6 million EURO) for 2018 and started its operations in January 2018. (See further Årsredovisning 2018.) During 2018, however, another state agency (Tillväxtverket) were handling state support to municipalities and others to counter segregation, while Delmos was setting up their basic administration.

In 2018 the Government of Sweden also decided upon a strategy that is a further development of the reform program and meant to give further detail and background, as well as direct the long-term orientation for the work in this field. The overarching aim of the strategy is: 'Reduced segregation, equal conditions when growing up and equal life conditions and good chances in life for all' (*Minskad segregation, jämlika uppväxt- och levnadsvillkor och goda livschanser för alla*) (Regeringskansliet, n.d., p.3).

In the strategy, the role of a number of state authorities is clarified in relation to the tasks at hand. The role of Delmos is made clear as an authority with a number of particular tasks but which 'mainly is a supporting knowledge authority (*kunskapsmyndighet*) that will function as a guarantee for coordination and long-term perspectives in the work to reduce and counter segregation' (Regeringskansliet, n.d., p.82). Among the tasks is also to distribute state support to county districts (*landsting*), municipalities and civil society organisations.

The latter thus point to how this public national policy translates into local action and becomes a 'local public national policy'. As evident in Löfving et al (2019, see also Borén 2019), municipalities in Sweden are self-governing entities that have extended rights and jurisdictions in a number of areas. It is therefore difficult for the state to have municipalities implement state policies without also giving the measures extra funding. Exactly how much state money is spent on counter acting

segregation in this and other ways is difficult to say, as the various reforms are spread out on a number of actors. However, in Delmos' Årsredovisning 2018, one can read that the state supported the 32 municipalities with the most challenging conditions in regard to segregation with 425 million SEK 2018 (c. 40.7 million EURO), and initially planned for 1 350 million 2019, and 2 200 million in 2020 (c. 129.2 and 210.5 million EURO respectively). However, political turmoil in autumn 2018 have drastically changed the circumstances for the state budget.

*Good and equal health – a developed policy for public health. (Prop. 2017/18:249)*  
In 2017 the County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelsen) in Stockholm and Västerbotten received a mission from the government to develop methods for coordinating an interdisciplinary regional work for equal public health. Several pilot cases are going to be implemented in 2019-2020. The County administrative boards are allowed to use 5 000 000 SEK each during 2019 to complete the mission (County Administrative Board Västerbotten, 2019). This policy is interesting in the RELOCAL project since it has specific focus on the two Swedish case study areas- Stockholm and Västerbotten.

The pilot programme derives from the latest proposition regarding public health 2017/18:249 'good and equal health- a developed public health'. Since 2003 Sweden has a collective politics for public health with an overarching goal to 'create societal conditions for good and equal health in the whole population and reduce the affectable divisions of health in one generation'. The politics of public health has 8 goals; The conditions of early life; Knowledge, competence and education; Work, working- conditions and environment; Income and possibilities for sustentation; Housing and local environment; Living condition; Control, influence and participation; An equal and health promoting health care.

In the proposition the municipalities are presented as one of several key actors to promote public health in Sweden. They have responsibility for schools and child care, support for elderly and for people with disabilities, physical planning, housing politics and emergency services, which are all important for public health (Socialdepartementet, 2017/18:249). This project is an example of a national policy that is coordinated at the regional level to give collective support to municipalities and local actors. The project aims to create better preconditions for the local promotion and preventive public health work (Länsstyrelsen Stockholm, 2019).

*Coherent policies for Swedish rural areas – for a united Sweden (2017/18:179)*  
In the summer of 2018 a new proposition for rural areas was voted through. This mean that the political steering and political goals aiming at reducing the urban-rural divide is decided over several terms and over party lines in parliament. The reason for the longer time perspective is the statement that politics for rural areas has been subject to inconsistency and short-term solutions. The government state that beyond the previous multimillion investments, the government will provide 1,5 billion SEK between 2019-2020. Thereafter 400 million will be provided annually to implement most of the proposals suggested by the rural committee. (Regeringskansliet, 2017).

The policy has an overarching goal of creating 'sustainable rural areas with equal opportunities for business development, work, housing and welfare, which in the long term will lead to sustainable development all over the country'. There are three sub goals mentioned that relate to the goals in Agenda 2030. And the third is related to spatial justice 'equal conditions for people to work, stay and live in the rural areas'. (Näringsdepartementet, 2017/18:179).

The policy states that national politics has an important role to create conditions for local and regional cooperation. The government mean that their starting point is that economic development and work opportunities must be created locally. The policy is meant to place the state closer to the citizens, especially regarding the provision of state services. The policy also aims to increase work opportunities outside urban areas and increase the number of local service centres. When it comes to rural development the government emphasise the local characteristics in different rural areas and the need to include more place-based knowledge when policy is implemented. (Näringsdepartementet, 2017/18:179).

### **Influence of EU policies on national policies**

In the Västerbotten case study we discuss how digitalisation politics is anchored in the European, national and regional work. In 2010 the European Commission presented a Digital Agenda for Europe, Sweden introduced their national digital agenda in 2011 and Regional Västerbotten put forwards the regional digital agenda in 2014. According to project leaders at Regional Västerbotten the straight line from the EU level and to the regional level is very important when applying for EU funding for digital projects (for example from the European Regional Development Fund). The European eGovernment Action Plan 2011–2015 is also closely related to the regional projects to create a smarter and more efficient public administration (Näringsdepartementet, 2011).

In the policy for rural areas (Prop. 2017/18:179), European policy is highly relevant. The emphasis on broad cooperation, between public agencies and actors on national, regional and local level as well as the private and third sector, is presented as the best way to implement European rural policy and European cohesion policy. Within the rural sector it is mentioned to widen the Agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI).

Within the Swedish policy field of public health there are also connections to European Policy even though the Swedish national Proposition (2017/18:249) for good and equal health are not specifically related to them. Inequality has for a long time been considered one of the main future challenges of the European Union. Within the European Council and the Nordic Council there is great support for a more equal public health in Europe. In 2010 the European Parliament agreed of the resolution Reducing Health inequalities in the EU. The members states are urged to implement the recommendations and try to reduce social and economic inequalities regarding health.

Västerbotten is one of 14 northern counties in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, which make up the distinct Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA), which was established in 2004 (NSPA, 2019). The Accession Treaty for Sweden and Finland to join the EU in 1995 included a special provision to promote the development and structural adjustment for these regions. Region Västerbotten has several projects with funding from EU.

With regard to the policy field of segregation, there is no clear connection between the national policy and relevant EU policies in the field. In the long term government strategy (Strategy 2018) to reduce and fight segregation, there are some mentioning of the social funds related to EU but there is no explicit link on the ideational level connecting Swedish national policy to European policy. Moreover, the Stockholm case study showed a similar pattern. The action and related policy were developed without any explicit influence from either the national level or the EU-level.

## 2.3 Framing the Cases

### Framing the cases in a RELOCAL context

The choice of Västerbotten as a case study area is grounded in the preconditions existing in the different municipalities in the region. In particular the differences between the smaller inland municipalities and the bigger coastal municipalities are relevant. A large percentage of the population in Västerbotten is concentrated in the regional centre of Umeå, which is located on the coast. The regional centre of Umeå has increased its share of the region's population from 36 to 46 percent over the time period 1990-2017, while the eight inland municipalities have declined from 21 to 15 percent of the region's total (See figure 1 in case study Digital Västerbotten). Even though some inland municipalities are doing better than others, many are struggling to maintain the same public services as the rest of the country. This is mainly because of limited economic resources due to low tax revenues because of aging population, centralisation and out migration as well as difficulty of attracting skilled labour.

The Region has an overall vision to reduce spatial injustice, even though that specific term is not used (see 1.1). The Regional development strategy from 2014-2020, named '*An attractive region from coast to mountains*' (Region Västerbotten, 2014b) states that '*the aim of establishing attractive living conditions regardless of town or municipality in the region*'. The action in focus in the RELOCAL case study, Digital Västerbotten, is one of the projects that derived from the Regional Digital Agenda. The agenda acknowledges that '*the preconditions for the county's municipalities are substantially different when it comes to resources and competence to be able to provide digital services for their citizens, business and visitors. (Region Västerbotten, 2014)*'. Hence, the aim of the project is to reduce differences through spreading of digital skill and develop e-services through cooperation. This was done through meetings and workshops with chief administrative officers as well as other people in the municipal administrations in the region. A platform was also

created where Skellefteå municipality (a big coastal municipality) shared e-services that they developed with all other cooperating municipalities.

Regarding the Stockholm case, the city is a highly socially, economically and ethnically segregated city with severe problems of exclusion, rule of law and poverty in a number of neighborhoods (Skillnadernas Stockholm 2015; Polisen 2017). As in many capital regions in Europe and beyond segregation is deepening, but the process 'is especially fast in Stockholm' (Andersson 2017:3). The differences are for example shown in the yearly earnings/capita in the different districts. The city district of Skärholmen, had the lowest mean income per capita in 2016 with 256 800 SEK/year (aprox 24 100 € a year). This in comparison to the mean income in the whole of Stockholm at 392 400 (36 900 €/year) and the highest mean income districts Östermalm, 505 500 SEK/year (47 500 €/year).

In 2014, after eight years of liberal-conservative rule, Stockholm City Council got a new leftist majority that decided to do something about the growing inequalities. In the city budget of 2015, the most important governing document of the city, the new ruling coalition stated that the development towards a more divided Stockholm should be halted and turned. Moreover, one of the four directive objectives (*inriktningsmål*) of the city up to 2018 was stated to be that Stockholm should be an integrated (*sammanhållen*) city. As one important measure to achieve this goal, the city created the 'Commission for a Socially Sustainable Stockholm' (*Kommissionen för ett socialt hållbart Stockholm*). The work of the Commission is the focus of the Stockholm case study, it is an action by the city carried out 2015–2017 that in a direct sense addresses inequalities and spatial differences in life conditions within the city. The actual work of the Commission was to produce grounded reports with realizable suggestions for change, i.e. measures the city could do to level out differences between neighborhoods. The case study focus on the reports and suggestions of change that are concerned with planning, and how they were implemented in city operations.

### **Framing the cases in the national context**

Sweden is in the RELOCAL description characterised as one of the social democratic welfare regimes along with Finland (Case study Manual, 2018:9). In comparison to many other European countries Sweden still has a rather large social security system built up by social democratic values, but the country is nowhere near the comprehensive welfare country it was from the 1960s to the early 1990s.

Because of the economic crisis in the early 1990s and the general 'neoliberal turn' spreading over the world, the social democratic party started the dismantling of the welfare system in Sweden. The aftercoming centre-right government continued the process which ended the former Keynesian economic system with 'active labour markets measures aimed at full employment; industrial restructuring and maximal economic growth; and a continuous expansion of state welfare services based on taxation and aimed at reducing inequalities and

individual risks through redistribution and universal public services' (Thörn, Letell, Larsson, 2012).

Many have argued that the neoliberal turn, beginning in the 1970s, has been beneficial for the upper class and created big inequalities both within and between countries (Harvey, 2006). The neoliberal policies in Sweden increased private provision within health care, education, social service provision. It is also argued that the political reforms in the housing market with minimum state engagement has increased inequality and social geographic polarization in Sweden (Hedin, Clark, Malmberg, 2011). According to the OECD (2015), the growth in inequality in Sweden increased by as much as one third between the mid-1980s and the early 2010s. The increase during this period was the largest among all of the OECD countries, even though Sweden still belongs to the group of most equal OECD countries (OECD, 2015).

The previous centre-right government in power between 2006-2014 adapted something they called 'the work strategy' and according to Bengtsson and Jacobsson (2018) this meant that Sweden was no longer a typical 'social democratic' welfare state but adapted a new international framework called 'Work-first, consolidation state'. The concept moves away from the former 'rights perspective' for citizens to an 'obligation perspective' and 'workfare regime'.

In this context the social democratic government went to election in 2014 focused on jobs, schools and fixing the welfare system. Their election manifest told one of a society that was breaking because of low taxes and privatization, profit pursuit in welfare institutions and unemployment (Social democratic election analysis, 2014). The social democratic party won the election and formed a government with the green party. Our selected policies are attempts from the government trying to reduce inequalities that have increased for a long time in Sweden.

The case studies compared in this report have both similarities and differences. When comparing the Stockholm region with Västerbotten Region there are some numbers that stand out. Stockholm region has 166 in GRP/capita (Index: EU28=100) while Västerbotten has 102 GRP/capita, the Swedish average being 121. The average income in 2017 also differed and was significantly higher in Stockholm (116,5) than in Västerbotten (93, 9) (National average = 100). The old-age dependency, which is heavily discussed in Västerbotten, is almost 10 percent points higher in Västerbotten (33,6) % than in Stockholm (24,2 %) (see table1. In Annex 6.3).

When we look closer within the region of Västerbotten and Stockholm municipality we see that our case study areas, Skärholmen and the inland municipalities in Västerbotten are more vulnerable than the region/city as a whole. In Västerbotten the bigger municipalities (cities), Umeå and Skellefteå weigh heavy in the statistics and pull up the numbers for the region. Umeå and Skellefteå are close to, or better, than the national average in most measurements (except old age dependency and share of population with tertiary education in Skellefteå). For example, Umeå and Skellefteå are close to the national average when it comes to income (Index: Na-

tional average = 100) at 96,8 and 95,4, while most of the inland municipalities differ between 80-90. (see table 2. In Annex 6.3).

