

TRANSLATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Local Investment Program in Trollhättan, Sweden

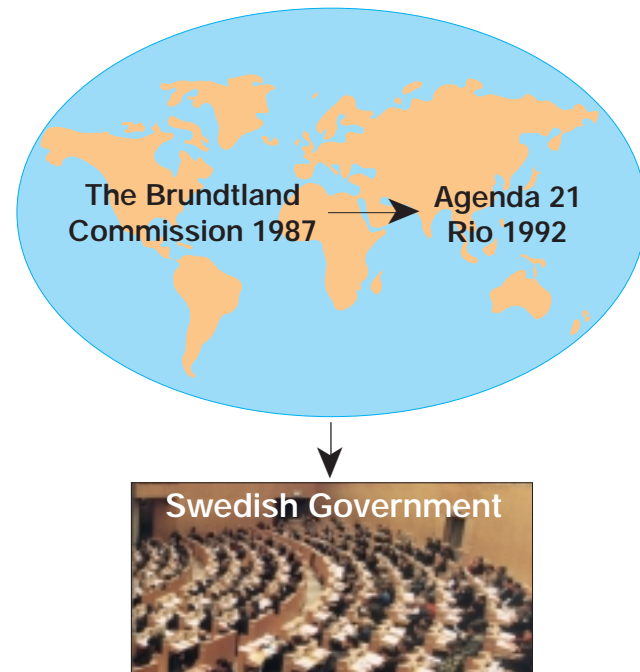


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SUMMARY

The local investment program is a further development of a decentralization of environmental work in Sweden. We argue that the local investment programs should be regarded in a global context. It is no coincidence that the Swedish Government has chosen to express its general aim in terms of Sustainable Society. There are explicit references to the Brundtland Commission concepts of Sustainable Development as well as the work of Agenda 21. Local Investment Programs have led to a greater integration of sectors in the municipalities. This also means that local politicians get a new role as responsible for the translation between national government, international agencies and citizens of the municipality.



QUESTION

How are global ideas concerning Sustainable Development translated into local practice?

Goals of the Local Investment Program (LIP)

- ◆ Reduce the negative impact on the environment
- ◆ Improve the efficiency in energy use
- ◆ Improve the efficiency in using other natural resources
- ◆ Enhance the use of renewable resources
- ◆ Increase the re-use and recycling of resources
- ◆ Contribute to the preservation of the biodiversity
- ◆ Contribute to increase the circulation of plant nutritive



CONCLUSIONS

The Municipality administrators stand out as translators of global visions to local practices. A condition for the translation is the skillful performance of the local authorities in speaking the public administrative language and transformation of the program itself in the process.

This means that the Local Investment Program does not only have environmental effects.

- The program gives priority to environmental issues in the municipality.
- It distributes resources, not only in monetary terms but also in a linguistic and symbolic sense.
- The LIP-program is arranged in a way that supports local commitment and responsibility for environmental management.
- It also supports the integration of environmental work between levels and sectors in the Municipality.

Since decentralized forms of control are used to a greater extent in several fields of inquiry it is of importance to understand how translation between local and global actors take place. At the same time translation supports decentralization, i.e. local initiatives are supported and integration of fields and sectors take place through the process of translation.

INTRODUCTION

A condition for Sustainable Development is that industry and public organizations take environmental considerations in their decisions and actions. It is also important for municipalities and regions to be able to provide a good living environment for their citizens. However, knowledge about how society may achieve Sustainability is scattered and distributed among different actors in society. There is also a risk that ideas and visions concerning Sustainability only lead to rhetorical changes rather than real changes in the everyday life of citizens, businesses and administrators. It is therefore important to understand how ideas and visions formulated in the global arena are translated into local practices. How this translation is made possible through an investment program, initiated by the Swedish Government, is the theme of this paper.

Translating a Global Idea into Local Practice

- ◆ The Division of Sustainable Development formulated the Local Investment Program as a way to support a development towards a Sustainable Society.
- ◆ 220 Municipalities competed for grants for their own Local Investment Programs by sending applications to The Division for Sustainable Development.
- ◆ 42 Municipalities in Sweden share 5.4 billion SEK from 1998 to 2000.
- ◆ The government decided to give grants to 21 projects in the municipality of Trollhättan with a total of 37.9 million SEK.

