

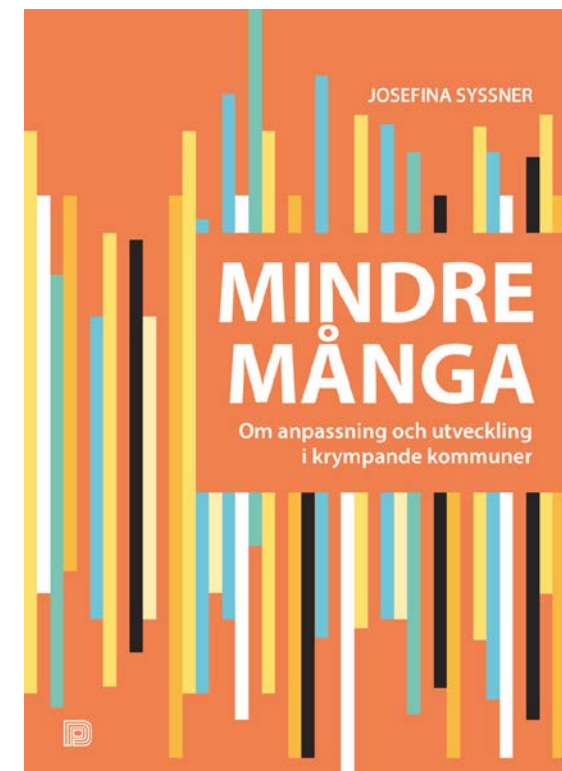
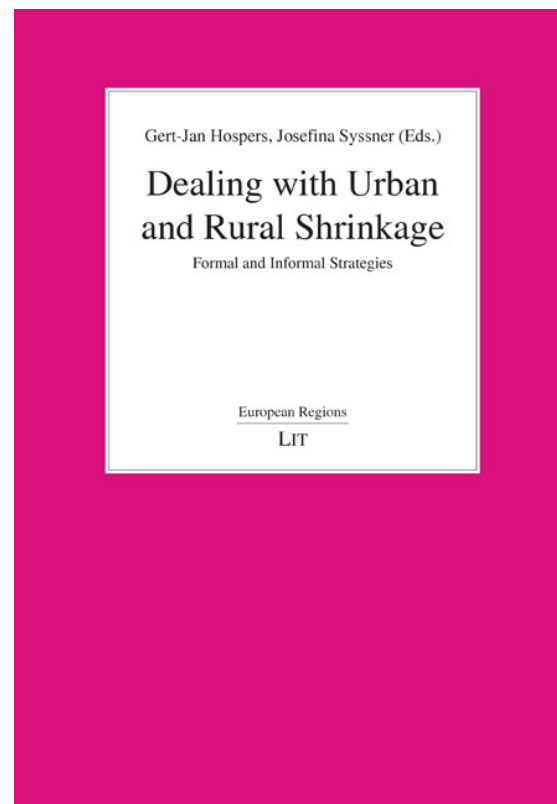
Can all municipalities do the same?

Findings on the differentiation trend among Sweden's municipalities.

Josefina Syssner, Associate professor

Short version for the impatient ones

1. It is unrealistic to believe that all places all over the world can grow always.
2. We need planning, policy and leadership that work in a shrinking context.



