

V.13. PITEÅ IN SWEDEN: Striving to attract former residents back home

By Hjördis Rut Sigurjonsdottir, 2018/2019

Introduction

Why are some municipalities better than others at deploying their resources, attracting people and creating jobs? This was the key question studied in this analysis of the attractiveness of 14 rural municipalities in the Nordic Region.

The 14 areas selected are all defined as attractive in the sense that their populations and the number of people in work have increased in recent years. The nature of the boost to employment in some sectors has been identified by means of shift-share analyses to determine how much of the change is attributable to specifically local factors.

Interviews then probed key stakeholders about motivation, working conditions, job creation and living conditions. These interviews were with public sector representatives (e.g. mayors and heads of planning and development), business representatives and entrepreneurs, high school students and people from the education sector, as well as fami-

lies. Combined with analyses of other data and information, the interviews helped us to understand why some places do better than others.

The municipality of Piteå is situated on the coast of Norrbotten, 40 km south of the regional capital Luleå, and almost 700 km north of Stockholm. It was formed in 1967 when the rural municipalities of Hortlax, Norrfjärden and Piteå were merged with the city of Piteå, as part of the 1971 municipal reform, with a total area of 4 460 km² (Statistics Sweden, 2015). The largest urban area is the city of Piteå, which is also the municipality's administrative seat. Just over 23,000 inhabitants, or roughly 55% of the total population of 42,116 in 2018 (Statistics Sweden, 2018), live here. Other urban areas include Bergsviken (population approx. 2,200), Rosvik (population approx. 1,800), Norrfjärden (population approx. 1,500), Roknäs (population approx. 1,200) and Hortlax (population approx. 1,100). All of them are located within a 15 km

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radius of Piteå city centre, together enlarging the functional urban area (Statistics Sweden, 2015). Since 2000, the population has steadily increased, going up from just over 40,000 to more than 42,000. This growth has exclusively been centred around Piteå (Statistics Sweden 2019b).

Piteå rapidly demonstrates its importance as one of two Swedish cases for the Attractiveness Project. Before the case study in late November 2018, Piteå's labour market was given an award for the best growth in Norrbotten county during 2018. The award was based on the share of companies that had both new employees and increased profit and turnover figures (Pitea.se, n.d.). Also, the city centre in Piteå was ranked in eighth place out of 62 Swedish city centres in the City Climate Index, which is based on measured sales, market shares, activities and number of jobs (WSP, 2018).

Demographic development

The population has been increasing in recent years, but it is an ongoing battle to keep the net figures positive. It is unlikely that the goal of reaching 43,000 by 2020 will be achieved, judging the trend in recent years. Figure V.13.1 shows the population change from 2007 to 2016, in which there was an increase of 943 people. The population has continued to grow, according to the latest statistics, by an additional 212 (SCB, 2018). However, the pace of growth is perhaps slower than desirable.

The proportion of foreign-born residents is relatively low in Piteå, only 6.5%, compared with 19% in Sweden as a whole (SCB, 21.02.2019). The bulk of population growth in 2015 and 2016 can, however, be traced to immigration, dating to when Piteå was obliged to take its share of refugees ar-

iving in the country. Jan Johansson, Director of Piteå's Urban Environment, says that immigrants have enriched the community and that Piteå has succeeded quite well in persuading them to stay. According to information from the municipality, 79% of the 709 refugees who arrived in 2015 were still resident in Piteå at end of November 2018 (Table V.13.1).