We see that the differences between areas are much greater within Stockholm than within Västerbotten. In Stockholm the average income is 127 compared with the national average index at 100, while the district of Skärholmen has 83,4. In comparison the richest district in Stockholm, Östermalm, has 164. In the statistics we also see the mentioned patterns of segregation where more than half of the population in Skärholmen is born outside of Sweden, while other areas of the city have a share of foreign born around 16-17 %. (see table 3. In Annex 6.3).

We can conclude that the differences are bigger within the region/city than between the regions. The differences between our case study areas and bigger and richer cities/districts are invisible on the regional level (NUTS 2). An analysis and comparison on a lower level is therefore needed. On a lower level (NUTS 3) comparison we for example see that our two case study areas have similar average income/capita. Skärholmen has 83,4 while five of the eight inland municipalities differ between 80-85 (percent of the national average).

### 3. The Studied Cases in a Comparative Perspective

#### 3.1 Characterising the Cases

The action Digital Västerbotten was implemented by the Regional authorities in Västerbotten in 2015 and ended in December 2018. According to the project leaders it took about a year before the project started to give results in form of knowledge development and organisational learning in the municipal administrations. Since Nordregio started to investigate the action in the last half year of the project it was 1,5 years in of productive work. In the end of the project the main goal of creating more than 30 new e-services was reached. The overarching goal of starting a digital transformation is harder to assess. Several municipalities have made changes in the structure of the administration to include digitalisation in daily work, but the real outcome of the project will be visible future on both in regard to how the digital divide is handled but also to what extent the municipalities continue their local work.

The ‘Commission for a socially sustainable Stockholm’ is an action carried out by the City of Stockholm between 2015-2017. The action seems to have had a quicker start than the action in Västerbotten and up till 2018, 17 reports plus research reports, other background material and a ‘road map’ was created by the Commission. The last report (the ‘road map’) was however in an internal consultation round just before the election in September 2018 when the majority changed, and the Commission’s work was not prolonged. The work of the Commission however stays on within some urban administrations and the Commission has informed several steering documents as well as put social value considerations higher on the agenda.

The action Digital Västerbotten belongs both to the national policy field of digitalisation as well as the regional development strategies in the region. When discussing the action and reading strategic documents about digitalisation in the region it is clear that the action is meant to assist in the work to reduce differences in the region, even though the concrete aim is the development of 30 e-services. While the project ‘Digital Västerbotten’ has the main focus on digital services and thereby only an indirect focus on spatial justice the ‘Commission for a sustainable Stockholm’ is more clearly connected to the field of spatial justice. The Commission has an aim of *‘analysing differences in life conditions in Stockholm and to propose measures for an equal and socially sustainable city’* (quoted in Borén, 2019:2). The work of the Commission stands within the policy area of social sustainability, which in practical terms to a large extent meant levelling out differences between neighbourhoods.

## 3.2 Findings Analytical Dimensions 1-5

### Analytical Dimension 1 – Perception of spatial (in-)justice within the locality

Stakeholders of the actions in Stockholm and Västerbotten are well aware of the differences within respectively the City and Region even though they do not refer to 'spatial justice'. Interviewed civil servants in both cases mention that the term 'justice' is not used since it, in Sweden, is too connected to the left in politics (see 1.1). In the Stockholm case there is even a joke about changing 'freedom of choice' to 'justice' in all steering documents when the majority change from right (blue) to left (red) or vice versa (quoted from Borén, 2019:9), which demonstrates the political connotations of the word. In the Stockholm case they instead talk about 'social sustainability' or 'equal access to' while they in Västerbotten use 'regional differences' or 'inequalities'. Nevertheless, even if the stakeholders do not speak in conceptual terms of justice, the issue of spatial justice permeates both actions if spatial justice is understood as 'equitable spatial distribution of resources and opportunities, and fairness in the relations of power that shape and transform the social space' (Madanipour et al. 2017, p. 74). In interviews with a planning officer in Stockholm 'spatial justice' is interpreted as '*feeling the same ownership over the city*' (quoted from Borén, 2019:10) and the concept is connected to segregation and alienation. In interviews from Västerbotten 'Spatial justice' is more often referred to in the context of limited resources, public services and work opportunities.

In interviews with citizens and leaders of administrations in Västerbotten, we identify that the most central spatial boundary is the dimension between the inland and the coast. This dimension is visible in terms of geography, infrastructure (public transport), political cooperation and economic differences. Another identified spatial boundary is the north-south dimension, where 'south' often represents Stockholm. Both of these boundaries also have an embedded urban-rural dimension. Stockholm is for example both referred to as 'the south' and 'the city' but also as the power centre where decisions are made and where media is. It is clear that interviewed people in Västerbotten are not referring to people living in Skärholmen when they talk about Stockholm. Interviewed people in Skärholmen mostly compare their district with wealthier areas in the inner city of Stockholm. This seems to be the case even though a bordering neighbourhood, Mälarhöjden, also has a double mean income than that of Skärholmen.

Because of the vast distances in Västerbotten the perceived spatial boundaries are more tangible than in Skärholmen. In some interviews it is directly pointed out that living in the inland municipalities is an active choice because of the many benefits, which are not often highlighted by the media. In Skärholmen the boundary is not as clear. You can travel to the city centre in under 25 minutes. However, a strong social, economic and often ethnic spatial boundary exists and the closeness between areas with vast economic differences brings the issue of inequalities to a head. People are aware of the prejudice concerning the different parts of Skärholmen and civil society groups are trying to reclaim their area and break

stigmatization processes that usually refer to the area in relation to crime and poverty.

## Analytical Dimension 2 – Tools and policies for development and cohesion

As mentioned, many policies introduced by the Social Democratic Party (also on city level) followed the trajectory of haltering growing inequalities. When the left parties had political majority in Stockholm between 2014-2018, social sustainability had a central role. One of four directive aims of the city was that Stockholm should be an integrated (*sammanhållen*) city. According to a leading politician; trying to reduce segregation was something that had to be done: *'We have to build housing and we must decrease segregation' ...Even if we are good at that (reduce segregation) in our souls, the last decades have gone in the wrong direction'* (quoted in Borén, 2019:8). The action in Västerbotten followed a trajectory of digitalisation. Västerbotten has for the last 20 years emphasised the role of digital solutions in the region. They have a long history of advanced broad band connectivity and a focus on digitalisation, which is shown by the region's *digital agenda* (Region Västerbotten, 2014a) and the Centre for Rural Medicine (GMC). The focus on digital projects, as Digital Västerbotten, follows that trajectory.

