

RISE

Regional Integrated Strategies in Europe

Targeted Analysis 2013/2/11

ANNEX 4: Case Study Västerbotten

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RISE CASE STUDY REPORT – Västerbotten SWEDEN

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GLOSSARY

CAB	County Administrative Board
CC	County Council
DP	Detailed Plan
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
MLG	Multi-Level Governance
NSPA	Northern Sparsely Populated Areas
RUP	Regional Development Program
RUS	Regional Development Strategy
RTP	Regional Growth Program
SFS	Swedish Code of Statues
TEN	Trans European Network

Within the ESPON funded project *Regional Integrated Strategies in Europe: Identifying and exchanging best practice in their development* four case studies for comparison are produced. The four regions are Birmingham/West Midlands in the United Kingdom, Region Sealand in Denmark, the Randstad Region in the Netherlands and finally Västerbotten in Sweden. In this case study the case of Västerbotten is presented and analysed. The overall aim of the project and also this case study is to understand and analyse how actors involved in developing the region can achieve higher levels of efficiency through increased integration of ambitions, resources and efforts.

Initially a description of the politico-administrative system for regional development in Sweden and more specifically in Västerbotten is presented. This section relies mainly on written sources (laws, regulations and policy documents) and interviews with officials responsible for or involved in policy implementation. Once this picture is presented it is somewhat contrasted by the perceptions, attitudes and experiences that emanates from a number of interviewees representing organisations in a couple of collaborative arrangements related to policy implementation. Finally, a regional outlook is provided with the ambition to position Västerbotten and its regional development actors in larger contexts, where strategic alliances and networks are the main focus. This section is based on a mix of the data sources mentioned above.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

Sweden's political system is organized on three levels; the parliament at the national level, the County Council (CC; *landsting*) at regional level, and the municipalities at the local level. State administration is mainly organized on these three levels too, the state at national level, County Administrative Boards (CAB; *Länsstyrelse*) at the regional level (county; *län*¹) and local level with branches of various state agencies, such as social security, public employment services etc. Especially in the administrative organization there are numerous examples of state functions that follow other spatial logics. However, this three tier system has long been the basic organizing principle, but it has been changing during the last fifteen-twenty years.

Of greatest importance is Sweden becoming a member of the European Union (EU) in 1995 which added a fourth tier to the political and administrative organization, the supranational level. Added to this is the changing character of the internal regional organization in Sweden, which was gaining momentum at roughly the same time. Pilot regions of Skåne and Västra Götaland were set up during the 1990's. They were and are self-governed by elected bodies and they combine functions previously assigned to County Councils and CABs, such as responsibilities for infrastructure planning, regional development, health care and culture. They are now permanent institutions

¹ There is also a historical region named Västerbotten, a *landskap* as opposed to *län* (county). They do not cover the same territory. Any mentioning of Västerbotten in this report refers to the County Västerbotten, which is the main state regional organization, established first in 1634 and in Northern Sweden in 1810 (<http://www.ne.se/lang/lan>).

(Lidström et al 2009). From 2003 it is possible to establish municipal co-operative councils at the regional level. They are formed by municipalities and County Councils and they can assume responsibilities for among other things regional development. The governing bodies are usually indirectly elected, appointed by each member organization respectively (SFS 2002:34). In Västerbotten such a body is setup since 2008, *Region Västerbotten* (more on this later), who is responsible for regional planning and development. These, and other, changes all result in a more diverse societal organization at the regional level than used to be the case in a more “mono-structural” Sweden.

As for the formal planning in Sweden, the municipalities have a very strong position since they have a physical planning monopoly. They have the right and the obligation to decide what to do with land and water resources within their territorial borders. Of general importance are comprehensive plans that should present a general view of the use of the entire territory. Of legally binding and specific importance are the detailed plans (DPs) appointing functions to certain zones (housing, industry, recreation etc.). They are mainly used in urban areas. The most important limitation to the municipal planning monopoly is when reserves are appointed for certain functions of national interest. Military functions, infrastructure along main planned routes, recreational, nature and culture reserves are examples of functions that the state can opt for. However, any reservation needs to be negotiated with relevant municipalities (Gradén 2011).

The regional level is in relation to physical planning fairly weak. CABs have counselling functions with regards to health, safety, national reserves, environmental quality, as well as provide inventories and data on regional level. They are also responsible for processing and handling of appeals related to municipal planning, e.g. a DP

<http://lansstyrelsen.se/lst/sv/amnen/Samhallsplanering/>.

Any agent in the Swedish planning system can setup strategies and programmes for achieving their objectives, i.e. other than mandatory. Related to regional growth and development the formal responsibilities for strategic planning are assigned to municipal co-operative bodies (most common), CABs (which was the only case previously; now – only where no municipal co-operative bodies exist) or the two regions of Skåne and Västra Götaland.

It should further be noted that the municipalities earn revenues from local income taxation, as do the County Councils and the state, whereas the municipal co-operative boards lack similar funding mechanisms. Strategic planning for regional growth and development is then, relatively speaking, weaker in terms of political mandate and funding than are actors involved in physical planning. Policies and structures for the promotion of economic growth and development are presented in the next section.

Planning for regional growth in Sweden

The fundamental cornerstone of policies for economic growth in Sweden is the assumption that national growth depends on regional and local growth processes. These processes are then assumed to be best governed (in a

wide sense) and nurtured through regional expertise and action. In order to support these processes the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications has developed a “National strategy for Regional Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Employment 2007-2013” (*En nationell strategi för regional konkurrenskraft, entreprenörskap och sysselsättning 2007–2013*). Ambitions and actions presented in the national strategy will support competitive regions and individuals in Sweden to achieve the main objective, “dynamic development in all areas of the country with greater local and regional competitiveness” (<http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/2112/a/19597,091204>). This is presented in a more technical way as: “effective, sustainable local labour-market regions which offer high levels of service throughout the country” (Näringsdepartementet 2007, p.6). The contents in the regional growth approach relates to other policy areas, also mentioned in the strategy, national employment policies and to EU cohesion policy.

A number of areas are prioritized and of particular interest:

- Combining environment and entrepreneurship
- World class business and innovation climate
- Knowledge and skills
- Culture and creativity
- Local and regional influence over well-functioning communications
- Cross-border growth efforts
- Balanced sectorisation and efficient government agency structure
- Strengthened development capacity in rural areas
- Access to public and commercial services

Within this framework four thematic priorities are outlined in the strategy:

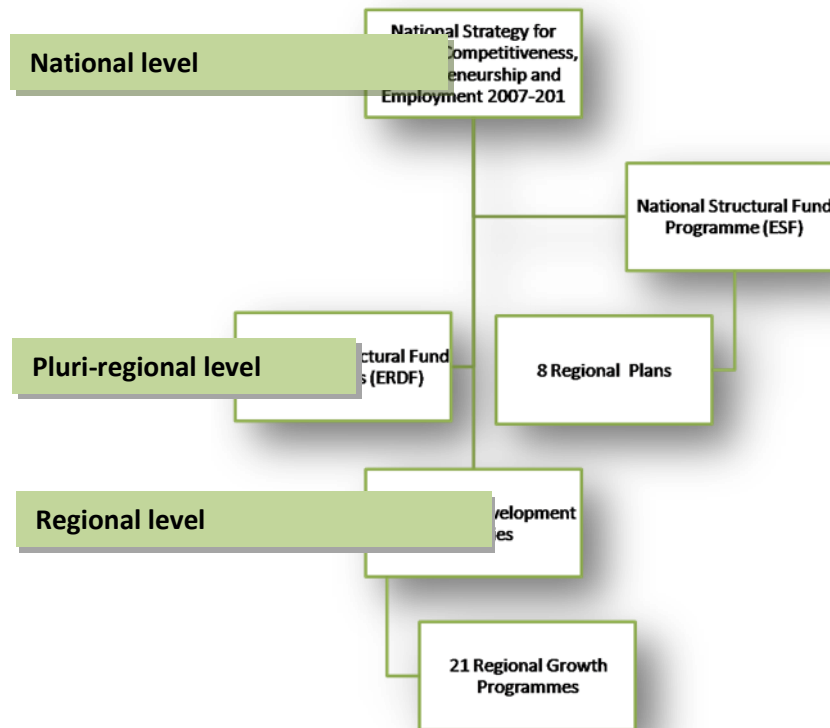
- Innovation and renewal
- Skills supply and improved labour supply
- Accessibility
- Strategic cross-border co-operation.

Further, the strategy specifies guidelines for implementing EU Structural Fund Programmes, Regional Development Programmes (RUP), Regional Growth Programmes (RTP), Regional Structural Fund programmes for Regional Competitiveness and Employment, and Territorial co-operation programmes.

In the strategy guidelines for the implementation of EU cohesion policy is presented, where the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) are the most important funds. Structural Fund resources are mainly directed towards innovation and renewal and accessibility.

Below is an overview of the system promoting regional growth for the years 2007-2013, i.e. the same interval as in the present EU programming period (figure 1). It is the first time the entire regional development system is adjusted to EU programming, in itself, an indication of the importance of EU in Swedish regional development.

