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Towards a critical understanding of Doughnut Economics

- The case of Tomelilla, Sweden

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Course code: SGEM08
Semester/year: Spring, 2022

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Abstract

In recent years, Kate Raworth's new alternative macroeconomic model, "doughnut economics" (DE) has become increasingly popular within policies on different scales around the world. The doughnut-shaped framework addresses the urgent crises of our time by advocating for a balanced development that considers the planet's well-being while securing our social needs. Since the introduction of the framework, several European cities have started to implement Raworth's ideas within their policies. However, there is a lack of previous studies that critically engage with this new economic model. To fill this gap in the literature, my thesis aims to examine how the model deals with growth and urbanization by incorporating critical theories as an attempt to move towards a critical understanding of the framework. The first Swedish city to explore the model is Tomelilla and with the use of a case study approach, my thesis investigates the municipality's take on growth, urbanization, and the model. The questions at issue were examined through four semi-structured interviews with city officials in Tomelilla and a content analysis of doughnut economics' core book. All interviews were then thematically analyzed based on four main themes that emerged from my theoretical framework: *urbanization, growth, the doughnut model, and housing*. The analysis shows that the municipality's views coincide with Raworth's ideas to a large extent, where the city officials, for instance, perceive growth as a possibility in the future. However, by analyzing Raworth's engagement with growth and urbanization, it seems that there is a need for critical theories that could open up alternative discussions and reflections. My analysis indicates that there are shortcomings and certain ambiguities within Raworth's analysis of growth, and her framework could be strengthened by insights from critical theory.

Keywords: *Doughnut Economics, Economic growth, Tomelilla, Critical theory*

Word count: 17917

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1. Introduction

“To do what has to be done will take tenacity and determination, patience, and cunning, along with fierce political commitments born out of moral outrage at what exploitative compound growth is doing to all facets of life, humans and otherwise, on planet earth” (Harvey & Wachsmuth, 2012:274).

The opening lines radiate a frustration that may be easily relatable but seem to pass unnoticed in the neoliberal mindset of the 21st century. I started writing this thesis when several European countries began to ease their corona restrictions and open up their societies, which gave me a slight feeling of hope. A hope for change that stems from a deep-rooted commitment to making a difference, and contributing to a better world.

During the pandemic, I stumbled across an alternative economic model that was surprisingly called the “doughnut model” because of its shape. It was advertised as a healthy doughnut that would fit all diets by aiming to fulfill our social needs in areas, such as housing and health, without damaging our ecosystems. Once I finished reading the model’s core book (Raworth, 2017), I immediately started to reflect on the contested concept of growth and how it could be addressed in policymaking. The issue is complex and the growth debate continues to be relevant until this day, a quick search¹ with the keyword “economic growth” in Lund University’s database (LUBSearch) resulted in hundreds of thousands of hits, where a majority of these were published within the last ten years. In other words, there are many different takes on economic growth and perspectives on its relation to the planet’s resources. The doughnut model is a part of a growing body of literature on alternative ways to structure the economy in a post-growth world. The economy of today is an urban economy and the questions of urbanization and housing are embedded into understanding contemporary economics. Urbanization has increased, not least in Sweden, where almost ninety percent of the population lives in areas defined as urban (Statistics Sweden, 2019) and a large part of the world is currently facing a climate crisis on top of a housing crisis that has been further exacerbated by the far-reaching effects of the covid-pandemic. Therefore, it also becomes crucial to take a closer look at the issues of housing and urbanization to fully understand contemporary economics. We simply cannot ignore the crises that humanity is currently facing and I hope we could stand together in finding ways to overcome these challenges. One of my favorite singers, Louis Armstrong once sang “What a wonderful world” in the late ’60s, which depicts a world that is far from recognizable today. Since

¹ This search was performed on February 20, 2022.

Armstrong passed away, we have entered another geological epoch called the Anthropocene, which, according to scientists, is characterized by the environmental destruction caused by humans (National Geographic, n.d.). Whether or not we have entered this new period is still widely debated (*ibid*) but in the last few decades, social injustices have increased along with an intensified pressure on our vital ecosystems. In addition to these crises, Russian military troops recently invaded Ukraine and we are currently in the middle of a humanitarian disaster. The Western response has shown signs of solidarity through sanctions against Russia, which indicates that we are more interconnected than ever before.

Throughout the years, several responses to these crises have emerged such as, “degrowth” and “green growth”. One of the most recent responses includes the previously mentioned, “doughnut economics” (DE) or the doughnut model, developed by Kate Raworth in the early 2010s. The DE framework has become popular in the last decade where two cities, in particular, have started to implement it in their urban strategies: Copenhagen and Amsterdam, and recently, researchers (O’Neil & Stratford, 2020) attempted to use the model on a national scale. Raworth (2017:3) is advertising her new economic model as a guiding tool for human progress and she develops new principles that should help decision-makers in their journey toward a sustainable society. They include, among other things, moving away from the strong focus on economic growth and finding ways to redistribute knowledge and wealth. According to Raworth (2017), the doughnut provides a more holistic approach to sustainable development that could be implemented in policies on various scales around the world.

While the doughnut has strengthened its position in urban policies, it has also faced criticism from scholars within academia. Milanovic (2018) argues that Raworth’s ideas neglect the importance of GDP growth and disregard people’s strong self-interest under the contemporary economic system. Other scholars such as the American economist Horwitz (2017) is skeptical of how Raworth’s ideas could be concretized and implemented. Similar to Milanovic, he questions whether or not actors even have the willingness needed to act in the real world (*ibid*). Outside academia, Raworth’s ideas have received criticism from both sides of the political spectrum. The left has accused it of not being radical enough to tackle capitalism while the right has criticized her ideas for not being particularly groundbreaking (Nugent, 2021; Teicher, 2021).

Most of the previous research has focused on exploring the possibilities of implementation and used the DE framework to assess whether or not a region stays within the doughnut’s threshold. As early as 2014, researchers tried to apply Raworth’s framework on a national scale in South Africa (Cole, Bailey & New, 2014) by developing ecological and

social indicators to measure progress. Oxfam (Sayers, 2015; Sayers, Trebeck & Stuart, 2014) took a similar approach and used the newly developed doughnut to get an overview of different countries' performance. The previously mentioned criticism indicates that there is a need to critically engage with Raworth's ideas. However, apart from the scholarly reviews, there is a lack of research that critically analyzes the framework. My project seeks to address this gap by analyzing how DE engages with the complex issues of growth and urbanization from a critical perspective. In addition, there is a need to investigate the usage of the framework in a Swedish context, where previous research has predominantly taken place outside Scandinavia. My research will attempt to fill this gap by developing an understanding of how a Swedish municipality views the framework and the issues of urbanization and growth. I hope that my paper will bring critical insights into the discussion of doughnut economics under contemporary capitalism that could hopefully open up for discussions and reflections.

1.1 Aim and research questions

In recent years, we have become familiar with buzzwords, such as “the creative city” (Florida, 2002), “the resilient city” (Vale & Campanella, 2005), and “the smart city” (Nam & Pardo, 2011) in urban planning. Some of these concepts are still widely used today and over the years, they have received criticism for causing segregation and gentrification in the city (Peck, 2005; Hollands, 2008) by prioritizing certain social groups.