Steering documents and directive aims are emphasized in both case studies as strong instruments in translating policy into action. More or less all decisions made within the municipal administration need to be a step in the direction of fulfilling the overall goal set by the politicians.

In Västerbotten, the vertical link between European, national and regional steering documents was important for the implementation of digital projects. The project leaders could thereafter point to the political goals in the documents when applying for money or starting new projects. The Commission in Stockholm also benefited from inspiration from visions and steering documents from other cities when they made their recommendations. Stakeholders in in both cases had a pragmatic view of the political municipal system. In Västerbotten the project leaders reached the politicians via the chief administrative officer in each municipality and in Stockholm they had a close cooperation with the Steering committee *'who work close to the politicians'* (quoted Borén, 2019:12).

The interpretation from stakeholders in both case studies are that the actions were successful within the scope of respective project, but that more needs to be done to make an actual impact. As mentioned, both actions had a realistic and pragmatic approach and the stakeholders pushed for finding solutions and suggestions that are doable and can make real difference. In a sense the new trajectory Stockholm city was following ended, or at least halted, when the political majority changed in 2018 and the Commission did not have a continued mission (even though the work still lives on in several urban administrations). In Västerbotten the action was a response to earlier projects where they realised that change need to happen top-down and that the municipalities in the region need equal competence about

digitalisation. How this will develop in the future is dependent on the individual municipalities. The digitalisation question has a broader support across party lines and how to deal with it is not as politically charged as how best to deal with 'segregation' or 'vulnerable areas'.

### **Analytical Dimension 3 – Coordination and implementation of the action in the locality under consideration**

In the formal sense, the administrative structure of Sweden and the role of independent, self-governing municipalities stand out as pertinent for issues of power and implementation of the actions. Within the municipal administrations, routines might differ widely between municipalities since each of Sweden's 290 municipalities are comparatively free to organise their work the way they seem fit, as long as they keep within the bounds of national legislation.

Comparing the cases in relation to how the actions are implemented highlights differences and similarities when it comes to issues of power. In the Stockholm case, the action is initiated, owned and carried out by the municipality with no reliance on any other administrative structure above it. The action is thus just dependent on the political will of local politicians and how they chose to direct it. In the Västerbotten case, however, the action needs to engage the local municipalities who are free to join or opt out. This thus involves persuasion and discussions overcoming among other things informal centre-periphery relations (where the periphery sits on the power) with a row of municipalities in order to (have them) carry through the action.

Nevertheless, a number of similarities between the cases can be noted. In both cases the role of administrations seems to be where a fair amount of power is practically located. Politicians are deciding based on material (*underlag*) from the civil servants, who produce this based on their interpretations of the political will of the council. In the Stockholm case there is also evidence of a 'personalised power vertical, that is the chiefs of administration follow the will of their respective city commissioner and if the commissioner does not prioritise issues related to the action, the respective administrations do not engage forcefully enough with the issues at hand, even if the municipal council has decided otherwise.

In relation to the key issues of the RELOCAL project, the administrative structure of Sweden thus enables pro-active, forceful localised action to increase spatial justice as in the Stockholm case, but may also encroach the possibilities of national or regional initiatives to root locally as in the Västerbotten case. Within the municipalities there are also factors that might inhibit the actual implementation of the actions which highlight the role of organisational learning. To have administrations work in certain directions it would be important that a critical mass of understanding for the issues at hand has developed within the organisation.

#### Analytical dimension 4 – Autonomy, participation and engagement

To what extent do the actions engage civic participation? In both the Stockholm and the Västerbotten cases neither of the actions are the result of engaged communities coming together and organising autonomously for or against the respective issues. Both actions are initiated and run by formal levels of power. However, even if civic participation is desirable looked upon in general among the formal stakeholders of the respective actions – and in both cases are also actively supported – it is difficult to get people to engage on their own in the respective actions.

In the action of the Västerbotten case, no grouping, formal or informal, is directly engaged and very few groups and people are engaging also in the broader issue of digitalisation of society in general in Västerbotten. In the Stockholm case, it is long known that dis-privileged neighbourhoods, in general, lacks an active scene with NGOs engaging in local urban development issues (Stahre, 2014). Interviews in Stockholm also show that far from all people (place users) in the study want to engage in issues relating to the planning and development of the place.

Nevertheless, in both cases there are examples of NGOs that engages with the issues at hand. In the Västerbotten case the local branch of a national NGO try to contribute to the overall issues, and as reported in the Stockholm case study a sub-municipal NGO is working to make their district a place '*that people want to move to, not move away from*' (quoted in Borén 2019, p. 10). However, although these and other examples of engagement exist and represent valuable contributions to issues at hand, the situation in both cases is such that it calls for critical questions of legitimacy to be raised. This is then primarily *not* related to a dis-interest of being transparent, inviting and open among the formal stakeholders of the respective actions, but rather about finding forms that function better than the ones now in use to get local people more engaged in the overall social and spatial development.

The structure of the action in Stockholm made the work of the Commission for a socially sustainable Stockholm much more transparent than the work in Digital Västerbotten. The Commission created 17 reports as well as research reports and background material (all open access) which makes the control and the information about the action easily available. In Västerbotten it was difficult finding documents or reports of what had been done, much because of the way the action was structured with focus on internal knowledge and resource sharing between the municipalities. It is however also noted in the Stockholm case that transparency is not just about availability, it is also about writing in a manner that people understand, a constant democratic problem when producing reports.

#### Analytical dimension 5 – Expression and mobilisation of place-based knowledge and adaptability

In the Västerbotten case, there seem to be no particular *mobilisation* of place-based knowledge in order to initiate the action if place-based here is considered to equal

the municipal level. Rather the action, which is a regional measure, has led to a type of knowledge transfer *to* the municipalities. However, since it was the municipalities themselves that implemented the action locally, it has increased place-based knowledge of the issues at hand. As stated by a chief administrative officer in one of the municipalities: *'the reason we reached another level in the digital transformation in our municipality is our local work'* (quoted in Löfving et al 2019:23). In that doing, the municipalities had to mobilise their own human resources who in the process developed their collective capacities and organisational structures.

The Västerbotten experience contrasts with the Stockholm case, in which the whole action is about mobilising knowledge in order to produce locally grounded suggestions for change. To a large extent this knowledge is place-based in the sense that it is built upon professional knowledge among officers in the various urban administrations plus a local mapping. The purpose of which was to create a knowledge-base underpinning suggestions for change that would not be 'party political' (i.e. ideologically prepositioned) but rather feasible and 'realistic'. In order to achieve this, the action was organised as a semi-autonomous 'special development project' to which various administrations should feed information into the action. Apart from place-based knowledge, the action also mobilised academic knowledge from external researchers that should feed research and academic understandings into the action.

