

Symposium in Lanzhou New Area, October 16-17, 2014

Name

Erik Sigge

Title

From Policy to Plan: Regional Planning and Federal Decisions

The case of the relocation of Swedish Governmental Agencies in the 1970s

Abstract

In 1963, a Swedish governmental investigation of the localization of national governmental agencies started a long and heated political debate on whether or not to relocate the offices of the agencies to other cities than the capital Stockholm. As a result of a parliamentary decision over 50 governmental agencies with more than 10 000 employees were relocated during the 1970s from Stockholm to other parts of Sweden. The relocations were in line with the labor market programs of the national government and their concern with regions in crisis. Most of the new locations were in areas where industries had closed down and unemployment increased rapidly.

This study is analyzing the relationship between planning and (Swedish) labor market politics through the work (planning and building construction) of the National Board of Public Building (KBS). KBS was a Governmental agency in charge of the provision of space for the government and its institutions and directly responsible for finding premises for the relocated agencies in their new locations. The specific examples of this study are of the relocation of five governmental agencies to Norrköping, some 160 km southwest of Stockholm. The agencies were: Swedish Civil Aviation Administration, National Migration Board, Swedish Maritime Administration, Swedish Prison and Probation Service, and SMHI (Sweden's Meteorological and Hydrological Institute). The study of these five agencies is juxtaposed to agencies that stayed or were relocated within the Stockholm area. In Norrköping, as well as in Stockholm, KBS both constructed new buildings and made alterations to existing ones.

This paper presents a specific case of relations between politics and planning (i.e. political decisions and policy-making, and the practical work of regional and urban planning). The analysis reveals the specific roles of KBS and Norrköping City Department of Planning while implementing a national political decision at a local level, and presents historical findings of the planning processes that give unique insights into Swedish regional and urban planning of the 1970s. In a more general perspective, the study raises questions about the local effects of implementing federal economic and labor market policies, and aims at giving a more general understanding of the complex relation between built form and public administration. The specific paper presented here is part of my research project *Architecture's Red Tape*, which is a critical study of public architecture's relation to bureaucratic State organizations during the 1960s and 1970s.