In consequence, some of these have disappeared from the urban agenda as it reminds policymakers to not uncritically adopt theoretical concepts. As an increasing number of cities have begun to embrace Raworth's ideas, it becomes relevant to analyze the framework and its principles. **Taking this into consideration, this paper aims to make sense of doughnut economics' engagement with growth and urbanization by the use of critical theory and to explore how the municipality of Tomelilla perceives the model and these issues.** Given the foregoing, I have outlined the following research questions that will guide my research:

RQ 1.1: What is doughnut economics, and how could it be connected to critical theory?

RQ 1.2: How is doughnut economics dealing with growth and urbanization and how has it been criticized?

RQ 2: How does the municipality of Tomelilla perceive doughnut economics and the issue of growth, especially in relation to urbanization and the housing question?

For practical purposes, I have decided to formulate two main questions where the first is theoretical and the second empirically based (*see table 2.1*). Due to the time frame and word limit of the thesis, I have decided to limit the scope of my research. My research is theoretical driven and seeks to critically engage with doughnut economics. More specifically, I have chosen to focus on how the model deals with the issues of growth and urbanization, which I will discuss more in-depth in the following subsections. However, I am well aware that DE contains a strong visual framework that could guide urban actors to measure performances over time, but I will not attempt to approach any of these methodological issues in my thesis. Since I argue that there is a need to analyze the framework before starting a discussion on methodology and implementation. This thesis takes a critical approach rather than a problem-solving approach, therefore I will not attempt to pursue an in-depth analysis of possible solutions.

Finally, I have limited my case study to examine a smaller urban area, called Tomelilla, located in the southern part of Sweden. Instead of focusing on several actors, my thesis will focus on the municipality and how the city officials view these issues.

1.2 Philosophy of science

As a researcher, it is important to be transparent with the philosophy of science since it will affect how I will approach the questions at issue. In this section, I will discuss what ontology and epistemology I draw upon as a researcher.

The epistemological and ontological approach in this thesis is highly inspired by critical realism (CR). First of all, as a critical realist, I believe that there exists a reality independently of our knowledge, however, the critical realist acknowledges that the world cannot be accessed without considering different types of concepts or theories in the process (*see section 2*). Critical realism appeals to me for several reasons, one of which is the view of knowledge as fallible (Sayer, 2000). Even if there could be different explanations of the same phenomena, it does not imply that some of these are wrong, because I believe that we cannot reach the final truth. Therefore, I will look into the issues of growth and urbanization from different perspectives to provide several types of explanations. In other words, it allows me to not only interpret different aspects of reality but also explain and pursue an analysis of the existing social world (Fletcher, 2017). I believe it is also important to discuss ontology more in-depth, which could affect my methodology. I would argue that it is possible to break down reality into different levels, where critical realism provides a deeper ontological analysis. This deep ontology is divided into different parts, ‘the empirical’, ‘the real’, and ‘the actual’. Events, mechanisms, and structures interplay in this view of reality, where the real could be

defined as the phenomena that actually exist, such as climate change or capitalism (Sayer, 2000:10-12). Critical realism distinguishes between these three parts of reality to show the complexity of reality where the “real” is not always easy to discern or interpret. According to Sayer (ibid), this level contains different kinds of structures and power that could become visible or remain invisible to a certain degree. This second level, more known as the actual, includes different events, where some may be perceived as abstract but still exist, in contrast to the empirical level which includes experiences that we could observe in one way or another (ibid). As a reader, it might be easier to comprehend this ontological approach with a concrete example.

I would argue that the accumulation of capital or the capitalist mode of production could be placed into the sphere of the so-called, real, which involves both events and mechanisms. In consequence, different events, such as planetary urbanization might become apparent at the actual level, and at the empirical level, we may experience rising housing prices, polarization, and displacements. However, the capitalist mode of production would still exist even if we would not experience polarization or displacements at the empirical level, as it unfolds in different ways depending on the circumstances. As shown by this short example, my philosophy of science allows me to identify and engage with some of the capitalist structures.

My philosophy of science impacts the research design and how I structure the project as a whole. At the core of the research project lies the belief that there is no single explanation that could be used to understand reality. This belief justifies the overall approach to move towards a critical understanding of doughnut economics and implies an analysis that tackles, for example, growth as a capitalist structure. My view of reality allows me to move between different levels of theoretical abstraction throughout my thesis. I have ambitions to move from an abstract level, where I analyze growth and urbanization, to a more concrete level, where I connect this theoretical analysis to the local context of Tomelilla.

1.3 Disposition

This master thesis has been organized in the following way. Section 2 introduces doughnut economics in more general terms together with its criticism and additional critical theories that engage with the issues of growth and urbanization. Section 3 presents the literature review with a focus on the previous implementations of DE, where insights will be given into the cases of Amsterdam and Copenhagen. Section 4 provides a description and reflection of the overall research design and methodology of my thesis. In this section, I critically discuss the case study approach and the chosen methodology, where I also expand on my

positionality. Section 5 provides a small background to Tomelilla together with a map showing its location in relation to surrounding municipalities. Section 6 critically engages with DE and analyzes the results of the semi-structured interviews based on the four guiding elements: urbanization, growth, housing, and the doughnut model. By the use of critical theory, I analyze how DE and the municipality view the issues of urbanization and growth under contemporary capitalism. The final section summarizes the main findings of the thesis, where I attempt to draw conclusions based on my analysis. I also discuss the implications of my findings in relation to future research that could be conducted within the area.

2. Theoretical framework

As previously mentioned, the project is based on Kate Raworth and her new economic model called, doughnut economics. She has written several articles throughout the years that promote a new perspective on economic development and growth. However, her best-selling book called, ‘*Doughnut Economics*’ which was published in 2017 will be used as a starting point in this project, and this book is the basis for the analysis. The book could be considered the main core of the DE framework, where the author provides an overview of key concepts. Since the introduction of the framework, other scholars have published several academic articles that engage with her ideas in different ways. In addition, Raworth has frequently participated in TED talks and other webinars, where she encourages people to get involved in her movement. In 2019, Raworth co-founded a platform and community called, *The Doughnut Economics Action Lab*, which strives to inspire actors to change their mindsets and mobilize people to act locally by putting the framework into action (DEAL, 2020). The platform regularly publishes articles, tools, and guides that help actors to transform and turn the new economic principles into reality (ibid). I will also present parts of the criticism from different scholars along with critical theories that will become an important component in moving towards a critical understanding of doughnut economics.

2.1 Overview of the theoretical framework

In this section, I will provide an overview of how I have structured the theoretical framework.

Table 2.1. Visualization of the theoretical framework.

RQ:	How is doughnut economics dealing with growth and urbanization and how has it been criticized?	How does the municipality of Tomelilla perceive the issue of growth and the doughnut model, especially in relation to urbanization and the housing question?
Focus:	How can growth and urbanization be analyzed from different perspectives? Who has criticized the model and why?	How does Tomelilla view DE’s principles of growth? How does the municipality view the model and the issues of urbanization and growth?
Frameworks:	DE and critical theory	DE and critical theory
Methods:	Desk studies / Content-analysis	Semi-structured interviews with city officials

2.2 Doughnut Economics

According to Raworth (2017:27), we need to replace the previous macroeconomic models with a completely new take on economics that could lead the way towards socially just and environmentally friendly sustainable development. Raworth recognizes the urgent challenges of today and attempts to create a framework that will work within many different contexts of the world.