Agenda

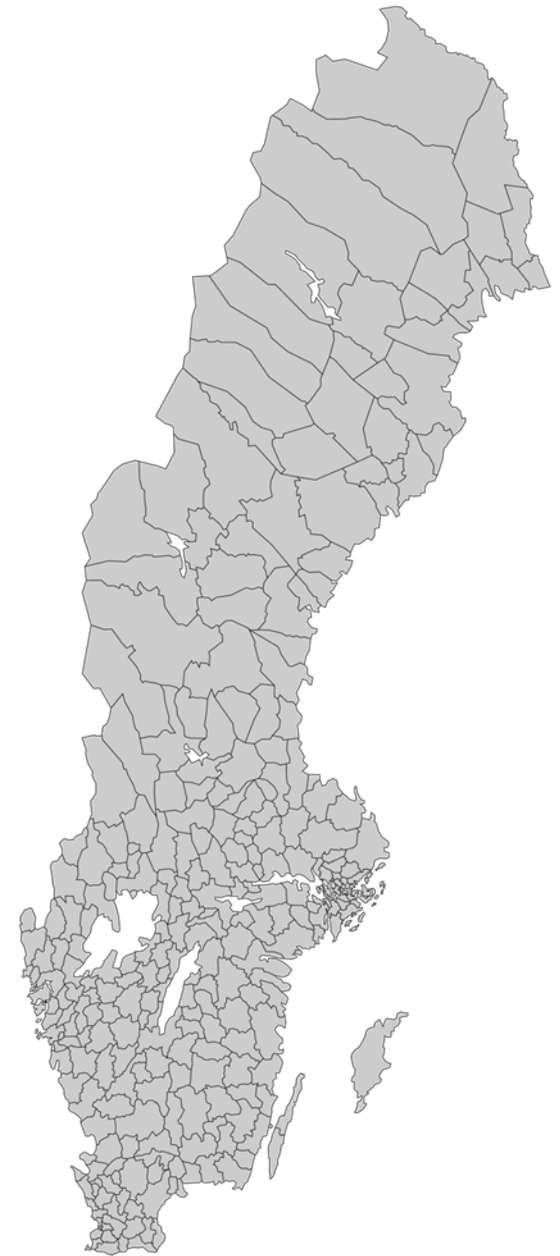
- Background
- Consequences
- Policy

*... regarding urbanisation and
uneven demographic development,
in Sweden and elsewhere.*

Background

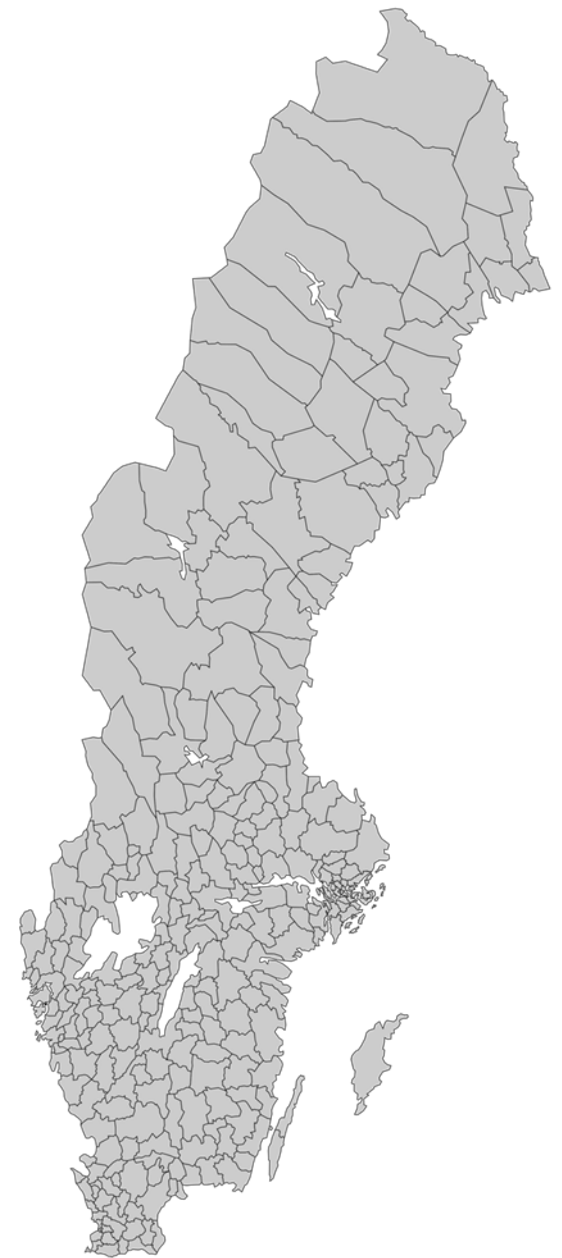
Background: Sweden

- 290 municipalities.
- High degree of local autonomy.
- Elected local governments.
- The right to levy taxes.
- A broad portfolio.