Figure 1. Policy organisation for regional growth in Sweden.



Source: Näringsdepartementet 2007, p.29.

Key actors are implicitly indicated in the chart. The *Swedish Government* through its *Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications* is responsible for the overall guidance and strategic decision making. Also on national level, the national programme for the ESF is managed by the *Swedish ESF Council (Svenska ESF-rådet)*.

At the pluri-regional level the ESF Programme is organized in eight regions within which the ESF Council works in partnerships with local actors and representatives of the labour-market organizations. The Managing Authority of the ERDF is the *Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket)*. Eight ERDF-programmes have been produced on regional level and based on existing Regional Development Strategies and Regional Growth Programmes.

Regional Development Strategies and Regional Growth Programmes are the responsibility of *County Administrative Boards (CAB)*, *regions* and/or *regional co-operative councils (kommunala samverkansorgan)*. The CABs previously implemented government decisions within regional development. As mentioned in the introduction, co-operative municipal bodies are now important regional actors and in majority as responsible for regional development. In Västerbotten the municipal co-operative body is *Region Västerbotten* (see *Strategy Analysis* below for further details). They are since

2008 responsible for the promotion of regional growth and development. They are also responsible for Västerbotten's regional development strategies.

Strategies for regional development in Västerbotten

There are a number of formal regulations and policies that guide regional development in Västerbotten, and other Swedish regions. These are the most relevant, zooming in from national legislation to Västerbotten strategic documents:

- Swedish Code of Statutes (SFS) law (2002:34) and law (2010:632, valid from January 1, 2011) on the establishment of co-operative municipal bodies in counties (*om samverkansorgan i länen*)
- An ordinance of importance for regional development is SFS 2007:713 on regional planning for economic growth
- National Strategy for Regional Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Employment 2007-2013
- Regional Development Plan 2007-2013 (*Regionalt utvecklingsprogram*), RUP
- Regional Development Strategy 2007-2013 (revised RUP for 2011-2013, *Regionalt utvecklingsstrategi*), RUS
- Regional Growth Programme 2011 (*Regionalt tillväxtprogram*), RTP11

As for the *laws on co-operative municipal bodies*, they set the legal foundation for Region Västerbotten. According to the ordinance a strategic plan should be established for the region, and it should be implemented through third party involvement. They are also made responsible for the resourcing of development activities through co-ordination of EU and national funds. The law is fairly open in terms of how those tasks should be implemented, and leaves it to Region Västerbotten's discretion.

The Ministry of Industry is responsible for the national regional development policy and EU cohesion policy through the *National Strategy for Regional Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Employment*. The national strategy is: "a platform for a holistic approach and sector co-ordination for regional competitiveness, entrepreneurship and employment. At the regional level the Regional Development Programmes have the same function" (Ministry of Industry 2007, p.29). All parts of Sweden contribute to economic growth and sustainable development, according to the strategy document. The way to achieve that is through functioning and sustainable local labour market regions with a good service level in all parts of the country. This is done through:

- Improved governance in public administration
- Enhanced regional responsibility for development promotion, and a holistic approach
- Improved division of responsibilities between state and local and regional authorities
- Learning programming
- Regional benchmarking for change
- Co-operation with the EU structure and regional policies
- Targeted measures

Any activity undertaken within the Swedish regional development policy, on any level, by any actor, is to follow the four priorities presented in the strategy:

- Innovation and renewal (innovative milieus, entrepreneurship)
- Improved skills and increased labour supply (education for professions and skills improvements, job promotion)
- Accessibility (regional enlargement, IT infrastructure and services)
- Strategic cross-border co-operation

Of specific, if not strategic, importance is northern sparsely populated peripheries and the larger cities.

In 2010 slight changes were introduced into the national strategy in line with scheduled programme updates. These changes were further necessitated through the OECD Swedish Territorial Review presented in 2009, the adoption of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy and other global events and changes. The overall ambitions are the same still, but with some adjustments:

- Strengthened focus on green growth, service innovations and improved co-operation between regional growth, labour and education policies.
- Contribute to the Baltic Sea Strategy implementation
- Demographic challenges, internationalisation and sustainability (environment, climate and energy, equality, integration and diversity), i.e. horizontal policy aspects, should be considered and included to a larger extent
- Clarified role of state agencies in regional growth promotion
- Strengthened regional leadership and increased harmonisation between plans and strategies on different administrative levels and between policy sectors

Process oriented dialogue is clearly stressed in the national strategy. Vertical dialogue and co-ordination of the RUP's, should evolve in a dialogue with the Ministry. Once priorities and objectives are in place, a national forum for on-going political dialogue between national and regional representatives is established. Among other things the forum activities will clarify the regional point of view to the Government. A similar dialogue between the regional and local levels is encouraged. Horizontal and on-going co-ordination on the national level will take place through thematic ministry working groups along the priorities identified in the strategy.

The *Regional Development Programme* (RUP) 2007-2013 is owned by Region Västerbotten, the co-operative municipal body, and defines the visions, prioritised strategy areas and measurable goals for future development of the region.

The RDP is divided into five strategy areas:

- Promote the environment, culture, health, an attractive urban environment, and good living conditions;
- Development of trade and industry;
- Skills and labour supply;
- Accessibility and infrastructure; and

- International co-operation and networking.

During 2010 a revision of the RUP was initiated, which resulted in a *Regional Development Strategy* (RUS). As with the revision of the national strategy, the new RUS is motivated by the OECD Territorial Review of Sweden, the adoption of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy and global events and challenges. However, the RUS is somewhat newer meaning it also includes the EU2020 strategy, thereby noting the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth ambitions. Therefore six focus areas (same as RDP) and 19 priorities are identified (and further clarified as compared to the RUP) for the region of Västerbotten:

- Improved skills and increased labour supply
- Increased net in-migration
- Infrastructure and accessibility
- Developed industry and entrepreneurship
- International co-operation and networking
- Culture

The national strategy stressed co-operation and networking along vertical and horizontal lines. The same approach is valid for the RUP even though there are few explicit formulations with reference to cross-cutting issues, save for the implicit wording: “The RUP form the basis of co-operation between local (municipal) development plans, comprehensive plans (*översiktsplaner*), regional, national, and European strategies that together combine to achieve the priorities that result in a sustainable development” (2007, p.4). In the RUS the Regional Development Forum is mentioned and supposed to involve the regional partnership in an on-going dialogue. Smaller operative groups along RUS focus areas with representatives from the partnership will also be setup. The aim is to promote insights on development preconditions in the region.

The Regional Growth Programme (RTP) is the operational programme for implementing visions and strategies presented in the RUP/RUS above. The RTP co-ordinates strategic targets in RUS with funding from other operational programmes, mainly EU funding. The RTP guides funding decisions, where projects shall contribute to the fulfilment of each of the six RUS priorities. However, the County Administrative Board is managing the Rural Development Programme. The RTP counts on funding from the Rural Development Programme, but it is weakly integrated and seemingly of little discursive importance for the RTP. The RTP is revised annually.

Measures in the RTP are the same as for the national strategy presented above, which in turn is valid also for the RUS. The RTP shall co-ordinate priorities and ambitions in RUS with existing sources of funding. Each strategic end is divided into means and measures that on a detailed level are presented in the programme. Funding sources are identified and their relations to programme measures are described.

Funding and financing

Regional development activities in Västerbotten are to a large extent funded from external sources, of which the EU and its various programmes are absolutely essential. In the table below (table 1) the more important funding sources are listed.

Table 1. Sources of funding for regional development in Västerbotten

Level	Funding
EU	EU-funding: ERDF, ESF, Rural Development Programme, Interreg (several), FP7, CIP, Urbact, Life Long Learning, Interact IVC, etc.
National	State funding: through the regional growth measure 19, specifically 1:1 (in the national budget), programme for women's entrepreneurship, etc.
Regional	Municipal membership fees to Region Västerbotten (providing administrative infrastructure)
Municipal	Income taxes, municipal equalisation system, etc.

The RTP connects ambitions, objectives and measures in the RUS – which in turn connects to national and EU level policies – with funding from a number of sources. Since a large share of resources come from the state and external agencies the majority of public sector development initiatives are promoted through projects, rather than e.g. permanent administrative structures.

The RUS and the RTP are embedded in co-operative structures and partnerships. Each actor in Västerbotten opting for funding through the RTP makes their own funding decisions, however to be eligible for RTP funding applications should connect to RUS priorities, as well as be in coherence with certain RTP selection criteria (mainly related to sustainable growth and networking). Actions undertaken within the RTP framework emanates from (mainly) business needs.

Once ideas are transformed into funding applications, there are a number of groups with responsibilities for the promotion of development through the RTP. Here the actual integration for regional development takes place, be it among politicians, wider partnerships or among hired staff with specific competencies (see table 2, below).

As for the regional integration and co-operation there are also other activities, such as regional seminars on regional development factors. Utvecklingsrådet decides contents, the Regional Office manages them. Experts are invited on a needs basis, any of the Västerbotten actors can call them in. Working groups are appointed and dissolved, also on a needs basis. There are other networks and partnerships related to other kinds of funding, but those mentioned here are the politically more important in relation to the RTP.

