

Sweden and the Future

Research programme for the Institute for Futures Studies 2009–2013

*The Institute's activities have come to be guided by the research programmes approved by the Institute's board of directors. Over the next five years, the Institute will conduct studies on research tasks identified as important to Sweden's socioeconomic development in the new research programme entitled **Sweden and the Future**. This will be the Institute's sixth successive research programme. A number of general considerations and points of departure for the Institute's activities are set out below. These are followed by an outline account of the orientation and organisation of the forthcoming research programme. The programme content will be developed and supplemented during the programme period in order to take full advantage of the Institute's flexible organisation.*

Points of departure

Sweden faces a number of important choices. These have to do with how we organise our public institutions in the future and how we can relate to the world around us in ways that promote our own welfare and that of others both in the shorter and longer term. It is essential that we gain a deeper knowledge of the global and national processes of change that will define our scope for action in the years ahead.

The Institute for Futures Studies enjoys a unique position in the field of Swedish social research and debate. The Institute's comparative advantages are readily apparent in terms of its ability to conduct interdisciplinary frontier research, policy-related analysis, methods development for futures studies and scientifically based strategic analyses of the external policy environment. The Institute is home to one of the few truly well-functioning interdisciplinary environments in the field of Swedish social research. It enables researchers to work across disciplinary boundaries in practice as well as in theory, a fruitful approach to the task of developing new perspectives on tomorrow's challenges. Although it does not train researchers, the Institute functions in effect as an interdisciplinary research school for doctoral students affiliated to different universities. Given its institutional orientation, activities are policy-relevant, making the Institute an important bridge between science and public policy. In view of the pressing need for external policy environment analysis in society, the development of systematic, scientific approaches and adequate methodologies is an urgent concern.

Thanks to its streamlined project organisation and the flexibility afforded by the absence of permanent research positions, the Institute is eminently well placed to undertake strategic initiatives in new areas. The past few years have seen a dramatic expansion in the Institute's activities as a result of major progress in terms of external funding, *inter alia* from Swedish research councils. Over the same period, however, the government grant has increased only in nominal terms. The Institute's ambitions in terms of seeking external funding for in-depth research remain high. The same applies to its efforts to persuade the Government and Riksdag to invest more in futures studies via the central government budget. At any rate, well-established, externally funded research constitutes an important part of the Institute's activities and serves as an effective indicator of the quality of the studies carried out by its researchers.

Given the Institute's unique position in the spheres of research and public debate there are cogent grounds for believing that, thanks to its independent status, it can serve as an arena for researchers from universities and institutions of higher education engaged common concerns. This means it is uniquely equipped to coordinate high-quality research, especially in view of the well developed national and international networks to which its researchers are affiliated. The studies undertaken by the Institute continue to attract considerable attention at both national and international level and a number of actors have expressed interest in collaborating with us.

The Institute produces a wide range of scientific publications, which enables us to actively pursue our outreach activities. These include our quarterly journal *Framtider*, our monthly half-day conferences *Framtidsfokus*, our publications series and our website, as well as hundreds of lectures and other external activities. In this way we contribute knowledge and background data to the debate on alternative courses of action in terms of future policy directions, an important complement to purely valuation-based considerations, which of course also have an incontestable place in the debate.

Scientific programme

Public institutions such as the market, the state, civil society and the family affect people's behaviour and actions in a variety of ways: through resource distribution, incentives, norms practices and customs. Society changes when our behaviour and regulatory systems change. Decisions by individuals and households at micro level can have significant implications at macro level. Nevertheless, society resists precise prediction. This is partly because social science research cannot generate sufficiently strong connections to make reliable forecasts, and partly because research inevitably affects the very object of its study. People are creatures of action; they react to their surroundings, including the images of the future produced by different actors.

However, we do know more about some aspects of society than others. One is that our demographic structure will generate an ageing population. Another is that the changes taking place in society are affected in essential respects by the existing institutional conditions and regulatory frameworks. 'Institutions' can be defined as a set of laws and norms designed to regulate different types of social activity. Institutional perspectives are fruitful in the futures studies context because institutions themselves are inertia factors which limit people's perceptions of what can be done. The interplay between population structures and institutions are also an important future issue and an area where systematic studies can help clarify options and alternative courses of action.

Ongoing European integration of public institutions presents a particular challenge for the forthcoming programme. We must also analyse other – i.e. non-EU – international organisations and their structure if we are to improve our understanding of how cooperation can be used as a strategy to deal with threats and challenges. As new policies are not always initiated at national level we need to study the ways in which ideas and strategies are disseminated from one country to another.

The Institute's studies are undertaken in the form of projects. Our aim as regards internally funded projects is that these should form part of a cycle with identifiable stages. Thus they will begin as **development projects** supported by a form of seed financing. Priority projects will receive substantial funding over a three-year period as thematic **programme projects**. The themes subsequently established at the Institute through its publications and by highly

qualified researchers will be termed **profile areas**. These areas will receive a certain amount of funding with a view to supporting applications for and management of *externally funded projects*.

Thus work in connection with the forthcoming research programme will be organised primarily into three-year **programme projects** under qualified project leaders. Starting dates for some programme projects will differ in the coming programme period. Existing staff as well as newly recruited researchers will be encouraged to seek external funding for new projects. New themes and projects will be gradually added to the programme as the Institute's finances permit. A new director will be recruited in the latter part of the programme period to prepare for the seventh programme period beginning in 2014.

The board of directors has approved a decision to initiate four new programme projects in 2009: (i) A special theme – *Futures Studies on Futures Studies* – will be a meta-analysis of the external policy environment and methods development for futures studies. Otherwise, the new undertakings for the coming period will focus on: (ii) *Welfare state financing*, (iii) *Integration and pluralism in tomorrow's society*, and (iv) *Social exclusion – causes and effects*. A more detailed account of these four areas is given under the heading **Priority themes: Programme projects in 2009–2011** below.