The doughnut model consists of a visual framework that is shaped like a doughnut that has an inner and outer limit (*see figure 2.2*). The framework initiates a paradigm shift in how we should approach sustainable development where some scholars argue that it could be perceived as an abstract mental model (Domazet, et. al 2020). The founder of the model targets the whole discipline of economics by suggesting a new economic vocabulary and visualization of key concepts within mainstream economics. As shown in figure 2.2, the inner circle represents the foundation and contains twelve different social dimensions that are essential to human life. In the middle of the doughnut, people are suffering, where they, for example, lack proper health care and housing. The main goal should be to get into the area between the circles, where a balanced development takes place.

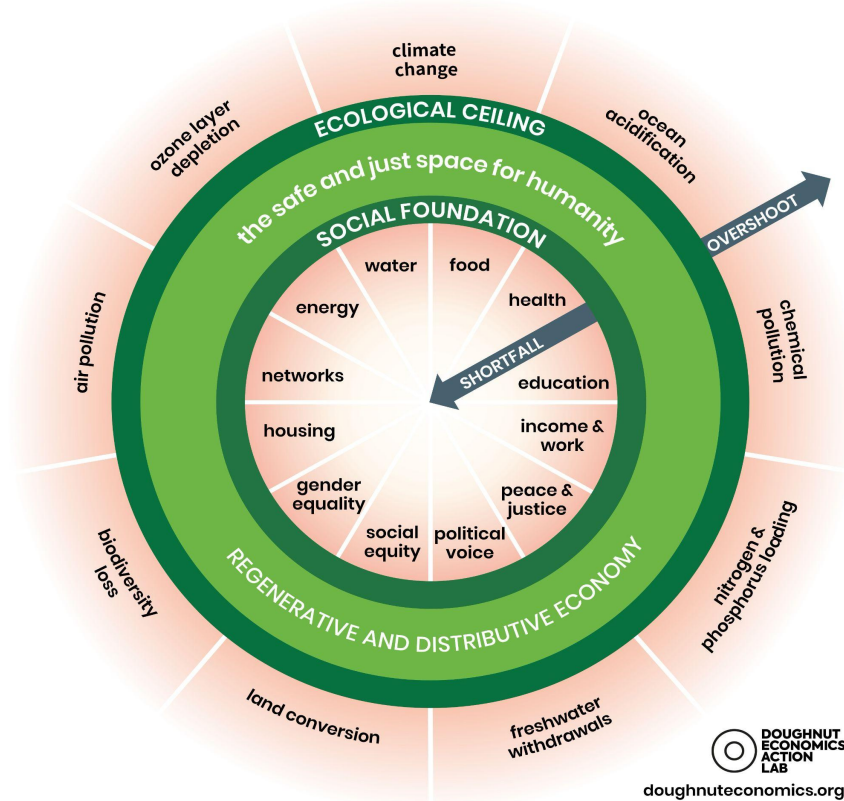


Figure 2.2. The doughnut's social and planetary boundaries (Raworth, 2017).

However, in order to move into this area, we will need to avoid crossing both the outer and

inner circles. The ecological ceiling is represented in the outer circle of the doughnut, where she builds upon the work of Rockström (et al. 2009) who identifies several critical boundaries that need to be considered to avoid devastating consequences for the environment (*see figure 2.2*).

Raworth’s doughnut starts on the other side of the spectrum compared to conventional economic models by putting human well-being at the center of attention. Her model is an attempt to move away from the strong focus on GDP under contemporary capitalism and instead, prioritize ecological and social aspects that she identifies in her visuals. As figure 2.2 shows, there needs to be a balanced development where none of the circles can be crossed in any sort of way. Raworth (2017) claims that it is possible to provide everyone with the necessary resources while still avoiding environmental harm. She argues that this kind of approach to economics needs to be practiced on a global scale as these issues cannot be solved by a sole actor. The author presents another figure to showcase the urgent need for change (*see figure 2.3*) where she urges everyone to reflect on how their decisions affect the emergence of shortfalls and overshoots within the framework.

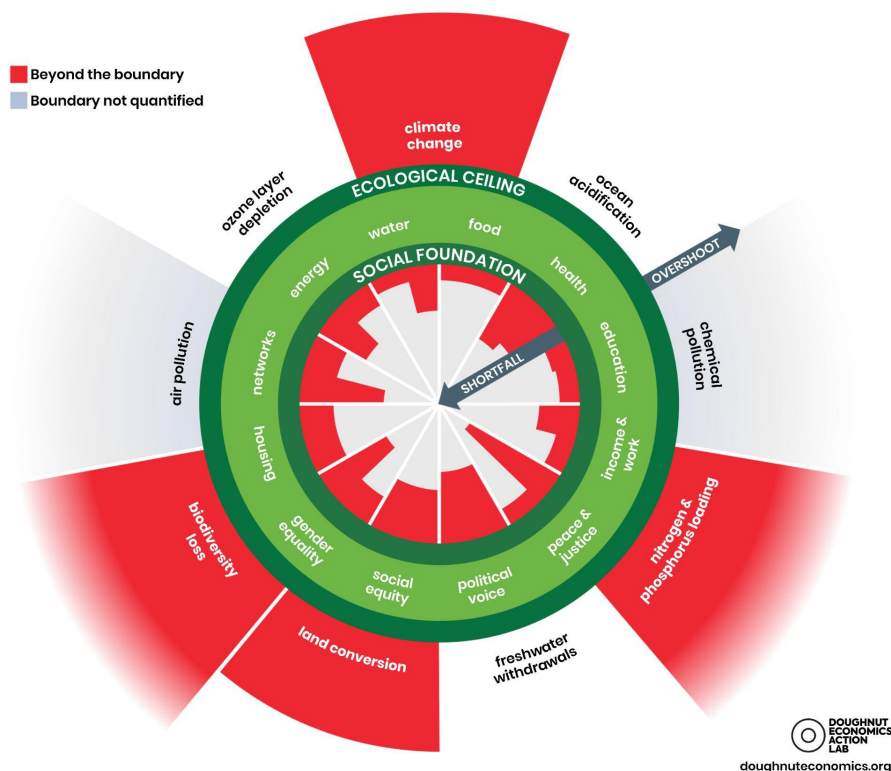


Figure 2.3 Overshoot doughnut (Raworth, 2017).

In one of Raworth’s (2018) speeches, figure 2.3 is referred to as the “snapshot” of the 21st century. As the above figure shows, the world has a long road ahead to get into the

framework's green space. She asserts that the visual framework is not enough in itself and needs to be accompanied by a new approach to sustainable development and economics, which requires closer examination. In this subsection, I have set the scene and explained the basics of the doughnut model and the overarching visual framework that guides the author's ideas and main principles. I will dive deeper into these principles and ideas in the following subsections, starting with the discussion on GDP and growth.