As for the administrative processes, they also involve various constellations and procedures for co-ordination and integration. One example is where Region Västerbotten, the CAB in Norrbotten, the Growth Agency (responsible

for ERDF) and the ESF Council meet and prepare for Structural Fund Partnership meetings. Another example is the administrators' meetings where Region Västerbotten meets with the Västerbotten CAB to discuss projects within the Rural Development Programme.

Table 2. Co-operative arrangements for regional development in Västerbotten

Name, Swedish	Name, translated	Function within RTP
Region fullmäktige	Regional Council	The decision-making body that ratify and revise the RTP.
Regionstyrelse	Regional Board	The decision-making body that prioritize among the regional projects funded by the national (government) budget for regional growth funding. This board also prioritizes among the projects from Västerbotten that feed into the Structural Fund Partnership for funding from the ERDF.
Utvecklingsrådet	Development Partnership	Regional partnership with public and private sector, unions and other non-profit sector representatives. Led by Region Västerbotten chairman. Meets at least twice a year. Development issues are discussed more holistically, which is important for legitimizing regional priorities and measures.
Samsynsgrupp	Consensus Group	Regional partnership with representation from Structural Fund Steering Committees and Partnerships, and Region Västerbotten Executive Board. Meets twice a year in preparations for Strukturfondspartnerskap, see next row. Advises Region Västerbotten in co-ordination of project applications to various EU funds within the region. To make sure that applications follow and meet regional measures and priorities.
Strukturfondspartnerskap	Structural Fund Partnership	Cross-regional partnership (Västerbotten + Norrbotten counties) for the ERDF. Municipal and County Council politicians, labour market organisations, regional state agencies, private and non-governmental organisations, the Sami Parliament. Chair appointed by the Government. Started with four meetings a year, now twice a year due to diminishing resources. Prioritise among project applications that have been approved by the Managing Authority; partnership decisions are binding for programme offices. Co-ordinates with ESF projects in the region, as well as with RUS and the Rural Development Programme.
Regionkansli	Regional Office	Hired staff at Region Västerbotten. Manages the RTP, co-ordinates RTP processes, drafting and administrative resource.

Source: Region Västerbotten, www.tillvaxtverket.se.

STRATEGY ANALYSIS

In the previous section a more structural and institutional background to the present situation in Västerbotten was presented, regarding strategies and ambitions for promotion of regional growth. It presented the “official view” of regional development strategies, i.e. information was gathered from policy documents and from interviews with representatives from organisations responsible for regional development planning in Västerbotten. This section focus on the perceptions, attitudes and experiences that emanates from a number of interviewees representing organisations in collaborative arrangements related to policy implementation in Västerbotten. First though, a brief history of the regional development process in Västerbotten is presented, a regional context.

Regional policy context

The Västerbotten CAB previously had the formal responsibility for regional development and to produce long-term County Strategies, which in many ways were similar to RUPs. At the end of the last EU programming period (2000-2006), the CAB produced strategy documents and developed the RUP as a way of further adjustment to EU and national policies and structures – legislation, funding and objectives, and to the EU discourses and concepts.

The RDP was established following a thorough dialogue with a large number of local and regional actors. The dialogue received high levels of participation, perhaps due to a mental shift. Rather than waiting for state and other money being redistributed to regions in need, organisations, politicians, officials and others realised that to opt for funding in the future, they needed to identify and communicate their ambitions. The previous mind-set, i.e. relying on and expecting state intervention, used to be quite strong in political debates in Northern parts of Sweden. Many of those organisations participating in the regional dialogue then became members of the regional development partnership (*utvecklingsrådet*), at present having some 35 members.

At the time, some ten years of EU membership and an increased use of partnerships in regional and rural development had created a general pattern of participation in Sweden. Public sector representatives were fairly easy to involve in partnerships, as were third sector organisations. Representation from industry or business was much weaker. Instead, business organisations and chambers of commerce tended to participate. Some of the interviewees also mention the fact that the inhabitants in Västerbotten rarely participated in dialogues concerning regional strategies. Evening events where people were invited to present their ideas and opinions received a very low or non-existent response. Given these limitations, participation in the regional dialogue was – and is – considered to be good.

Due to this substantial organisational embedding of the RUP, the process for revision of the strategy (2010-2011) was somewhat different. Rather than approaching a large number of possible stakeholder organisations, the main

focus was on dialogue with each of the regional partnership organisations. They all had the opportunity to meet with Region Västerbotten, who assumed regional development responsibility in January 2008. The municipal co-operative body consists of elected representatives from the municipalities in Västerbotten and the County Council (15 + 10). They are now legally responsible for providing and implementing RUPs, even though there is freedom in how to establish the strategy and what to include. One important aspect is the mandatory co-operation with other actors in the county, such as the CABs and other relevant organisations.

Since 2008 then, the regional development responsibility has moved from being a state owned concern to a local and regional political issue. Since Region Västerbotten and the Västerbotten CAB are mandated by legislation to work with regional development (some responsibilities still remain within the CAB, such as rural development and small business support), they are more active and set aside resources to pursue the necessary processes. They tend to be the more active partners in RUP/RUS processes, whereas other organisations with more limited resources and mainly issue interests (e.g. forestry, rural development, social security, union issues) consequently play less central roles.

The shift in roles and duties among the leading stakeholders is a recurring theme in the interviews:

The co-operative municipal body of Västerbotten established in 2008 represents and assumes legal responsibility for regional development and growth processes in Västerbotten. Previously, a distinctive feature of the regional development and growth process was an unclear and inefficient organizational framework. At that time no one of the three parties concerned – the County Administrative Board, the County Council and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities in Västerbotten – enjoyed the other parties' obvious approval to represent the region in regional development and growth issues.

Other respondents focus on enhanced opportunities to influence current policies or projects: “Nowadays, the framing of a regional growth and development strategy derives more clearly from within the region itself.” Another interviewee concludes that:

We aim for a more democratic and inclusive process as well as a better representation. The goal is to connect strategies from the local level up to the EU level. We can frame our own plans but there is an alignment to the local, national, and EU levels as well. The strategic documents guide the alignment and choices of potential projects for funding. We have assumed the role to actively shape and influence the regional growth process instead of the County Administrative Board. This might also be seen as a preliminary exercise at the prospect of a forthcoming regional enlargement.

As for the interviewees – other than representatives from Region Västerbotten and the CAB – their perceptions of *context* and *purpose* of the strategy are diverging even though they tend to follow the overall discursive approaches already presented. Many respondents start with the observation that Västerbotten is a heterogeneous region with two main, coastal cities and

otherwise consisting of vast areas with sparsely populated hinterlands, forests and mountains. Since Västerbotten is a small county in terms of population, partnerships and alliances with other regions are necessary. Since continuous economic growth is desired and needed, Västerbotten can and shall avoid heavy dependence upon the public sector for employment opportunities. Some of the interviewees consider opportunities to arise mainly within the natural resource industries. Others state that the goal is to refine and diversify the economy, through creative industries and innovative milieus. In either case it is considered to be relatively easy to form common objectives for utilization of common resources in Västerbotten. One example is Västerbotten being at the forefront in establishing well-functioning cooperation between the CAB and Umeå University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in Umeå. This alignment has been guided by strategic policies for regional development, especially in selection of potential projects and options for funding.

Initiation of the regional development policy process

In contrast to the well-founded narrative above, only few of the respondents have a clear understanding of how the process was established and who took the initiative. One view is that the CAB initiated the process, another that the initiative to draw up a regional growth program came from the government through the CAB and that Region Västerbotten coordinates the process nowadays. One or two respondents suggest that the predecessor of the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Nutek) initiated the process for the regional development strategies, whereas the ESF council initiated the process for the horizontal priorities such as accessibility for the disabled.

Irrespective of understanding, there is concordance among the respondents regarding what kinds of relations to other actors that were established during the process. As for the start-up phase: "The first programme period did not result in much, but later on a network developed between NGOs, the authorities, and other representatives that created an understanding between stakeholders and spurred the dynamics within the network." Initially it was also quite clear that the two counties Västerbotten and Norrbotten (north of Västerbotten) strived to position themselves in relation to one and another. At present there is a developed and common understanding where the focus is to achieve what is best for both counties. This re-positioning is also identified within the region – co-operation within Region Västerbotten is more inclusive, even though the smaller municipalities might have the impression that they are somewhat less included.

As the process evolves through involvement of the wide scope (as compared to pre-2005-2006) of agents, it creates an understanding of the different needs and requests put forward in the process. According to interviewees Västerbotten is successful in reaching consensus in comparison to other regions: "We are successful despite huge intraregional differences between for example Skellefteå, Umeå, and the rest of county. "Network relations are primarily established with those who actively participate in the growth process. Over time relations have evolved with trade and industry, the wider civic

society and even internationally (see section Regional Outlook below). Relations develop locally, regionally nationally, and internationally. Everybody is invited to participate in this relational process, but each stakeholder needs to choose to participate actively. The overall impression is that when forums for planning and decision-making are established and when funding procedures and decisions are on the agenda, all stakeholders strive to pursue and push their own interest. However, but once a decision is made everybody accept the outcome. The adherence to consensus is no surprise to one interviewee stating that:

There have always existed various shifting co-operations in Västerbotten, but the EU Structural funds have been an essential injection into a more formalised co-operation process. The central governments' means of allocating financial resources have affected the growth and development process. The responsibility for shaping the RUP gave an impetus to the process.

