

The Sustainable Nordic City - utopia or business as usual, as evidenced by a systematic review

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ABSTRACT

The urban planning discourse has reached a critical mass of 'buzz'. Be it resilient or sustainable, smart or digital, all cities wish to be known for good quality of life and wellbeing. Still, urbanisation degrees and rates, challenges, obstacles and opportunities differ by not only continent but region and sub-region. These differences render a global discourse somewhat disconnected from local practice. It is therefore the aim of this paper to bring a specifically Nordic element to the discourse, analysing the 'buzz' and catch phrases around urban planning and city development in the context of Northern Europe. This region is often looked upon as spearheading socially equitable societies, trust in government and governance, high levels of wellbeing and (urban) quality of life. Through a systematic review we attempt to unravel which planning practices or societal discourses in the Nordic region underpin their ability to create sustainable cities, if any. Does societal equality and good governance practice underpin good or 'sustainable' urban planning, or indeed enable cities with good quality of life in general.