Table V.13.1. Refugees in Piteå 2015–2018

Year	Registered	Still left	Rate
2015	110	77	70%
2016	178	147	82%
2017	271	201	74%
2018	150	136	90%
Total	709	561	79%

Labour market, employment and business development

Labour market and economic activity

No single industry has clearly dominated the labour market in the municipality. Nevertheless, with industrialisation, forestry became the main economic activity in the area, and has continued to be so. Paper industry company SCA, together with the paper packaging manufacturer Smurfit Kappa, together employ around 1,000 people (Regionfakta, 2019). In addition, local companies Stenvalls and the wood/timber building constructor Lindbäcks employ around 500 people between them. Otherwise, the largest overall employers are the municipality and the Norrbotten Region, with nearly 6,000 employees in total (Regionfakta, 2019). In 2018 there were 1,498 active companies in the municipality that had up to 200 employees, and six that employed 200 or more (Statistics Sweden, 2018).

The forest and the forestry have long formed a stable base for Piteå's business community. The shift-share analysis (Figure V.13.2) shows that local efforts have had a positive impact on the agriculture, forestry and fishery sector. The manufacturing sector is also doing better than expected. The pillars of this growth are the two large paper industry companies mentioned above, SCA and Smurfit Kappa. In addition, leading sawmills, metal and engineering industries, house construc-

Piteå, annual population change 2007–2016

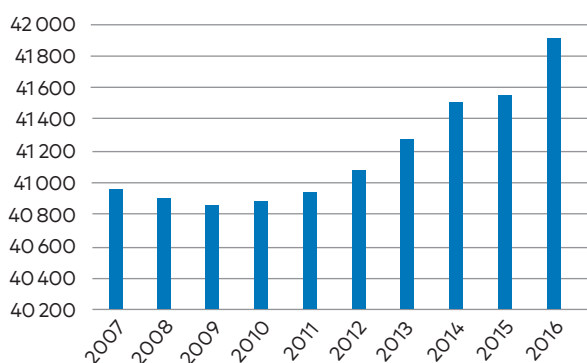


Figure V.13.1. Population Change in Piteå 2007–2016

tion companies and a wind power farm are being constructed. The harbour in Piteå is important for these industries and the labour market in general. However, job growth in health, social work and education sector, has been lower than expected.

One substantial boost to the labour market is a huge wind park, where 1,100 wind turbines are being built. Construction started in 2018 and, by the end of 2019, 179 turbines will already be in use. This is creating 500 jobs the first two years, which will largely be filled by foreign labour. Fifty permanent jobs are expected to be created in the wind park from 2020, which will be the largest such facility on shore in Europe when it is completed.

(Piteå, n.d.). Peter Palmqvist, Labour Market Director for the municipality, points out that all the extra electricity produced will create potential for further developments, such as energy-intensive businesses. His hope is that Piteå will prove so attractive to business that the municipality will be able to choose what kind of business it wants. The preference, in relation to the existing timber and paper industries, is some kind of environmentally friendly industry, since it is important to preserve the unique and untouched natural environment in the area. This is a resource that Palmqvist believes will increase further in value, attract tourists, and create more jobs.

