



Stadsutveckling (Sweden)

Summary

Stadsutveckling seeks to promote new and innovative concepts related to urban planning, development of public spaces, and regional development. The project hosts a website (www.stadsutveckling.se); an information channel for local government officials and private entrepreneurial enterprises about activities, projects, and topics related to innovative urban planning. Stadsutveckling also organises a number of seminars and workshops where key people and institutions meet to exchange and discuss new approaches and to hear about new, interesting concepts from abroad. The project specifically focuses on presenting solutions to the common phenomenon of “shrinking cities”. While this is often looked upon as a frustrating tendency, the Stadsutveckling project turns attention towards those new options and new arenas for creative development that this phenomenon also creates.

The project

The primary goal of the Stadsutveckling project is to promote innovative urban planning methods among local governments and to engender their development processes. It is run by the architecture company, Testbedstudio, who launched the project in 2004. So far it has primarily addressed the phenomenon of shrinking cities occurring in Sweden, as well as in Europe, where cities face decreasing populations primarily due to de-industrialisation, suburbanisation, and post-socialism.

Sector(s) covered

Main Sector

Arts and creative industry:
Architecture, Landscape
architecture.

Other Sectors

Society: Regional development;
Urban regeneration (actions to foster
the social, economic and physical
regeneration of cities, towns and
villages).
Public administration: Urban
planning

The message has been spread by launching an informative project website, publishing research, holding seminars, and arranging study trips. The main target groups so far have been Swedish municipal governments and private enterprises, but, with time, the project also hopes to include local governments and companies from other European regions facing urban planning projects.

Approach

The project was launched in 2004 and quickly became popular among local government authorities. First of all because it addresses a problem that is becoming increasingly common in Swedish cities. Secondly, the project is run by a private architecture company with research qualifications which uses this combination of capacities to present a very practical and implementation-ready approach to modern urban planning. The two main concepts used to deal with the challenges of shrinking cities are the German-developed IBA and Integrated Urban Development procedures, which both focus on the new opportunities and freedoms created by the less densely populated cities. The concepts present different ways of how to replace old or unused buildings and sites with new inspirational and creative environments by utilising open spacing and innovative architecture.



A central element in the Stadsutveckling project is the focus on letting local government authorities play a major role in the implementation phase.

Element of innovation – the process

The Stadsutveckling project basically seeks to foster new ways of thinking by the people and institutions responsible for city planning in Sweden. It seeks to disseminate the fact that new challenges, facing both Swedish and other European cities, require new and modern solutions. A central element in spreading this message has been to gather relevant people in meetings and seminars in order to exchange and discuss new approaches and ideas. These forums also present innovative cases and organisations from abroad that can serve as sources of inspiration. The publication of relevant studies has further helped foster creativity and innovation in Swedish urban planning.

Key successes

(outcomes, results, impacts)

The Stadsutveckling project has been very successful. It has produced publications, articles, and research reports, and conducted national and international conferences and study trips. The project managers have set up a network between a number of Swedish municipalities, regional and national organisations, consultants, and researchers, as well as with a selected number of European model organisations covering various aspects of urban development. The aim is to engender direct innovation and development processes in the municipalities.

Due to a lack of financial resources from the local governments, the project has not yet been directly included in the implementation of an urban restructuring programme, but the overall message of innovative thinking has undoubtedly spread since the project started in 2004.

Transferability and sustainability

Similar projects are already running in Norway, Finland and Germany, and the model could easily spread to other European countries. The concept of disseminating new creative ways of looking at urban planning can, in principle, be used anywhere, relevant because the shrinking cities phenomenon is currently occurring in many European cities as a result of varying societal developments. The key to securing the project's sustainability is to continue to maintain, and further develop, strong networks of stakeholders and to continue the workshops, publications, study-trips, as well as to maintain the topic of innovation in city planning at the top of the agenda.

Special Highlights

It addresses the common European phenomenon of shrinking cities by studying and disseminating new innovative urban planning concepts. It further applies these concepts to local contexts and utilises the background of the project administrator organisation to develop these into practical solutions that build, to a great degree, on the involvement of local governments in the implementation phase.



Key characteristics

General purpose of the practice	Innovative/creative approach to tackle problems in society (architectural concepts, urban planning, public space and regional development)
Target group	Municipal government and businesses
Level of implementation	Regional
Funding	Private
Time frame	2004 and ongoing
Leading organisations	Testbedstudio Architects

Further information

Website of the project

www.stadsutveckling.se

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Further information:

www.testbedstudio.com (The website of the architectural company running the project)