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Location of Public Services

Legitimacy, Challenges, and Solutions in Sweden

Jenny de Fine Licht
David Karlsson
Louise Skoog

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Gothenburg, Sweden — Jenny de Fine Licht
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Terminology: Key Location Concepts

There is some variation in the terminology used in the literature on location of public services. This glossary demonstrates the usage of terms in this book.

Concept	*Definition*
Public service facility (or unit)	A physical site or building where public services are provided to users (e.g. schools or public indoor swimming pools). More broadly, this encompasses sites where public activities are conducted or public goods are produced, including infrastructure arrangements (e.g. storehouses, bus stops, or energy plants).
Location of public services	The policy area concerned with physical placement of public service facilities.
Location decisions/ decisions on location	The practice of determining the physical placement of public service facilities.
Spatial allocation of public services	The distribution of service facilities over a particular geographical area or polity, determining the general availability of services throughout the entire area. The degree of allocation can be more or less concentrated.
Centralisation/ decentralisation of one or more service facilities	The process of closing service facilities in peripheral places and redirecting users to facilities in more central places, *or* establishing new facilities in peripheral locations where none existed before. (Sometimes referred to as *geographical* centralisation/decentralisation as opposed to centralisation/decentralisation of responsibilities.)
Centralisation/ decentralisation of public service responsibilities (including location decisions)	The relocation of the duty and authority for the provision, funding and location of public services between tiers of government (from lower to higher or vice versa).
LULU	Stands for 'Locally Unwanted Land Use', which in this context refers to a public service facility that is unpopular among local residents. These residents may wish to have it removed if it exists, or prefer to avoid its establishment—at least in their vicinity.
LALU	Stands for 'Locally Attractive Land Use', which in this context is a public service facility desired by the local residents. They would like to retain it if it exists, and if it is absent, they wish for its establishment.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

'The maternity Ward in Lycksele is closed—Heavily pregnant Emma is forced to drive 300 kilometres.' So reads the headline in 2023 of a leading newspaper in Sweden, *Dagens Nyheter* (Kejerhag, 2023), signalling seriousness and justified concern. Emma, who lives on a farm in the inner parts of northern Sweden, is nine months pregnant. She estimates that if everything goes well, it will take her four hours to drive to Umeå, where the nearest maternity ward is placed. 'It feels really scary,' she tells the journalist, in a reportage illustrated by pictures of beautiful but heavily snow-covered landscapes.

The background is that the maternity ward in Lycksele, an inland town in northern Sweden with about 12,000 inhabitants, closed in January 2023 for an indefinite period due to difficulties in recruiting qualified staff. In effect, pregnant women in the inner areas of Sweden must travel to the coastal cities of Umeå or Skellefteå to give birth.

People living in the inner parts of the region are upset and channel their discontent in different ways. One example of a particularly active platform is the Instagram account '@Inlandsaktivisterna' (The Inland Activists). Most of their work is focused on spreading a positive image of life in the sparsely populated areas, such as posting photos of ski slopes, swimming in lakes, fishing, barbecue evenings, and the tranquillity of nature. They reject the sometimes-gloomy picture of rural areas as boring and sad,

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