

INNOVATING THE FUTURE CITY - UMEÅ

Innovation in Action - 2017

This briefing paper includes key take-aways from Innovation in Action Day 1. Anna Wilikson, head of Umeå City Marketing, along with Linda Gustafsson, Gender Equality and Social Sustainability Officer of Umea, led the workshop, that explored the requirements for building the future city, using an interactive game requiring collaboration among participants.

"THE GAME ALLOWED DEEP UNDERSTANDING BY ALLOWING COMPETITION FIRST, AND THEN COLLABORATION TO SHOW THE GAINS IN THE LATER"

"IF WE WANT ROOF OVER OUR HEAD IN THE FUTURE, WE NEED TO BUILD GOTHENBURG, EVERYDAY"

"IT IS NOT ONLY WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, BUT PEOPLE THAT LOOK LIKE YOU"

PURPOSE

The purpose of the workshop was to explore and experience different methods on how to create future cities. Throughout the day, the participants were divided into smaller groups of 8 to play the interactive game about city planning and development.

METHOD

The workshop's aimed at making participants think about the design, planning and development that goes into building a city. Anna gave examples from her daily work at the Umeå commune and brought out the importance of strategic decisions made to make sure the needs of all the inhabitants of the area are met. While building a new park in Umeå, the focus was girls in the age of 15-20 years who were almost always underrepresented in all city planning.

5 TAKEAWAYS

- People like to be, where action is in the city.
- Games are a fun, interactive and creative way of getting everyone involved.
- To be sustainable, a city needs collaboration not competition.
- Visualization, through use of tools such as VR helps everyone be on the same page.
- Small efforts can lead to big changes.



The workshop started with presentation about the interactive concepts to visualize the city, involving game developers. The City plans for 2050 to build and build faster were enlisted. The main requirements of cities are houses, business stores, infrastructure. But,

Anna wanted the participants to think- “How to talk about cities?”. The takeaways were shared and documented using the digital tool ‘mentimeter’.

A fun way to involve citizens is through games such as card games and VR games. The participants played the card game individually first. The broad rules were to discuss, simplify, think about actions and then negotiate.

DESCRIPTION

STEP 1- Understanding the Rules

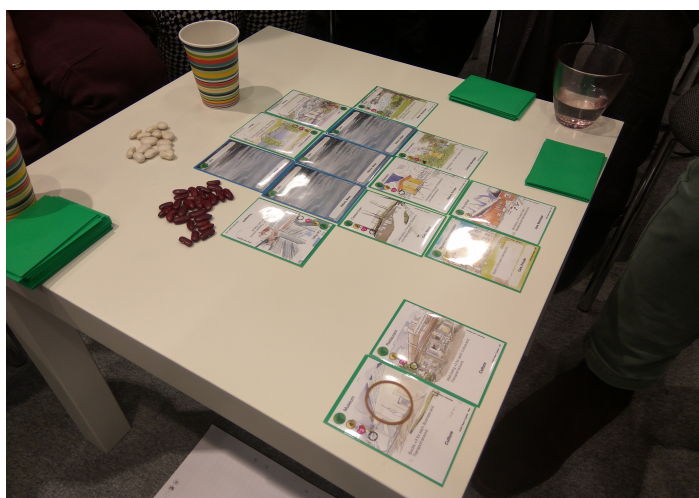
The game was simple but had a list of rules to follow. The city should be built around lakes which were represented by 4 cards. Also, the city had a defined limit. The participants were divided into teams of 2 and they played around their table with 4 teams competing against each other. The rewards during the game were beans, white for bucks and red for well-being.

The players had to collect the most number of beans to win the game. Each team used a card that had associated gains based on where the card was placed and the cost of investment that the team had to pay. The game ended when 25 cards were played. The advantage was given to the team with the youngest member to start first. The city had to be built around the lakes and there was benefits to make a diverse city. There were volunteers to help the participants throughout the game.



HOW TO MAKE PLANNING INTERACTIVE:

1. Involve all stakeholders.
2. Use simple models such as games and VR to get everyone on the same page.
3. Understand and communicate the importance of the process.
4. Look for unrepresented parties and take feedback.



STEP 2- Playing Individually

There was a prompt buzz in the room with all the players putting their game face on. The youngest member in each group was marked out with humorous interactions. The lake cards were arranged with a brief discussion. The players started playing the game with the motive of maximizing their personal profits in terms of beans.

The differences in the players wealth started to show with some players gaining huge amounts of beans with their skills, creativity and gameplay whereas a few players

moving towards bankruptcy and finding innovative ways to prevent a disaster for themselves by trying to negotiate with the other players. This part of the game revealed our cities of today, with enormous gaps between the wealth and well-beings of the people of a city.

STEP 3- Discussions and Revelations

During and after the first round, there was lots of discussions, planning and curious glances amongst the participants. Next, Linda gave a speech about women equality and social sustainability in the city of Umeå and her actions about the same. One interesting fact pointed out by Linda was that women in Umeå used more sustainable modes of transport than the men which affected their goal of 55% of citizens using sustainable public transport. Also, the new open space in Umeå and its development was discussed. The challenge of the design was to have Inclusion through Exclusion. The focus of the development was girls in the age of 15-20 years and they demanded a space that was free from expectations. The participants also had a short discussion about what is required for a good city and what can be done to meet these goals.

STEP 4- Playing Collaboratively



The next part of the workshop, which most participants were unaware of till the point it started, was to play the game again, but this time, collaboratively. The players could discuss about their cards, where they want to place it and why. This led to a lot of mutual discussions, strategy development and optimization as the group of 4 teams collected beans commonly instead of individually. Also, there was no investment required to be made by the players, only reap the benefits of making mutual beneficial decisions about the city planning.

This part of the game led to higher number of beans, i.e., bucks and well-being for the overall group than the previous version. There were lots of benefits of playing the game collaboratively which was revealed to the players indirectly by the game play. The workshop ended with various key takeaways about planning cities, optimizing resources and implementing group thinking.

LEARNING & RESULTS

To understand the essential requirements of city planning, takes a very long time and a lot of efforts, but the game gave the participants a crash course, with understanding at different levels in a 2-hour afternoon workshop. The importance of tools such as games, VR and other visualization techniques were revealed throughout the

workshop. Also, the creativity, passion and fun associated with games could be easily spotted in the participants of all ages during the workshop.

The differences in the creation of a city, individually and collaboratively, was one of the major takeaways for the participants. The corporates present were very enchanted by the simple game that explained the meaning, boons and advantages of collaboration that they could use in their everyday lives at work. Also, the complexity of planning a city was understood by the participants along with how they could be involved to make their cities better. Overall, the workshop was very energetic with the speakers from the Umeå commune holding the attention of the participants till the last moment, providing the topics in a very well composed and comprehensible form through the interactive game playing session. Thank you for your participation during this year's Innovation in Action and we look forward seeing you next year at the Innovation in Action Day.



Anna Wilikson, Head of Marketing, along with Linda Gustafsson, Gender Equality and Social Sustainability Officer of Umeå Commune.