Further thematic projects are dealt with under the heading **Development projects**. The latter are entitled: *Effects of Climate Change*, *Effects of Technological Development*, *Gender, Care and the Life Cycle*, and *National and Global Migration*. A number of pilot studies will be conducted in 2009 and 2010 with a view to defining these projects with greater precision. Other themes may also be the subject of pilot studies. The themes addressed by programme or development projects relate to economic, political and social aspects of developments in society. Although the board of directors does not feel that this should preclude themes closely related to nature (climate) or technology, it would not be an optimal strategy for a small institute with limited resources to focus on these areas as such. Rather, the focus should be on the implications of these factors for society and society's ability to respond effectively. Although a gender perspective can be fruitfully incorporated into pre-established themes, the future gender order in society could also be an appropriate theme for a programme project of its own. National and global migration issues can also be the focus of priority projects.

The Institute's researchers have already secured funding for a number of projects which will be undertaken during the coming programme period. For a number of reasons, these projects are of exceptional importance to the Institute's scientific and other activities. They involve important intensification of scientific work on important future themes and ensure continuity from a personnel standpoint. Moreover, it is clear that they can help generate synergies between new projects which have already been approved and between further new projects in the programme. We have identified the following five **profile areas**: *Population and economy*, *Regions in transition*, *Children's and young people's living conditions*, *Social policy and deprivation*, and *The European social model*.

Participation in Nordic, European and other international networks will help deepen the international comparative perspective. The Institute's various external activities will continue to be developed ahead of the new programme period.

Priority themes: Programme projects in 2009–2011

Futures studies on futures studies

The purpose of the Institute's studies is to highlight – on a scientific basis – the major issues that lie ahead and to promote public debate about our common future. This confers a special status on the Institute, both in Sweden and internationally, as against research being conducted at universities and research institutes and *vis à vis* the large number of business enterprises and organisations variously engaged in futures studies. The Institute has explicitly adopted an interdisciplinary perspective; our research is not primarily aimed at establishing what the future will be like, but at identifying opportunities, alternatives and scope for action. Thus our work differs from current research; nor are we a policy institute as we seldom give policy recommendations. Our scientific point of departure distinguishes us from the large number of consultancies, institutes, special interest organisations, government authorities and business enterprises otherwise engaged in futures studies. The combination of scientific perspectives and methods and openness towards the future can stimulate public debate by contributing essential knowledge about major socioeconomic development issues.

The wide field of futures studies encompasses a broad range of perspectives and approaches, from the way we ourselves define the discipline to so-called analysis of the external policy environment, scenario-building, foresight and other methods of exploring the future. Few of these approaches are scientifically based. Many actors in the field are institutions engaged in what might be more accurately described as communication about the future, aimed at producing definitive pronouncements on the shape of things to come. The Institute's research work serves as an important complement and a potential counterweight to these actors.

The Institute thus also undertakes research that adopts a critical and historical perspective on futures studies and forward analysis, and intends to further strengthen this orientation in the coming programme period. While awareness of the distinctive nature of our own perspective is the basis of our approach, continual reflection and self-criticism are also essential.

The Institute is conducting a study of the methodological aspects of external policy environment, its knowledge base and its use by Swedish government authorities. We take part in international conferences on futures research and follow current developments in European and other futures studies projects. *Fourteen Perspectives on Futures Studies*, an interdisciplinary anthology project undertaken at the Institute, has laid the groundwork for subsequent work. An externally funded project focusing on long-term change in futures studies and long-term planning has been added. A hypothesis concerning the 'privatisation of the future' has been taken as a starting point for a discussion of key democracy concerns with respect to how knowledge about the future is created and who controls our vision of the future today. A history of ideas perspective on our past and present visions of the future serves an important purpose: it shines a critical light on contemporary futures issues and demonstrates how assumptions about the future, when viewed in a historical perspective, always seem to vary according to contemporary cultural, political and philosophical currents. 'Meta-studies' of futures studies such as those conducted at the Institute and elsewhere are therefore of crucial importance in the research context. They contribute to the development of methods and theory in the futures studies field, and to the critical examination of the knowledge base on which futures analysis rests.

The strength of a research-based approach lies in its ability to take account of major trends and the recurrence of historical patterns. It also provides a basis for a cumulative process of knowledge acquisition. During the coming research programme we will seek to develop our work by linking these perspectives together. Meta-studies of futures studies can help us to strike a reasonable balance between science and informed speculation, and continue the important discussion about our current visions of the future and the ground on which they stand.

Welfare state financing

Welfare state financing is a key issue for the future of our type of society. Economic globalisation and demographic change are two trends that challenge our ability to sustainably finance the welfare states of the future. Greater economic integration is heightening the mobility of some tax bases and increasing the socioeconomic costs of taxation. An ageing society brings growing demands for the redistribution of wealth between generations. The combined effect of these processes yields an intractable equation: the cost of meeting the care needs of an ageing generation must be covered; at the same time the size of the working population is diminishing in relative terms.

Taxes, social insurance contributions and their configuration are of crucial importance to the economic organisation of a society as well as to the norms that regulate relations between people and should therefore be studied using an interdisciplinary approach. Comparative methods enable researchers to analyse the consequences of institutional choices. Thanks to the broad expertise commanded by the Institute, the future financing of welfare institutions can be studied both from an inter-generational and an institutional perspective. The studies being planned are comparative, both in terms of time and space; they include comparisons at the macro level and analyses at the micro level, as well as historical studies.