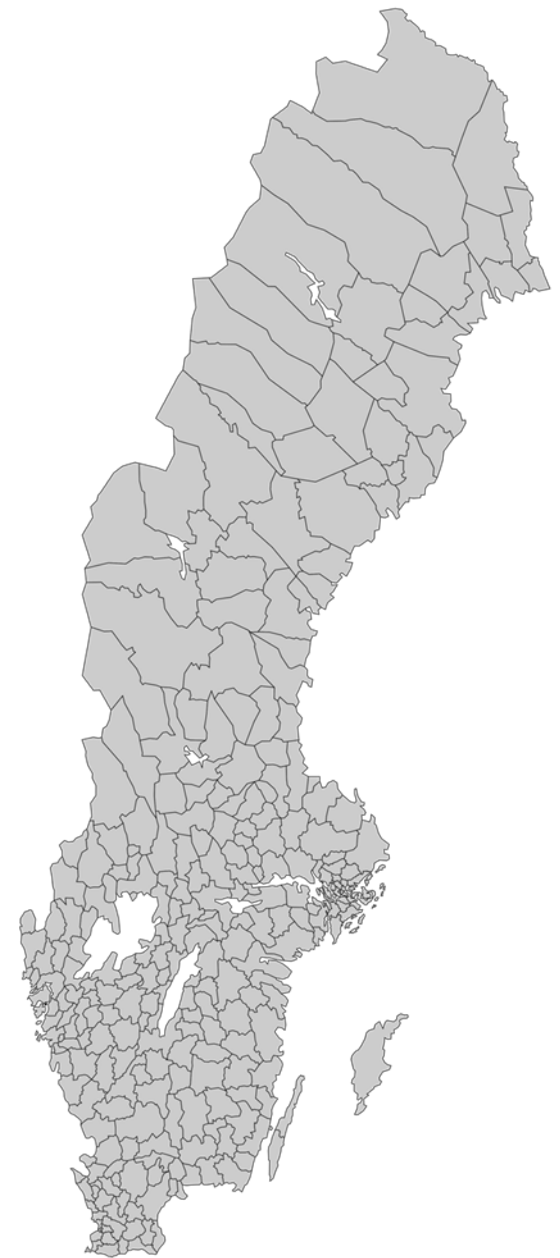
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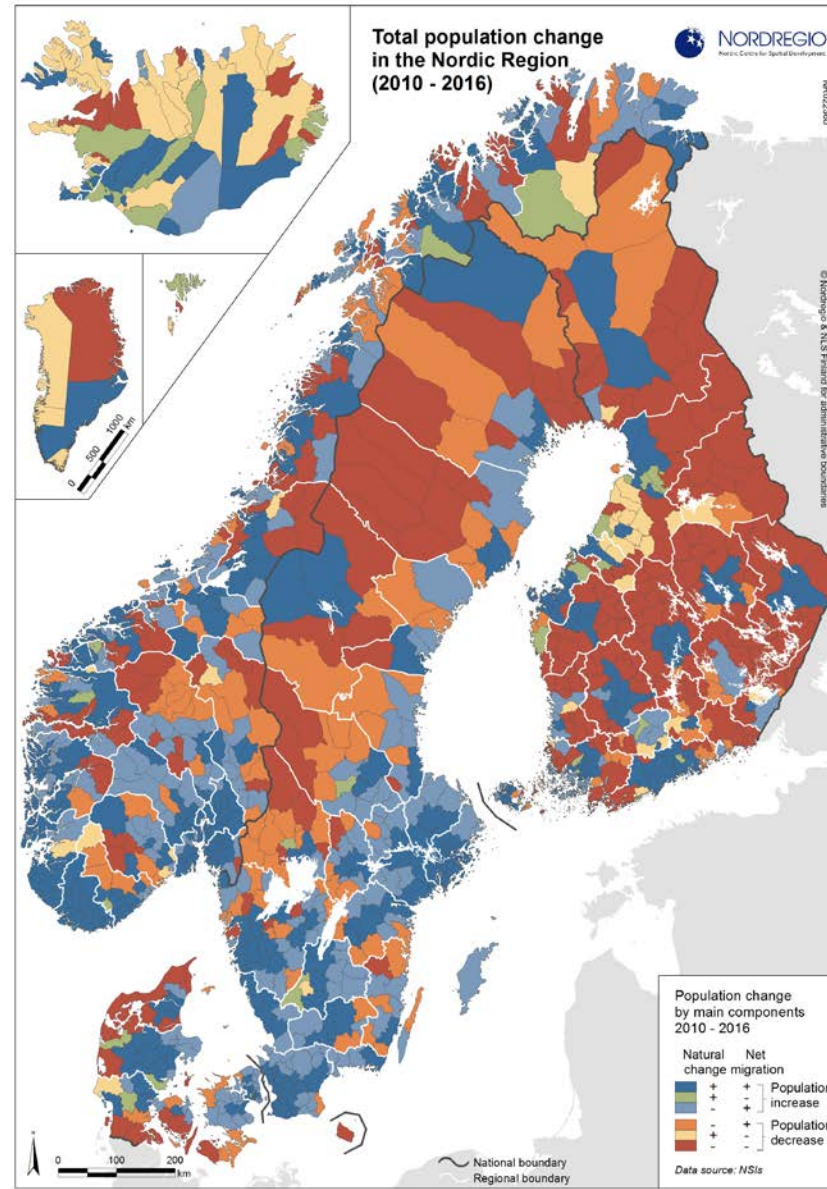
- Demographic change is a challenge.
- 35 % of the municipalities have 5 % less inhabitants today than in the 70´ s
- Big municipalities grow. Small municipalities shrink.