2.2.1 GDP, growth, and the overall approach to economics

The concept of growth and GDP continues to be frequently debated within and outside academia. Not only whether or not we should strive for growth as an overall ambition but also to what extent, in what form, and on which occasions it could be regarded as acceptable. These are some of the questions that Raworth (2017) reflects upon when she delves into the debate on growth and GDP. First and foremost, the author believes that it is crucial to reflect upon our addiction to growth and she identifies growth as a problematic structure within contemporary economics. Instead of focusing on growth, we should deprioritize economic growth in favor of ecological and social issues. The author acknowledges that it might be easier said than done as she explains how the strong focus on GDP has expanded over the years until it became a political goal. Raworth (ibid) disagrees with this idea by claiming that economics needs another starting point, where we should stop viewing economic growth as the magical solution to emerging crises. She makes the case that the focus should be on finding ways of getting into the doughnut as it could help us to overcome the urgent issues of our time (*see figure 2*). Raworth (ibid) explains that it is important to fully understand the linkages between the outer and inner dimensions of the model. In other words, environmental damages could affect the livelihoods of people around the world as we are dependent on the planet and its resources. This suggests that we cannot isolate either the social or the ecological aspects of the framework as it could end up causing a domino effect with devastating consequences.

Raworth (2021) argues that there need to be new ways of understanding the economy as a part of a larger context and she continues to criticize the macroeconomic models for being insufficient. The author (ibid:88) introduces her readers to a new drawing that emphasizes the role of the economy in relation to crucial socio-environmental systems (*see figure 2.4*). Raworth (ibid) asserts that previous macroeconomic models have left out these important aspects of the economy, such as the household and the resources of the planet that need to be considered to a larger extent. As shown in figure 2.4, her new drawing involves, for instance, recognizing the earth's resources in fueling the economy and the important role

of the commons as an alternative to the capitalist-driven market. Raworth's figure contains four different fields within the economy and provides an alternative structure to the existing capitalist system that encourages policymakers to broaden their approach to economic policies.

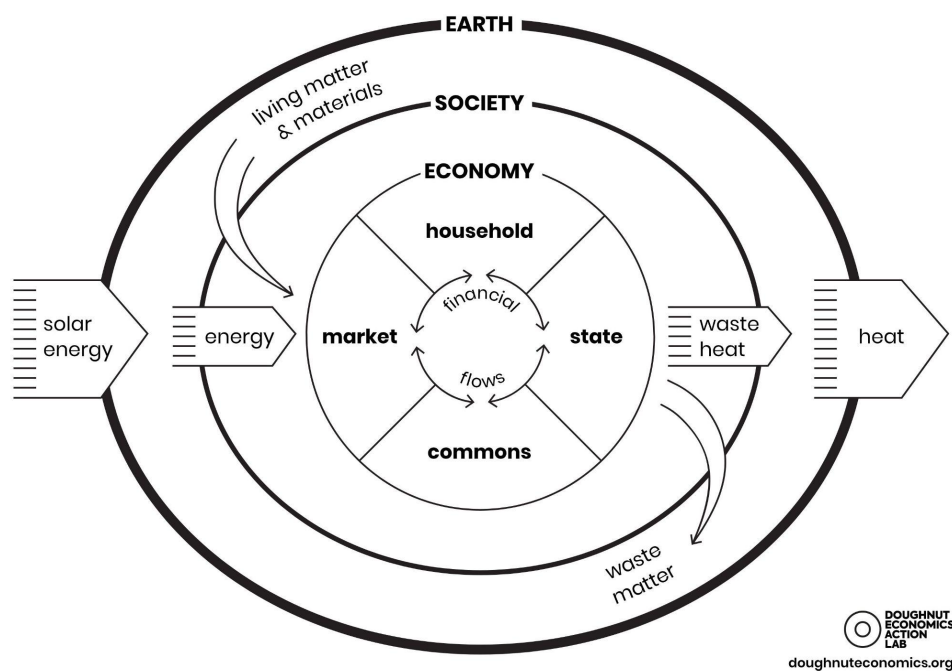


Figure 2.4. The Embedded Economy (Raworth, 2017:60)

Figure 2.4 underlines that the economy consists of far more than the market in which the state plays a part in the interaction between the different fields. Raworth (2017:70-72) discusses the responsibility of the state, from a leadership perspective, where she, for instance, demands the state to pursue more initiatives that could lead the way towards a sustainable transition. It could include everything from supporting innovative ideas to regulating the commons in different ways. However, it is important to see these ideas that present an alternative way of organizing the economy in relation to the optimism that permeates the entire framework. This alternative economic model has a strong belief in humans as creative social beings who are open to different types of collaborations as opposed to seeing humans as solely obsessed with personal gain (ibid). To illustrate, the author gives several examples of successful projects that have encouraged people to act in environmentally friendly ways by giving them reminders or other types of cost-efficient nudges. If we want to get into the green space between the rings, she claims that we have to perceive humans as something far more than purely consumers on the market (ibid:102-104).

2.2.2 Designing the economy

Turning now to the design issues of the economy, the author proposes a circular economy that tackles the previous flaws in industrial design that have caused environmental harm in the process of profit-maximization (ibid:172-175). In an attempt to move away from this design that harms the environment in several ways by not accounting for the waste, the model suggests an economy that builds upon new regenerative principles (ibid:178). The author encourages people across the whole economy to design, for instance, their products and businesses in more sustainable ways. Raworth (ibid:179) illustrates this by pointing out how we can design products with the end goal of them being reused or setting up businesses that take environmental responsibility from start to finish. In comparison to purely focusing on the environmental management of the final output, the framework insists on finding ways to give back to the environment by constantly upgrading business structures and product designs, and utilizing the full potential of natural resources. As a reader, it might be easier to interpret her discussion by linking it to the complexity of the economy (*see figure 2.4*) that constantly reminds us of responsible resource use and societal concerns.

This proposed paradigm shift also highlights the importance of redistribution. Raworth (ibid:143) argues that we should find ways of reducing the existing inequalities through a fairer distribution of resources that contributes to the creation of wealth. The author holds the view that we cannot only focus on the income differences that exist without considering the distribution of wealth. The model is focusing on the burning question of who owns or controls what and underlines the importance of redistribution in terms of, for instance, knowledge and power (ibid:143-148). Raworth (ibid) asserts that these assets cannot be controlled as they are today and explains how they can be redistributed through setting up policies and regulations. More specifically, the author discusses how this could be done through e.g. creating alternative currencies, or increasing taxation on unsustainable resource use. Raworth (ibid:139) argues that we need to actively take decisions and make efforts that will reduce these global inequalities that the current neoliberal agenda has created in the first place. Although she urges the state to take more action, she also highlights bottom-up approaches as she believes that they could sometimes be more effective than relying on governments or international corporations. To conclude, Raworth's doughnut advocates for a circular economy accompanied by a fair distribution of income and wealth that prioritizes social and ecological issues.

2.3 Critique of the DE-framework

This project seeks to engage with doughnut economics and bring new critical perspectives into the discussion of sustainable development. Hence, it becomes relevant to present the criticism of the framework and summarize it in a separate section. Doughnut economics has received criticism from different scholars throughout the years where some are critical of the content, while others are more skeptical of the implementation. Accordingly, I have divided the criticism into two different subsections, implementation, and content.

