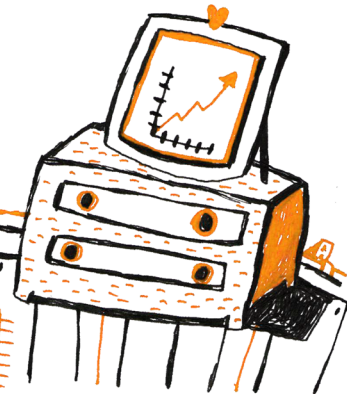


Beyond GDP growth

Scenarios for sustainable building and planning



Some say I should meet someone else but my growth economy has promised that everything will be different after we get back from vacation and that I just need to be patient and get better at compromising and that it WILL give up fossil fuels, but that it's not really a good time right now and that it actually had a rough childhood and cant I stop fucking nagging for once!



We need another story

A future society that is no longer based on economic growth – what would that look like?

Society faces a transformation of historical proportions to approach a safe and just operating space for humanity within planetary boundaries.

In economic and political discussions, the notion of economic growth is often taken for granted and seen as a prerequisite for a sustainable societal development. At the same time, the expectations surrounding growth can constitute a threat if growth declines, which even the most optimistic prognoses indicate is likely. It is therefore important to plan for alternative scenarios, where social and environmental sustainability goals - rather than continued growth - is in focus.

The research programme “*Beyond GDP growth: Scenarios for sustainable building and planning*” has explored the conditions for planning for a sustainable future beyond GDP growth. Four scenarios for Sweden 2050 were developed, that illustrate future societies that do not have to build upon the current economic logic. The scenarios should be seen as a tool for discussion and challenge notions of what is possible, and what changes that can and should be made.

Collaborative Economy



Ownership has shifted from private or public form to shared ownership of stuff and means of production. The production of goods and services mainly takes place in cooperatives or other collaborative networks. Many are 'prosumers', i.e. both producers and consumers. Digitalization has made it possible to pursue a livelihood and collaborate with others wherever in the country one might live. People live in clusters in smaller towns and cities, connected by public transport. Planning and decision making is characterized by norms of reciprocity, where civil society has a prominent role. Citizens are to a high degree involved in decisions regarding the organization of society.

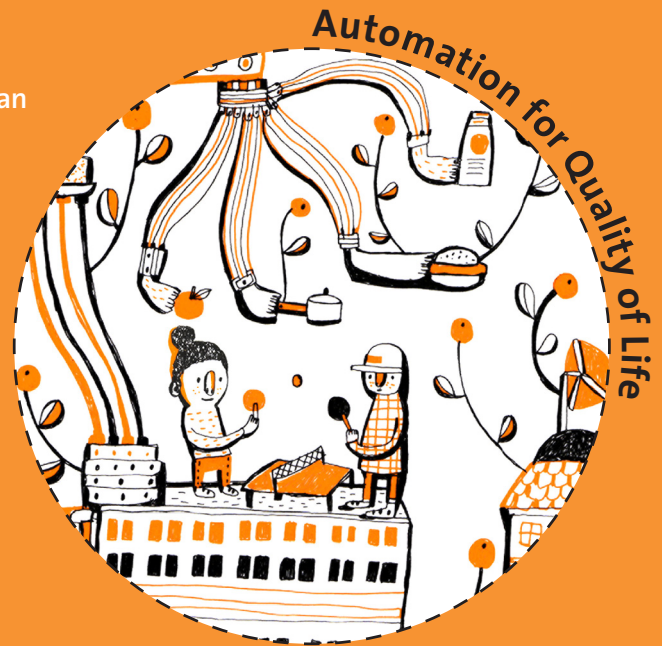
Scenarios for

Local Self-sufficiency



Sweden is good at making use of local resources and potentials, with a high degree of self-sufficiency. People adapt their consumption to the capacity of local ecosystems, which means downscaling and reduced import. Municipalities have large influence over their own development, with high local involvement. It is increasingly important to live close to systems of provision, so many live in the countryside or in smaller towns and cities. Economic activities are adapted to the local prerequisites, with large regional variations. Civil society actors have an important role, and people work together in local communities in order for the production to be resource-efficient.

The technological development has led to an automation and robotization of production. Meanwhile, resource efficiency has increased. People have been able to take out these productivity gains in reduced work hours, with a 10 hour work week as the new norm. Domestic work has also been automated, meaning that people have more time to spend on leisure activities, social relationships and civic duties. Despite relatively low average incomes from wage labor, there is a guaranteed basic security for all. The population is concentrated to both medium and large cities. As people spend a lot of time in the local community, public gathering places, such as squares, are central.



Sweden 2050

Waste no longer exists as a concept. Products are designed to be easily disassembled, repaired and reused. The economy is to a large extent based in consumption of services that aren't as resource intensive. Consumption of welfare services, culture and nature experiences are highly prioritized, as material consumption is limited. Social welfare is to a high degree dependent on functioning industrial policy. The state has a strong role in creating the premises and incentives for an efficient resource use and development opportunities for industry and business. Some tasks are organized by public institutions or entities, while some are run by private, cooperative or social enterprises.



A sustainable society

Four goals that should be met for a sustainable society were specified: two environmental goals related to *climate* and *land use*, and two social goals regarding *power, influence and participation* and *welfare and resource security*. The four scenarios illustrate different directions that society could take to reach the goals.

Sustainability assessments show that the climate and land use goals can be reached in all scenarios, even though it demands changing multiple parameters at the same time. In all the scenarios, the consumption of goods and of meat is reduced. Flight travel also needs to be drastically reduced to reach the climate target. The scenarios furthermore assumes a reduction in the construction of both housing and road infrastructure, to varying extents. Other aspects such as working hours, organization of welfare, and the built environment however differ in the scenarios.

All scenarios point towards the need for resource redistribution. Nothing points to it being impossible to reach the social goals in the scenarios, however there might be different aspects that are particularly tricky. The assessment shows that there are both development potentials and risks, which can be diametrically opposite for different parts of the country.



The future means change

The scenarios all suggest a large change compared the current development trajectory, and the project points towards that there are both cognitive and structural barriers for transition. A lot is connected to expectations and assumptions regarding growth. Municipalities and companies to a large extent plan for and expect a development that builds upon a further expansion of infrastructure, transport and consumption. This upholds unsustainable structures and ways of life.

At the same time, there is a growing consciousness regarding the need for transition, and a myriad of examples of new sustainable practices and ways of organizing the economy, society and welfare are being developed. These ideas can be seen as windows of opportunity, but also show that change can happen within the current system.

The scenarios outline the opportunities to move towards a sustainable development with maintained or increased well-being – provided that the understanding of well-being is based on other values than those of our current growth-oriented society. For these trajectories to gain support, there is a need for political visions and measures that drive the development towards a sustainable society.



This brochure is a summary of the final report from the research programme 'Beyond GDP growth: Scenarios for sustainable building and planning'. The report (in Swedish) and other scientific publications are available to download from the project's web page:

www.bortombnptillvaxt.se

Illustrations: Sara Granér

Print: Elanders Sverige AB, Vällingby

Financed by:

FORMAS 

The project has included researchers from:

