Make towns

– instead of traffic planning and housing development
Changes in the town does not only affect the town but also citizen’s health, quality of life and everyday life in generations to come.

Photo: Viveca Berntsson.
Say the words “make towns” to yourself. Reflect on them. What inner picture do you see? Then say, “traffic planning” and think about that. Finally, say “housing development” and do the same thing. Did you get the same picture each time, or did you get three different pictures?

Words are important. They guide feelings and thought. And feelings and thought should lead to the town and the vision of the town. So we are serious when we propose that traffic planning and development housing should not exist in our towns, but should be replaced with town making.

Planning today is carried out by experts from many fields – but that does not mean that it needs to be sectorised. Planners, urban designers, public transport authorities, road engineers, environmentalists all need to bring in their expertise. But at the same time, all these experts need to share a common vision – that of their future town.

This booklet is a translation of the Swedish summary of the book “STADSPLANERA – istället för att trafikplanera och bebyggelseplanera”, which was launched by Boverket\(^1\) in 2002, as part of a campaign to inspire local politicians, planners, environmental experts and traffic engineers towards a joint and more holistic view on urban development and to take the features of their own town as a starting point for discussing its future. The intention was also to emphasise the connection between traffic, built environment and human everyday life, the fact that planning is important for the everyday lives of people. And the everyday lives of people are not divided into sectors.

\(^1\) The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning
For more than a decade now, Boverket has left the epoch of centralised and state regulated planning. Rather, Boverket has seen as its main objective to inspire the municipalities to think and plan in holistic and sustainable ways and to do it based on the existing conditions: To sustain the architectural and cultural qualities at the same time as addressing the problems and deficiencies.

Boverket has also encouraged planners to dare to use themselves in their work, besides their expert knowledge also their intuition, courage and empathy. And to use dialogues across the borders and with the citizens. It is a matter of leaving old patterns and start thinking fresh. For many this is probably one of the most difficult things to do. But if they do, they will find it rewarding! And they will find that it is enjoyable to MAKE TOWNS. As a result we will get better towns – as shown by urban history.

We hope that this booklet will stand as an example of how the national level can serve the local level towards more thoughtful and sustainable planning.

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We have built ourselves into dependence on the car.
Photo: Mirja Ranesköld.
How did it get like this?

The number of cars in Sweden increased nine-fold between 1950 and 2000. During the same period, car density increased from 49 cars to 450 cars per 1000 inhabitants.

Streets belong in the town, traffic routes and roads belong to the countryside.

Why did we stop building towns as we intended them to be?
Originally, Swedish towns were compact, mixed and easy to grasp, built for people. It was easy to move about in them, to go anywhere along paths, lanes and streets. But during the latter half of the twentieth century new town planning ideals, and the possibilities offered by the car, have led to the development of towns being characterised by thinning out and urban sprawl. Clarity and connection have often been lost. Housing, workplaces and other activities have been separated and the town divided into zones.

This resulted in longer distances and heavier traffic. The town, which had been built for proximity, was now increasingly built for motorized mobility. For those who do not have access to a car, 25 percent of Swedish households, this development has involved considerable restrictions on daily life. The daily life of people is no longer the guiding principle.

The town has developed into a sparse traffic landscape

The car quickly dominated the townscape. Traffic queues and parking also take up valuable space. The physical result has become a town of which large parts are a traffic landscape. Streets and esplanades have been replaced by traffic routes. Road junctions have become traffic roundabouts, and broad traffic routes have been imposed on old town centres. Ring-roads and large-scale traffic interchanges have been built in the newer areas. The appearance of the town has changed, in many cases dramatically.
While the population has increased by about 50 percent since the middle of the twentieth century, urban areas have increased six-fold during the same period.
Source: Janos Szegö.

Road safety increased – but other values were lost

In order to understand the convictions that guided development, it is necessary to look at the spirit of the time and the conditions that applied in Sweden during the middle of the twentieth century. The functionalist ideal of town planning dominated; space, light and air were to replace overcrowding, and neighbourhoods were to become self-supporting for schools and services. At the same time, the number of cars increased dramatically. But the negative effects of traffic increased far more than did traffic itself. Those who moved to the new districts were mainly younger and middle aged people with children. Care of children became a strongly controlling factor as regards planning. One aim was to reduce accidents involving children through planning. And that was successful. But other values and qualities of the town were lost.

The town became accessible only for some

Increased knowledge and technical development have created conditions for an improved transport system. It should result in us getting closer to the goal of accessibility for everyone. But instead,
the increased mobility offered by the car has generally resulted in proximity being lost. At the same time, public transport has not been prioritised; it and urban areas have not been developed in a coordinated way. Distances to service facilities have increased, not only in the countryside but also in the town.