### 3.3 Findings Synthesising Dimensions A-C

#### Synthesising Dimension A – Assessment of promoters and inhibitors

In both cases the politicians' will and mandate were key drivers for the outcome of the actions. In the Stockholm case the political will to address the problem of segregation and social sustainability, in particularly in a holistic perspective, is highlighted as one of the most important steps. In Västerbotten the whole action centred around involving politicians since the decisions needed for a digital transformation, for example budget prioritizations, can only happen on a political level. According to the project leaders in Västerbotten, the lack of political backing was the reason previous projects had only had limited impact.

Other similarities are the importance of devoted and hardworking civil servants and experts. In Västerbotten the project leaders worked hard towards actualizing a digital agenda and getting the politicians on board. In Stockholm it is mentioned that researchers were searching for additional funding to write the research reports for the Commission and that senior staff neglected their own health in the process of wanting to do a good job.

Trust is also put forward as important in both cases. In Västerbotten it was important that the local political board had faith in the chief administrative officer. The chiefs that were able to motivate their own local politicians were also most successful in implementing new digital changes. In one municipality a local politician describes their relationship with the chief administrative officer as a two

way-communication built on trust (Löfving et al. 2019). In the Stockholm case study one conclusion is that people who are trusted and can work relatively independent for issues they find important are often ready to go the extra mile.

According to the project leaders in Västerbotten, the direct connection from the Digital Agenda for Europe through the national and regional digital agendas and to the local implementation is vital for the formation of digital projects. As well as the connections between the Digital agenda and the Regional development strategy. In Stockholm inspiration has instead come from other cities within different city networks. The structure of the action is also mentioned by both project leaders. The (semi-autonomous) organizational form of the Commission in Stockholm and the voluntary cooperation in Västerbotten.

In Stockholm two inhibiting factors are mentioned. The first is the lack of organisational learning in form of analysis and reports not penetrating the deciding bodies of the city. Politicians would know of the Commission, interviewees say, but they have not read its reports. The second inhibiting factor is the existence of a 'personalized power vertical', meaning that even more support from the top would have strengthened the action and allowed it to go further. This is closely related to 'learnings' of previous digital projects in Västerbotten and what triggered the creation of 'Digital Västerbotten'. The realisation of how the process need to be implemented and that big changes, which is needed for a digital transformation, can only happen with political decisions.

In Västerbotten the action's potential to deliver more spatial justice is inhibited by the creation of a digital divide. Where the extent of the problem could have been better understood and recognized if more citizen interaction was included in the project. Another issue is the lack of consistency within EU-funded projects since they are outside the budget of the region and the municipalities. When the project money run out the region and municipality need to decide if they can prioritize the project within the budget. This is particularly an issue for the projects created to reduce the digital divide and help citizens with digital knowledge.

## **Synthesising Dimension B – Competences and capacities of stakeholders**

Stakeholders in both case studies argue that most drivers of spatial injustice/inequality in the areas are situated outside the competences of the action and the stakeholders. In Västerbotten the leaders of the municipality mean that the vicious circle of relocation of companies and stores which leads to outmigration which in turn leads to lower tax revenues for the municipalities can only be halted with national policies. The region and the municipality can ease the process, but bigger structural, and particular economic, changes of the system are needed, those decisions can only be made on the national level. The situation is similar in the Stockholm case. There are larger primarily national and beyond political, economic, social and legal developments over which the city has limited control,

for example regarding population growth, migration, settlement rights<sup>1</sup>, labour market relations and/or other conditions that influence segregation over which the city does not have jurisdiction.

In more concrete and local terms, however, segregation is produced and re-produced in relation to the spatial pattern of the availability of affordable housing for people with low incomes as low-priced (rental) housing is concentrated in certain neighbourhoods. Locally the city is a prime actor and the ultimate decision maker in the field of planning and therefore has some possibilities to address these issues. What this action has done that can have consequences on how the city addresses these questions in the future is to place segregation higher on the agenda as well as providing knowledge and solutions on how to continue working with it. This is also the case in Västerbotten regarding digitalisation.

Both actions have increased the local capacity for change. In Västerbotten the cooperation and common platform has given the municipalities the possibility to work with questions about digitalisation in spite of limited budgets. In Stockholm the Commission has empowered the city with analyses, reports and suggestions and through that improved the local potential for change. And also increased the potential for local place-based knowledge to have effect on policies implemented in the area.

Local capacity is referring to capacity for formal local institutions to act, this is referring to municipal administrations and not citizens or civil society. Both actions are top-down, and the power is in the hands of city, regional and municipal authorities. In Stockholm, getting people more involved and active for the sake of the district or for the city at large seems to not have radically changed relations between formal and informal engagements. Even though some development groups were active, they are to a considerable degree dependent on municipal initiative and support, especially in dis-privileged neighbourhoods. The action in Västerbotten has neither engaged civil society or changed the power relations between formal and informal engagements. An outcome of the implemented digital services is however that it has increased the individual freedom of the citizens who can contact public authorities from home without traveling long distances, on condition that they have sufficient digital skill to use the digital service.

### **Synthesising Dimension C – Connecting the action to procedural and distributive justice**

Both actions are relatively recently completed and the full effects of them remains to be seen. Nevertheless, both actions represent important first steps on a longer journey towards spatial justice. However, as spatial justice is about understanding

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<sup>1</sup> A minor change has recently been made concerning settlement rights in “EBO”, that is in the law that regulates that asylum seekers may settle where they may themselves arrange a place to live (i.e. often with fellows from their country of origin) and still keep state daily monetary allowances. The change now allows the state to withhold the allowances if the asylum seeker chose to settle in some named districts in segregated cities.

how agents and material objects 'mediate the relations between people and territories, and only in comparison with others' (Madanipour 2017: 78) it is possible already now to also conclude that both actions have contributed to spatial justice in their respective localities. In the Västerbotten case inland citizens have gotten better access to digital services (i.e. distributive justice) bringing them closer to the level of larger urban centres at the coast thus making the situation more spatially just. The inland municipalities' administrations have furthermore increased their digital competence while at the same time increased cooperation with each other and are thus pooling and sharing resources, making them comparable larger and more forceful in working with the issues at hand than if each municipality would be on its own. This type of cooperation may also be viewed as an aspect of procedural justice moderating the effects of being a small but self-governing entity, albeit it is not directly related to citizen participation opportunities or e.g. increased transparency and accountability.

