

Sverker Åström Foundation

Report

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Research topic: Human rights in Sweden: Lund's experience of being a human rights city (Права человека в Швеции: Опыт Лунда как города прав человека)

Dear Representatives of the Sverker Åström Foundation,

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the given opportunity to conduct a research project in Sweden and to explore Swedish academic and cultural life. I spent three months in Sweden (from September 1st to November 27th 2021) and had a chance to be hosted by the Department of Sociology at Södertörn University in Stockholm and by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute in Lund.

It is worth mentioning that I was supposed to come to Sweden in 2020, but due to the pandemic I was allowed to postpone the internship. And I appreciate it, as it turned out, a year later, the object of my research slightly changed and became even more interesting.

Human rights (HR) city is a relatively new concept, even for Sweden. So far, there is no universal definition or procedure for becoming a HR city. That is why, when coming to Sweden, my main purpose was to learn more about this concept, what it means for the citizens and authorities, how people work with it, and how it relates to other parts of the country.

I may say that my internship was divided into two parts. The first one was from September to the mid-October. I spent it at Södertörn University in Stockholm studying literature related to human rights and urban studies, as well as preparing a questionnaire for the interviews. I would like to thank Zhanna Kravchenko for her help with getting to know the University better, for introducing me to some of her colleagues who work in a field of urban studies, and for providing me with all necessary information.



Södertörn University

Besides reading, I attended some quite interesting and thought-provoking higher seminars in Sociology at the department, workshops organized by the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES), and seminars at the Institute for Urban Research of Malmö University (via Zoom). I also had a chance to discuss my Master's thesis with a doctorate student Vasileios Kitsos from the department and received valuable feedback that helped me to prepare an article.



Lund University Library

Last two weeks of October I spent at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute in Lund. I had a pleasure to work at the Human Rights Library, but the most important part was semi-formal interviews with researchers and practitioners from the institute as well as from the Lund municipality about Lund's experience of being a human rights city. These interviews showed me a Lund's perspective on the topic, but I also received contacts for further interviews, which I continued in November when I returned to Stockholm.

In November, I was lucky to arrange meetings with representatives from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) in Stockholm, Region Västra Götaland in Gothenburg, and Piteå Commune via Zoom. In overall, I managed to conduct nine interviews during the internship.

As I wrote in the beginning of the report, for the last year the topic of HR cities became even more interesting. The reason is that as for the end of 2021, there are two HR cities in Sweden – Lund (since 2018) and Piteå (since 2020). Moreover, there is a network of municipalities interested in this topic, so maybe in the future there will be even more such cities.

I believe my findings can be helpful for my colleagues who are interested in this topic, and that I can develop this short-term research project into something more, perhaps, even into a doctorate study.

Apart from studying and working, I was happy to explore Sweden outside of the University walls. First of all, I would like to thank Disa Håstad for the hospitality and taking care of all Sverker Åström Foundation scholars. It was an honor to meet Disa in person. And it was a pleasure to meet other scholars at a dinner and share our project ideas and plans.

After such a long lockdown, it seemed almost unreal to have a chance to visit so many museums and exhibitions – Stockholm has definitely a lot to offer for its

visitors. I was also amazed by how the city looks like when you ride a bike or take a boat. Being a cinema lover, I volunteered at the Stockholm International Film Festival, where I met a lot of nice people who were always happy to chat.

I am convinced that the Sverker Åström Foundation is doing a great and very important job by supporting young scholars from different fields of studies and giving them this wonderful opportunity to learn Swedish experience.



One of the favorite views in Stockholm



Christmas market in Gamla Stan