Piteå, 2008–2016

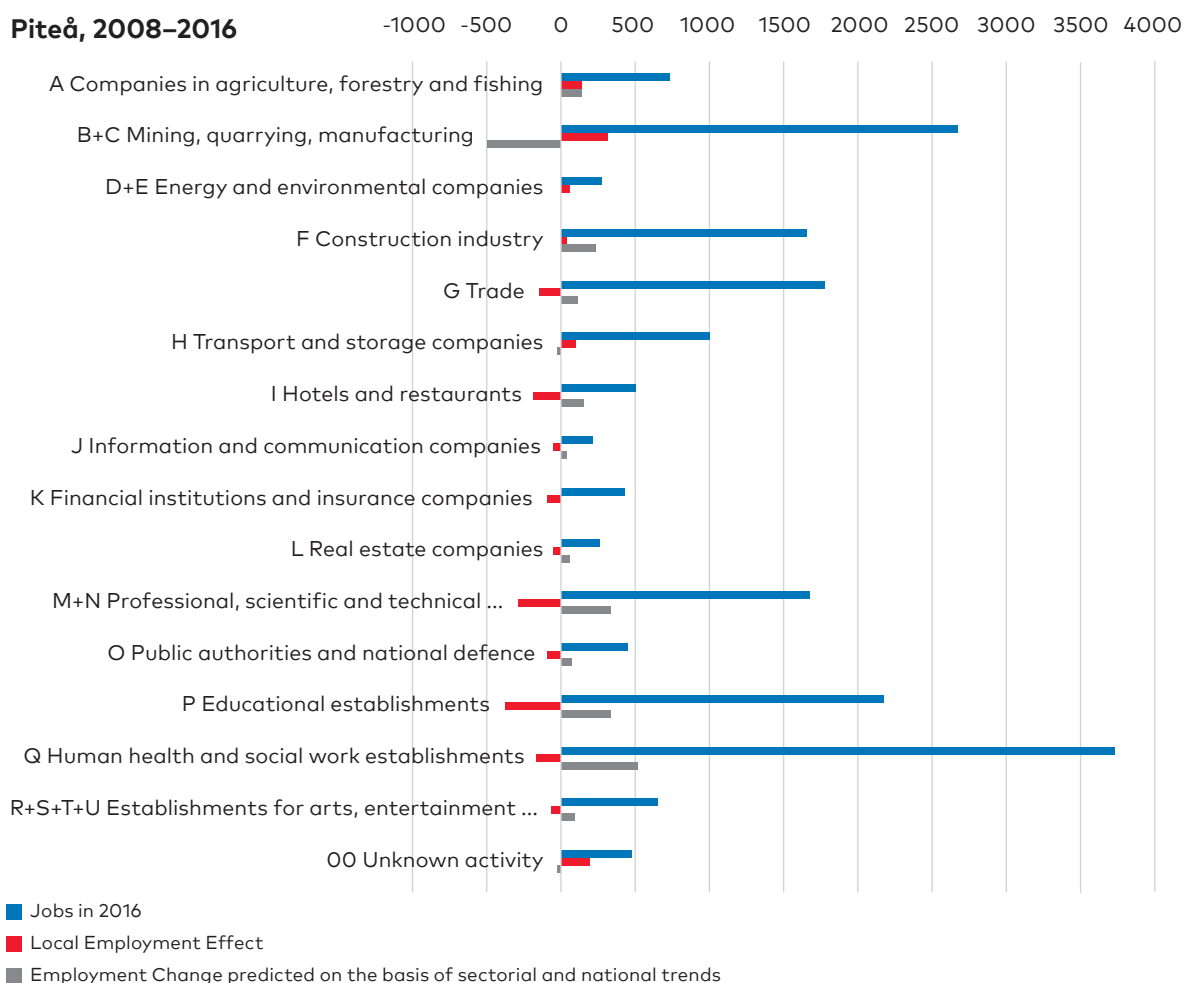


Figure V.13.2. Employment and the local employment effect in in Piteå. The **blue bar** shows the number of jobs in the area in 2016. The **grey bar** shows the employment change predicted on the basis of sectorial and national trends. The **red bar** shows the local employment effect, a reflection of the change in jobs (growth or decline) at municipal level over a period of time, attributed to local factors (e.g. local policies, local natural or institutional conditions). In the cases where it is positive, the local development in that particular industry is better than would have been predicted, based on national and sector trends. This means that industry in the area is stronger, or specific impactful policies are in place. Qualitative methods of data collection (e.g. interviews) helped us to understand the reasons behind these statistics.