An overall objective in connection with the studies of inter-generational redistribution within the programme project is to understand the role of taxation in the interplay between age groups over time. Inter-generational redistribution studies take as their starting point the varying degrees of economic activity that people are engaged in over a life cycle. Viewed in this perspective, the challenges posed by an ageing population are bound up with the difficulty in bringing about the required distribution when people's period of dependence is extended. At present, the bulk of wealth redistribution takes place via the public sector.

We have a fairly good picture of the public consumption and transfer profile. However, less is known about the private sector and the role played by taxes in this connection. The way in which inherited wealth and private gifts are transferred from one generation to the next affects the ability to support groups in need. Studies of migration provide examples of the movement of different forms of capital across national borders. In a global economy, growing numbers of wage earners will be paying social insurance contributions in countries other than their own. Migration of this kind must take place under controlled and safe conditions if it is to be mutually beneficial. Portability – the ability of members of a labour force to carry their social rights with them across national boundaries – is an important issue in an area about which little is still known.

The other primary task of the programme project is to identify and study different tax regimes by means of international comparisons. Particular reference must be made to the way in which taxes and contributions regimes are designed. The institutional analysis of tax regimes complements the study of inter-generational wealth distribution and provides an entry to the

study of tax policy development and its various effects. Analyses of the effects of different tax regimes are concerned with the way in which taxes and contributions mediate economic incentives and norms that structure people's life choices.

How different countries design their welfare institutions also affects the way they are financed. The close relationship between welfare institutions and forms of financing is clearly evident in the widespread use of tax expenditure – the 'hidden welfare state'. Tax expenditure, an alternative to measures financed on the expenditure side of the central government budget, prompts questions about the way in which wealth distribution between generations and social groups takes place in a society. Moreover, tax expenditures are important when assessing effects of the tax system in a number of respects. In particular, it raises the question of how tax policy institutions regulate relations between men and women, particularly in terms of their participation in the labour market.

Finally, historical and comparative studies of the growth and evolution of tax regimes are an integral part of the theme itself; their purpose is to show the political driving forces behind this development. Implicit in the theme is the recognition that taxes are in a constant state of change, regularly adapted and restructured to prevailing circumstances. The project offers good opportunities to learn from historical examples of obstacles to and driving forces behind phased or single, comprehensive tax reforms.

Integration and pluralism in tomorrow's society

Integration is a key issue for the future of Europe's welfare states. Our vision of participation, affinity and the high legitimacy of democratic institutions are challenged by contemporary fears and apprehensions about ethnically motivated intolerance, segregation and, ultimately, divided societies. Successful integration of people from different ethnic backgrounds is often presented as the key to the development of the European democracies.

The problem, however, is that our understanding of how to promote integration processes in practice is still vague and uncertain. In a pluralistic society – and in this era of globalisation we are moving towards a manifestly pluralistic world – real democracy presupposes that inclusion and participation are not determined by a society's ethnic, socioeconomic or demographic categorisations. The aim of the project is to contribute new insights and perspectives to the public debate on future integration policies by means of broad-scale analysis. These will benefit from the Institute's interdisciplinary character and extended network of researchers. Our premise is that the analysis will profit from an integrated view of relationships between individual and group identities and of the prospects for participation in a pluralistic society. Three key words to which we must constantly refer are thus *integration*, *society* and *identity*.

In the first place, ethnic diversity in Sweden and comparable countries raises fundamental issues concerning political integration. We should ask ourselves what policies have actually been developed, what governance strategies have been applied and what effects have been observed. Evaluating the effects of political integration calls for both theoretical and empirical, comprehensive analyses of all existing structures that could impact political participation and mobilisation.

Closely associated with political integration are social and economic integration. This will require reliable surveys of disparities in educational, income and employment levels between groups of different ethnic backgrounds. We also need to know more about the development of

housing patterns in cities and rural areas. Demographic trends and future migration flows are major factors in shaping the scope for public action. The Institute maintains a vigorous research environment for demographically and geographically based futures studies.

A more general problem is the model or strategy a society chooses in order to deal with a multiethnic reality. There is considerable evidence to suggest that Sweden will adapt its national policy to supranational regulatory frameworks on minority rights, conflicting to some extent with Swedish tradition in this area. The metaphor ‘the multicultural society’ became current in Sweden in the 1980s. The recognition of cultural freedom of choice was assumed to be consistent with special rights for ethnic minorities. However, the term multiculturalism has been questioned in many quarters. Critics have maintained among other things that it is based on a static view of cultural identity. What needs to be studied further is how politicians and other actors have applied the expression, and what role it has played in welfare policy strategies.

Using the concept of intersectionality, researchers have focused on the ways in which social categorisation and experiences of superiority and inferiority often interact with one another. At the Institute we are able *inter alia* to build on previous studies that have addressed the issue of individual identity and assessed the scope for manoeuvre in varying regional environments.

In this programme project we will also be considering hypotheses – as interesting as they are contradictory – on the impact of globalisation within a broader futures-oriented context. It is generally accepted that globalisation can both homogenise and fragment: on the one hand it provides the basis for a universalistic or cosmopolitan intellectual construct, the ‘global community’. On the other hand it provokes counter-movements based on neo-nationalism and ethnic and religious awakening. A number of future scenarios are possible. While some people point to an increasingly conflict ridden world and the gradual disintegration of the nation state, others talk of an emerging, cosmopolitan concept of citizenship, marked by a strong sense of social solidarity.

Another essential task within the programme project will be to develop collaboration already initiated with Swedish university environments, focusing particular attention on issues such as ethnicity, racism, integration and migration.

