

Preface

In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Al Gore shared the Nobel Peace Prize “for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change”. A year earlier the *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* had been published. The Nobel Prize laureates, and the fact that they received the Nobel Prize, have had enormous importance among the public for the dissemination of the conception of climate change as possibly the greatest threat of our time. The impact of the Stern review may be more internal to the academic world and to policy makers, but as perhaps the most influential report on economics and climate change and through its emphasis on the threat involved, its impact can hardly be underestimated. Reports such as those above can be said to have laid the foundation for this book. But instead of describing costs or effects of climate change, this book digs into the everyday life of city inhabitants, describing what kind of changes might be needed in for example travel, housing and eating if people’s activities are not to contribute to climate change.

Two circumstances have been decisive for the structure of the study presented in this book. The first is that over the most recent decades the power of the sustainability question has been diluted in various ways. Social and economic aspects have been presented as equally critical. In this way there is a risk that the physical frame that the ecologic systems establish for life on earth become relativized or even completely forgotten and critical conditions tend to be treated as background material. The most important ones are that many of the resources we extract are finite, that the ecologic systems cannot withstand unlimited pressure, such as rapid changes in atmospheric composition, and that to a high degree today’s civilisations presuppose continued exploitation of exactly those finite resources and continued use of nature as repository of many kinds of waste products.

The second circumstance is well described in the book McNeill’s *Something New under the Sun*, whose subtitle is *An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*. The book draws a succinct picture of how human activities over the last century serve as the basis for the dramatically changed conditions for many of the earth’s species. Its author, John McNeil, points especially to the enormous expansion in population, production and energy consumption during the twentieth century. He believes that the historic course departs from earlier centuries in that in

order to ensure an honest picture of events, rapid environmental changes must be noted.

We have taken the global environmental threats seriously and understand that the causes derive from human activities and structures. We think that it is in the cities that many new activities are born and disseminated. Seen from a global perspective, the city is well on its way towards becoming the dominant settlement type. Thus it is especially relevant to study the city from a sustainability point of view.

With this book we want to promote a serious discussion concerning those challenges presented by the demands for sustainability in both the design of and actual living in modern cities. It is not enough to simply point the way. Acceptable levels for resource consumption and environmental load must also be given.

This book has been written within the framework of the HUSUS Research Project, and acronym for Households and Urban Structures in Sustainable Cities. On the initiative of Peter Steen, who was research director for FOI, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, and leader of the Environmental Strategies Research Group (*fms*), a consortium of various skills and organisations was formed to manage this multi-disciplinary project. The parties involved were *fms*, itself a collaboration between FOI, the Department of Systems Ecology at Stockholm University and the Departments of Infrastructure and of Industrial Ecology at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), the Division of History of Science and Technology at KTH and a collaboration between the Department of Sociology and the Department of Economic History at Stockholm University. Peter Steen was the first project leader for the Husus-project. After his sudden death in year 2000, Arne Kaijser, Professor of History of Science and Technology, took over as project leader. The contributions from Peter and Arne, as well as from the *fms* director 2000–2003, Karl-Henrik Dreborg, were of crucial importance at the beginning of the project.

We want to thank Elin Löwendahl and Johan Swahn for comments on earlier versions. The two larger workshops within the projects have also inspired the book. The first one was at the Hotel Hilton in Stockholm and involved around 50 researchers from other projects tied to the Swedish Research Council's Formas focus on Sustainable Cities. The other was at the Bosön Conference Center on Lidingö Island and brought the participation of a collection of colleagues drawn mainly from KTH, FOI and Stockholm University.

The comprehensive work done by Ulrika Gunnarsson, doctoral student in the Department of Urban Planning and Environment (KTH), has been essential for the completion of the book. She has read it from cover to cover, corrected smaller errors and offered many excellent suggestions for improvements. We would like to thank Bridget Lewakowski who has been very helpful and put a lot of effort into the reference system and other practical matters of this English version of this book.

Comments and ideas have also come from researchers who participated in various segments of the Husus-project. In addition to those directly involved in the book, the following individuals have made larger and smaller contributions to the Husus project:

From fms: Per Bolund, Annika Carlsson-Kanyama, Karl-Henrik Dreborg, Sven Hunhammar, Daniel Jonsson, Marie Jungmar, Ahmad Kanyama, Jon Möller, Peter Steen and Anders Wadeskog.

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Images of the Future City

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