Job development in Piteå, by number of jobs

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Jobs in 2016
A. companies in agriculture, forestry and fishing	479	442	489	690	743	774	755	757	740
B+C. mining, quarrying, manufacturing	2835	2670	2548	2559	2545	2484	2490	2550	2663
D+E. energy and environmental companies	193	216	233	220	229	252	289	267	278
F. construction industry	1378	1383	1464	1508	1549	1598	1649	1631	1653
G. trade	1789	1674	1726	1787	1826	1789	1770	1737	1763
H. transport and storage companies	902	874	929	913	947	982	1025	997	986
I. hotels and restaurants	515	431	496	477	485	530	551	515	495
J. information and communication companies	222	204	215	206	218	214	198	222	216
K. financial institutions and insurance companies	490	488	445	435	430	425	421	429	424
L. real estate companies	251	268	260	260	263	263	271	270	260
M+N. professional, scientific and technical companies; administrative and support service companies	1615	1475	1520	1513	1636	1671	1641	1644	1662
O. public authorities and national defence	454	403	475	433	427	429	434	438	454
P. educational establishments	2185	2104	2051	2023	2054	1997	2006	2069	2167
Q. human health and social work establishments	3378	3315	3257	3268	3409	3416	3461	3681	3719
R+S+T+U. establishments for arts, entertainment and recreation; other service companies etc.	608	620	626	598	592	626	638	636	644
X. unknown activity	278	265	374	482	485	511	520	528	467
	17572	16832	17108	17372	17838	17961	18119	18371	18591

Tourism

Summer is the main tourist season in Piteå, with domestic tourists representing the largest group, or 80% of the 1.1 million overnight stays in 2017. Half of Swedish tourists stayed in commercial accommodation, and Norwegians accounted for 77% of the overnight stays by tourists from abroad. The largest group of tourists are campers. The camping sites, 15 in total, account for more overnight stays than the 12 hotels on site put together. Tourism generates around 372 jobs a year, but significantly more during the summer.⁶¹ Many

people come to enjoy the coast and the archipelago and Pite Havsbad, the largest tourist and conference centre in northern Sweden is an important attraction. Tourism during the winter has been on the rise because the cold climate, the space, the peace and quiet and nature attract people from heavily populated areas, often in central and south Europe. According to Jan Johannsson, Director of Piteå's Urban Environment, various companies involved in winter activities have been established specifically to respond to this particular growth in interest. Test driving inland in Arvidsjaur and Arjeplog has also led to some more winter tourism.

⁶¹ Tourist information in Piteå in 2017, sent by e-mail from the municipality.

Competence matching

Matching competences to requirements is a challenge that applies for the whole Norrbotten region, according to Peter Palmqvist, Labour Market Director for the municipality. "It is indeed a problem to provide the skills and competences that the labour market needs," confirms Jan Johansson, Director of Piteå's Urban Environment. There is great need for nurses and assistant nurses in the municipality, but the challenge is even larger than that in fact, because the municipality lacks almost all the established academic professions. Construction, technology and industry struggle with competence matching meeting demand from growing businesses and replacing older cohorts that soon will retire. According to Jan Johansson, labour shortages can also influence population growth, since too few employees are in place to manage the building permits and processes required to facilitate further urban development. The demand for space on which to build has been steadily rising from 2016 and exceeds the municipality's capacity. This creates bottleneck and is likely to delay population growth.

Piteå Science Park

Piteå Science Park is a development company for the creative industries, for clean tech, and for digital service industries. Its aim is to support entrepreneurs, companies, students and researchers, in order to create growth throughout the region. The operation involves particular cluster initiatives and development projects, creating attractive meeting spaces and offering support for business development and new businesses. The Concert Hall Studio Acusticum has been part of Piteå Science Park since 2016. The multifunctional concert hall offers customisable premises, the latest technology, and world class acoustics (Piteasciencepark n.d.).

Municipal and public policies supporting attractiveness and facing challenges

Attracting and reaching out

The Department of Urban Environment and Community has, in accordance with political decisions, played a larger role in Piteå than in many other municipalities⁶². In addition to physical planning and social development, it has responsibility for



Photo: Hjördis Rut Sigurjonsdottir

62 According to Jan Johansson, Director of Piteå's Urban Environment.

competence matching, adult learning and post-secondary school education. It also has responsibility for receiving refugees. All of these activities are important for Piteå's development and progress.