In Stockholm, the action has provided grounded suggestions for change that have had a clear effect in various steering documents important to planning and building, e.g. the new Comprehensive plan contains a number of suggestions for change produced within the action. The new plan will continue to influence all new development and building projects until it is replaced. The plan, for example, is trying to steer investments in such a way that it results in positive development spirals in dis-privileged neighbourhoods which thus represent a form of distributive justice that aim to level out differences between the concerned neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods that are more affluent. In procedural terms of justice, the action has furthermore made a number of suggestions that if fully realised would increase the power of districts to influence their own development. This represents a change of power relations within the city to the benefit of districts, which are generally closer to the population.

## 4. Conclusions

This paper compared two very different actions in two quite different geographical contexts in Sweden. In Stockholm, the action concerned Stockholm's work to produce realizable suggestions to become more socially sustainable, which include ways to level out differences between neighborhoods and thus in effect fighting segregation and fragmentation. In Västerbotten, the action concerned digitalization of the countryside in order to level out differences (e.g. regarding public services) between rural inland municipalities and the urban coastal municipalities. The respective actions thus addressed concrete (and also typical) problems in the respective geographical contexts, and both actions also engage with relations between places (segregation, and rural-urban divide respectively) which are critical in a spatial justice-perspective. Following Madanipour et al (2017), justice is relational and spatial justice is about the relations between places, including both distributive and procedural aspects. Based on the above accounts (see espec. Dimension C) we can thus conclude that both actions have contributed to increase spatial justice in both a concrete sense of the measures taken and implemented (i.e. resources are more equitably distributed than before the actions, and the relations of power are not, as before, as hierarchal and asymmetrically organized in both a practical and a systemic sense). Moreover, the actions also change the conditions for future development in the respective policy fields, in short raising the level of competence and awareness on the issues at hand in the respective municipalities. The actions thus also represent important cornerstone developments in the respective policy fields of the two places.

In both cases, the actions rely on placed-based strategies for implementation and we argue that the results are achieved, to a large extent, as a function of them being related to localized decision-making and local administrations. In Stockholm, the action is clearly built on a local municipal initiative drawing first on a local mapping of the problem at hand, then drawing on local (and external) expertise to come up with 'realistic' suggestions for how to address the issues. Connected to these (the realistic' suggestions) a locally developed strategy for implementation was produced, which involved suggestions being promptly handled in city council, placed in the budget, and allocated to various administrations to implement in their practical operations. In Västerbotten, the action involved convincing a number of municipalities to engage in the action, who then on their own decided how and what to do. In this sense the municipalities increased their resources and knowledge to handle digital solutions locally. Thus, in both cases the municipal level, i.e. the lowest level of public policy decision-making in Sweden, has been crucial for the respective actions. Moreover, it is difficult to see that actors from *without* the municipalities could have done a similar or better job as the respective actions draw upon, and develops, local competencies and capacities in their respective field. Competencies and capacities would also include tacit knowledge about the local context, and values and relations within it that external actors cannot possibly possess. It could also maybe be noted that these local and context-knowledgeable competencies and capacities were not insignificant to start with, and that the actions thus were implemented in a 'competence environment' were

advanced skills in the respective fields were already in place. The actions developed upon these competences and capacities, organized and steered them towards certain spatial justice related goals.

Thus, regarding the first overarching research question in the RELOCAL project: 'Can spatial justice, as a fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them, be achieved through place-based strategies?', we can, based on the two cases and the comparison between them state that yes, spatial justice has increased in both cases and that the place-based strategies used in the respective actions have been crucial for achieving this. However, important to note is that the strategies in the two actions differ. Although both are place based, they can hardly be regarded as similar in form. Nevertheless, their 'place-baseness' is about equally strong in the shaping of the form the respective strategy have taken.

This 'place-baseness' is largely related to the national political and administrative context. When comparing the two cases, the Swedish multilevel administrative system stands out as important to understand the opportunities and limitations for the respective actions, and as mentioned above the role of municipalities is crucial. In the Swedish context, municipalities are democratic, self-governing entities with extended rights (and obligations) in a row of policy fields. They also have the right to tax their citizens, which gives them financial muscles. Administratively they are most often large organisations with expertise in a number of areas. In relation to the hypothesis of the RELOCAL project, i.e. that 'the processes of localisation and place-based public policy can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment', it may all in all be stated that, public policy has already to a large extent been localized to the level of municipalities, the advantages of which are pointed to above.

However, this also means that overarching regional, national or EU-policies might have difficulty reaching 'down' to the local level, or that municipalities risk to become 'policy islands' with little contact and input from developments from the outside. However, the two cases compared here suggests otherwise. Both have included, albeit in various modus operandi, extra-municipal input. In Stockholm, the action was without doubt a local initiative that stemmed from local politicians within the new political majority of 2014. However, interviews also reveal that before they initiated the action, responsible decision-makers looked around among other cities in Sweden for successful actions in similar fields to learn from them. Moreover, in the very directives of the action, it was stated that it should build not only on internal city expertise and local knowledge and input, but also on external (academic) knowledge as well as the experiences of other places. One can note, also, that input from state agencies or the EU seems to have been very limited in the Stockholm case. In the Västerbotten case, on the other hand, the original idea of the action comes most directly from the regional level, but to the regional level it has run via the national level from its origin in an EU initiative. It was a strategic measure from civil servants working with the Regional Digital Agenda and Regional Development Strategy to tie the documents to national and EU initiatives. A consequence of this is that the Digital Agenda has many nationally and EU funded projects surrounding it. Digital Västerbotten is one of the projects

sponsored by ERDF. In any practical sense, however, the regional level was, together with the municipalities, doing the actual work of the action. Summing up, Stockholm was reaching out to find external input whereas municipalities in Västerbotten was reached out to with an offer of input, which the municipalities accepted and then made their own. Substantial extra-municipal input was the result in both cases.

The various modus operandi of extra-municipal input to the respective localities also highlights another aspect when comparing the two cases. In Stockholm, the input might be stated to consist of 'horizontal' flows of ideas within a loosely formed city network consisting of the larger cities in Sweden, where ideas from Malmö turned out to be the most formative. In Västerbotten, it would be more fair to talk about 'vertical' flows of ideas as the action has connections not only to policy initiatives on the national level (Digital Sweden) but from there on to the EU level (Digital EU). However, it should also be noted that within the action there were extensive horizontal flows between the municipalities in the region. As stated above, both ways resulted in extra-municipal input, but it is likely that the two forms differ concerning the possibility of pushing ideas and local innovations outwards in the other direction of the respective networks.