At the same time, the retail trade has undergone considerable change. Increased establishment of out of town shopping centres not only affects the town, but also its surroundings. Traffic in the town and traffic outside the municipality are both affected. For those who do not have access to a car, proximity to a bus stop and a shop mean a great deal. The disabled, women, old people and children are especially affected.

Children have to be driven from place to place

As towns have spread, children increasingly have to travel longer distances. This is connected with changed lifestyles. Sometimes, for example, they live in two places with separate parents, and they can have various activities spread around the town. Heavier traffic also means that parents feel uneasy about the possibility of their children being in an accident. Therefore, those that can, increasingly give them lifts, driving them about. But children want and need to move around, preferably on their own, when they are mature enough to do so. Being close means a lot for children, as it does for us all.
We want to get away from the divisions between people, functions and activities. 
Photo: Anders Damberg.
A healed town – a town for everyone

In recent years the longing to recreate the attractive, mixed and lively town for everyone has grown strongly. This longing expresses itself in the ongoing debate on town planning. The intention is to get away from the divisions between people, functions and activities. The idea is to stop the thinning out and sprawl and to recapture the town. This can be achieved through such things as appropriate concentration, improved public transport and attractive shopping and meeting areas, both in the town centre and in the outer areas of the town. Sustainable urban development also requires an overall view of the town.

So what is sustainable urban development?

What does sustainable urban development mean? This abstract concept that we use so frequently? That limits and yet contains so much? Ecological, social, cultural and economic aspects, nothing is left out. Large regional solutions and small-scale local ones. Quality and problems, impacts of various choices. Everybody should benefit, young people, old people, the strong, the weak, women, men and children, healthy and sick ... Everything from serious threats to our environment, such as problems with water supply to how to solve the design of kerbs, all these things are to be given sustainable solutions. We are only at the beginning. But we always will be.

Sustainability is something that is durable, something hard-wearing that can be used for a long time. It is beautiful, functional
Aspects of sustainable development:
- Consideration
- Care
- Beauty
- Participation
- Cooperation
- Equity
- Gender equality
- Integration and mixing
- Competitiveness
- Life and diversity
- The unexpected
- Peace and quiet
- Security
- Safety
- Stability
- Proximity
- Accessibility
- Attainability
- Economy of resources
- Independence
- Reliability
- Pride

The list can get longer.

Modest town building and progressive improvement of buildings and traffic systems on the basis of local conditions is sustainable, in both towns and cities. But boldness and innovation must also be included.

and made from sound materials with love and care. Development is a movement in a direction, towards something. Sustainable urban development is thus a movement in the direction of a more sustainable town. You cannot enclose or package a movement. On the contrary, it is a prerequisite for what we have called the directional epoch.

There is no such thing as the ideal town

The plan of Radburn, outside New York, from 1928, was the model for Swedish traffic planning in the second part of the 20th Century. But just the idea that there should be one ideal principle for the construction of towns surely makes many people shudder. For this reason, we should be careful not to recommend a single solution again. It is difficult to single out a structure that leads best to sustainable development. Examples from various towns show that there are alternative structures and alternative strategies. Just as we have buildings from various epochs of the past in a town, so we also have different street structures.

The spread and structure of our towns are of fundamental importance as regards the amount of energy used for transport. But the internal connections between housing and various activities, i.e., how they are located in relation to one another within the town, are of even greater importance than the town structure. The urban structure, according to recent research, affects transport volumes by ±20 percent, while connections affect them by ±130 percent.

There is obvious inertia in a country’s built structure. It is estimated that over 90 percent of the buildings in existence today will be present during the next generation. Large sums are invested in buildings, roads and railways. Cultural values and patterns have developed throughout history. Existing structures are therefore also largely a fixed condition as we enter the 21st century.

Future changes will thus primarily affect development, renewal and supplementation of towns and communities that have already been built. In this perspective, what is really sustainable is modest town planning and progressive improvement of buildings and traffic systems on the basis of existing local conditions. The fact that the ideal of the garden city and the ideal of the small town have survived through time, while other town planning ideals and utopian ideas have been launched and forgotten, is surely because they are the basis of what many people perceive to be the good life. But that should not prevent the inclusion of boldness and innovation.
Prerequisites for Sweden’s towns

Sweden’s population density is about one tenth of that of the EU as a whole. The sparse structure of the country, seen from a European perspective, and its relatively small towns and villages are perceived by many people as an important quality. Nowadays, about eighty-four percent of us live in urban areas, but nevertheless, Sweden was urbanised relatively recently. Well over half the population still live in towns of 50,000 inhabitants or less, or in sparsely populated areas.