As mentioned above though, there is still a lack of representation from individual companies. Since regional development processes are mainly funded through projects, the lack of private firms means that public organisations receive more of the funding. A further aspect of this situation is associated with the costs of drafting project proposals, of administration for project management and the time lag before applicants receive funding, thereby inducing credit costs. Public sector and other larger actors are more likely to have the resources to deal with this situation. It should be noted though that some respondents complain about their own inability to really compete for funding due to lack of resources.

The commitment from the public has declined (from a low initial level), according to respondents. This is possibly due to a sentiment of being less included and successful within the process, or because they perceive that the process is functioning even if they do not take part in the process.

At present the regional development process is quite well established and the majority of the respondents have a general understanding of the division of labour between regional development actors. Region Västerbotten is responsible for the RUS, the qualification/competence platform, and transport infrastructure. The CAB has a responsibility from the national government to coordinate state actors at the regional level in order to support the regional growth strategies. They also maintain responsibility for certain spheres of the regional growth policy such as the EU Rural Development Programme. The municipalities also actively work with these issues, especially the larger ones that have personnel and financial means to draft and administer projects. Some of the respondents have a less clear understanding: "The implementation is to a lesser extent governed by any specific instructions. We form thematic task forces to cope with the work load." There also exist misinterpretations, one example being that: "The administrative staffs manage the ESF projects while the politicians manage the ERDF projects." Some call for a (more concise) division of labour, since "there is a duplication of work among the agencies", and further:

The formation of coalitions that come into existence changes depending on the issue at hand, and there is seldom any kind of blocking coalition, or formation that have

reached an understanding before the meetings. That is impossible due to the consensus culture that guides the decision making.

Regional development achievements

In the process of setting up a new regional development organisation with greater democratic legitimacy, enhanced regional participation and more extensive external funding – are there any achievements made? The majority of interviewees give a confirmatory answer to this question and points to three broad themes – funding, projects and the influence on EU strategies.

As for the first two themes, funding and projects, the following examples are provided:

- One interviewee provides an overall statement: “We have influenced the allocation of co-financing and the alignment of choices made regarding projects. “
- Investments in railway and port facilities
- Investments in the bio-energy sector in creating two pilot plants
- The ICT industry – video games and other creative industries in education, research and innovation – have been successful
- Investments in innovation, such as the development of testing services in small, inland municipalities
- Firms have been supported in recruitment, cooperation and marketing. They have also been encouraged to approach the universities concerning product development, design, marketing, business concepts, and sales.
- Projects for functionally impaired and mentally disabled have been pursued that would not have been realized without EU funding
- Various research initiatives have secured more than 2 billion SEK
- The continued existence of the Swedish Defence Research Agency in Västerbotten
- Developed co-operation with bordering regions in Norway and Finland.

The list is not complete, but indicates what kind of achievements that are known in the regional development networks. Examples given further tend to reflect representation of the respondents, where they are more familiar with their own professional field.

The third theme, influencing EU-strategies, include examples such as:

- “... a clear common objective with reference to the regional development strategy, transport infrastructure plans, and problems such as the skew demographic structure in Västerbotten. Also to work towards a TEN status for the Bothnia Corridor and E12 throughout the county. The Europe Forum Northern Sweden has influenced the planning of infrastructure and the allocation of funding to the ERDF”, and further – to secure additional EU funding via the sparsely populated area criteria²
- The impact is more pronounced at the EU level than at the national level through new network connections: “The impact of this collaboration has been

² The four northernmost counties in Sweden fulfill the requirements for the sparsely populated area criteria and thus obtain extra funding from the EU.

- more efficient by sidestepping the national level and instead directly approaching the EU level”
- Others conclude that the new regional development setup has created an organizational learning process for shaping regional strategies.

Overall the respondents find the achievements satisfying: “We have made an investment in a new mind-set to achieve economic growth. A lot of good investments have been made that will have long lasting effects and a long term yield”, and further: “We have been able to reach a better consensus in the county”, and finally: “Informal meetings with no prestige and jealous protection of one's special preserves is one important outcome of the regional growth process”.

Some of the interviewees express opposing views, and do not perceive the achievements as satisfying. They mention:

- the diminishing importance of a civic perspective,
- the lack of private firms using funding for developing the tourism sector, and
- the lack of inclusion: “As an organisation we would like to be more involved [...] regarding priorities and decisions concerning the specific projects”.

Key policy instruments used

So far, this section has provided information on perceptions and understandings among the representatives from regional stakeholders. To follow is a more analytical section where scientific concepts are used to structure information received. The concepts concern the use of instruments in regional planning, such as visioning, positioning, potentials and integration. Mostly these concepts have been presented to the respondents, together with a brief discussion of their meaning and scope. In some cases the actual phenomenon has been discussed without explicit reference to the concepts.

Visioning

A first concept, or rather an opposing pair of concepts, has been used to clarify and discuss the idea of visioning. On the extreme planning can be a purely *regulatory* process, on the other planning is a non-regulated *visioning* process. For the RISE project a tentative definition of visioning has been established – the purpose of a vision for the regional future is to invite or inspire private and public actors to join actions sustaining a common strategy for the development of the region. As for those interviewed, an overwhelming majority perceive the regional development strategy production as a regulatory process. Some identify a touch of or a potential for a more visionary approach. In either case, the visioning is to a very limited extent used as a strategic instrument, according to the respondents.

As mentioned earlier, each region in Sweden is mandated by law to produce a RUP/RUS. In that respect it is part of a hierarchical regulatory approach towards regional planning. According to Region Västerbotten officials though, the RUP/RUS should be considered as a strategy, as a way of identifying and agreeing upon where to go and where the region ought to be in the future. As a consequence or evidence there is no mentioning of funding in the

documents, they are not about distribution of money. The two views are not exclusionary, a strategy can be initiated from a mandatory decision but still include quite large portions of visioning, which is the case with the Västerbotten RDP/RUS. Its contents and functions are more visionary than only adhering to legislation.

In the RUP there is consequently a vision presented (2006, p.5):

The region of Västerbotten is leading among Northern European regions in working towards a sustainable development characterized by a knowledge driven and competitive economy. The region contains Northern Sweden's most attractive habitats with diversity and accessibility to work, housing, culture, leisure time, studies and social services, where people feel participation and inclusion. In year 2013 Västerbotten should have 270 000 inhabitants.

The vision statement presents a fairly general and all-encompassing description of a future Västerbotten, rather than presenting a more strategic and precise idea. In the revised RUS focus areas and priorities are further clarified as a response to national and global changes, but also as a preparation for the next period of EU programming. However, the actual vision statement is no longer present in the RUS. According to Region Västerbotten the vision is still valid, and can be identified through a deductive exercise from RUS objectives.

Positioning

A second concept used is *positioning*, which is to conceptualise ones' location in order to identify opportunities, comparative advantage and possibilities on the basis of which new links and relationships could be developed. It is about responding to development opportunities of sub-regions, cross-border regions, functional regions, the delimitation of which is part of strategic competence.

As mentioned earlier, the regional strategies identified and analysed here are all focusing on the county of Västerbotten, a long established state administrative region. It is partly due to the Government missive to use existing counties or regions as the main planning unit in promoting regional growth; partly due to the fact that over time many societal processes have adjusted to that regional delimitation. When other relevant territorial units are mentioned in interviews, they are:

- Northern Sparsely Populated Area (NSPA, 14 northern regions in Norway, Sweden, and Finland),
- The Barents region,
- The Europe Forum Northern Sweden (comprising the four northern most counties)
- The Kvarken Council (cross border cooperation association for the Ostrobothnian counties in Finland as well as Västerbotten and the municipality Örnsköldsvik in Sweden),
- The E12 corridor (municipal co-operation along European highway),

- the coastal region from Luleå in the north to Örnsköldsvik in the south as an integrated region for the cooperation between industry and academia, and finally
- LEADER areas.

All of the above mentioned territorial areas are to some extent overlapping one and other.

There are no clear indications whether alternative territorial alternatives for strategy making were considered. One group among the interviewees clearly answers the question in the negative. The other group of respondents mention territories as listed above, be they of functional (labour market regions) or administrative character. This does not imply that they were considered for common regional development strategies, which might indicate that legislation rather than spatial visioning were more decisive in territorial delimitations for the strategy.