Background: Sweden

- Huge differences in size, composition and distribution of population in space.
- ... these circumstances are of fundamental importance to local policy and planning.
- Subject to broad debate in Sweden at the moment.





Why do places shrink?

- Globalization (changing location of manufacturing industries).
- Rationalization (in agriculture, forestry, mining)
- Expansion of service sector (proximity to customers more relevant).
- Higher demands on education on labour market.

Why do places shrink?

- Birth deficits because of previous (and current) selective outward migration.
- A cumulative effect, generation by generation:

*“In a society with fewer children, the number of potential mothers also recedes – children who are not born cannot produce their own children”
Hospers and Reverda (2015: 9).*

Consequences

Consequences of depopulation

- Physical infrastructure tends to be oversized.
- Lower labour-related tax revenues.
- Per-capita expenditures for social services rise.
- Competence and quality in welfare services
- Politics, legitimacy, democracy.

(Sousa and Pinho 2013; Haase et al., 2012; Hollander 2011; Fjertorp 2013; Hutter & Neumann 2008; Martinez-Fernandez et al 2012; Wiechmann and Pallagst 2012).

Policy

Policy implications of depopulation

Shrinkage has been widely disregarded among politicians and planners. *Growth* has been the primary goal in urban and regional planning and policy.

(Wiechmann and Pallagst 2012; Bontje, 2005; Martinez-Fernandez 2012; Sousa and Pinho 2013: 11-12; Syssner 2006; 2012, 2018).

Policy implications of depopulation

- A stigma. A political taboo.
- Unrealistic ideas of growth stay in the way for “proactive strategies in managing decline”.

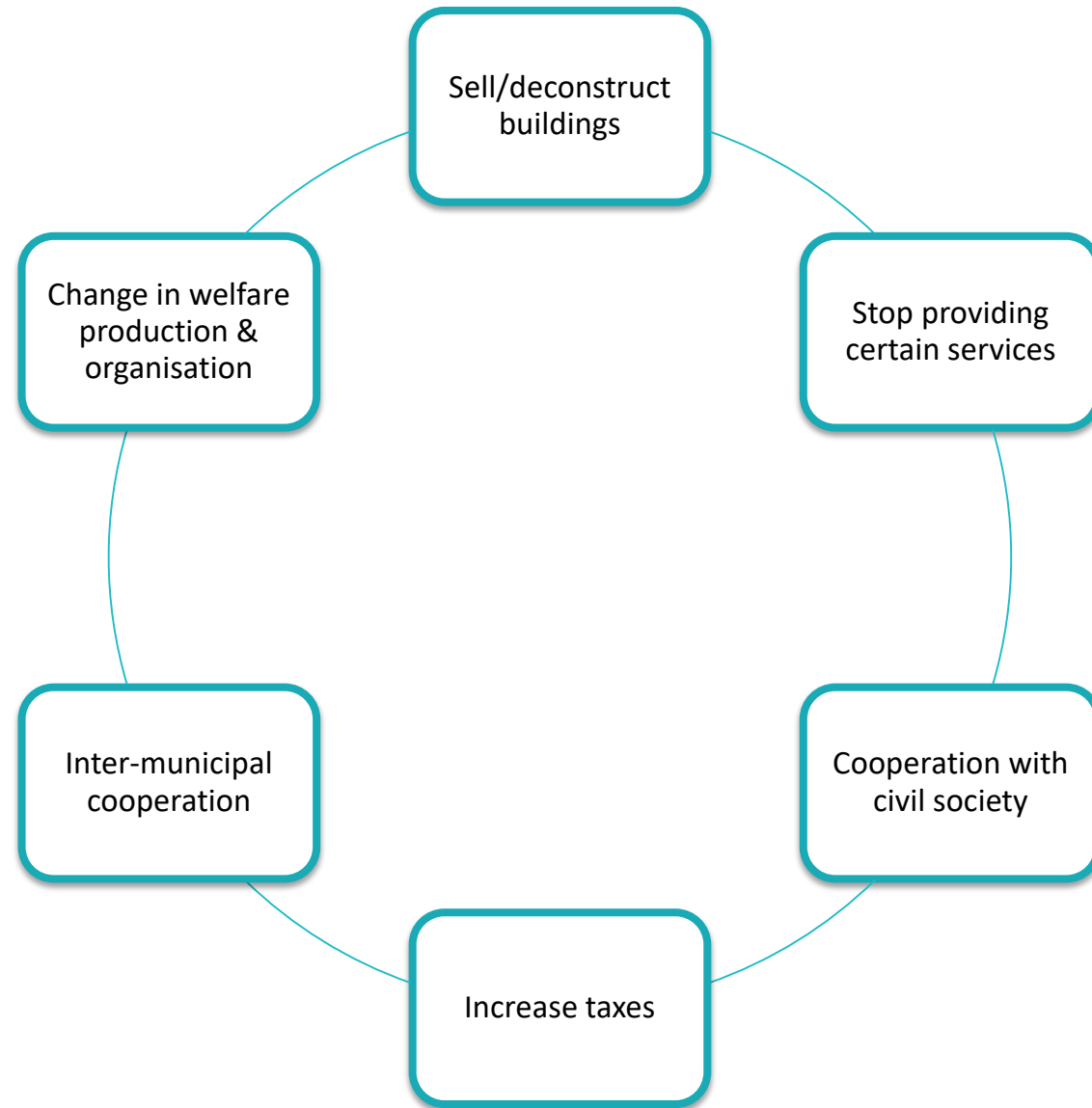
*(Wiechmann and Pallagst 2012; Sousa and Pinho 2013;
Martinez-Fernandez et al 2012; Lang 2012)*

Conclusion 1

Demographic change is a fact, that local actors can affect to a minor degree. Municipalities take action to handle depopulation, but actions are highly ad hoc/situational.