But big city life, with its pulse and diversity, also attracts many people. At present, the trend in Sweden, as in most countries, is that people move to the larger towns and cities. Above all, there is great pressure on the Stockholm region. At the same time, the population of the vast majority of Sweden’s municipalities is declining. It is important to include these facts when discussing the future. They give good opportunities for increasing density, while still retaining proximity to open green and blue areas.

Today’s transport is not sustainable

Today’s transport is not sustainable. Access to oil is also uncertain. If energy prices increase, so do the costs of transport. For this reason, municipal planning must continually create conditions for achieving towns for pedestrians and cyclists, with properly functioning public transport and goods distribution. For instance, transfer from a train to bus should be simple and easy. Strategies for such interchanges between forms of public transport are intimately connected with the structure of a town.

The goal is a sustainable transport system

Increased travel places great demands on society, as the general goals also involve environmental adaptation and accessibility for everyone.

Transport of goods, travel for work, travel to school and study, shopping trips and travel for care are necessary movements in modern society. It can be assumed that most people would rather not have to make these trips, or wish that they were shorter. People would rather have short distances between housing, school, work and shops.

But travel for pleasure has also increased, in pace with improved living standards. At present, leisure trips constitute about half of all
Walking and cycling should be easy. Photo: Fredrik von Platen.

If urban development is to be perceived as sustainable by everyone, it is important that we can continue to decide where to live and how to travel in accordance with what we can afford. And that there should be countryside, small communities and towns and cities of varying sizes with well-functioning and coordinated transport to choose from.

travel, irrespective of whether calculated in number, time or length of trip.

The extent to which a sustainable transport system can be realised is dependent on physical, technical and organisational circumstances, and upon values and attitudes, i.e., lifestyles. It is difficult to predict what measures will become the most important in the future.

A sparse town or a compact town

So what sort of town are we striving for, in which direction shall we go? What factors give the best conditions for a good living environment, the sparse town with better means of creating a quiet, green environment, or the compact town with a more dynamic town life? Do we want a large city or a small town?

Ultimately of course, the town’s inhabitants shall together decide on the town’s development. But people have varying requirements, and the same person can also require different types of town during different stages of life. Lifestyles, values and travel patterns are of great importance.

A town that is culturally and historically of a sparse, green character cannot be treated in the same way as one which is initially dense and compact. But in the more compact towns it is, nevertheless, possible to create parks and green areas of high quality in appropriate places. And it is possible to reduce the amount of transport in a sparse town by means of conscious planning with mixed functions. Also, it is always possible to make the town more compact. Abandoned, industrial, institutional and other brown filed areas, which have now lost a great deal of their purpose, can be filled with new life. Building the town inwards reduces transport movements and creates better conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

Visions of the town

In every town it is necessary to formulate a vision of the future to aim at. The vision is the objective. It gives the force and desire to continue in a sustainable direction. Our vision is of a mixed and attractive town. It involves continually following the conditions for attaining a town for pedestrians and cyclists, with efficient public transport. It also involves planning for cars on the terms of people and town character.
Our vision is of a mixed, attractive town, a town for pedestrians and cyclists, with efficient public transport, and with cars on the terms of the people and the town. But our vision is, above all, of a town which is for everyone. A town full of human interaction, in which people can, dare to and will, be out and about on streets and open places. A town in which children can move about freely.

Our vision is, above all, of a town which is accessible for and usable by everyone. A town in which people feel good, and in which they participate in the life and development of the town. A town full of human interaction, where people can, dare to and will, be out and about on streets and open places at all times of the day and night, a town which is also planned for those who have the greatest difficulty in getting about and who are the most vulnerable in society.

And last but not least, a town in which children can move about freely, on their own, without their parents having to worry about them. A town to be proud of.


The information society and new lifestyles give new opportunities

The information society gives new possibilities of developing the town, through workplaces and housing being located more freely in relation to one another. This is possible because the workplaces of today cause less disturbance than did the industries and workshops of yesteryear. People can work from home to an increasing extent, and flexible working times can reduce the pressure of traffic during morning and evening rush hours. Some trade can take place
through the Internet. But we are only at the beginning of a development which is difficult to predict.

Changed values and lifestyles of a younger generation are also of importance for the type of town we wish to achieve. We know that fewer young people are applying for driving licences nowadays, especially in urban areas.

Society’s requirements for sustainable development and a sustainable transport system place increased demands on the environment, on accessibility for everyone, on road safety and security.

This means that accessibility for cars has to give way. It involves considerable opportunities for regaining a more coherent town with a mixture and diversity of people, housing and activities.
Children are unpredictable in their movements. That should be seen as a planning prerequisite.

Photo: Ulla Follin.
MAKE TOWNS! So that children can move around freely within the town.
Photo. Ulla Follin.
MAKE TOWNS – new ways of thinking

The town and traffic are not at opposite poles to one another, they need one another. The idea of the town is that goods, services and news are interchanged between people. But movements, in the form of traffic, must in many cases be subordinated to other values.