Piteå works consciously on getting people to move to the municipality, not least encouraging emigrants to return. A special fair has been held in Stockholm, together with neighbouring municipalities, to attract people emigrating from the northern part of Sweden and 'longing for home'. The fair, entitled Hemlängtan (a longing for home), aims to show the job opportunities, affordable accommodation and quality of life that will attract people back to the area. In November 2018, Piteå worked together with Skellefteå, inviting over 500 people to the fair in Skansen, in Stockholm. An event was also held for students at The Royal Institute of Technology (KTH). In April 2019 another dual fair was held in Junebacken in Stockholm. This time it was held along with different neighbouring municipalities – Luleå, Boden and Kalix och Älvsbyn.

The municipality also makes an effort to encourage its young people to maintain links with the area⁶³. It pays an 80% subsidy on bus trips for students studying in Luleå and pays for one trip home per month for those studying in Umeå. No data is currently collected on the results of this, admits Jan Johansson, Director of Piteå's Urban Environment. However, this is seen as a long-term investment to support students, both to promote education and also to retain and nurture their ties to Piteå.

Education

Access to tertiary education in Piteå is limited to Luleå university of Technology campus for its School of Music, which is based on the long tradition of music in the municipality. Its programmes attract students from elsewhere to Piteå and diversify educational options for locals, as well as enriching the cultural life of the town.

Strömbackaskolan is the larger one of two upper secondary schools in Piteå, with around 1,500 students. This institution attracts more than 90% of young people in Piteå, following graduation from grade school – where almost half of the students are in vocational training, according to the Principal, Britta Dahln. Vocational education provides great opportunities for students, and most find a job directly after they leave the school. *"Ten years in a row, we have been among the schools in Sweden with the highest proportion of students to complete their education,"* notes Britta Dahln. She claims that companies in the municipality have contributed to this success by encouraging young people to complete their education. It would be better to attract more students to the school's science section in the future, which is a good preparation for Luleå University, since the need for trained civil engineers is consistent in Piteå. In terms of tertiary education, the closest universities are in Luleå and in Skellefteå. Umeå University is also a popular option and is in about 200 km away.

An attractive place to live

Housing and infrastructure

House building has increased along with the population. This has consisted mainly of detached homes and apartments for rent, as the tradition of the condominium is limited in Piteå. In 2017, 138 apartments were built, and according to the interview with Jan Johansson, this trend continued in 2018. The main problem involved is delays in processing all the necessary permits required by the Planning Department. Housing shortages have also plagued neighbouring cities. This impacts the situation in Piteå, where prices are considerably lower overall, even though they have been rising. Johansson says that a particular challenge involves older people being reluctant to downsize to relatively expensive newly built apartments in a municipality where the tradition is to live in a detached home. He hopes that uplift in the city centre will support such a transition and attract the older generation to live in a lively city centre with a high level of services.



Photo: Hjördís Rut Sigurjonsdóttir

63 According to Jan Johansson, Director of Piteå's Urban Environment.

Transport

Running a local public transport system in Piteå is another significant challenge. It is presently caught in a vicious circle of few trips and few passengers. In the past two years the number of passengers has increased. This is mainly attributable to new residents of foreign origin, many of whom do not have access to a car or to a Swedish driving licence. For Piteå to meet the Global Covenant of Mayors target for energy and the climate 2030, use of public transport and bikes needs to increase. *"People do not gain much time by using the car; it is mainly a bad habit,"* says Jan Johansson, Director of Urban Development. A car culture is prominent in Piteå, where people often drive for relatively short distances, Johansson adds. Free bus rides were offered in October 2018 to familiarise the public with the use of buses as an alternative. Johansson adds that proposals to reduce the number of parking places in central Piteå but have not been well received. This 'car culture' interpretation is supported by a residents' survey showing that people who live there feel that roadworks should be prioritised. It also demonstrates that they think pavements and bike lanes should be a lower priority (SCB, 2017).