To the extent that the two actions involved conceptual and/or procedural innovations, it is thus more likely that these might stream more easily to equally empowered cities in horizontal networks, than upwards to regional, national and supranational levels of administration and power, which are concerned with different jurisdictions. If so, this would clearly impact on the actions potential contribution to mitigating territorial disparities in the national context. Nevertheless, to the extent that the horizontal city networks are more closed and organised between self-governing municipalities (i.e. they are more exclusive to cities and municipalities) it might be more difficult for innovations to 'scale-jump' than in vertical networks, where connections between scales are open even if the main flows are more top-down than bottom-up. This would then mean, that it might be easier for the Västerbotten case to have implications for national policies than the Stockholm case, which on the other hand might have higher potential to actually influence other municipalities. To what extent the various forms matter, and how they work in practice would, however, be a question for further research.

In terms of innovations stemming from the actions, this was not the focus of analyses of the respective case studies. It is however stated in both cases that resources need to be used in a more efficient and innovative way, in order to better the life conditions and in effect increase spatial justice. In Västerbotten several digital solutions that could be considered innovative have been implemented after citizens' requests and suggestions from the Commission can also be considered innovative. But in general, the structure of the actions and organizational forms are probably the most interesting innovative outcomes of the action, and as concluded above both actions have worked to increase spatial justice.

Lastly, we might ask what the policy changes would be for bigger impact of the respective actions. In the Stockholm case, which so clearly build upon local organizational learning, organized in a way that supported the development of

increased spatial justice, the basic idea for bigger impact and reach would be, maybe not the various 'realistic' suggestions produced within the action, but again the idea and organizational form of this action as a whole. Any city could form a 'commission' of the type analysed in the Stockholm case that work from the local context and at the same time draws upon external expertise and experiences in producing what would then be localized, grounded and 'realistic' suggestions of change. Change towards a spatially more fair development. The inland municipalities in Västerbotten are requesting and working for more cooperation between municipalities. They are very aware of the importance of sharing resources if sparsely populated areas are going to survive in the future. In Västerbotten cooperating around digitalization was facilitated by already existing structures of cooperation between the municipalities. But this form of cooperation has advantages and can be useful for areas with similar challenges elsewhere.

Regarding the relationship towards European Union, Västerbotten has much stronger links to EU funds and EU policy than Stockholm. As mentioned previously, Västerbotten is part of NSPA (Northern Sparsely Populated Areas) which received a special provision when Sweden entered the EU in 1995. It is possible that Västerbotten because of this has a history of applying for EU funds and because of the differences in economy and population between Stockholm and Västerbotten, also is on receiving end of them. In Västerbotten EU funded projects are often used as pilot cases for innovative ideas. Even though it is problematic that the project period often is short and that the municipal or regional authorities will have to continue funding the project when the funding runs out, it is an efficient way to test projects before implementing them full scale. Region Västerbotten have several projects, in the field of digitalization and other fields, receiving funding from EU, especially from ERDF. In Stockholm the influence from EU seems limited and the city actually supports the subsidiarity principle in its EU-policy. Stockholm on the other hand are more inspired and cooperate more with other cities in different inter-city networks.

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## 6. Annexes

### 6.1 List of Indicators

The subsequent list of indicators is identical to the one provided by NORDREGIO for the data availability on NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 level (see also D 2.1) and helps us to contextualize the case study both within the country and across countries. As most cases will be below NUTS 2 and also below NUTS 3 level, we ask all partners to provide the information below at the spatial level of the particular case. If the case does not match with an administrative or statistical entity, please provide the most fine-grained data that you can get (e.g., LAU-1, LAU-2 or a national classification which then needs to be explained).

#### Indicators that should be provided in the national case study reports<sup>2</sup>

<b>Indicator 1_1</b>		Sweden	Västerbotten (NUTS2 - SE33)	Stockholm (NUTS2 - SE11)
<b>Name</b>	Income of households	22200	20800	26000
<b>Indicator 4</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Economic activity rates	82,1	82,1	84,1
<b>Indicator 5</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Employment rates	76,2	77,2	78,5
<b>Indicator 6</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Unemployment rates	7,0	5,8	6,5
<b>Indicator 7</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Youth unemployment rates	18,9	15	17,7
<b>Indicator 8</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Long term unemployment rates	18,3	15,4	19
<b>Indicator 10_1</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Life expectancy	82,2	81,4	82,7
<b>Indicator 14</b>				
<b>Name</b>	NEET	8,8	8,2	8,9
<b>Indicator 24_1</b>				
<b>Name</b>	Total population	9 851 017	263 378	2 231 439
<b>Indicator 28</b>				
<b>Name</b>	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	16	17,3	13,1

Notes: Data are for 2013 except for population data which are for 2016. Data are from Eurostat.

<sup>2</sup> The precise definitions of all indicators can be found in RELOCAL D 2.1. (including year)

## 6.2 Additional information

Region	Gross Regional Product (PPP) per capita 2017. Index: EU28=100	Old age dependency ratio 2019 (pop 65+ as share (%) of pop 15-64)	Share of foreign born (%) 2018	Employment rate 2017 (Employed 15+ as share of pop 15-64)	Average income 2017 (Index: National average = 100)
Stockholm	166	24.2	25.4	82.7	116.5
Uppsala	114	29.1	18.0	79.5	100.1
Södermanland	91	37.6	20.0	77.9	93.1
Östergötland	104	32.7	16.2	77.6	94.1
Örebro	107	34.5	16.6	79.1	95.4
Västmanland	103	35.8	20.8	76.9	93.2
Jönköping	110	33.8	17.8	83.9	91.0
Kronoberg	114	34.7	20.1	78.9	87.7
Kalmar	92	41.3	14.3	82.3	92.3
Gotland	90	42.1	7.5	84.9	93.7
Blekinge	89	39.3	15.2	77.9	100.6
Skåne	106	31.3	22.1	77.5	99.0
Halland	93	35.7	14.0	84.4	89.9
Västra Götaland	124	30.6	19.0	81.1	92.7
Värmland	96	39.1	13.4	79.1	96.0
Dalarna	99	40.6	12.9	82.1	92.1
Gävleborg	96	39.4	13.5	77.8	91.8
Västernorrland	104	39.9	11.2	80.7	94.9
Jämtland	98	38.5	10.1	85.7	90.5
Västerbotten	102	33.6	10.6	79.6	93.9
Norrbottn	121	38.7	11.6	80.3	97.0
SWEDEN	121	31.7	19.1	80.6	100
EU28	100	30.5	11.7	67.7	n/a