No traffic, no town. The town and traffic are not at opposite poles to one another. They need one another. Therefore, the traffic situation must be solved by establishing an overall view of the town.

We would like to show the connections between the town, people and their movements. As has been pointed out, the present transport system is not sustainable. We must therefore work actively to achieve an adjustment to environmentally friendly transport, primarily in large towns and cities. For this reason, town planning is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Many measures must be coordinated in order that established goals can be achieved.

To MAKE TOWNS, five new ways of thinking are necessary. They are

- Make towns instead of traffic planning and housing development
- Take your own town as a starting point, with the people who live in it and are present there
- Dismantle the barriers between different sectors, and allow citizens to participate
- Go in the direction of sustainable towns, from the epoch of norms towards the epoch of directions
- Work for a coherent urban policy

They are all about the need to have a new view of planning, and are actually generally applicable for all planning for the sustainable development of society.
It is important to highlight the conflicts of interest that exist, and must exist in every town, otherwise it would not be a town.

Say the words “plan towns” to yourself. Reflect on them. What inner picture do they conjure up? Give them careful consideration. Then say, “planning for traffic” and think about that. Finally, say “planning for development” and do the same thing. Did you get the same picture each time, or did you get three different pictures?

Words are important. They create impressions which guide feelings and thoughts. And feelings and thoughts shall lead to the vision of the town. Questions about the town’s environment, its traffic and the daily lives of its people are intimately interconnected. The town and traffic are not at opposite poles but need one another.

The division into housing development and traffic planning, which rules today, is therefore extremely unfortunate. At present there is also a risk of yet another culture being developed, namely that of the environmental planning expert or the Agenda 21 coordinator. There is intensive work in municipalities to implement Agenda 21, and there are considerable ambitions to integrate this work into general planning. There are, however, indications that environmental planning may become a third track in addition to other planning.

Yet another group who work with urban traffic are the traffic authorities. They are responsible for both local and regional public

Make towns instead of traffic planning and housing development

Traffic planning and housing development should no longer apply to our towns, but should be replaced with town making, a form of town making in which traffic is one of the fundamental prerequisites contributing to a rich, living, and well-functioning town. Do not even use these concepts! Words are important. They create images, which guide feelings and thoughts. And feelings and thoughts should lead to the vision of the town. Questions about the town’s environment, its traffic and the daily lives of its people are intimately interconnected. The town and traffic are not at opposite poles but need one another.

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Yet another group who work with urban traffic are the traffic authorities. They are responsible for both local and regional public
transport. Many of these have chosen to operate in the form of limited companies. There is a considerable risk that the necessary co-operation required between the traffic authorities and local town planners is not materialising.

Even though many work well together over sector boundaries, nevertheless, at a deeper level, we are living in different cultures that have different approaches to the town. Of course we should, to some extent, have different ways of approaching things on the basis of different expert knowledge, but we should have a broader joint basis, which should be of use to the town and its life.

The existing divisions have caused visible physical traces, when people, the town and traffic have not been able to meet in a balanced, respectful way. If instead we analyse buildings and traffic together, it is possible to find mutual qualities in the town. It should also be easier to see those problems and conflicts of interest that occur, and to solve them. Yet another important message is, therefore, that all planning affecting the town must be seen in totality, even though it is complex and complicated.

Take your own town as a starting point, with the people who live in it and are present there.

Simply start from the everyday life of people. They are not sectorised.

Experience tells us that it is not sustainable to impose an identical pattern on all towns and cities in the country. They are much too di-
verse, each of them is actually unique and is also inhabited by people with quite differing requirements, needs and dreams. Requirements also vary considerably between various parts of the same town. One should therefore start out on the basis of the place in question.

Context thinking is even more important for another reason. Future planning will affect existing town and city areas to a great extent, and only to a lesser extent will it involve new town areas on green field land. This means that there are people, buildings and town environments to take into account when something is to be changed.

So take the place itself as the starting point, in the unique town in question. Simply start from the everyday life of people. They are not sectorised.

Dismantle the barriers between different sectors, and allow citizens to participate

Perhaps we should read the same books and go to the same conferences a little more often. Then we would have something in common as the basis for discussion, and the chance of success of newer and better ways of tackling problems on the home front would then be greater.

Everybody in a town has the same goals and visions to plan towards, and everyone will presumably wish to do it well. Then it is a matter of listening to one another and treating one another with respect. And we should stop assuming that there is only one truth, namely one’s own. Everyone who works with the town or the town’s
Conversation it is unbeatably the best planning method. And take advantage of common sense – that is also an unbeatable planning method.

Traffic, from detail to entity, must acquire knowledge of the town, the people who live and are present there and their movements. Only then do we have a joint platform on which to plan.

Dismantling barriers involves looking beyond separate cultures, organisations, training and use of language in order to greater understanding of one another’s knowledge and arguments. It also involves studying professional literature and conference material, for example, that of the traffic engineer, the environmental expert and the architect. If politicians and civil servants who work with the development of the town cannot understand one another, how then can they communicate with its citizens?

Everyone who lives and is active in a town is affected by how transportation is solved. For example, closing off a street or making it a one-way street can awaken the strongest feelings, either for or against. Therefore, it is necessary that the inhabitants of the town should participate in planning. It is a matter of taking advantage of existing involvement and combining the knowledge of the inhabitants with one’s own professional knowledge.

It is also important that both men and women should participate on equal terms. In order to attain the new transport policy sub-goal of gender equality in the transport system, the angles of approach of both men and women are needed. Children and young people also have experience and needs to take into account, which are different from those of adults. It is quite simply not possible to adapt children to towns, we must instead adapt towns to children.

Some consideration should be given to those who will be affected by change. Take special account of those who have the greatest difficulty in getting about, and to those who are most difficult to reach. Use conversation – that is unbeatably the best planning method. Build up trust between different people and groups within the town and have fun while doing so, then it becomes creative. Research has shown that trust can be economically profitable for the development of a town. And take advantage of common sense – that is also an unbeatable planning method.

Talk to children and young people. It is quite simply not possible to adapt children to towns, we must instead adapt towns to children.

Go in the direction of sustainable towns, from the epoch of norms towards the epoch of directions

Experience has clearly shown that it is not possible to calculate and decide in advance what people want. Instead, the basis of all planning must be to find out first what you have and then to establish and jointly agree on what values should be retained and
Before each individual measure, large or small, everyone should ask themselves whether it would be easier to walk and cycle, whether it would be more rewarding, more beautiful, greener, quieter, safer, more secure and so on. Make your own checklist. The worst changes are those that arrive unforeseen and by stealth.

Management by objectives must involve finding out everything possible at the local level in each individual case, giving an account of it openly and conducting a dialogue with the town’s inhabitants. After that it is the task of the politicians to weigh up and make the decisions that they think will best lead towards the goals.

EIA, SIA GEIA, CIA; TIA, AIA, CIA, ASOIA; interpreted mean environmental, social, gender equality, child, traffic, accessibility, cultural and-so-on-impact-assessments. Nevertheless, it is a matter of elucidating what consequences for the town and for people’s everyday lives a certain action will produce, before the decision is taken. We, therefore, vote for HIA or ELIA, holistic or everyday life impact assessments.

Use the calendar to keep the vision of the town alive together. To strive in different directions in the same town is not profitable. Photo: Erik G. Svensson.

developed. After that, one can decide on goals and visions regarding the town and its traffic.

In order for a vision to be kept alive and to be known about by all the inhabitants of a town, it is important to put words to it in an abbreviated way, why not in the form of a checklist. The municipal council can subsequently determine that the vision will be the basis of both general and detailed planning work, and that it will constitute a preamble to all planning documents that affect the town. One idea is to make the vision in the form of a calendar. Then it does not get forgotten, but it is always possible to check easily whether what you intend to do is in keeping with, or conflicts with, the general goals.

Then all the various aspects of sustainable urban development can be handled in a strategy document, embracing all sectors. Planning involves documenting existing values, describing possibilities and problems, taking into account all aspects, weighing up between the various conflicts of interest that occur, finding alternative solutions, analysing the consequences of various alternatives, and then deciding on the most appropriate alternative. If you work in this way, you have carried out a suitability assessment on the basis of the Planning and Building Act.

To take into account all aspects, weighing up various conflicting interests and sometimes even goals, against one another, and then
coming to a decision, is not easy. We are purposely not giving any single method for achieving this. We think that in each individual case management by objectives at local level must involve finding out everything possible, giving an account of it openly and having a dialogue with the town’s inhabitants. After that, it is the task of the politicians to weight things up and make decisions that they think will best lead towards the goals.

Planning also involves ensuring that local changes lead in the direction of established national, regional and local goals, taking a small step at a time, and continually studying the effects of changes and people’s reactions to them. If you do this you can change course in time. And sometimes the goals need to be changed. It is possible to make systematic local follow-ups on the basis of simple, easily understandable indicators that can also be understood by the town’s inhabitants.

Avoid planning that is excessively based on norms and forecasts. Instead, plan in the direction of the sustainable town, from the epoch of norms towards the epoch of directions.

Work for a coherent urban policy

How we move from housing development and traffic planning to town making is a key question. In order to succeed, measures
should be incorporated in every plan. Boverket has previously pointed out the need for a national programme for an urban policy in order to be better able to satisfy requirements for the coordination of social, cultural, ecological and economic development. In the Habitat Agenda, the UN has formulated the basic requirements for such a policy. In its Urban Action Programme, the EU has formulated a route to follow, and in Sweden we have a number of political initiatives, which are each important components, and which can and should be joined into an entity. MAKE TOWNS shows the importance of all aspects of the town being carefully handled.

The closing message is therefore the need to progress towards a coherent urban policy.
No link should be neglected at the cost of another one.

Photo: Viveca Berntsson.
What can be done?

So what can one do to make towns in a way, which leads in the direction of the vision of the town, the town we want? Too often we have asked ourselves what shall we do instead of finding out what can we do on the basis of the unique conditions that exist in each town. And we have put far too little emphasis on the town’s inhabitants and their daily lives. Social, cultural, ecological and economic interests should be elucidated. Sometimes they all pull in the same direction and sometimes they conflict with one another.

We start with a story, which originates from a discussion about establishing a holistic view of the town.

The story of the chain and the links

In this story, the town and its traffic are compared with an expensive chain, or as in this picture, a cast-iron chain which consists of many separate links. All the links are of equal importance and all of them need to be undamaged and shining. This means that they need to be looked after continually, and mended, painted and cleaned by someone who knows about the special properties and possibilities of the various links. Those who look after the chain must also suggest necessary improvements now and again, which make the links even more sustainable, and in this way increase the value and usefulness of the chain.

The people who maintain and develop the various links must be able to cooperate so that the links will fit one another in the future as well, and that together they will continue to form the desired chain.
We have the town we have, and it is a matter of taking care of it and developing it wisely and tenderly. It is thus important to give consideration to all aspects of the town. Otherwise, we often get into the situation in which we deal with one question at a time at the expense of the other questions; instead of town making.

The challenge from New Zealand also applies in Sweden. Photo: Peter Nilsson.

Each and every one must therefore have knowledge about the chain as an entity, even if they are only responsible for a small part of a single link. In order to have satisfied customers, it is self evident that one should continually keep a dialogue going with those who own and use the chain, and who also pay for its maintenance. How, otherwise, would one be aware of what qualities and design the owners of the chains would like to have. They have the greatest interest in the result being something very special.

If the chain is not looked after because one or more links is being given extra attention at the expense of the others, the chain will become less effective or even impossible to use. Those links which are strength-ened and cleaned can therefore inadvertently contribute to the neglect-ed links weakening or breaking. And replacing a damaged link is hardly feasible. Nor is it feasible to buy a new chain. The value incorporated in the chain that we have is far too great. It is not only a question of eco-nomic value, but also value in the form of inherited memory, strata and hardship. The chain is part of our identity and therefore impossible to lose. We have the chain that we have, and it is a matter of looking after it and developing it wisely and tenderly.

The various aspects of the town are treated in different ways

We have the town we have, and it is a matter of taking care of it and developing it wisely and tenderly. It is thus important to give consideration to all aspects of the town. Nevertheless, we often get into a situation in which we deal with one question at a time at the expense of the other questions; i.e. instead of making towns. Certain periods we have concentrated on good housing for everyone, and other periods on the interests of nature and agriculture.

Of the aspects which Boverket has chosen to elucidate in this book, the safe traffic link is in focus just now. And it is a very important as-pect, but for this reason we should not forget the other aspects. If one carries out traffic safety measures in such a way that the space within the town is made more difficult and consideration is not given to the soul of the town, the measures can in the long run be unprofitable and counteract sustainable urban development. Similarly, attaining traffic safety, by special cycle routes through a park, can result increase in fear of crime, especially among women.
Begin on the basis of various aspects

Grasping the town as an entity in all its diversity is not easy. The story of the chain and the links means that we suggest getting close to the town from various directions; that one begins on the basis of a number of aspects which are found to be important at the time. We are not making requirements for full coverage, we do not even believe that that is possible. Each town must make its own choice, from the point of view of its inhabitants and its reality, by thinking through what is important to study and achieve. The beginnings can also be seen in the form of an expanded checklist to go through and study things that are considered necessary for sustainable urban development. Boverket has chosen the following five starting points to work from. Everything actually links together, and most of it is basically to do with the structure of the town.

- The form and identity of the town
- Proximity, in being able to walk and cycle
- Possibilities and competitiveness of public transport
- Road safety and security
- An open and equal planning process

By showing these starting points, we hope that we can collect some of the qualities of the town that are required in order that men, women and children can all live well and feel that they participate. Through these starting points, one should also be able to get at such aspects as accessibility, proximity, beauty, greenness, tranquillity and fresh air.

