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Management and stakeholder participation in local strategic energy planning – examples from Sweden

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Abstract

When it comes to improving energy efficiency and environmental sustainability, municipalities are important actors. The Swedish Energy Agency initiated a program called Sustainable Municipalities to support strategic energy activities at the local level. Participating municipalities were mandated to develop local energy and climate strategies. This study gives a general overview of how the 60 participants in the Sustainable Municipalities program developed and used energy strategies. The paper focuses on analyses of whether energy plans or strategies are present, and if present, how the municipalities address the issues, what actors are involved, and whether follow-up of the strategies is pursued. The empirical data were collected using structured telephone interviews and other studies. The paper elucidates local energy strategies from a management perspective, discuss whether and how the composition of actors influences suggested goals and measures, and explore whether there were plans for implementation and follow-ups. The theoretical ambitions are to integrate theories on how to manage efficient strategic energy planning with theories on how to achieve successful participation of stakeholders. These theories are used to discuss weaknesses and strengths in existing municipal energy planning practices and potential improvements.

The results from this paper show that only 75% of the municipalities adopted local energy strategies. In addition, it was revealed that the processes to develop the strategies generally included several municipal actors although other stakeholders were rarely represented. The strategies resulted in concrete measures; however, there were no clear correlations between included actors, suggested measures, and identified themes in the strategies. The

Key words: energy strategy; planning; municipality; participation; management

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