Implementation

Some scholars have questioned whether it is possible to implement the framework and its principles on various scales as the author suggests. Horwitz (2017) is skeptical of Raworth's ideas and criticizes the model for being insufficient in providing answers to questions of implementation. He argues that the doughnut fails to account for the political will required to put the model into practice and questions whether or not an implementation would be realistic. Likewise, Schokkaert (2019) claims that Raworth does not offer an adequate explanation for who will stand behind her principles. Although DE points out several shortcomings within the current economic system and provides a well-argued alternative way of thinking, the critics maintain that it leaves many questions unanswered. Schokkaert (*ibid*) argues that it does not describe how to deal with the social-ecological trade-offs or how the commons should be regulated to encourage innovation (*ibid*). Similarly, Krauss (2018) asserts that Raworth's book lacks real-life examples of how these principles could be used and implemented within different contexts, rather than only seeing them from a global perspective.

Milanovic (2018) continues to discuss the book, where he claims that Raworth assumes that everyone has the same interest in, for instance, fighting climate change. Instead, he asserts that it is important to acknowledge the complexity of different interests and how humans are selfish and money-driven. There is a difference in how they view humanity which affects to what extent they believe that these ideas could be operationalized. I will return to this discussion in the next subsection as it relates to one of the model's main principles.

Content

In this subsection, I will dive deeper into the scholarly debate on doughnut economics where most of the criticism is centered around the model's main principles and assumptions.

Some scholars (Milanovic, 2018; Horwitz, 2017) hold the view that DE ignores the

importance of economic growth in bringing about change. They disagree with Raworth's call for growth agnosticism and give several examples of how growth has played a crucial role in improving the standard of living of the world's population. They (ibid) claim that the DE is too abstract in its discussion of growth where they question under what circumstances growth should be regarded as acceptable. While DE suggests that low-income countries should be expected to grow, it does not, according to Milanovic (ibid), explain how it could be achieved. An interesting discussion that I will dive into in my analysis of the DE framework (*see section 6*).

Another theme running through the scholarly reviews of DE is the underlying assumptions of human behavior. Many writers (Schokkaert, 2018; Milanovic 2018; Horwitz 2017) have challenged Raworth's understanding of humans as becoming less money-oriented and more cooperative. Some scholars (ibid) disagree and argue that DE provides an inaccurate description of human nature that overlooks the fact that people are still acquisitive and driven by self-interest to a large extent. Although a more nuanced view of human nature might be welcomed, critics of DE underline the necessity of considering self-interest in the analysis (ibid).

This section has attempted to provide a brief summary of the criticism of the framework, mostly in relation to the doughnut model's core book. It was a challenge finding adequate material for this section as there is a lack of academic papers that critically engage with Raworth's ideas.

2.4 Critical theory

So far this thesis has focused on doughnut economics. The following sections will present critical theories that could provide alternative ways of understanding the current crises and fill some of the gaps identified by the critics of DE.

2.4.1 Degrowth and socialist modernism

As was previously mentioned in section 2.3, some critics argue that the DE fails to acknowledge the underlying structures that sustain the current economic system. In an attempt to provide an alternative critical understanding of growth under contemporary capitalism, I will incorporate the argument of socialist modernism and degrowth.

. There is a tremendous amount of degrowth literature and it involves both criticisms of capitalism and growth and different types of suggestions of how a post-capitalist society could be organized. It takes a strong stance against the current economic system and proposes

new forms of organizing our way of living that moves away from the capitalist structures that affect our daily lives (D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2014). Proponents of degrowth argue that we need to find alternatives to the profit-driven capitalist market as they highlight how there are certain limits to growth. Therefore, implementing degrowth principles would create a completely contrasting society with a broad range of new initiatives including, urban gardening and eco-friendly communities. In contrast to profit-driven projects, these small-scale projects are aimed at improving social and ecological well-being (ibid). For instance, urban gardening could help combat climate change while improving the quality of life within cities. The creation of urban gardens also contributes to improving the accessibility of local resources and strengthens urban communities through cooperation (Anguelovski, 2014). Robbins (2020:3) interprets degrowth as a movement that tackles the addiction to growth by reducing both production and consumption to a large extent. It is mostly concerned with setting up small-scale alternatives, in contrast, to favoring such large-scale technological production that modernists would prefer (ibid). The degrowth advocates highlight the ecological limits that may be surpassed by solely focusing on economic growth. This approach also implies a decrease in economic growth since this new way of living and organization of society will affect the whole economy (D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2014:4) Similarly to Raworth's principles, the degrowth literature recognizes the issues with the GDP measure and claims that it is insufficient. New measurements would need to be developed in order to sufficiently evaluate the social and ecological progress (ibid). Apart from criticizing growth, the movement also highlights the issues with commodification. The above examples, abolishing the GDP measure and the creation of smaller projects, are attempts to move away from the capitalist system. Consequently, there is a strong belief that the continuous commodification needs to stop and we need to actively take steps to reduce this phenomenon, by, for example, incorporating the commons to a larger degree. It could be argued that increased commercialization of products and services excludes certain groups and sustains the deeply rooted growthism in today's society (Gómez-Baggethun, 2014).

Let us now consider the idea of socialist modernism that stems out of a debate within political ecology between different critical perspectives on growth. First and foremost, Huber (2021a) along with other proponents of socialist modernism acknowledges the ecological crisis and the need for change. It recognizes the tremendous power of technology to bring about change and believes that the industrial production system could be transformed in a more environmentally just way (Robbins, 2020). Huber (2021a; 2021b) claims that we cannot neglect the power of production and technology in creating a robust society that could escape

its use of manpower. While discussing modernity, Huber quotes Marx to illustrate how capital has transformed our energy systems for the better through the use of modern technology (ibid). It could therefore be argued that today's societies are in need of these larger modern technological projects, not only to progress but also to create time for relationships and unpaid work. Modernists advocate for a broad range of different scalable technologies that includes everything from renewable energy to nuclear power that could contribute to a greener world (Robbins, 2020). However, there is much in the previous description of degrowth that is reminiscent of Raworth's main principles and therefore, socialist modernism could be connected to the doughnut model since it provides an additional critical perspective on growth.

Furthermore, Huber (2021a; 2021b) argues that degrowth advocates often fail to address how small-scale initiatives could make a difference on the broader societal level, where he questions the power of these initiatives. Rather than scaling down the whole production, the socialists strongly believe in a transformation of the system that could eliminate the negative ecological impacts with the help of technological improvements. It differs from the conventional degrowth perspectives both in terms of strategy and how it deals with growth. This approach is accompanied by the allowance of economic growth in contrast to the previous perspectives. It underlines the importance of modern infrastructure to enable this economic growth and keep the materialist foundation of the economic system (Robbins, 2020). This could be linked to the next section where I will expand upon the commodification of housing and capitalist urbanization in the 21st century.