Prerequisites for a good town environment

Necessary values in the sustainable town are:

- Transportation as part of life and the town
- Conversation and participation
- The life and soul of the town
- Accessibility for everyone
- The structure and energy requirements of the town
- Beauty, comfort and well-being
- Greenery and fresh air
- The sounds and noise of the town
- Road safety and security

We see these prerequisites as necessary qualities for sustainable urban development. But they can also be seen as limitations which, in their contradictions, lead towards a town which takes the world’s resources and negatively affects people’s health and well-being. And then urban development becomes unsustainable.
Everything is connected, from global questions to local ones. As shown in the picture below Sweden Post cares about the environment. Photo: Ulla Follin.
The world is changing and it is becoming more difficult to assess what measures best lead in a sustainable direction. The new information society, globalisation, increasing ties with Europe and consequent connected regionalisation, increasing environmental requirements, the growing proportion of people who live on their own and the increasing number of people from other cultures are some of the changes that affect the life and form of our towns and cities.

As regards town traffic, increased gender equality can lead to a different type of development. It is also a fact that fewer young people are applying for driving licences nowadays, especially in large urban areas. The emphasis on what is best for children and accessibility for everyone also affects the life of the town. Increasing involvement by the business community in town planning in partnerships between different groups is similarly a new factor.

Everything is connected, from global questions to local questions. One global problem is climate change, which requires us to look at the town’s traffic in a new way. Climate studies from a lakebed in Minnesota, and from ice laid down thousands of years ago in Greenland show that climate change can come faster than we previously thought. Changes in the past have had natural causes. The next change may be caused by people, for example, if those living in developing countries begin to use vehicles and aircraft to the same extent that we do, without the consumption of oil in countries with a higher standard of living being reduced to an equivalent extent.

The need for co-operation is clear
All the things that are happening mean that we need a more attractive view of the future town to strive towards. Life gets faster and people find it more difficult to keep up. Then the town and the town’s meeting places become more important.

The need to coordinate and cooperate in planning also becomes ever more obvious. The inhabitants of the town have both the freedom and the responsibility to make decisions through their politicians, which will lead towards sustainable urban development.

The possibilities of town planning should be better utilised

A key question is the extent to which the car should be allowed to affect our towns and the life, which is lived there. In order to direct the development of the town towards established goals and visions, it is also necessary to control development of traffic in a better way than is done at present. And that must be carried out in a context. The opportunities offered by town planning are, at present, not fully utilised. We must dare to choose between different ways of travel in a much clearer and more deliberate way than we at present, in order to have the chance of achieving stated goals. And this must be carried out at local level.

For this reason, a new way of thinking and a new view of town planning are required. The interview with the Nobel Prize winners, described below, is a conceivable approach. It is probably not possible to decide upon the future of the town on the basis of calculations. An open planning process and broad coordination are needed. Knowledge, experience and intuition can then be combined prior to a decision leading in the direction of the vision of the town.

However, many of the instruments required for affecting the transport system lie outside the area of town planning. We have touched on some of these, for example, the need to influence people’s attitudes so that their travel habits change in a more sustainable direction.

Interpretation of goals and legislation led to MAKE TOWNS

That which distinguishes the present in relation to earlier epochs in Sweden is that the number of new goals and descriptions of objectives has increased dramatically, at the same time as the old goals
remain. Certain goals pull in the same direction, others contradict
one another. Among the new ones are the fifteen environmental
quality goals, which are directly connected to the Swedish Environ-
mental Code. Here, we would like to describe briefly the environ-
mental quality goal, *Good Built Environment*, and we would also
like to mention that which we found most important of all for
sustainable urban development in the Government Bill, *Infra-
structure for a Sustainable Transport System*. The Planning and
Building Act which gives the tools for carrying out MAKE TOWNS
can suffice. But first we would like to describe the general interna-
tional goals.

**International goals and strategies**

The environment is a top issue in most international organisations.
The UN, EU and OECD, all work with environmental issues. The Rio
Conference, 1992, where Agenda 21 was launched, put environ-
mental questions at the forefront, and implied a working method
based on local input and broad participation. The UN conference in
Istanbul in 1996, Habitat II, put further pressure on the social
aspects and dealt especially with housing. One of the fundamental
issues is urbanisation and people’s living environments. Both the
UN and the EU are conducting policy work in these areas, which in
essence deal with the town and traffic, or town planning.

Rapid urbanisation has brought the question of transport in
towns to the forefront. Sustainable solutions cannot be constructed
on the use of private cars, nor are expensive underground railway
systems the solution in the rapidly growing cities of the third world.
Nor in Europe’s medium-sized towns.