As for the latter aspect of territorial positioning, the possible suggested merger of the four northernmost counties now acting together in the Europe Forum was also mentioned. A Government Commission presented in 2007 its findings on necessary and possible changes for a “sustainable societal organisation for development” (SOU 2007:10), in which larger regions were identified as an important structural change. All Swedish regions have since then been involved in discussions on how to organise, and eventually merge into, larger regions (Swedish Government, <http://regeringen.se/sb/d/12757/a/139489>). The revised Västerbotten RUS was made effective in 2011 when the Government ran yet another Commission (Swedish Government, <http://regeringen.se/sb/d/11395/a/132644>) analysing the restructuring of the state organisation. In that process Region Västerbotten presented its favoured idea, which was a new four county region in Northern Sweden (similar to Europe Forum). The idea is contested since bilateral agreements were made between two of the potential partner counties.

Focus and shared strategic interests

Increasingly strategies are related to development potentials, i.e. regional futures, but strategies may also relate to changes in the outside world, regional problems or shared strategic interests among stakeholders. According to the respondents there are three foci of the RUP/RUS. First, a broad transnational/international perspective, for instance through the Baltic Sea strategy, is in focus. The respondents generally acknowledge the importance of links and interdependence with actors outside Västerbotten and Sweden. Reference is made to the climate debate and how that might affect the bio-energy industry and how China’s demand for ore and steel affects the region’s mining industry. Other focus on how to draw on influences and experiences from other regions and the learning processes that takes place between them. Some hold the view that business opportunities create and maintain relations with the outside world and therefore serves as an integral part of the dynamics in the region.

Second, the region itself and its industries are in focus, with a predominant growth perspective. Especially, the respondents stress the importance of building structures that support development and growth in the areas of infrastructure, ICT, education and regional attractiveness. In the short run the creation of new companies and start-ups are important, in the long run supporting and developing linkages and relations between firms and universities are important to increase innovation. The focus on extraction of raw materials and their refinement is exemplified by the forestry, mining and steel industries. This is also where respondents identify development potentials, e.g. in forestry, mining and renewable energy industries, but also tourism, testing areas for the automotive industry and safety and security. Other areas with development potentials include the service sector, creative industries and ICT business.

A final focus area mentioned is support for development processes. One example is to encourage firms to elevate their products further in the value chain instead of just exporting raw materials. Another example is the development potential in activities, methodologies, and vocational training through ESF funded projects.

As for current regional problems, which is an inverted perspective on development potentials, the top ranking issues are the insufficient capacity in transport infrastructure and lack of opportunities for public transport commuting. The ageing and skew demographic structure in Västerbotten is also frequently mentioned. Further problems identified include how to:

- promote and support start-up companies and secure venture capital in early phases of business development,
- increase the population numbers, and
- secure firms' demand for qualified employees.

The two last problems are in certain situations even intertwined, according to one interviewee:

The problem is to recruit qualified personnel to the smaller municipalities, to which we have no solution at present, will be more pronounced in the coming years. This runs the risk of creating an all too weak a tax base to maintain the service level to the citizens in smaller municipalities.

A complementary way of discussing focus areas is to identify shared strategic interests among stakeholders. Shared strategic interest is the identified need to collectively frame strategies and plans, and the importance of cooperation. In Västerbotten, they are clearly overlapping with focus areas. Common interests mentioned include the skew demographic structure, to secure qualified employees for the future and the promotion of a growth perspective. Economic growth is a recurring topic, but conflicting interests include e.g. the promotion of environmental priorities versus exploitation of resources.

Horizontal and vertical integration

Horizontal and vertical relations play a significant role in (analyses of) strategy-making and also in implementation of strategies. Without delving into lengthy explanations, the concept of vertical integration is closely related with hierarchical political systems with clearly separated responsibilities, whereas the 'new' understanding of relational governance and rescaling emphasise horizontal relations of fuzzier character.

The overwhelming majority of respondents perceive that the Västerbotten RUP/RUS was developed along a vertical dimension. The vertical dimension is understood as either top down or bottom up. The top down relation ties into financial flows for funding from the EU level as well as from the national level to the regional level. The bottom up direction relates to the allocation of funding to certain projects or proposals from the municipal level and from various stakeholders into to the regional level.

A few respondents point to the usefulness of the horizontal dimension to address issues related to labour supply problem and the need to increase the skill levels in the labour force. Others view the horizontal dimension as a vehicle to achieve a cross-sector coordination to cope with the imminent demographic and growth challenges that faces the region.

In implementing the strategies, the general view is that the strategy is not supposed to follow neither vertical nor horizontal initiatives except for two cases. First, the horizontal initiatives relates to equality of opportunities for women, men and ethnic groups. Second, horizontal aspects are perceived to be more relevant regarding ESF funded projects in general.

Strategy analysis – a concluding comment

The interviewees are proponents of increased co-ordination, co-operation and integration for regional development in Västerbotten. Given the selection of respondents as partners in the development processes it is not surprising. As has already been mentioned there are some aspects that achieve top rankings irrespective of whether potentials, focus or problems are put forwards in the interviews. Transport infrastructure in a broad sense – physical infrastructure such as railroads, roads and buildings, as well as operation of public transports and planning of future transport infrastructure projects – is in the top of many minds. Two other highly ranked and intertwined issues are (the lack of) population growth and the skew demographic structure in Västerbotten. Apart from these three often mentioned issues, economic and employment growth, firms demand for qualified employees, the alteration of generations within private firms, tourism as an underexploited economic resource and the need for regional enlargement follows. Even though these issues most often are identified from competitiveness and/or an economic growth perspective, the majority of respondents state that sustainability and cohesion are policy ambitions of vital importance as well. A large share of the interviewees argues that the one cannot function without the other. As a final comment we can note the similarities between the outside in perspective in the regional profile chapter

for Västerbotten that identify a number of growth and development issues such as population, accessibility, a skew demographic structure. The very same issues reoccur in the inside out perspective presented here.

REGIONAL OUTLOOK

The previous section concluded that partners involved in regional development strategy making consider regional strategies to be useful and even necessary. Some important issues and aspects of their perceptions regarding regional strategies were also presented. Neither the general views nor the general problems/focus areas are surprising given the location, size, history, economic and political path dependencies and associated patterns of social and cultural interactions that constitute the county of Västerbotten. It could be argued though that the situation is changing given the situation during the better part of the 20th century. Rather than being governed along national rationales, a regional and potentials oriented discourse is being established. Somewhat ironically this enhanced regional approach is supported by subsuming to increased hierarchical co-ordination through adjustment to EU policy agendas.

Mastering and nurturing this partly new situation demands greater knowledge about other actors and resources than those provided by the Swedish government only. Consequently, Region Västerbotten is developing links with other actors inside and outside the region. Some aspects of this strategic networking are presented in the following.

Regional stakeholders and external networking

The regional partnership has a wide composition, but there are actors or sectors that are poorly represented or not included at all. The partnership composition bias mentioned earlier, where the business sector was notoriously difficult to include still remains (see Sandström and Ylinenpää 2009 for a possible explanation). Rather than including specific firms, the tendency is to include business organisations and/or Chambers of Commerce. Through these kinds of organisations there is some business representation in the regional partnership in Västerbotten. Civil society or third sector organisations are included in the partnership as well, but their representation does not rest on a specific mandate. As with other organisations, they are included on a stakeholder basis – if you as an organisation and other partnership members agree on a common interest, then you are free to join. As a consequence, "the system of post-parliamentary government tends increasingly to be one of organisations, by organisations and for organisations" (Andersen & Burns, 1996: 229). From that observation it is not surprising that the general public, the citizens in the region, do not have any specific and direct interest in regional development. Region Västerbotten and others have been seeking public advice through various planning and meeting exercises, but the response is very weak. Since the composition of the partnership is of strategic importance slight changes in organisational participation have taken place, following negotiations some are included whereas others leave.

Some respondents discuss partnership composition as cross-sector cooperation. The majority of respondents deem better cross-sector cooperation as desirable. Some interviewees state that cross-sector cooperation is always desirable, and stress the general importance of strengthening relevant networks. Others suggest that to increase the efficiency and quality of projects the use of a peer review system is desirable. On a more cautious note, some argue that there is partly a duplication of work between the Västerbotten CAB and Region Västerbotten. Others state that there even exists rivalry between the CAB and Region Västerbotten, even though no specific examples are provided.

Specific fields and problems that could benefit from strengthened cross-sector cooperation include relations with the business community, declining population, transport infrastructure, firms need for qualified employees, higher education and cross fertilization between the extractive industries and the service industries. Still, a few respondents advance the opposite view that cross-sector cooperation already exist between the relevant agents.

When considering involving additional regional/territorial stakeholders in the partnership, quite a few interviewees oppose an increase in number of actors. The argument hinges on perceptions that there already exists a well-functioning dialogue among the relevant stakeholders, or the notion that there are already too many politicians involved. The opposite argument draws on the need to include more private firms rather than business organisations that might to some extent function as a filter for the individual firms.