2.4.2 Planetary urbanization and the commodification of housing

As I mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the "urban" has expanded outside the boundaries of the city as we are more interconnected than ever before. The concept of planetary urbanization refers to the massive expansion of the urban that affects areas far beyond the classic city, where urbanization takes place on a planetary scale (Kaika & Swyngedouw, 2014). It was first introduced by Lefebvre (2003:1-10) in the early '70s when he predicted that complete urbanization would conquer the world. He highlighted the need for a relational approach and encouraged scholars to include areas outside of the city within the analysis of the urban (ibid).

Having defined what is meant by planetary urbanization, I will now discuss the concept of implosion-explosion that could provide a deeper understanding of the rapid capitalist urbanization in the 21st century. I will use the concept as a tool to highlight the capital-driven processes that have emerged as it could be connected to Raworth's call for a

multi-scalar analysis. The implosion-explosion could be described as a process in which the urban takes over and spreads over a large part of the non-urban landscape. This metaphor provides an explanation for how capitalist urbanization is expanding and creating greater inequalities by dominating new peripheries (Schmid, 2013). There is tremendous usefulness of this term as it could be used within several different contexts where implosion-explosion could be far more than the urban-non-urban. According to Lefevbre (2003), the implosion could be regarded as the concentration of the urban such as a massive population or assets, which through the explosion causes zones to emerge outside of the urban that could support continued capitalist urbanization (ibid). Brenner (2013:17) highlights how the explosion of the urban creates polarization where the creation of new sites outside the city sustains the capitalist expansion by providing the centers with the necessary infrastructure. It also illustrates a process where resources, such as labor or capital are transferred from one place to another where the extension of the urban has political implications as it forces surrounding areas to adapt (ibid). These concepts remind us that we are economically, socially, and even mentally involved in these capitalist processes where the definition of the urban has become far more questionable. The planetary urbanization framework could add an important analytical tool to Raworth's existing toolbox as it fits well within her relational approach.

Having discussed the benefits of looking beyond cities as entities, I would like to discuss the issues of seeing housing as a commodity under contemporary capitalism. This critical approach complements the degrowth perspectives by expanding Raworth's discussions on redistribution. Marcuse (2012:37-40) points out several fundamental issues that have emerged under the current economic system, such as the presence of a profit-seeking mindset in politics. Similarly, Huber (2021b) seems hopeful and believes that there are still possibilities within this economic system. He asserts that there are ways of restructuring the different sectors where these could become free from profit-driven interests and exploitation. Marcuse (2012) decides to expand upon one sector, in particular, namely the housing sector. Housing is one of the most basic needs for all people and the author urges us to stop seeing housing as something that should be commercialized. In today's society, investments in real estate are used as a tool to increase profits over time which the author finds problematic since our main concern should be to tackle the current housing crisis. While investors benefit from this system, others struggle to find somewhere to live and Marcuse (ibid:216) argues that we must have greater public control, where the private sector should be less dominant. However, the author discusses these issues in the context of the US but I would say that the overarching arguments are still relevant to this paper. Our perception of housing must change where we have to make a profound shift and recognize its use value

to a larger degree than before. This indicates that both local and national actors have an important role in regulating the housing market in several ways that could solve the current crisis. There are several alternatives to the capitalist form of housing that could be explored further and initiatives need to be taken to limit the profits within the sector (ibid). As previously mentioned, housing has an immense value and should be viewed as something essential in our lives that cannot be deprioritized in urban agendas (Lefebvre, 2003).

3. Previous research and implementations

As was mentioned in the introduction of this paper, there has been an increased interest in the framework during the last few years within academia and policymaking. Cities and regions around the world have applied the DE framework to their local context and created place-specific indicators to measure progress. However, this section will primarily focus on the usage of doughnut economics in Copenhagen and Amsterdam. My literature search showed that these two cities are among those that have gone the furthest in terms of implementation.

Before diving into describing how these cities have implemented the model, I would like to present some of the previous research within the area. In 2020 (O’Neil & Stratford), researchers at Leeds University examined how the DE framework could be used on a national scale in the recovery of Covid-19. Taking inspiration from Raworth, this research focused on combating growth addiction in different ways. The paper suggests that governments need to introduce policies that could help us get into the doughnut by, for instance, improving the working conditions and supporting tenants to a larger extent (ibid:3). Furthermore, other researchers (Capmourteres et al. 2019) have tried to advance the doughnut model by creating a new model that addresses the interlinkages between the outer and inner circle (*see figure 1 for the specific dimensions*). This paper concludes that these interconnections could differ in a wide range of different complex relationships and therefore, cannot simply be treated in policies as standalone aspects (ibid). Recently, another research project was carried out where researchers tried to compare Raworth’s model with insights from foundational economy (FE). Despite the differences, the research found that the two models were compatible to a certain extent and DE would benefit from the policy recommendations provided by FE (Wahlund & Hansen, 2022).

3.1 Amsterdam

Turning now to two European cities that have recently decided to explore the framework at an urban level. Starting with the Dutch case, I will present how these cities have adapted the framework to their local context.

The city that most people associate with the doughnut model is probably Amsterdam. Amsterdam was the first city to show interest in Raworth’s ideas and officially declared the use of her model at the start of 2020. Raworth along with other actors, such as C40, has worked closely with city officials in the development of the capital’s doughnut. Together they created a so-called, “City Snapshot” which shows how Amsterdam is currently performing

within the different areas of the doughnut (Boffey, 2020). The city is using the DE framework as a starting point for the circular strategy where the customized doughnut is used as a tool to measure progress. They created a separate report where they described the indicators in detail for each area. Raworth and her colleagues encourage Amsterdam to reconsider how the city contributes to a better world. To fully undertake this approach, the city needs to undertake the principles that permeate the whole doughnut mindset (*see section 2.2*). Using a multi-scalar perspective and four different lenses ranging from the global to the local level, Amsterdam identifies several overshoots and shortfalls within areas, such as climate change and housing that need to be improved. The municipality tries to identify indicators for all of the areas but there is still a lack of data within certain areas and more work is needed to find additional indicators (The City of Amsterdam, 2020a).

Apart from the creation of the doughnut, the municipality has released other reports that build upon Raworth's ideas and describe how the city will become more sustainable. The municipality has decided to focus on different areas of interest including waste and consumption patterns, where there seems to be room for improvement. Within this strategic document, there are also policy suggestions such as increasing responsibilities for producers to encourage recycling (The City of Amsterdam, 2020b). Moreover, the city is currently suffering from a housing crisis, where there is a challenge in securing the need for housing as the material needed to build new accommodation causes environmental harm. In addition, the deputy mayor of the city pointed out that the private investments affect the current prices and noted that Raworth's framework may not be able to address all issues to a sufficient extent (Boffey, 2020).

3.2 Copenhagen

The Copenhagen City Council decided in June 2020 to follow Amsterdam's initiative to investigate how the city could make use of Raworth's ideas. Since then, the municipality has outlined a plan of action to describe the necessary steps they intend to take. However, the municipality seems to still be in an early stage of implementation as there is an ongoing political process for each of the steps (Københavns Kommune, 2021). The municipality is inspired by the Dutch capital in implementing the DE as a tool to guide the development of the city. Copenhagen perceives the project as a first of its kind since the framework has not been used before to govern a city. In the action plan, the municipality describes the model and tries to connect Raworth's social dimensions with the goals of the UN. It could be operationalized by creating certain sub-goals where they intend to use existing national and local statistics. Furthermore, they discuss the planetary boundaries and the difficulties with

implementing these in the local context of Copenhagen since there is a lack of previous implementations at the city level. Taking inspiration from Amsterdam, the city would like to define limits and find indicators that could help them to stay within the DE framework's threshold. However, the municipality also acknowledges that they have to consider the availability of data and adjust the indicators accordingly. The plan addresses the importance of involving the global value chain in the analysis, where consumption patterns in Copenhagen could cause environmental harm outside the borderline of the city. The city is still in the early process of conducting such an analysis and there is more work to be done shortly (ibid).

Finally, the municipality outlines several key steps in moving towards implementation of the framework, and these steps involve identifying indicators and connecting these to the UN goals, setting new goals, and formulating strategies on how to stay within the defined threshold. As a final step, the city will decide in what way the model should be implemented where they will have to investigate the practicalities further (ibid).

4. Research design and methodology

This chapter will describe the research design and the methodology of my thesis. I have decided to construct a qualitative design for my research that corresponds with the aim of this research; to move towards a critical understanding of the doughnut framework. The use of a qualitative research design allows me to understand and dive deeper into selected aspects of the framework rather than analyzing the framework as a whole (Lichtman, 2014: 42). I have decided to structure my thesis as a case study where I will investigate how a Swedish municipality engages with the framework and view the issue of growth. To answer the research questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with city officials along with desk studies that included a content analysis of Raworth's core book (2017). The chosen methodology and research design will be discussed more in-depth in the following subsections.

4.1 Case study

As described in section 1.2, I will attempt to move from theoretical abstractions to an empirical level and I will operationalize it by using the case study approach. Clark (et. al 2021) emphasize the importance of describing the unit of analysis and discussing the case selection in-depth. I have chosen to investigate the urban development of Tomelilla which is located in southeastern Sweden (*see figure 4*) and it was chosen based on the fact that it is the first Swedish city to explore the implementation of DE. The authors (ibid:60) discuss different types of case studies, where I would categorize the Tomelilla case as an 'exemplifying' case. I would argue that it corresponds well with the aim of my research and could provide valuable insights into the questions of growth and urbanization, even if the case is not representative of all cities that seek to engage with DE. By recognizing a gap in the literature, this research aims to explore the usage of DE within a Swedish context, therefore Tomelilla was the only viable option. Thus, by this approach, I will be able to shed light on details in my research and pursue in-depth explanations (Denscombe, 2010:53-56). Choosing a single case study allows me to delve into the municipality's view on urban development and provide a deeper understanding of the situation in Tomelilla, which would be more difficult with the use of multiple case studies (Ibid). Arguably the Tomelilla case will add perspectives to my theoretical analysis as the chosen issues are complex and should not be viewed in isolation from abstract theory. Flyvbjerg (2011:310-315) highlights the benefits of case studies, where he notes that the researcher could obtain a deeper understanding by, for example, linking different ideas. For this reason, I believe that the case study approach is well connected to my philosophy of science (*see section 1.2*). It would be interesting to analyze

multiple cases and compare, for example, the implementation of DE in Tomelilla with the implementation in a neighboring region, such as Copenhagen. However, the limited time frame did not allow me to dive deeper into multiple cases or conduct any sort of comparative analysis.

It is also necessary to point out the limitations and disadvantages of using this approach. There is an ongoing debate within academia regarding the generalizability of qualitative case studies (ibid), however, the case of Tomelilla was not randomly selected and it is important to pay attention to the place-specific conditions, such as resources, population size, and location. I am aware that Tomelilla is a small region with limited resources compared to other Swedish cities or cities that have previously explored the DE framework in Europe. Although Tomelilla is not a typical European city, the case will still give insights into how a smaller municipality perceives the framework and the issues of growth and urbanization. According to Denscombe (2010:60-62), Tomelillas as a case could still be regarded as representative of cities with similar conditions, for example, other smaller Scandinavian municipalities that seek to engage with the framework. Moreover, it is very time-consuming to familiarize yourself with a case as there are analytical difficulties to move from theory to practice. I tried to overcome this challenge by allocating a great amount of time to read and review existing literature as it helped to improve the overall research design and theoretical framework.

4.2 Semi-structured interviews

My second research question was answered by using semi-structured interviews with officials at Tomelilla municipality. These interviews could be used as a powerful tool in my research as it gives me insights into the municipality's view on the DE framework that would otherwise be difficult to obtain (ibid). I chose to use semi-structured interviews as opposed to unstructured or structured interviews, mainly due to the flexibility of semi-structured interviews as it allows the city officials to freely express their opinions and ideas. It is far more difficult to acquire this kind of information with the use of a survey or a questionnaire, where the interviewees cannot expand upon their ideas which is necessary when dealing with the complex issue of growth (ibid). The municipality has not produced any material yet on doughnut economics and therefore, it would be difficult to gather this information by using other methods. By using interviews, I will also be able to raise follow-up questions and spontaneous questions that fall outside of my prepared interview guide that could be of interest. However, it is also important to be aware of the interview effect and how it affects what answers I will receive (ibid:178). The interviews were conducted via Zoom, which is an

application for voice calls and video conferencing. I believe that the online environment could have an impact on my research, however, Archibald (et. al 2022) identify several benefits of using Zoom for qualitative studies, including convenience and engagement with the researcher. There are several advantages to using this method but the interviews could be affected by different factors, such as my performance and role as a master's student at the university. I tried to minimize this effect by presenting myself and my research in a relaxed manner. In conclusion, the benefits of using Zoom as an interviewing tool during the pandemic, such as convenience, outweigh the potential drawbacks that may include any technical difficulties in setting up the interviews.

Early in the research process, I reached out to the municipality and informed them about the project and its overall purpose. The municipality gave me access to relevant planning documents and statistics that saved me a great amount of time. With the assistance of the municipality, I got access to the contact information of relevant interviewees that worked within the municipality. Since I am a native speaker, I had the chance to conduct the interviews in Swedish, which made this project possible. In addition, I also decided to analyze the interviews in Swedish, which I then translated into English. It was a process of going back and forth between languages to ensure nothing was lost in translation. It was a somewhat difficult process where some of Raworth's key terms and concepts were difficult to translate properly in Swedish without losing the initial meaning, such as "thriving".

Furthermore, all of the interviewees had been introduced to the model to varying degrees, and some had participated in workshops beforehand. After getting all of the information, I decided to conduct four semi-structured interviews that lasted around 25-35 minutes each. Since the purpose of the research was to analyze how the municipality views growth and urbanization, I was interested in talking to a wide range of different city officials. Due to ethical reasons, I could not mention their exact position within the organization or describe the interviewees in more detail, and therefore, I have decided to use the broad category "planner" for all of the interviewees (*see appendix 3*).