Peter Palmquist, Director of the Labour Market, says that better train connections within the region would definitely be a significant infrastructure improvement for Piteå. Most importantly they would connect Piteå, Skellefteå, Luleå, and Umeå. This matters not least because the latter two are university cities. A Norrbotten line from Umeå to Luleå along the coastline is now being constructed, across a total distance of 270 km. This addition to the Swedish railway system will improve transport for passengers and goods to, from and within the region. However, it will take many more years until it becomes operational. The current railway line has many twists and turns, creating limited opportunities to improve speed, weight and train length, and it does not include Piteå (Norrbotten, n.d.).

Sport, culture and club activities

Spending on culture amounted to SEK 1,292 per head of population in 2016, corresponding to 2.4% of the municipal budget. This places Piteå above the national average of 1,091 per person. The budget was increased by 24 SEK per capita from 2014 to 2016 (Sveriges Radio, 15 January 2018).

The School of Music, a branch of the Luleå University of Technology (LTU), is located in Piteå, training music teachers and musicians in a variety of genres, as well as researchers in music pedagogy and musical design. The Academy of Music was founded in 1978 and is a further development of the music activities at Framnäs Folk High School. Under the same roof there are also courses in journalism sound engineering and dance teaching. This provides good opportunities for collaboration, both within existing programme boundaries and at a more personal level. In the same building there is also the university's Studio Acusticum, which is one of northern Europe's most modern concert halls (LTU, n.d.).

Sporting culture is quite strong in Piteå, and the women's athletics victory in the Swedish Championship 2018 was a great accomplishment for a team from a municipality of this size. Mona Lundström, Director of Culture and Recreation, says it is remarkable how successful women athletes in the municipality have been in recent years. Apart from the football they have also been successful in other sports, such as in skiing, horse riding and hockey. Lundström claims that this success really adds to a sense of unity among people in the municipality.

There are many different sporting facilities in Piteå. There are eight larger sports halls, halls for gymnastics, two ice rinks, an indoor football hall, a swimming pool, and a course validated for the Swedish Championship in football. Outdoor facilities include a running track, an outside gym, ice rinks created in various places during the winter, cross-country skiing trails, to name but a few.

Quality of life

A cold climate is not for everyone. Maybe this is one of the reasons why the municipality places the greatest emphasis on attracting former Piteå residents back home, to increase the population and to bring the competences and skills needed to local business. In the project interviews many of the interviewees expressed the view that the consistently cold climate in the municipality is much better than the kind of instability in temperature which characterises the winters further south in Sweden. *"I would rather have cold than slush,"* as one interviewee put it! The darkness during winter is, however, more challenging. This issue emerged at the group meeting with the students. But on the positive side students pointed out how the snow



Photo: Hjördis Rut Sigurjonsdottir

during winter made up for short days by making everything brighter. That is in addition to the many who appreciate the bright summer nights in the charming and comparatively warm summer in the Swedish archipelago.

The social ties

For Piteå it is valuable to bring former residents back after education and employment elsewhere. Various local features attract people back, according to the project interviews. One major factor is social networks, family and friends, especially when people are starting a family on their own and their need for support grows. The longing for closeness with grandparents and other relatives increases in particular, since many people have little other support in the larger cities. Many of the interviewees indicated that people who have strong families are attempting to come back in order to enjoy living closer to their wider family. On a few occasions this was linked to the large role played by interaction within families as a part of social interaction in Piteå as a whole.

The relationships and interaction within families and old friends can restrict opportunities for incomers to integrate into the community. It was mentioned more than once in project interviews, both with family members and with the municipality's employees, that although the number of res-

taurants and other meeting places has increased, the social life of many is largely tied to invitations to other people's homes. This can serve as an excluding factor for people who do not have established relations in the area. One interviewee gave an example of two presentable and well-educated women who had moved to Piteå to take up jobs. However, they ended up moving away because they found it really hard to integrate into the community. This concern (and examples of it) was brought up several times during the case study, and is therefore mentioned without any generalisations being made about it.