For a long time the EU’s Expert Group on the Urban Environ-
ment has worked with policy questions for urban transport through
the Sustainable Cities project. The European Parliament has re-
quested that an *Urban Thematic Strategy* for sustainable develop-
ment should now be attached to the EU’s Sixth Environment Action
Programme. This strategy deals with five questions, most of them
related to traffic systems.

- Let Agenda 21 inspire the planning process.
- Use indicators in order to proceed in the correct direction.
- Plan for reduced travel requirements.
- Promote pedestrianisation, cycling and public transport.
- Work towards increased use of low-emission vehicles.

An interview with ten Nobel Prize
winners in chemistry and physics
revealed that for nine of these
scientists, intuition was of
importance in their scientific work.
Intuition stood out as a strong feeling
of having suddenly discovered
something of importance, and only
afterwards being able to explain the
logical basis for it. The Nobel Prize
winners often had sudden, creative
ideas and intuitive feelings when
they took a break from their work and
changed perspective.

International and national visions,
goals and legislation control town
planning. They emphasise all the
requirements for a collective
approach and coordination in order to
achieve sustainable urban
development and a sustainable
transport system.
In its white paper, *European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to Decide*, the European Commission emphasises the need for a holistic strategy, over and above the joint transport policy. Urban traffic of high quality shall be developed, among other things. The Commission proposes an exchange of positive methods, with the purpose of improving use of public transport and the existing infrastructures of towns. They also think that a new strategy for the organisation of urban traffic by local authorities is necessary. In such a strategy, modernisation of public transport should be combined with input for a more rational use of the private car.

**Good built environment**

The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning is the authority responsible for implementing the Parliament goal *Good Built Environment*. It also has overall responsibility for spatial planning and economies of land, water and buildings. The environmental quality goal of *Good Built Environment* requires all built environments to be good and healthy. Spatial planning should be used as a means of guidance towards attaining that goal. Municipalities and county councils have important roles in the work of developing programmes and strategies. Among other things, a strategy for efficient use of energy and transport will be a guiding principle in this work. In cooperation with the authorities affected, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning should develop, support and follow up the work of the municipalities with environmental goals in planning.

A factor that contributes considerably to the environmental problems of today is the sectorisation and lack of a holistic view, both within and between national, regional and local levels. Input is needed to attain a better holistic view and coordination. It is also very important that Sweden should participate actively in the EU’s cooperation with regional development planning.

**Infrastructure for a sustainable transport system**

According to a decision by the Swedish Parliament from 1998, the overall transport-political goal is that transport policy shall secure provision of transport for citizens and the business community throughout the entire country in a way that is economic, efficient and sustainable. This means that the transport system shall be accessible for everyone, and allow a high quality of transport for the
business community. The transport system shall also ensure road safety, provide a good, healthy living environment for everyone and promote positive regional development. A seventh sub-goal has also been introduced into the Government Bill 2001, *Infrastructure for Sustainable Transport System*. This sub-goal involves the transport system achieving gender equality and fulfilling the transport requirements of both men and women.

In the Government Bill for infrastructure, it is emphasised that investment in infrastructure should be planned on the basis of a broad social perspective, and be coordinated with developments within other social sectors. There is a basic need for coordination and a collective view, because the various forms of physical planning are connected to one another. The forms of such cooperation can be progressively improved, not least by the distribution of best practice. A fundamental principle of transport policy is also to increased cooperation between different types of transport.

**The Planning and Building Act**

The introductory paragraph of the Planning and Building Act stipulates the good life for everyone. This view is shared by the Environmental Code and other regulations. Together these laws stipulate how we shall use land, natural resources and water so that we, our children and our grandchildren will have the best possible living conditions.

The Planning and Building Act is a splendid Act, in the way it is constructed, for achieving the attractive, mixed town that we strive for, both because it builds on assessments of appropriateness in which consideration is given to a great variety of different interests, and also because it assumes an open planning process. But it must be used with common sense.
How shall we get the town back?

The longing to recreate an attractive, mixed and lively town for everyone has grown strongly during recent years. This yearning expresses itself in the ongoing urban planning debate. Throughout Sweden municipalities and organisations work hard on achieving such a town. Our vision is of a mixed, attractive town, a town for pedestrians and cyclists, with efficient public transport, and with motor traffic that operates on the terms of the people and the town. But our vision is, above all, of a town which is accessible for and usable by everyone. A town full of human interaction, in which people can, dare to and will, be out and about on streets and open places. A town in which children can move about freely.

The information society gives new possibilities. It also gives changing values and lifestyles for a younger generation, and the desires of society for sustainable social development and a sustainable transport system.

This publication is intended to explain why one should MAKE TOWNS – instead of just traffic planning and housing development. It is primarily intended for local politicians and civil servants who, in various ways, work with urban development. But it is written in order to be read by everyone interested in the subject, and thus also, by the inhabitants of the town.