Social exclusion – causes and effects

Poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation are major issues on the political agenda in Sweden and in the EU. The issue of social exclusion has several dimensions. A great deal of research has focused on the difficulty people – particularly young people and immigrants – have in establishing themselves in the labour market. Another important dimension of social exclusion concerns the individual citizen’s relationship with his/her family, friends and civil society.

This research theme occupies researchers from a range of scientific disciplines. Work is focused primarily on two broad problem areas: *the dynamics of social exclusion* and *housing segregation*. Extending our knowledge and understanding of the processes of marginalisation and how these work over a life cycle is important, partly because basic welfare issues are involved, and partly because it gives us a clearer idea of what society’s institutions can do to counter marginalisation and social exclusion. During the coming programme period, we will be studying longitudinal data in greater depth and developing analyses of the dynamics of exclusion in several strategic areas. As regards the causes and effects of exclusion, the focus

will be twofold: a) childhood conditions and schooling, and b) the functioning and organisation of the educational system, the labour market and the welfare state. As educational programmes, establishment patterns and the labour market differ for men and women, the gender aspect will be of central importance.

We will also be inquiring whether the causes of social exclusion change over time. There has been a rise in the proportion of young adults who neither study nor have work, an increase that cannot be attributed solely to business cycle-related fluctuations in the labour market. This poses new challenges for the institutions of the labour market, the educational system and the welfare state. To analyse the functioning of national institutions, we use a comparative approach in which countries with different institutional solutions are compared with one another.

A further expression of marginalisation and exclusion that we will be addressing is long-term social security reciprocity. In particular, we will be studying the situation of young people and immigrants, and the significance of education for the risk of social security reciprocity in this group. With regard to young people's and immigrants' chances of exiting from long-term reciprocity, we will also be examining the impact of different policy practices implemented by Swedish municipalities.

Another important issue is educational poverty as a factor in marginalisation and the risk of social exclusion. Does this risk change over time for those who do not finish compulsory school or complete their upper secondary education? This question is relevant in light of the higher qualification requirements in the labour market and the fact that increasing numbers of individuals go on to and graduate from upper secondary school. We also intend to take a closer look at the factors that co-vary with the likelihood of individuals dropping out of upper secondary school or leaving without passing final grades.

Meanwhile, a generation shift is now taking place in the Swedish labour market, with a large cohort of young people on its way in and the large cohort of people born in the 1940s on its way out. However, the former cannot immediately replace the latter. Young people lack experience, do not live in the same localities and have other forms of education. In our view, therefore, a deeper understanding of the labour market establishment process and how it is affected by the Swedish institutional framework is essential in the context of current developments in the labour market. In addition, we have seen an upward age shift in connection with the establishment of young people in adult life, particularly with respect to higher education and family building. These changes raise a number of questions that will need to be addressed in the near future. For example, the delayed establishment of young people in adult life conflicts with the need to increase the number of taxpayers, which in turn has implications for government commitments, *inter alia* in the welfare sphere.

Housing segregation is the *spatial* expression of social and economic inequality and can be regarded as a risk factor in social exclusion. It can also be an effect of increased social exclusion. Despite the development in recent years of methods aimed at isolating the effects of the social environment *itself* into different types of outcome, our knowledge of the effects of housing segregation remains limited. We intend to broaden our studies of the effects of housing segregation by examining its impacts in a number of areas, including ill-health, schools and political resources. Research into the ethnic and socioeconomic consequences of segregation will be conducted in collaboration with researchers at the Centre for Health

Equity Studies (CHESS) at Stockholm University and with the researchers in the programme project *Integration and pluralism*.

Development projects

Effects of Climate Change

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the most likely scenario for the future will in all likelihood be one which entails significant climate change. Questions of sustainability and vulnerability, what groups and areas will be affected, new forces driving migration, transport, urban planning, land use, etc. are all key issues.

The climate issue is also linked to the question of global access to and demand for biological resources. The rise in population forecast by the UN and the economic growth that can be expected to follow in its wake are incompatible with present day production and consumption patterns. Whether we can adapt to nature's constraints – to what nature can tolerate – by improving energy efficiency and changing our consumption patterns, or whether the process will be cut short by disasters and/or conflicts over resources, is an open question.

Both these perceived threats, which are well established scientifically, would indicate the need for sweeping institutional change, shifts in values, new policy goals and instruments, the internationalisation of politics, a different energy infrastructure, etc. Here we want to emphasise two areas which we propose to focus on over the coming three years. One area concerns the effects of the climate issue on distribution; the other is forestry in a global natural resources perspective.

Emerging climate policies in different parts of the world will also lead to higher energy prices. Increasing taxes on carbon emissions and carbon trading rights are already on the agenda. A key question is how the transition to alternative energy sources – implicit in IPCC's future scenarios – will affect incomes for groups in society and income distribution as a whole. The distribution effects of climate change are an important area of research. The Institute has the necessary data and essential expertise to undertake such projects, which would match our profile well in cases where the focus is on the social effects.

The global economy is expected to grow by 3–4 times over the next 40 years as a result of strong population growth and rises in income throughout the world. Competition between different land use alternatives will intensify. Sweden's forests and rural areas will be placed in a new situation, economically, socially and politically. The Swedish forestry industry operates within the context of a natural resource market. At the same time it is deeply institutionalised in the Swedish countryside. A steep rise in demand for forest products would have far-reaching effects. What opportunities arise? What values are threatened? We will be undertaking a project entitled *Forestry at the Crossroads* as part of our work on international forest-related issues within the Mistra project *Future Forest*, overseen by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Umeå University and Skogforsk, the Forestry Research Institute of Sweden.