**Table 1.** Data over Swedish Regions . Data sources: SCB and Eurostat (GDP)

	Municipality	Share (%) of population with tertiary education	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Youth unemployment rate (15-24 years)	Average income 2017 (Index: National average = 100)	Municipal tax rates	Old-age dependency (65+ as share (%) of 15-64)
Coastal municipalities	Nordmaling	22.2	80.0	8.6	28.0	87.5	34.6	47.5
	Bjurholm	21.7	82.4	7.2	23.5	82.8	34.5	54.2
	Vindeln	23.6	84.7	5.4	19.3	86.6	35.0	50.6
	Robertsfors	26.1	83.6	5.8	20.0	87.6	34.5	44.8
	Vännäs	30.3	82.0	6.2	29.4	91.7	35.0	35.7
	Umeå	49.4	77.5	4.9	15.9	96.8	34.2	25.4
	Skellefteå	31.0	81.1	6.2	22.4	95.4	34.0	39.3
Inland municipalities	Storuman	24.1	81.6	6.0	22.9	85.8	34.5	50.2
	Sorsele	22.0	85.8	4.8	16.1	84.4	35.0	50.1
	Dorotea	17.5	82.2	7.9	27.2	83.3	35.2	57.5
	Vilhelmina	21.7	77.7	10.0	29.5	81.9	34.8	44.6
	Åsele	22.1	76.2	9.4	22.9	80.2	34.5	54.7
	Lycksele	25.8	82.1	6.9	21.8	90.0	34.4	42.2
	Norsjö	18.7	80.9	6.6	21.2	86.6	34.7	49.2
	Malå	19.9	87.5	5.7	21.4	92.0	34.7	48.5
	<b>Swedish average</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>78.9</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>31.9</b>

**Table 2.** Data over municipalities in Västerbotten. Data sources: SCB and Eurostat (GDP)

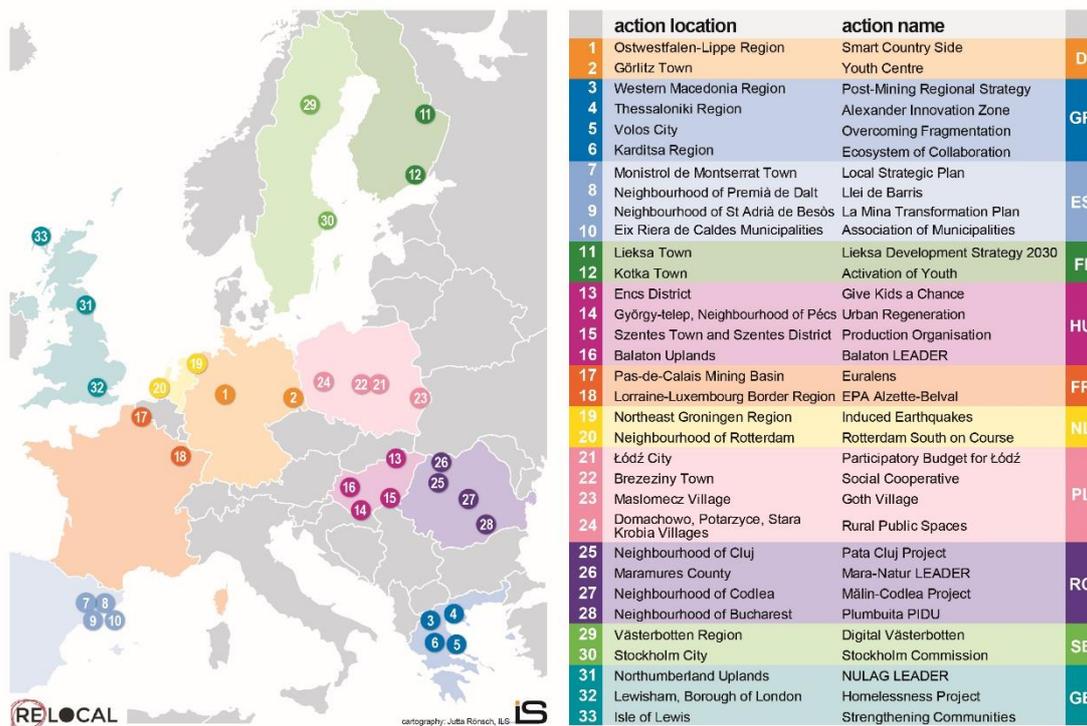
District	Share (%) of foreign born 2018	Open unemployed as share (%) of population (18-64 years) 2018	Average income 2017 (Index: National average = 100)	Employment rate (20-64 years) 2018	Average number of days of leave of absence due to sickness and rehabilitation 2018	Share (%) of population who receive economic aid 2018
Rinkeby-Kista	59	6.5	82.1	79.5	27.2	7.2
Spånga-Tensta	41.7	5.5	102.5	70.5	20.5	5.7
Hässelby-Vällingby	32.6	4.3	107.5	76.8	23.2	3
Bromma	16.8	2	147.6	84.4	14.4	1.2
Kungsholmen	17.8	1.7	153.0	85.4	12.2	0.4
Norrmalm	18.3	1.7	160.3	79.5	11	0.4
Östermalm	19.7	1.7	164.0	76.3	10.3	0.3
Södermalm	17.8	2.1	134.6	83.2	15.5	0.8
Enskede-Årsta-Vantör	31.5	3.2	111.1	80.6	17.9	3
Skarpnäck	21	2.9	111.5	81.6	20.7	2.4
Farsta	25.8	3.7	104.7	78.1	23.3	2.7
Älvsjö	18.7	2.5	130.6	83.2	17.4	1.4
Hägersten-Liljeholmen	18.9	2.3	124.1	84.2	16.4	1.3
<b>Skärholmen</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>83.4</b>	<b>67.4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>5.1</b>
STOCKHOLM	25.2	2.9	127.3	79.5	17.3	2.7

**Table 3.** Data over districts in Stockholm City. Data source: City of Stockholm

## The RELOCAL Project

EU Horizon 2020 research project ‘**Resituating the local in cohesion and territorial development**’ –RELOCAL aims to identify factors that condition local accessibility of European policies, local abilities to articulate needs and equality claims and local capacities for exploiting European opportunity structures.

In the past, especially since the economic and financial crisis, the European Social Model has proven to be challenged by the emergence of spatially unjust results. The RELOCAL hypothesis is that **processes of localisation and place-based public policy** can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment.



The research is based on **33 case studies in 13 different European countries** that exemplify development challenges in terms of spatial justice. The cases were chosen to allow for a balanced representation of different institutional contexts. Based on case study findings, project partners will draw out the factors that influence the impact of place-based approaches or actions from a comparative perspective. The results are intended to facilitate a greater local orientation of cohesion, territorial development and other EU policies.

The RELOCAL project runs from October 2016 until September 2020.

Read more at <https://relocal.eu>

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