



Peer reviewed article

## Watertight strategies: Long-term planning of neglected maintenance of municipal infrastructure

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### Abstract

The following article aims to investigate strategies that municipalities with neglected maintenance use to deal with the so-called maintenance debt. In Sweden, maintenance is generally neglected in terms of municipally owned infrastructure. Future reinvestment and investment needs are great, as is well known. Despite written steering documents and policies regarding good financial management, long-term neglected maintenance is a condition for municipalities of different sizes and different parts of Sweden and previous research emphasizes that it is very unusual for municipalities to succeed in reversing long-term neglected maintenance. However, the municipality of Skellefteå is unique in the sense that, despite different forms of financing for water and sewerage and street, the municipality has succeeded in managing its fixed assets in accordance with good financial management in recent years. Based on the concept pair strategy and tactics and through interview and document studies, we intend to investigate which strategies Skellefteå municipality developed to reverse a long-term neglected maintenance. The results show that by working on the basis of two overall strategies, the maintenance strategy and the collaboration strategy, the municipality has succeeded in reversing neglected maintenance in both areas. While the maintenance strategy is about managing fixed assets in accordance with good financial management and developing fixed assets in a conscious way of housekeeping, the collaboration strategy is about how the municipality has chosen to organize the relevant activities to facilitate cross-sectoral work. All in all, the strategies chosen by Skellefteå can be a source of inspiration for other municipalities in the work of managing maintenance debt within the water and sewerage as well as streets and roads. However, it is worth emphasizing that each individual municipality has its contextual

challenges such as climate, topography, economy, and population density, that contribute to the need to translate selected strategies into its own municipality's conditions.

**Keywords:** municipal infrastructure, strategy, maintenance



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