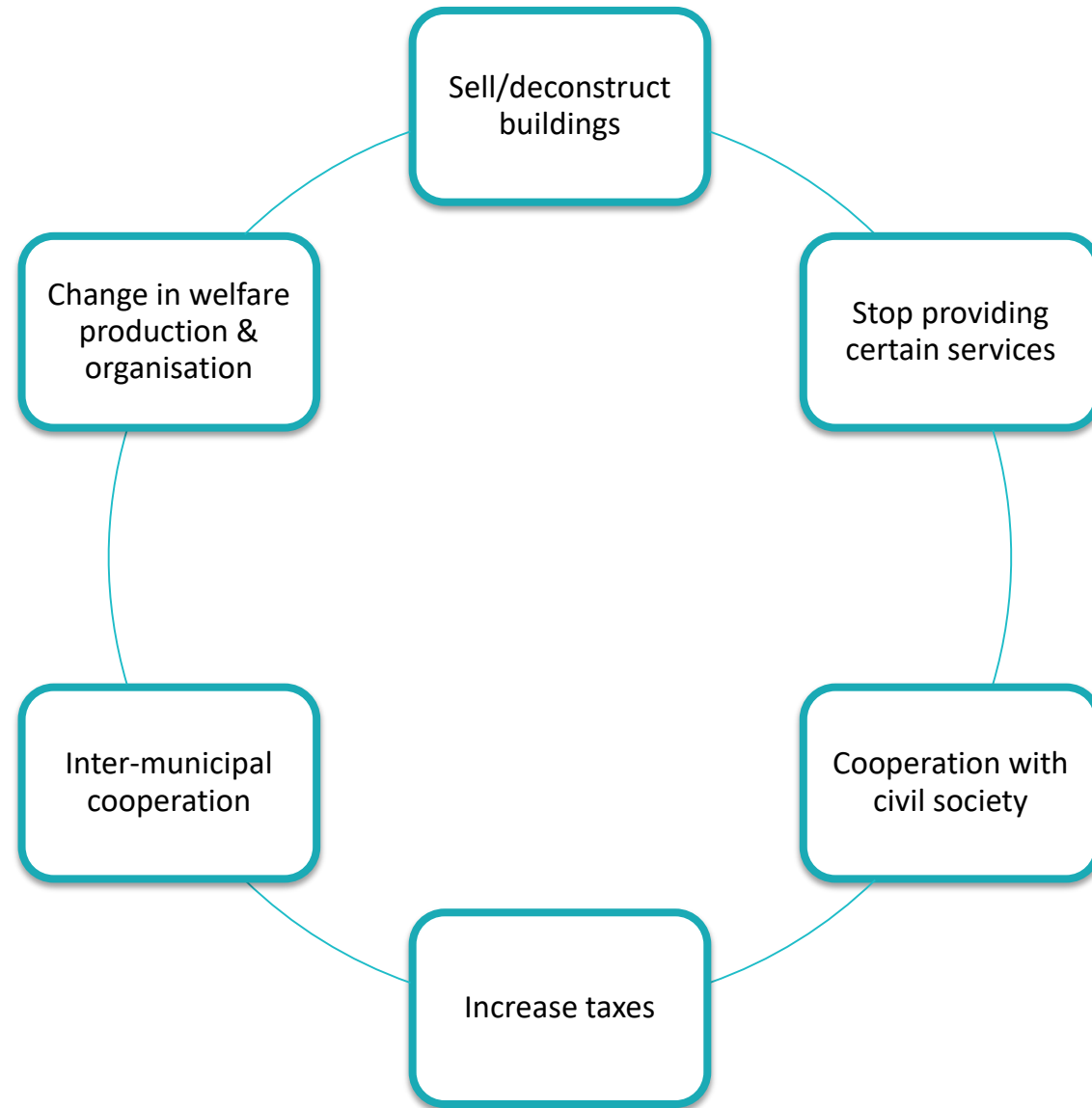
This is why we request an explicit local adaptation policy.

Local adaptation policy in practice



Local adaptation policy in practice

Can this be done in a more democratic, sustainable, well-informed way?



GROWTH POLICY



MEASURES

Stimulating entrepreneurship, investments,
business climate, communications.



AIMING AT

creating supply as well as demand at local
markets, creating growth and a more diversified
local labour market



RESULTING IN

better preconditions for welfare services in all
parts of the municipality.

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ADAPTATION POLICY



MEASURES

Inter-municipal collaboration, concentration, budget cuts, cooperation with civil society, increase taxes.



AIMING AT

adapting the municipal service and organisation to current and coming conditions



RESULTING IN

an economy in balance, high welfare services quality despite shrinking resources. Transparency and inter-municipal learning.

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Benefits of local adaptation policy

- Transparency. *Do it in dialogue with citizens.*
- Sustainability. *Long term planning.*
- Learning. *Shrinking localities can learn from each other.*
- Resources. *Can be co-produced and increased.*

Further research

- What can state agencies do to help municipalities deal with population change?
- What can the regional level do in terms of coordination, support, collaboration?
- What is "smart shrinking" in an Nordic context?

Josefina Syssner

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