Affordability

The cost of living is another important factor mentioned by interviewees, not least when compared with larger urban areas. Many people are unable to afford to live in a detached house in the metropolitan areas and enjoy short commuting distances to work or school. By contrast, for the price of a rather small apartment in the metropolitan areas, you can enjoy a nicely renovated home in a good location in Piteå.

The lower cost of living also has a great influence on regular family life. A single mother explained in one interview how she can make ends meet and have some money left over to treat herself and her child, as well as owning a house and

a car. She says that living in Piteå improves the family's quality of life, because they can go to restaurants every now and then and holiday abroad almost every year. She is convinced that in Stockholm, for instance, she would not be able to do these things, and would actually struggle to make ends meet.

Outdoor activities and recreation

In recent years, access to outdoor activities has been more and more important for the people of Piteå, according to the municipality's Director of Culture and Recreation, Mona Lundström. This was confirmed in interviews with family members, where the ability just to go outside, start training and enjoy nature at the same time was brought up. *"I just see so much more of the sky here,"* said one interviewee who had recently returned to Piteå. For those who want to exercise indoors, a training centre and other sport facilities are within reasonable distance for most people.

Interviewees regard good access to outdoor and health-promoting activities as an important factor in enhancing life quality and reducing overall stress level. Good logistics like this are important for many participants, because they make everyday life and family duties easy (or easier) because of the shorter distances to work, activities, schools and most services.

Participants were in general pretty satisfied with the range of sporting and cultural events in the municipality, considering the size of the town. As one family member noted, it would not be fair to compare Piteå to much larger places. Rather the region should be seen as a whole, a place where advantage can also be taken of the offerings in the neighbouring cities of Luleå and Skellefteå. In addition, many children enjoy support from their families in the area, helping them use the available facilities more than would be the case if they lived far away from such support networks.

A reason for special emphasis on gender equality

Interestingly, and a matter frequently raised in interviews, a real emphasis is placed on having beautiful homes, hosting fine dinner parties and being well dressed. *"Even the windows should be attractive and inviting when seen from the outside,"* as one family member commented. Also mentioned in this regard is the relatively large proportion of women in Piteå who are do not work due to infirmity. Some

think that there might be a link between this and the emphasis on making a good domestic impression, adding extra pressure on women who in most cases are the primary care-givers for keeping their homes presentable. The municipality takes this seriously and has placed special focus on gender equality because of the differences between men's and women's health and income outcomes in Piteå. These inequalities are greater than in Sweden as a whole, and also compared to other municipalities in Norrbotten region, according to Anette Christoffersson, Process Leader in the municipal council (Pitea.se, 13.11.2018).

The Piteå spirit

The definite sense of civic pride in the area is often called the 'Piteå spirit'. This was repeatedly mentioned in project interviews, and in various contexts. This term is most often associated with self-sufficiency. Local people are often accustomed to taking care of themselves. This is related to Piteå being the second largest town in the region, and younger siblings wanting to do things on their own and in their own way. It was also suggested by some participants that pride in being from Piteå might give a greater sense of belonging – a mutual feeling of being part of something that can possibly influence former Piteå residents to consider returning, and which may encourage others not to leave.

Good place to grow up in

The group of students participating in group interviews were positive about living in Piteå in the future. Before that, most felt that it was important to explore other places and to broaden their horizons. But four out of six were quite sure that they would return to Piteå after finishing their education, some when starting a family and others due to job opportunities in the area. A large proportion of the group did not plan to travel too far to obtain a higher education. They mentioned Umeå (215 km) or Luleå (55 km), saying that they like the north of the country.