Effects of technological development

Technological development has been and will continue to be fundamental to welfare development. Technological issues appertain to those areas where society invests major

resources in research and development. Research on the social impacts of technological development and society's ability to affect these conditions constitutes a vanishingly small proportion of all research in this area. However, economic history shows that technological development changes society in fundamental ways, particularly in areas relating to people's work and lives. Occupations will disappear or be transformed and new ones will appear. These changes will have a wide variety of social consequences. They will change people's lives and new institutions will emerge. Institutional change has often come about as a direct result of observation by actors and interests of the social impact of new technologies. Many of the areas studied at the Institute are also affected by these impacts: unemployment, generational shifts in the labour market, exclusion, gender relations, education and integration.

Futures studies have a tradition of examining the future social repercussions of technological development. Towards the end of the 1960s, the US government began working more systematically on *technology assessment*, the purpose of which was to study and discover unexpected, undesirable and indirect social effects of technological development. The term 'technology' was not restricted to artefacts but also included social technologies such as tax and social insurance systems. There were also new demands for more careful analyses of technologies, based on ethical considerations. The idea behind technology assessment was that it should serve as an *early warning system* for politicians and decision-makers. By examining the secondary and tertiary effects of new technology – rather than the primary, intended effects – it was possible to gain a deeper insight into the potential consequences of introducing a new technology into society. Assessments were meant to be anticipatory and adaptive, rather than reactive and symptomatic.

Although technology assessment never became a major discussion topic in Sweden it was largely taken up by researchers in the wider field of futures studies. Many major enterprises pursue activities under the heading of *technology foresight* or *technology forecasting business intelligence* or external policy environment analysis. Even though the negative effects of technology are generally unintentional, its introduction has often had a detrimental impact. In some cases the damage has been foreseeable, but in many instances it was only discovered long afterwards, with serious results.

An area the Institute has begun to investigate is the computer-based virtual world, inhabited today by millions of users all over the planet. One aspect of the digital revolution is its impact on knowledge generation and on how we define knowledge. While democratisation of knowledge and transparency of events is improved through increased access and more effective means of dissemination, inadequate source criticism and the potential for control and propaganda can contribute to content trivialisation and superficiality. Another important issue comes under the heading of the 'control and surveillance society'. Technology has also brought new forms of crime and a new net-based form of international terrorism.

Major infrastructural investment in areas such as broadband, wireless communication, transport systems and, not least, energy systems, is essential to technological development. This investment will shape conditions for our society far into the future. Futures studies actors have therefore always been keenly interested in examining and understanding infrastructural investment planning processes and implementation, interests and actors, political visions, strategies and decisions.

Many of the projects undertaken at the Institute are clearly concerned with issues related to Sweden's infrastructure. We have studied future housing patterns, migration, functional regions, the development of the municipal system, e-management – all issues related to transport systems and IT infrastructure. The trend towards increased commuting is both the product of a political vision and an anticipated trend in local and regional planning. The concept of converging labour market regions governs much of ongoing road and railway construction. The internet is increasingly perceived as a major technological success. In terms of its speed, reach and phenomenal development the internet has been an unprecedented technological breakthrough. In some areas, these changes are very concrete. Government authorities are changing rapidly. Different levels in the same authority are linked together by new distance-spanning technology, thus opening the way for greater spatial flexibility.

Gender, care and the life cycle

There are certain important, all-pervading issues which every society must take a stance on. One such is gender relations. Modern society has by definition undergone major changes in terms of relations between men and women and women's status in the community. But formal and real gender equality are not the same. Visible as well as invisible mechanisms and processes within organisations and institutions tend to perpetuate the established gender order. Gender is tied to a scale of values through a variety of cultural and institutional processes. Nor are these easy to legislate away as they are not always formalised. All gender relations are characterised by change and continuity, and gender equality remains an issue of major relevance for the future.

The Institute's researchers have begun to focus the spotlight on family life, gender equality and care from a life-cycle perspective. These aspects of social life are rarely accorded a more central role in futures studies generally, but are vital issues in and for people's lives. These are also the kinds of questions to which much of the public debate on social issues is devoted. We know that people's everyday lives and the deliberations and decisions made therein are informed by society's gender relations and are of significance not only to the individuals concerned but also in the context of society as a whole. That little or no significance is nonetheless attached to changes in people's everyday lives often has to do with where power lies and who decides what constitutes a futures issue.

However, it may be pointed out that Swedish society is now facing challenges that stem from the very conformation of everyday life and relations between men and women. Long-term trends in this sphere include an ageing population, a growing number of single households, more single parents and blended families, more same-sex relationships and a declining proportion of children. The fact that family life structures are changing need not mean that the care and intimacy often specifically associated with family life will be lost. These will take on new forms, both within the family and in different types of remunerated care provision.

Welfare state institutions are coming under pressure, not least with regard to the financing of social welfare services, and especially the ability to meet the growing need for elderly care. Looking back, we see that social welfare services targeted at people at different stages of their lives have developed in various ways. In the case of elderly care, welfare state inputs have diminished while families' unpaid inputs have increased. At the same time, the childcare system has been extended and now serves more children than ever. Regarding recruitment in the care sector as a whole, there is reason to believe that national as well as international

migration will play an increasingly prominent role, regardless of the financing modality chosen.

A challenging question for the future is how care needs will be met in a landscape of new family relations and social welfare institutions. An equally crucial issue is how the care needs of the elderly and other groups are to be met with sustained welfare services for those who need care and those who provide it. What trends are discernible with regard to the division of responsibilities between families and welfare institutions and between women and men in paid and unpaid care provision in tomorrow's Sweden? What will these processes mean in terms of our understanding of families, masculinity and femininity, and relations between the sexes?

The Institute has previously conducted research on families from a gender perspective. Our ambition is to explore this area in greater depth in a new project focused on care and intimacy from a life cycle perspective. We also want to study care in other types of close relationship not based on kinship. Care and responsibility are dimensions that can be found in other types of close relationship, within or outside the family, paid and unpaid. The gender perspective is of key importance to these analyses. However, they must be complemented by other perspectives such as class, ethnicity and sexual orientation, using an intersexional approach. By focusing on the complexity of these questions, the Institute can help highlight gender, care and intimacy as important futures studies issues, and thereby further research on close relationships between individuals from a gender perspective.

National and global migration

Moving to a new locality or country is a significant event that not only affects the life of the individual migrant but also has an impact on the society that receives him/her and the society he/she came from. The number of migrants has grown both in Sweden and between countries, and is expected to rise still further. This will have wide-ranging consequences both for Swedish society and the world at large. The emergence of migration as a key global social issue has *inter alia* created a growing demand for knowledge about the phenomenon, the driving forces behind it and its effects at individual and societal level.

A special aspect is labour migration. As the population of Europe – as well as other parts of the world – is ageing while fertility is declining in potential countries of emigration, it is likely that labour migration will become a still more important issue in the future. Meanwhile, emigration from Sweden is on the increase. Although many of the emigrants are former immigrants, many people born in Sweden are also moving away. Increased migration is at once a result of and a driving force behind globalisation. From the standpoint of Sweden's competitiveness, it is essential that we learn more about these migration flows. Migration also takes place within Sweden, a fact of major future significance for regions of net immigration and net emigration. Some researchers have speculated that unemployment in certain regions far from the country's metropolitan centres could rapidly experience a shortage of labour when the "last big cohort" living there retires in the 2010s. Moreover, migration is a particularly important factor in understanding regional population dynamics as its significance increases with the level of geographic detail.

In recent years, population-related issues have also held a prominent place in the Institute's research work. The reason for this is that population size and composition are essential to an understanding of society's needs and the prospects of meeting them. It is now generally recognised that population trends are a significant factor in economic development and

growth. Moreover, the fact that they can be forecast several decades ahead to an acceptable level of accuracy makes population studies a key factor in understanding threats to and opportunities for social development in the future. However, migration is the most difficult component to assess in the context of demographic change; unlike birth and death rates, it is more susceptible to changes in socioeconomic conditions, has a more rapid impact on population composition, and of course is driven by entirely different forces.

The importance of knowledge about migration to the Institute's activities is also reflected in the frequent presence of migration-related projects within many of the Institute's previous themes. At present, there are three research groups at the Institute engaged in separate projects directly concerned with migration issues. During the programme period, we propose to undertake a strategic initiative aimed at establishing in-depth collaboration with these groups. The Institute enjoys important comparative advantages in the field of migration research. These include access both to existing networks of leading international migration researchers and to empirical data that offer unique opportunities – from a Swedish as well as international perspective – to shed light on contemporary migration issues.

Profile areas

Population and economy

The Institute for Futures Studies has established a profile as a leading international research environment for the development of methods – supported by demographic forecasts – for predicting future economic and social trends. From being regarded as a relatively minor factor in the 1990s, demographics are now increasingly recognised as a major driving force behind economic and social development. Demographic trends have been shown to have a strong impact on saving, economic growth, trade patterns, fiscal balances, price trends, housing construction, changes in fertility, migration, and even the risk of violent conflict.

Demographic change has not only been cited as one of the most important factors in the rapid growth of countries like Taiwan, Korea, China and India, but also as an explanation for the weak growth in many African countries. There has been a growing awareness in first decade of the 21st century of impending major demographic changes in Europe. In many policy areas, reforms are being implemented in an effort to meet the anticipated negative impact on GDP growth of an increasingly ageing population.

The importance of demography is reflected in a number of ways in the Institute's research programme for the period 2009–2013. The impact of an ageing population is one of the challenges to be analysed in the programme project *Financing the Welfare State*. The development project *National and Global Migration* includes an analysis of the feasibility of using immigration to compensate for low birth rates, and of how migration flows in Sweden can even out – or impair – regional imbalances in the age structure. However, it is essential that we retain our expertise in developing methods for demographically based futures studies. A feature of methods development in this area during the coming programme period will be the opportunity to verify the demographically based predictions on macroeconomic trends made at the Institute 8–10 years ago. The accuracy of these projections supports the view that demographically based forecasts are a useful tool.

The Institute's researchers have undertaken research of various types on the impact of the pronounced changes in the age structure on inter-generational transfer systems. The upward age shift we have seen in the past few decades with respect to all aspects of establishment in adult life, particularly in the areas of higher education and family building, gives cause for

concern for a number of reasons. Some of this research will be deepened in the programme project *Welfare State Financing*. The coming generation shift in the Swedish labour force poses a number of questions about the immediate future. These will be the subject of a series of analyses at the Institute. A large cohort of young people is on its way into the labour market and the large cohort of people born in the 1940s is on its way out. In most cases, the former cannot directly replace the latter; they lack experience, do not live in the same localities, have other types of education and, in many cases, need further training.

The aim of the international project on generation relations – in which the Institute took part – was to build up a set of comparable inter-generational national accounts recording inter-generational flows and providing supporting data for broad comparative research into how these systems are affected by institutional features. The outstanding Swedish databases enable a closer analysis of the issues at numerous levels, from individuals, their homes and workplaces, to municipal and regional levels.

Another line of research in this area, the labour situation for the elderly, focuses on the demand side and addresses gender disparities in pension coverage. These are important pieces of the puzzle in assessing future labour market development. Other research projects have also pointed to significant gender disparities between individuals combining children, education and careers. The effects of gender disparities in regional higher education institutes and those of age on local labour markets largely remain uncharted. Ongoing research is now assessing to what extent delayed maternity, long periods of study and increased poverty among young people are attributable to omissions and inadequate coordination by the social insurance system.

