



**SHERPA**  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

## GOVERNANCE IN RURAL AREAS



### MAP NORRBOTTEN, SWEDEN

The MAP Norrbotten is centered around the northernmost region in Sweden. The group consists of civil society and businesses, academic research expertise, national and regional representatives as well as LEADER organisations.

The region has experienced revolutionary changes in the last ten years due to the rapid growth in green and industrial investments. This growth, together with the existing large distances, has created a need for improved cooperation between public actors and local rural actors to ensure an inclusive digital transformation process. While there are ongoing participatory digitalisation projects, there is also a need to strengthen governance and cooperation between public actors.



### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Future rural policy

- Investigate ways, both at national and EU level, to diversify the financing alternatives for support to local development to receive the maximum output.
- Restore the holistic perspective on rural areas.
- Prioritise spatial justice on the national agenda.
- Designate one actor with the main responsibility for rural issues.
- Employ more coordinators on the regional level to test already existing solutions.

#### Future rural research

- Benchmark the realities of rural areas in Sweden.
- Compare and evaluate the long-term effects and impacts of LEADER in different countries and regions.
- Establish inclusive research teams with representatives from academia, civil society and policy.
- Conduct research on governance processes for rural areas.
- Apply spatial justice as a theory in terms of the urban-rural dichotomy.

## KEY STRENGTHS

- Strong engagement from people in rural Norrbotten to fight for the existence of their locality.
- People get organised in cooperatives and economic associations to influence local and municipal governance. The large engagement in rural areas should however be nuanced by the fact that all municipalities are different, and some are more vocal and resilient than others, and commitment also varies over time.
- Digital services and tools as instruments to enhance the cooperation in and between rural areas.
- Strong sense of community, security and nature.

## KEY NEEDS

- Discuss spatial justice and fair development in rural areas.
- Give rural questions a more central position in all administrations.
- Appoint one coordinating actor to be responsible for rural issues in the region as a lack of clear responsibility creates confusion. Moreover, several actors have disappeared from the region, leading to a gap in rural officers at regional administrations.
- Focus on intersectionality and equality in governance processes. Include different groups in the population and broaden inclusion.
- Increase the use of digital services and work with digital inclusion.



## EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

### Research project DigiBy

Digiby is a digital service project that began in 2019 to promote digitalization for service development in rural areas. The project has increased coordination of public and commercial services, developed service solutions, supported vulnerable areas, and invested in new technical solutions such as digital venue, parcel boxes, support for bookmobiles, and digital locks.

