

Two Swedish dialogues with business on sustainable development

Think new, think sustainable

Der Schwedische Umweltrat wurde von der Regierung beauftragt, mit verschiedenen Branchen in einen Dialog über ihre Bemühungen im Punkto nachhaltige Entwicklung zu treten. Die Ergebnisse sind viel versprechend.

The Swedish Environmental Advisory Council engaged in dialogues with companies in two different sectors. One dialogue focused on the building and property sector, which was named Building and Living. 20 companies and three municipalities participated. The companies involved were real estate management companies, developers, contractors, architects, consultants, suppliers, banks, insurance companies, and telecommunications companies.

The second dialogue focused on future convenience goods retail market – logistics and sales channels – and was named Future Grocery Market. The subjects discussed were the retail market, carriers, the food industry and the IT sector, and 16 companies participated altogether.

A wide range of sectors were represented because tomorrow's solutions will require cross-sector cooperation. Reference groups with representatives from government agencies were set up to give expertise advice. The council also had a continuous exchange of information with relevant business organizations.

It was demanded by the companies that the Managing Director should support the dialogue, which was manifested by them meeting the Swedish Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Industry at the beginning and at the end of the process. A requisite for a company to be able to take part was also that they should be willing to be forerunners and that they should be represented by high level strategic persons from the companies. One fourth of the companies were represented by the Managing or vice Managing Director. Few of the participants were responsible for the environment – most were directors for other departments like marketing or innovation or strategic thinkers close to the Managing Director. Once one company had appointed a high level person the others followed.

The two dialogue projects may be seen as pilot projects, the aim of which has been to explore approaches to sustainable development. Using a

back-casting technique, the companies and municipalities in each of the dialogue projects formulated and agreed on a vision for sustainable development up to 2025. Taking this vision as their starting-point, the groups formulated long- and medium-term objectives and devised strategies for achieving the objectives and the vision. The dialogues went on for about a year in the first round. They have since been continued and are still ongoing on a more specific level.

► Building and Living

Buildings in Sweden are responsible for a considerable part of the total environmental impact, and consequently there is great potential in the property sector for a major contribution to sustainable development. For example, the sector accounts for 40 per cent of the total energy and 50 per cent of the total electricity used in Sweden.

More efficient use of energy and resources, a good indoor environment and sound materials were identified as the most important factors for sustainable development in the property sector and the group formulated objectives for these areas.

The objectives with regard to energy were to phase out the use of fossil energy sources for heating and hot water production by 2025, to meet more than half of the energy requirement from renewal sources by 2015 and to reduce the use of purchased energy by 30 per cent by 2025. Another objective

was to phase out the use of hazardous metals and substances by 2008. All new buildings and at least 30 per cent of the existing building stock should be classified with respect to building-related health and environmental impacts by 2010. By 2025, waste volumes are to be reduced by 90 per cent.

In order to achieve these objectives, the group agreed to concentrate on developing solutions within eight areas:

- sustainable community development,
- use of the best available technology and introducing new technology,
- research and development,
- procurement based on life-cycle perspectives and a holistic approach,
- coordination of the construction and management process,
- environmental classification of residential and commercial buildings,
- the marketing of environmental solutions,
- sustainable management.

► Future Grocery Market

New solutions for transport and distribution are urgently needed in order to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and certain other substances.

The dialogue group focused on logistics, e-commerce and the content and manufacture of products. The target for 2025 is to halve transport volumes of transports in the food industry and the convenience goods retail market, as well as households' shopping journeys, and to achieve a much higher percentage of renewal energy sources in the food production chain. The dialogue group also agreed on objectives for phasing out harmful substances.

The dialogue group identified five strategic action areas:

- collaboration between sectors and transport categories,
- development, procurement and introduction of new technology,
- research and development,
- whole companies geared to sustainable development,
- environmentally sounder products and dissemination of information about the environmental impact of products.

The dialogue group also proposed to start a number of pilot projects, including projects on the coordination of transport systems in cities and rural areas, on intermodal transport, on e-commerce systems, and on fuel and vehicle technologies.