Many students think that Piteå is a good place to grow up. For children it involves the freedom to roam about, rather than being in pre-determined places all the time. They also expressed satisfaction with the moderate population size, and having lower stress levels than they imagined might be the case in Stockholm and Southern Sweden. They also noted how life in the countryside can

create closer bonds between people (social cohesion), and they think it would be harder to make friends in larger urban conurbations. Despite more cultural opportunities in bigger cities, they were quite satisfied with what was on offer in Piteå. They named, bowling, the cinema and the range of sporting events as positives. Their main complaint was limited public transport to smaller towns and villages in the municipality. This problem is mainly solved by the use of scooters, and parents driving them around.

Discussion and conclusions

Different factors reported that make Piteå an attractive place to live (table V.13.2).

With a thriving labour market, Piteå's main challenges are matching skills and competences to the needs of employers and avoiding labour shortages. The municipality's population has been on a slow and a steady rise since 2009, even though it will probably not reach the target of 43,000 by 2020. Piteå has made interesting moves to increase its population. The main emphasis has been on attracting back people who have previously left, with several events in Stockholm where the municipality and companies in the region show po-

tential immigrants or returnees what Piteå has to offer. The municipality also has good educational facilities, and supports connectivity by subsidising trips to the universities in Luleå and Umeå.

Piteå has not received large numbers of immigrants compared to many other regions in Sweden, and immigration has been the main or only reason for population growth in many regions in the Nordic countries in recent years (Grunfelder et al, 2018). According to information from the municipality quite a large proportion of refugees arriving in 2015 and later have subsequently settled in the area. Only time will tell if that trend continues. It is worth noting that some interviewees believe it can be difficult for new residents, with no roots in region, to be and feel included in a close-knit community. This is an element of the overall challenge that might be worked on and improved. In addition, a more gender-equal environment has been noted as something to emphasise in future development work. It will be interesting to see how this pans out, since lack of gender equality can impact how women feel about settling and staying in Piteå.

The 'Piteå spirit' has both advantages and disadvantages. It nurtures local pride and supports

Table V.13.2. Attractiveness in Piteå and obstacles/challenges to overcome

Good practices and reasons underlying attractiveness	Obstacles and challenges
<p>Culture, sport, recreation Piteå is a popular tourist destination during summer – including also Pite Havsbad.</p> <p>Employment & jobs Good job opportunities.</p> <p>Entrepreneurship culture Innovation and entrepreneurship cultures are strong. People want to find own solutions. Many new companies set up every year.</p> <p>Housing Relatively cheap housing compared to other parts of the country.</p> <p>Young people - living, staying/returning Young people positive on moving back after their education</p> <p>Quality of life & local community Tight-knit community (can be a problem for incomers to Piteå or Norrbotten). Piteå spirit = civic pride. Pride and confidence in Piteå and in being from there. This encourages people to not move away from Piteå. It also encourages former Piteå residents to return. A safe place to live.</p>	<p>Entrepreneurship culture The will to find new solutions can sometimes be perceived as a negative.</p> <p>Infrastructure & transport Options of public transport between Piteå and the smaller towns in the municipality are limited. Owning a car is therefore popular and necessary.</p> <p>Quality of life & local community It may be difficult for incomers to integrate into the local community if there is no one to introduce them. A high proportion of women with infirmities. A rather gender divided society.</p>

entrepreneurship and initiative, but can also stop people working together (particularly with newcomers). Many of the participants were aware of this and efforts have been made to work more closely with neighbouring municipalities. This is based on a realisation of how working together and looking at the region as whole can be beneficial for all stakeholders. The 'Piteå spirit' also creates a genuine feeling of belonging. Local people seem proud to be part of community and of living in the north.

In addition, it is worth mentioning affordability and quality of life in Piteå. Although the climate or the dark may be challenging at times, this did not seem to have too much influence on interviewees, who were also able to see the advantages of these local conditions.

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