Partnerships can face or contribute to organisational fragmentation, which can be considered an obstacle if concerted (strategic) action is desired. Among the interviewees some point to the fact that fragmentation can emanate from the fact that public authorities are not always organized along the county dimension. It can be problematic and hinder integrated action. Others mention that a certain area such as the hinterland region unfortunately remains on the shelf, not fully participating. A final example is the creation of too small projects that have difficulties in securing enough co-financing and thus become weak and very loosely co-ordinated projects. Organisational fragmentation is then an issue, however not very clearly stated and – as it seems – not really a substantial practical problem, even though those interviewed put forward issues that call for integrated action. It should also be noted that some interviewees do not consider the organizational fragmentation a problem, and suggest that the formation of Region Västerbotten was and is a way to resolve this issue.

Overall though, integrated action and the present regional development strategic conduct provide valuable preconditions for plenty of promising opportunities in the future. They include entrepreneurship, creation of an attractive residential region, the European Capital of Culture in 2014 (Umeå), tourism, renewable energy (wind power) and development of the triple helix notion. Others identify lost opportunities such as denial of the skew demographic structure in Västerbotten, that the region has not been very successful on the Brussels arena, have failed to secure the healthcare

sector's need for qualified employees, or less explicit comments that one could have been more active in the past.

When widening the perspective to include trans-regional actors, the interviewees provides examples such as possibilities for future export markets in the Barents region (North-West Russia), inclusion of a wider business community, coping with the legal right of public access to private land and protection of right to use beaches for development. The Baltic Sea strategy and the accompanying macro region are mentioned in terms of making it essential to obtain gateways for future lobbying. Critical voices claim that such involvement already exist, or argue that one cannot cover everything in one and the same forum.

Preparations for EU programming

A special case in trans-regional networking is the preparations for EU-programming. It is presented at length here since it is an example of very strategic conduct for access to influence and resources. Generally, the respondents know that Västerbotten took part in preparations for the Structural Fund programme 2007-2013. In a similar fashion they know that similar activities are undertaken as preparations for the next period. One respondent claims correctly that: "the region is active regarding both the budget discussions and to formulate its content". This pro-active approach is manifest through strategic planning networks outside Region Västerbotten. The Västerbotten CAB is also involved in trans-regional networks for regional development, but to a lesser extent. Representatives from each organisation provide illustrative examples, but especially Region Västerbotten provides richer narrative of pro-active lobbying and planning.

The political representation in for example the Assembly of European Regions promotes the Västerbotten and northern perspective within the European Union, but there are also other forums to use for input to and discussions with the European Commission. In some cases Region Västerbotten and the regional partnership provide input on policy and programming on their own, but the region is small and lack resources for serious lobbying. As a consequence the *Europaforum Norra Sverige* (The Europe Forum Northern Sweden – EFNS, <http://www.europaforum.nu/>) was established at the end of 1990's. The four northernmost counties are since then co-operating through the network in pursuing a common agenda towards the Commission. Two examples are the promotion of their views on the Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion and on the Multi-annual Financial Framework post 2013. A third way to provide input to the Commission is through the Northern Sparsely Populated Area (NSPA) network:

The NSPA network consists of 14 regions in three countries [Sweden, Finland, Norway] sharing common circumstances and objectives, working together to raise awareness of the region in the EU institutions, influence EU policy and to provide a platform for best practise (<http://www.nspa-network.eu/>).

From a Region Västerbotten point of view, they choose the forum for dialogue with the Commission that suits their needs best, which also holds true for the other participating regions. Before any action is taken in each of the forums,

not all issues can be dealt with. Other forums can then be used, or one actor can produce papers that present their own views on a given issue. The organisational chain for input to EU policy is then, in sum: Region Västerbotten → EFNS → NSPA → the European Commission in Brussels.

The NSPA is a case that provides insights into how integrated efforts can provide valuable outcomes. According to interviewees the NSPA has achieved a position in relation to the Commission that is rather unique and shared by perhaps a handful other regions, where a high level of trust from the Commission has developed. One indicator is that the NSPA have meetings with the Director General for DG Regio. It allows the NSPA to put forward their views directly. In return, the Director General seeks NSPA advice on policy and programming measures. This position has developed strongly since the NSPA was established in 2008, but even before then the northern EU-offices in Brussels were co-operating which resulted in among other things extra funding to sparsely populated northern areas.

The research institute Nordregio produced a report on the situation for the northern sparsely populated areas in Sweden, where the necessity of the extra EU funding was identified. This report was used in negotiations for the previous programming period. During 2008 the EU-offices asked Nordregio to produce a new study where a 2020-vision for the northern areas could be developed. This vision was then successfully put on the agenda at a meeting with the present Director General, where he acknowledged the analysis and asked for policy suggestions based on the analysis. As a consequence, the present setup of the NSPA-network was established.

The NSPA network consists of two politicians from Sweden and Finland respectively, and one from Norway. Added to this are five public officials (2+2+1) in the regions, plus the Directors of the five regions' EU-offices in Brussels. During the autumn 2008 the NSPA held its first meeting in order to provide a response to the Director General. A position paper was produced and presented early 2009. The response from the Director General was positive, especially since the paper made manifest a change in attitudes among politicians in Northern Scandinavia. Up until 2007-2008 they defined and presented the region as in need for external support due to the sparseness. However since 2008 the focus has rather been on sparseness, but with an extreme regional productivity and growth potential. Politicians in the region use growth rhetoric, arguing that the potential for growth can be further enhanced through funding from the EU.

The NSPA-DG Regio dialogue has since then continued, where the next step was a NSPA response to the Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion mentioned above. Analysis and discussions on territorial policy measures in relation to the specific geographical conditions in the NSPA area provides nuance and a more detailed understanding of their EU-wide consequences. From a national point of view the NSPA might also provide a more nuanced picture of Sweden's preconditions for regional development. In terms of priorities in the RUS – developed industrial processing, service and cultural economy, demography – they are also clearly stated in NSPA papers.

EFNS – i.e. the four northernmost counties in Sweden – have relations and connections with politicians and officials at the national level, but they are not as well established as with DG Regio and the Commission. The Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications is responsible nationally for the management of the EU Structural Funds. EFNS has a fairly well established relation to politicians and officials within the ministry, and there is a general compliance in political perspectives and measures. The Ministry of Finance is also important for regional development, but according to interviewees there is a lower level of mutual understanding. From an EFNS perspective more EU funding is desired, whereas the Ministry of Finance rather strives towards limiting funding for territorial cohesion. This is arguably where further nurturing of relations and networks is needed.

In presenting this situation, these networks, a large gap in understanding among actors in the regional development networks. The initiated description of actions and perspectives put forward from Region Västerbotten is not even nearly as developed among other actors. It seems this is where further integration of ideas, actors and resources could be of real and important value for the development of Västerbotten. A coordinated view of important issues codified through the RUS is of great importance for the external networking and lobbying. However, judging from the perspective of the interviewees outside Region Västerbotten, there is a lack of feedback and information from Region Västerbotten to other regional actors. From the reverse perspective there also seems to be a lack of interest and realisation of the strategic value of these external networks.

Conclusions in relation to RISE intentions

Each case in the RISE project aims to present findings related to the level of policy integration and/or options for increased integration in order to improve the capacity for regional planning and strategic development. To achieve this, four themes including concepts and operational questions have been identified:

- Policy integration
- Policy transfer and learning
- Meta-governance and new forms of governance
- Collaborative planning

In the following the empirical case of Västerbotten provided above will be analysed in relation to each theme.

Policy integration

For the purpose of the RISE project a conceptualisation of policy integration has been made. It is a process of either co-ordinating or blending policies into a unified whole, or of incorporating concerns of one policy into another. It thus refers to the process of sewing together and coordinating policies across horizontal and vertical levels of governance. If necessary they can be modified to ideally create an interlocking, hierarchical, loosely-coupled, multi-level, policy system that functions in unity. The output of such an integration

process will be an integrated policy system aiming to achieve multiple complementarities and synergies.

An initial analysis of policy integration in Västerbotten is made along the following concepts:

- Sectoral integration and its two sub-forms: cross-sectoral and inter-agency integration
- Territorial integration: vertical integration (policy coherence across spatial scales) and horizontal integration (policy coherence between neighbouring authorities such as nations, states, regions etc and areas with some shared interest)
- Organizational integration: co-operation between parties in the form of organizational integration. Different forms are:
 - 1) strategic integration (the alignment of linked strategies, programmes and initiatives); and
 - 2) operational integration (the alignment of related delivery mechanisms), including a coupling between (strategic) spatial visions, objectives and spatial concepts at the one hand and operational decision-making (including concrete investment on the ground) at the other hand.

The Västerbotten strategy documents (the national growth strategy, RUP/RUS, RTP) contain flavours of sectoral, territorial, and organizational integration. In terms of sectoral integration the cross-sectoral (dimension of) integration includes relations between the regional growth strategy, national employment policies, and the EU cohesion policy. National and regional ERDF and ESF programmes are also integrated issue-wise even if not along previously established sector organisation, e.g. focus on entrepreneurship and competence rather than industry and education. Inter-agency integration can be exemplified through the Structural Fund Partnership where state agencies, municipal actors and e.g. labour market organisations make consensus based decisions on project funding. Territorial integration can be exemplified through infrastructure investments. They include both vertical (across national, regional and local scales) and horizontal integration between neighbouring authorities. Infrastructure and transportation are among the top three development issues mentioned by the interviewees which indicate its importance also in relation to development potentials. Organizational integration is most pronounced in the coupling between strategies, prioritized projects and funding of the latter. One could argue that this coupling is the backbone of the regional growth strategy in Västerbotten. An outside observer commented that this coupling could be characterized as a form of 'retrofitting' projects to funding.