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► Agreements 2003

In October 2000, the Managing Directors of the companies, the leading councillors of the participating municipalities, and the two Ministers agreed to prolong the two dialogues to make it possible to reach agreements on concrete measures, including evaluation and development.

In 2003, such agreements were signed by the Minister for the Environment and the Managing Directors of in total 36 companies and municipalities. More companies show an interest in joining the process.

In the agreements companies, municipalities, and the government are making commitments on measures to meet the objectives agreed upon including a follow-up system. Examples of measures are that a system should be developed for classifying buildings regarding environment and health. Insurance companies and banks participating in the dialogue will consider the ranking in this system when they decide on premiums and rents for a specific building and the government will consider economic incentives for instance within the tax system.

► Experiences

Using a back-casting process was very useful for having a creative atmosphere and for not getting stuck in obstacles in the short run. In the Building and Living dialogue there were more high level people which seems to have given a better credibility and understanding for the results of the dialogue within in the companies. Relatively more persons were knowledgeable on environmental issues and on technical development in the dialogue on Future Grocery Markets which may have been the reason that more concrete projects were proposed.

Continuity turned out to be important. Those companies that were represented by the same persons throughout the process were more dedicated. At one point – after the „vision seminars“ – new companies were admitted to the dialogues, which tended to somewhat delay the process. Interesting was also that the participants, that were already there, had by then gained an ownership to the process and were active in getting the newcomers to accept the process and to contribute.

The broad cross-sectoral participation in the groups helped giving a holistic perspective and ideas on new solutions. Sometimes there was a tendency of the representatives from a certain sector to see more what other sectors could do. An experience was also that smaller working groups around the themes that had been identified

by the whole group was productive in making the work more concrete and more grounded. Expertise on different issues was invited to give knowledge and energy to the groups. Also the reference groups with governmental agencies commenting upon the papers and proposals were important. The overall experience is that the dialogues generated exciting visions of a more sustainable future, ambitious objectives, and sound strategies towards achieving the objectives.

► Strategies for the future

The Environmental Advisory Council concluded its work with a report to the Government regarding the dialogues (1). The council judges that great changes will be necessary in order to meet the environmental challenges of the future and realize sustainable development. New solutions will have to be found, especially as regards energy supply and transport. Business has a key role in these efforts. Dialogue and agreements should be used as a worthwhile complement to other instruments. The experience of the two dialogue projects is encouraging.

However, a number of aspects must be taken into account in connection with dialogue and agreements with the business sector, including competition-neutrality, opportunities for SMEs, the risk of free riders and the need of transparency. The council therefore proposes a number of guidelines to help raise awareness of these aspects as a framework for future dialogues and voluntary agreements.

Dialogue can help society to prepare for a transition to more sustainable products, services, and systems that can meet citizens' needs without jeopardizing the ecosystems on which we depend or consuming natural capital. The council estimates that the nations that take the lead in these endeavours will have a competitive edge in the future.

Anmerkung

(1) The results of the dialogues are available in Swedish on the website of the Swedish Environmental Advisory Council: www.mvb.gov.se

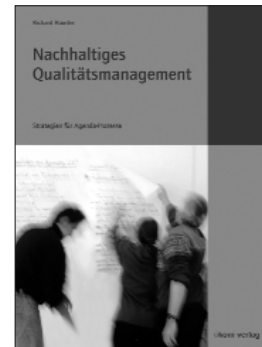
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Nachhaltiges Qualitätsmanagement

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Richard Häusler liefert in seinem Buch aufschlussreiche Erkenntnisse aus seiner langjährigen Erfahrung als Trainer und Moderator von lokalen Agenda-Prozessen und Nachhaltigkeitsprojekten. Er leistet damit einen wichtigen Beitrag für die praktische Umsetzung von nachhaltigem Qualitätsmanagement und vermittelt dem Leser strategische Instrumente, um die eigene Arbeit zu überprüfen und zu verbessern. Das Buch wendet sich an alle, die im öffentlichen Bereich, in NGOs und im Non-Profit-Sektor mit professionellen Methoden Organisationsentwicklung betreiben wollen.

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