Predicting future population structures and the economic consequences of an ageing population is an extremely complex task owing to this interaction between demography and economy. Researchers at the Institute have developed a simulation model – a computer programme – which will enable them to analyse this interaction while taking the above-mentioned complexity into account. This in turn enables us to carry out counterfactual experiments and determine how institutional changes affect future outcomes, both in terms of demography and economy.

Regions in transition

The Institute has established a strong tradition of geographically based futures studies, affording a significant, broad-based body of expertise on spatial aspects of the organisation of the public administration. This profile area embraces demographically based futures studies that provide detailed knowledge about Sweden's regional systems and settlement patterns. It also includes institutional studies on the organisation of public sector services, tomorrow's municipalities and regions, the transformation of the geography of government activities, issues relating to the accessibility of different kinds of services, etc. Particular attention is focused on the new-technology driven reorganisation of the public sector, efforts to achieve cost-effectiveness, increased demands for adaptability and sharper international competition.

Sweden's New Geography, a major project in this profile area funded by the Swedish Research Council, will be undertaken in 2008–2011. The study will involve an in-depth analysis of a number of issues concerning the future of Sweden's regions.

An important concept explored by the research group is the increasingly network character of organisational spatiality. Established administrative boundaries are being crossed and

becoming increasingly flexible as municipal and regional authorities interact to fulfil their public tasks as efficiently and effectively as possible. Meanwhile, digital technology has paved the way for a new kind of virtual presence in the landscape, enabling authorities to offer greater or unchanged accessibility, despite the disappearance of local and/or regional levels and/or radical changes in their tasks and responsibilities. In many respects, there has been a geographic decoupling between services and users. Whether this will lead to renewed impetus for urbanisation or to the emergence of new localisation factors is an open question.

Viewed from an institutional perspective, much of the transformation of Sweden's regions has been determined by changes in assumptions at national level regarding the nature of the state's role. We have referred in a variety of contexts to the development of the concept of the 'competition state', the notion that governments should become more actively engaged in promoting the competitiveness of their countries' enterprises. This development has brought a stronger focus on growth in relation to welfare, a markedly more international orientation and, in terms of regional undertakings and responsibilities, a shift towards the supply side of the economy. Greater emphasis is placed on innovation systems, business clusters and development policy, while traditional welfare responsibilities have been played down over the last 20–30 years. This area has clear links to migration issues and to the issue of the future of the Swedish welfare system.

Children's and young people's living conditions

The past hundred years have seen a dramatic change in terms of the proportion of children in the population. At the turn of the last century, almost 40 per cent of the population was under 20 years of age. Today, the figure is just over 20 per cent. If the large number of children and young people posed a challenge to society a hundred years ago, the situation today is precisely the reverse. A society needs children, and the conditions under which they live and grow is a key issue for the future. In the latter part of the 20th century, terms such as 'child perspective' and 'the best interests of the child' entered the public debate. Child policy had become a policy area in its own right. Although children's status in society has changed in important respects, these developments have been accompanied by other tendencies such as class differences in certain areas, regional disparities in terms of investment and conditions, and difficulties in entering the labour market. Parenthood and childhood involve new challenges for families and society alike.

Children have little say in the decisions which affect their situation, and the conditions under which they grow up are to a very large extent determined by others and other factors: their relationship with their parents, their parents' economic and social situation, and relations between state and family and state and individual. The shifts and displacements that come about through interest in public policy issues can be crucial in this connection.

In the most recent programme periods, the Institute has overseen a number of projects focused on children and families. Broader areas addressed have included a comparison of family structures and parenting conditions, children's citizenship, children, young people and work, and the connection between marginalisation processes and the attainment of adulthood. 2009 will see the completion of a major project funded by the Swedish Research Council on the long-term effects of children's family and living conditions. This will be followed directly by a study of foster children funded by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research.

Social policy and deprivation

The transformation of welfare institutions was the underlying theme of a number of projects forming part of the Institute's most recent research programmes. Ultimately, this transformation is about the basis of citizenship in terms of the rights and responsibilities of the individual *vis à vis* the state and the family. To understand what is happening in the statutory sphere, we follow developments in the individual and collective private insurance sector. Ongoing demographic development places the focus on public institutions that are important to the elderly, such as retirement pensions and elderly care. For reasons developed elsewhere in this programme, our attention should be directed at the education, research, healthcare and other systems that will have a significant bearing on the future tax base. The researchers at the Institute are thus an invaluable resource in tracking trends and changes in the way society is organised and assessing how these will impact the welfare of individuals.

Social policy is naturally concerned with gaps or inadequacies in the social welfare system. There are indications, in the aftermath of the economic crisis of the 1990s, of a polarisation of welfare distribution, both in time and space. Although the first decade of the 21st century has seen an average improvement in welfare provision, there is clear empirical evidence of increased, or deeper, deprivation for some smaller groups. Perhaps the clearest indication of this is the trend in long-term social security reciprocity. Although the long-term social security reciprocity curve has moved tentatively downwards in the present decade, a growing proportion of recipients are people in more permanent need of help. The figure for 2006 was the highest in modern times. As of 2002, national social security statistics have included data on social security benefits paid out every month of the year, which we are studying as part of an externally financed project.

The polarisation also appears to have increased in terms of cumulative deprivation. Deprivation appears to have decreased in the early 2000s among groups that experienced unfavourable development in welfare terms in the 1990s. However this trend coincided with a rise in the number of people with many simultaneous welfare problems. Spatial polarisation has a further dimension which we propose to examine in greater depth. It is therefore vital that we continue to track these trends and, in particular, deepen our analyses of the potential impacts of segregation both on individuals and on the development of society as a whole.