For Västerbotten the tying together functions through the strategic focus in RDP/RUS and the operational focus in the RTP, are put into action through the coupling of priorities and objectives with project funding. The coupling is guided by the six RUS priorities.

Other than the strategies studied and analysed here, municipal comprehensive planning can possibly be understood as integrative. One aim with comprehensive planning is to prioritise and co-ordinate interests and

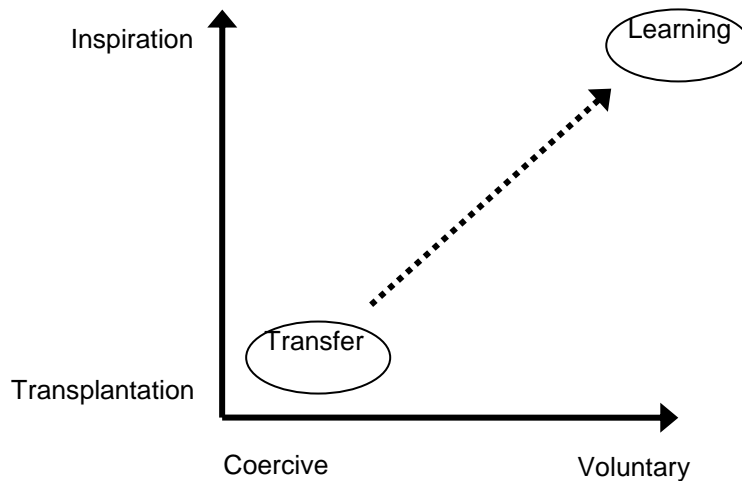
actors in urban development. The municipalities do this from a land use planning monopoly, but with some restrictions. They concern state and national interests (military, transport, nature and culture preservation etc.) that can overrule municipal planning. However, they need to be negotiated with the relevant municipalities. Therefore they are not an obvious example of policy integration.

Policy transfer and learning

One of the key assumptions of the RISE project is that policy integration in the case study areas will show high level of situated practices or contextuality. Each case is unique to a certain extent since the level and potential form of integration depends on a number of regional contextual factors. In such a case, the validity of comparative studies between different regional contexts will be restricted. Having noted that, policy transfer and learning are both desired and achievable.

In the figure 2 below some aspects of policy transfer are illustrated as continua between conceptual extremes. The figure combines the continuum between transplantation and inspiration and the continuum between coercive and voluntary transfer. At the bottom end (coercive transplantation) transfer is at its extreme of accuracy and at its extreme of contextual barriers to cross. At the opposite end, voluntary and inspiration, transfer is taking place as a learning process during which contextual borders are eliminated as part of the learning process.

Figure 2. Conceptual illustration of policy transfer and learning



Even though the axes in the figure are very relevant – degree of voluntariness and form of transfer – some aspects might be relevant to further consider. The case of Västerbotten, or more generally – the case of regional development policy, indicates that the “object” is a fairly evasive one. How is it possible to transfer dialogue and discourse, history and national systems that provide contextual preconditions to another setting? As mentioned in the literature contextual similarity most likely enhances the possibilities for transfer, where larger disparities will obstruct transfer (Jong & Mamdough 2003, Loughlin 1999). To avoid these barriers, what is transferred easily becomes abstract, technical and of potentially limited use.

Especially the technical aspect of policy is central since what can more readily be transferred are knowledge that can be codified, i.e. written or transported and presented through other kinds of (static) media. Therefore abstract ideas, such as sustainability, growth, governance, are easily shared, but tend to neglect context. Methods and/or approaches are also attractive to share, for the same reason. They can be of great use, and influence practices in organisations and regions. However, situated knowledge can also be shared, but in different ways. These kinds of knowledge refer to local practices and discourses, which can be transferred through prolonged and participatory visits to actors in other contexts. Learning of this kind is arguably not very suited for inclusion in the RISE toolkit.

Repeatedly through the case study the need for setting a new agenda has become evident. Rather than expecting the state to solve regional problems, Västerbotten actors are approaching development from a regional perspective and forming coalitions and alliances with actors that can support regional development ambitions – irrespective of geography or scale. The perspective is not radically innovative, but from the story of the initiation of the NSPA it became clear that a well-informed research study provided important

arguments for a change in attitudes and actions. The actual formulation of what to transfer from this experience is difficult, but relates to the capacity to identify crucial knowledge needs. The changing world views was further promoted through an EU funded and research-based project identifying and constructing regional databases and knowledge, analytical methods to be applied in policy planning and implementation, and a large number of external lectures, presentations and seminars in the region. This particular project has been mentioned as influential in interviews.

In the context of RISE comparison Västerbotten has a distinctively rural character, with 77 per cent of land surface being covered by forests, and only 0.3 per cent with artificial surfaces and 1.7 per cent agricultural areas. Further, the Västerbotten NUTS 3 area is six times larger than the Randstad region, with a population of roughly 260 000 and with a maximum distance from east to west of some 380 kilometres. Co-ordination and integration of regional development policy is therefore challenged by the distances and small population base (hence economy). Given these preconditions and barriers the integration seems to be achieved fairly well.

Integration is further promoted through procedures for matching of ideas, political will and funding. Relatively speaking, and connecting to the previous point, Västerbotten has a strong public sector – in relation to other member states within the EU, to other RISE case regions and to other regions in Sweden. Regional development strategy making is territorially organised along state administrative borders, which removes obstacles for conflicting and/or confusing ambitions. A strong public sector within a clearly delimited region, where a large share of development resources emanates from EU funding are factors that favour integration. On top of that the formalised routines for matching funding with development ambitions further provide “grease” for increased integration.

This conclusion could be expected from a perspective where multi-level governance Type I (Hooghe & Marks 2001) is prevalent, and somewhat contra intuitive in a situation where Type II is exercised. The first type is defined as co-ordination of decision making between non-intersecting general-purpose territorial jurisdictions arranged in a hierarchical way. The second type is understood as governance as a complex, fluid, patchwork of innumerable, overlapping jurisdictions centred around particular tasks or policy problems. Putting the two types together allows for a positioning of multi-level governance in Västerbotten, figure 3.

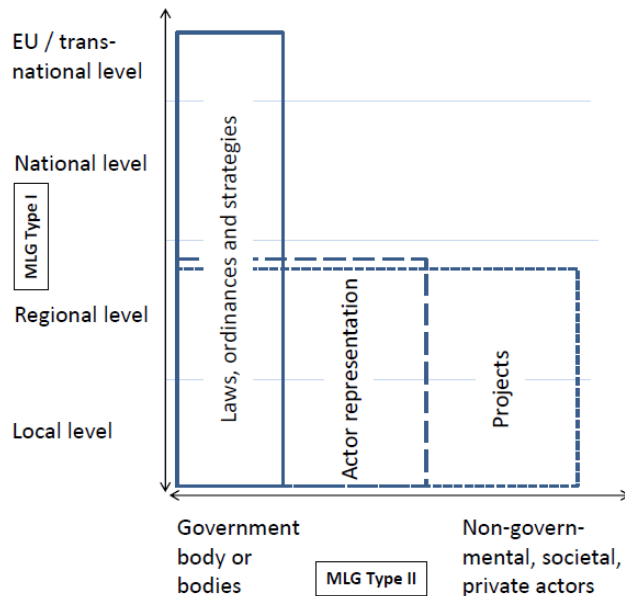


Figure 3. Multi-level governance in Västerbotten

A final comment on multi-level governance concerns possible barriers for integration. Phelps & Tewdwr-Jones (2000) identifies power as the most important barrier to functioning multi-level governance Type II. It could be argued that the Västerbotten regional development strategy making is organised in a way where political power is a useful resource for co-ordination. Consequently then, other forms of dialogue than those established might be needed if a change towards Type II governance is desired. Such a change could on the other hand contribute to reduced levels of policy integration.

Meta-governance and new forms of governance

Metagovernance is a way of enhancing coordinated governance in a fragmented political system based on a high degree of autonomy for a plurality of self-governing networks and institutions. ... [M]etagovernance is an indirect form of governing that is exercised by influencing various processes of self-governance. (Sørensen 2006: 100)

The indirect ways of governing emanates from an ever increasingly complex world where no actor has the capacity to rule independently of other actors. As a consequence governance networks are developed (more below), but also ways of governing governance networks. As for Västerbotten the hierarchical adjustment is still evident, if nothing else from its sheer existence. The law on the establishment of co-operative municipal bodies in counties is legal foundation that provided the opportunity for its establishment. A second example is the ordinance on regional planning for economic growth. The two documents set the legal foundations for the regional growth process and prescribe that a strategic plan should be established. It is also stated that objectives within the plan should be implemented with third party involvement.