The 'European social model'

The question of a European social model came up on the EU agenda when the citizens of France and the Netherlands voted in respective referendums against a new constitution for the Union. The Institute and its researchers have participated in the ensuing dialogue in different ways in the intervening years through a number of studies of clear relevance to the European agenda in this area. Several studies have been conducted at the Institute, some of them in cooperation with the Institut für Demographie (IFD) in Vienna, with funding from the European Commission. Since 2006, the Institute has also been a member of a Network of Excellence, which is supported through the 6th European Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration. The network, whose working name is RECOWE (REConciling Work and Welfare), is responsible for studies of the relationship between the labour market and the welfare state. In addition the Institute's researchers have published a number of studies on social policy development in Europe. The studies are not only predicated on a long-term commitment to comparative welfare state research, but are also broader than the ongoing discussion in the EU and within social policy.

One example is the question of how power and responsibility are to be distributed between the nation state and local communities. This is an issue that has gained increasing relevance in recent years as most Western countries witness a progressive extension of authority at regional and municipal level and a concomitant reduction in the influence of central governments. In the European Union, moreover, nation states have seen their sovereignty challenged by supra-national agreements and provisions which not only lay down frameworks for national policy but also incorporate the latter into a common European agenda. These displacements of power have been accompanied by new kinds of more or less institutionalised cooperation involving a range of actors. The cumulative result of the complex networks that arise is often referred to as multi-level governance. The term ‘rescaling’ has been used to emphasise the fact that the vertical distribution of power currently taking place is not just a gradual displacement; it is also transforming conditions for social policy and the operation of market mechanisms.

In recent years, a number of projects involving studies of economic and social policy from a development perspective have been undertaken by the Institute in collaboration with several national and international partners. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has taken part in several projects, as has the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva. These collaborations have also included contributions from a number of individual researchers from all the world’s continents. We have also written reports and have taken part in educational and training programmes on behalf of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago de Chile, the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Hanoi. The Institute cooperates with the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) and with researchers in South Africa on projects involving comparative studies of social policy in the African context. There are also clear links here to studies that primarily come under the Population and Economy profile area, in which the Institute’s researchers collaborate with the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA).

Organisational strategies

By 2008, the Institute’s activities had expanded to include almost 50 employees. The great majority of these are researchers and many are employed on part-time contracts. The Institute is a well-functioning interdisciplinary environment.

The Institute needs to take a position with respect to existing research environments ahead of the coming programme period. Here one can envisage at least four roles for employees – as explorers, coordinators, initiators or newcomers. These functions in turn correspond to different levels of ambition in terms of the organisation and funding of the various themes:

- *Explorers* carry out inventories of research projects being undertaken and determine to what extent they meet the Institute’s requirements in terms of their future relevance.
- *Coordinators* compile anthologies with contributions from researchers active in the research field. An anthology editor responsible for directing this activity will be recruited externally.
- *Initiators* set in motion research on the theme’s key issues of relevance to the future. The object here is to fill in the blank spaces on the research map more explicitly. Initiators are expected to recruit researchers who will be tasked with writing applications to research councils, and to pursue their own research.
- *Frontier researchers* create a research environment of a certain duration that can compete with existing research centres. They are expected to recruit a group of

researchers tasked with writing applications to research councils, and to pursue their own research.

The relationship between population trends and changes in public policy is the leitmotif that runs through all research themes, and their integration has already led to fruitful cooperation. Future work will be aimed at harnessing and developing the expertise built up over the past years. There are compelling reasons to preserve this continuity, based on thematic as well as methodological considerations. In the previous research programmes, the same types of themes recur in different guises. Put somewhat simply, they relate to 'the good life' on the one hand and to the 'efficient society' on the other. Thus there are reasons for promoting deeper analyses. The methodological reasons have to do with the recurring ambition in our research programmes to develop methods for futures studies, which by and large lack cumulative elements. One major explanation for this is that futures studies are still rooted in traditional academic disciplines. Significant learning time must be spent before new researchers can contribute to methods development. Another reason for promoting continuity is the fact that the Institute today is involved in studies of social conditions that will remain crucial to development for the foreseeable future. There are also grounds for promoting continuity from an organisational standpoint, given the networks for futures studies and external policy environment analysis that the Institute's researchers have systematically built up at regional, national and international level.

At the same time, there are obvious reasons to promote renewal. One basic reason is that each programme is constrained by the limited resources at the Institute's disposal, and that the future – so to speak – includes everything. There are therefore grounds for promoting thematic renewal.

The Institute's task is to stimulate and encourage debate in Sweden about the future. All the Institute's projects have information plans designed to ensure this. The Institute has developed good working methods and procedures for communicating scientific findings to the public debate. Its external activities are partly aimed at the broad general public and partly at key groups of special strategic significance. Our external work is improving all the time but the task of encouraging debate on important issues for the future must continue to be developed.

The research programme will be developed and translated into concrete projects in cooperation with those who will be taking part. The new research programme will involve changes in the way research is organised. There will be a clearer product-oriented approach with regard to projects and areas that have been identified. Establishing working procedures to ensure this will require a change in working methods as the new research programme gets under way. This also applies to our external activities.

The financial conditions for the Institute's activities are governed in practice by how strategically government grant funding is spent on new initiatives and how successful research staff are in obtaining external funding. Recruitment of skilled staff is a critical issue, and here the Institute's attractiveness as a workplace will continue to play a decisive role.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 2008–12–02.

Translator: Stuart Sheild