The process of regional integrative strategy making is further embedded via the national strategy, which is supposed to serve as “a platform for a holistic approach and sector co-ordination for regional competitiveness,

entrepreneurship and employment. At the regional level the RUP has the same function” (2007, p. 6). Further, the regional development processes are also to adhere to Structural Fund regulations and processes, locally e.g. in relation to Structural Fund Partnership meeting, on the EU level in response to the multi-annual funding frameworks. These are some aspects of institutional preconditions, and it seems that they cause very little reflection among those interviewed. None of the respondents’ made any specific comment on whether the hierarchy in the form of meta-governance was perceived as positive or negative for the outcome of the regional integrated strategy making process.

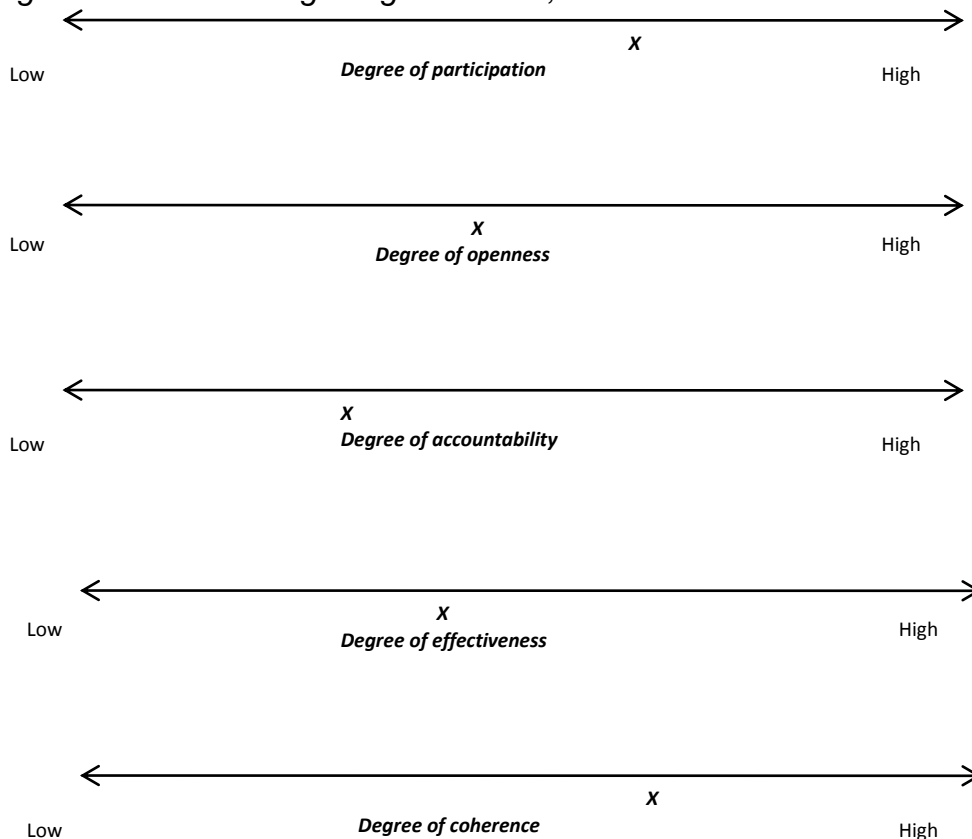
They are however included in the process of developing regional integrative strategies. There are at least three different stakeholder constellations that comprise the regional partnership (as described earlier):

- *The structural fund partnership* is a cross regional partnership between the two northernmost counties Västerbotten and Norrbotten. Stakeholders include municipal and county council politicians, labour market organisations, and regional state agencies, private and non-governmental organisations.
- *The development partnership* is a regional partnership with public and private sector, Universities, labour market organisations, ngo:s, the Sámi parliament, the chamber of commerce, the federation of business owners, the Swedish transportation administration, and the Swedish forest agency representatives.
- *The consensus group* is a regional partnership with representatives from the structural funds partnership and region Västerbottens regional board. The primary task of the consensus group is to make sure that applications for funding meet regional measures and priorities.

Changes were made in the composition of the development partnership which indicates that it is not ideally crafted for the purpose. The effectiveness and smooth operation of a governance network can be analysed along six indicators developed by Sørensen and Torfing (2009). The governance network in Västerbotten has from that perspective accomplished to produce: joint policy decisions (item 3), flexible policy solutions and public services (item 5), and created favourable conditions for future policy co-operations (item 6). It has ensured a smooth policy implementation at least for stakeholder organisations, public administrators and politicians (item 4). The governance network has to some extent accomplished to produce a clear and informed understanding of the policy problems and opportunities at hand (item 1), as well as produce policy options that match joint perceptions of problems and challenges (item 2).

Another way of framing the efficiency of a governance network is to use matrices for good governance (figure 4 below). The overall ranking of the decision making process on regional integrative strategies suggests that the answer is affirmative; the organisational setup can be identified as delivering good governance. The weakest aspect concerns accountability. No evident and built in mechanisms or procedures on how to handle short comings or failure have been identified. This relates to the achievement of planning ambitions through targeted priorities and objectives in the strategies, hence the lower score for the accountability dimension.

Figure 4. Matrices on good governance, the case of Västerbotten



A final dimension of analysing the Västerbotten regional integrated strategies are whether they relate to hard or soft spaces. Hard spaces follow clearly demarcated administrative territories, whereas soft spaces refer to governance networks and coalitions that follow other spatial logics. They tend to have more fuzzy delimitations and jump scales.

It is then obvious that the spatial focus of the strategy is predominantly hard, mainly organised along the county of Västerbotten borders. The soft space dimension is most clearly pronounced in international co-operations and networking through policy networks and though transnational project funding.

Collaborative Planning

As has become clear, present planning practices are no longer endeavours for planning experts only. Other actors and perspectives are included in governance networks. As a consequence the scientific and expert knowledge that guided planning earlier is now one of many information sources. In this plethora of perspectives and information sourced, it is argued that dialogue and negotiations are essential instruments for successful planning. However, information shared needs to fulfil certain criteria. It: “does not influence unless it represents a socially constructed and shared understanding created in the community of policy actors” (Innes 1998, p. 56). Shared understandings are developed through a variety of communicative processes among stakeholders, a process that could be termed *collaborative planning*. One

aspect of collaborative planning is public participation, which simultaneously is expected to increase the quality of planning decision and to legitimise planning projects.

Transferring the regional development responsibility from the Västerbotten CAB, a state owned agency, to Region Västerbotten, a co-operative municipal body brought along a shift towards increased democratic control. Region Västerbotten is governed by a regional council and a regional board, populated by politicians from the region. However, they are not elected directly for their positions within Region Västerbotten, but for positions within the municipalities and the County Council. Their mandate is indirect. Public influence on regional development issues is therefore weak. When RUP/RUS was produced a large number of contacts were taken with potential and already identified stakeholder organisations. In the process sessions were also organised where the public, the inhabitants of the region, were invited to put forward their views. The outcome was meagre; very few actually used the opportunity for influence.

Public participation is sought when strategies are formed and/or organisational changes are pursued. From the interviews there are no indications of routines or actions for increased public participation in the everyday practices. One interviewee responds that not only is the public participation difficult to manage, it is also difficult to identify the public in an operational sense. Who could be identified as interested? And further, as mentioned earlier, since governance tend to favour organisational participation, the public is somewhat excluded due to no obvious organisational routines for voicing their interest other than at public elections.

Finally, the objects for regional development strategy making are mainly non-tangible. Judging from physical planning public participation tends to be low as long as no specific investments in buildings or other objects take place. Once the actual investments are near construction the public interest can be expected to RISE.

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Interviewees

Erik Bergkvist, President, RegionVästerbotten.

Harriet Classon, Municipal executive board, Skellefteå municipality.

Kerstin Nilsson, Council member, Västerbotten County Council.

Marie-Louise Rönmark, Mayor, Umeå municipality.

Ewa-May Karlsson, Mayor, Vindel municipality.

Maria Östberg, The Swedish trade union confederation, Västerbotten.

Chris Heister, County Governor, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten.

Anna Viklund, Swedish public employment service, Skellefteå.

Birgit Högberg, Swedish Disability Federation, Västerbotten.

Ulf Edlund, Umeå University, Umeå.

Tomas Lundmark, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Umeå.

Gun-Karin Karlsson, Chamber of Commerce, Lycksele.

Torbjörn Halvardsson, Swedish Federation of Business owners, Umeå.

Ann-Mari Lindgren, Västerbotten county educational association, Umeå.

Anders Ågren, Mayor, Umeå municipality.

Katarina Molin, Head of financing and planning support, Region Västerbotten.

Anne-Louise Lindqvist, Manager, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten.

Birgitta Heijer, County Director, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten.

Kajsa Pösö, Departemental manager, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten.

Torkel Stinnerbom, reindeer owner, member in the structural funds partnership.

Thomas Westerberg, Head of planning, Region Västerbotten.

Niklas Gandal, Development planner, Region Västerbotten.

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