As previously mentioned, I created an interview guide based on my theoretical framework that guided all of the interviews (*see appendix 2*). The interview questions were designed based on how the city officials perceive growth, urbanization, and Raworth's model. I took into consideration that Tomelilla is in an early phase of implementation and most of the interviewees were still in the process of getting to know the model. Therefore, the interviewees had limited knowledge of how DE deals with growth and urban development. Thus, the questions were formulated in such a way that the city officials could understand them without being familiar with Raworth's terminology or framework in detail. I decided to

create a separate table (*see table 4.1*) to illustrate how I operationalized my theoretical framework and translated the theoretical concepts into interview questions. My goal was to analyze how the city officials engage with the model and reflect upon the urgent issues of growth and urbanization.

Table 4.1. Operationalization of theory translated from Swedish. See the full interview guide in the appendix (3).

Themes from the theoretical framework	Examples of interview questions
<i>Growth</i> (relates to concepts such as “growth-agnostic”, economic growth, “thriving”, and capitalism)	What is growth for you? What is a “thriving” economy for you? What role does economic growth play in urban development?
<i>The doughnut model</i> (eg. establishing a new set of goals beyond economic growth and moving towards a sustainable transition)	According to the doughnut model, we should change our mindset where GDP growth should not be the goal, how do you view this? How do you perceive the doughnut model and how has your way of working changed?
<i>Planetary Urbanization</i> (relates to the concept of “implosion-explosion” and capitalist urbanization)	An increasing number of smaller communities and urban areas are affected by the global urbanization process. Does this affect Tomelilla’s development, and if so, in what way? What are the opportunities/challenges with increased urbanization?
<i>Housing</i> (relates to the ownership of land, and the commodification of housing)	What is the role of housing in Tomelilla’s development? And what can the municipality do to solve the housing crisis/shortage?

I asked for permission to record the interviews and all of the interviewees were anonymized by using randomly selected letters (eg. informant A and informant B). The interviewee's information, such as names and e-mail addresses, was treated confidentially.

Clark (et al. 2020:441) describes several benefits of transcribing interviews, including increased reliability. Mainly in relation to research projects that examine languages and discourses (ibid). Due to the limited time frame, I decided to not transcribe the interview recordings in full since I was mainly interested in the content of the interviews rather than the discourses. I had to choose between either conducting more interviews that would help me gather more material for the analysis or fewer interviews that I could manage to transcribe in full.

4.3 Content analysis

I completed a qualitative content analysis of Raworth's book (2017) and the semi-structured interviews to fully understand how they deal with the questions of growth and urbanization. According to Boyle & Schmierbach (2015), content analysis involves analyzing texts or any other artifacts to gather valuable insights that could enhance the study. It differs from other types of analysis because the researcher needs to systematically review the material to decrease the amount of data (Schreier, 2014). This method is beneficial to my research because it allows me to focus on certain aspects of the economic model, rather than analyzing the framework as a whole. I have limited my research by focusing mainly on growth and urbanization, therefore, I did not analyze all of the aspects of doughnut economics. I chose to focus on these aspects because they are recurring themes in the core book and it allows me to critically engage with the framework within the time frame of this thesis. It was a challenge to decide upon a specific focus since Raworth does not address any of her social or ecological parameters in detail, thus growth and urbanization were some of the most researchable issues within the book. Furthermore, the content analysis of the DE framework resulted in a structured piece of text together with a quantitative analysis of the key terms within Raworth's book (*see table 6.1*). The quantitative analysis was conducted to support my critical engagement with doughnut economics by listing the frequency of key terms.

Schreier (ibid:175-180) discusses the coding frame where the categories or codes are usually derived both from the data and the theoretical framework. I decided to follow this suggestion for the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and created four main categories with several subcategories. As I was handling a large amount of data, I decided to keep the categories to a minimum. The following four main categories were derived from the theory section: *the doughnut model, growth, housing, and urbanization (see table 4.1)*. According to Schreier (ibid), there are several steps that I need to take as a researcher, including defining and structuring my codes to facilitate the process. For this reason, I created a so-called coding handbook where I structured all the categories, defined them, and described how they were coded, which also increased the reliability of my research (*see appendix 1*). As I went through the material from the semi-structured interviews, I revised the existing coding handbook with new sub-categories derived from the transcriptions of the interviews. In order to structure the coding, I used different colors for the main categories and during the process, a total of ten sub-categories emerged which could be found in the appendix (1). This step of going back and forth between the data of the interviews and the coding handbook was repeated throughout the research process to ensure that all relevant information was included.

4.4 Positionality

I would like to conclude this chapter by reflecting upon my positionality as a researcher. I have already touched upon my ontological and epistemological approach that impacts the overall research structure. However, I would like to dedicate this subsection to discussing my identity and beliefs that may impact my analysis.

Raworth's model is favoring a sustainable transition and I believe that my age is a factor that influences my optimistic attitude towards such a transition. Mainly because I think there is a great chance that I will experience this shift, which motivates me to fight for a better future. Moreover, I am conducting this research within a Western context as a Swedish citizen, which might reflect how I perceive the global dynamics of growth. Although Sweden is one of the leading countries in sustainable development, I believe that there is room for improvement where politicians need to take greater responsibility. To be clear, I share most of Raworth's concerns and I think the capitalist structures are highly problematic. However, I do not believe that doughnut economics is necessarily the only explanation or solution to the emerging crises. I rather think it is crucial to examine the usefulness of this approach and discuss the framework based on insights from other critical theories. Doing so will contribute to a better understanding of the complex issues of growth and urbanization which could open up avenues for further research that critically engages with the model.

My academic background affects the focus of the thesis in several ways. I have a bachelor's degree in urban- and regional planning and I am well aware of the difficulties of balancing economic development and socio-ecological issues. Therefore, I believe that there is a need to discuss how we can provide urban actors with the necessary analytical tools that can facilitate transitions and the creation of sustainable urban strategies.

5. Situation of case

Tomelilla is located in southeastern Sweden (*see figure 5.1*) and has approximately 13 600 inhabitants, of which around 6 000 live in the city of Tomelilla. There are several villages within the municipality where more than a third of the population lives. It is a large-sized municipality and has a land area of 396 km² (Statistics Sweden, n.d.a), where more than half of the land is considered to be agricultural land. Tomelilla is therefore considerably different from other municipalities that have previously explored the framework, such as Amsterdam (Tomelilla kommun, 2022a). According to Statistics Sweden (n.d.b), the GRDP (Gross Regional Domestic Product) has increased during the last couple of years apart from a slight decrease in 2015. Moreover, there has been a population growth since 2014 which is one of the municipality's goals as stated in their comprehensive plan. Apart from achieving a steady population growth, the municipality would like to develop the infrastructure and housing areas further (Tomelilla kommun, 2018). There is currently a housing shortage in the region where there is a need for an expansion to meet the current demand (Boverket, 2021).

At the end of 2021, RISE (Research Institute of Sweden) published a pre-study that through various workshops with city officials explored how the DE framework could be implemented within the municipality. It provides a short literature review of previous implementations of the model and this paper concludes that the doughnut could act as a point of reference that could guide the municipality in its sustainable development work. In addition to this, the DE framework could convey the connection between the global and local targets comprehensively (Tekie et al. 2021). Compared to this pre-study, my thesis takes a more theoretical starting point in focusing on growth and urbanization by engaging with critical theories. This pre-study could be seen as a first step in the municipality's implementation of the model (Tomelilla kommun, 2022b).

Tomellia's location in relation to surrounding areas

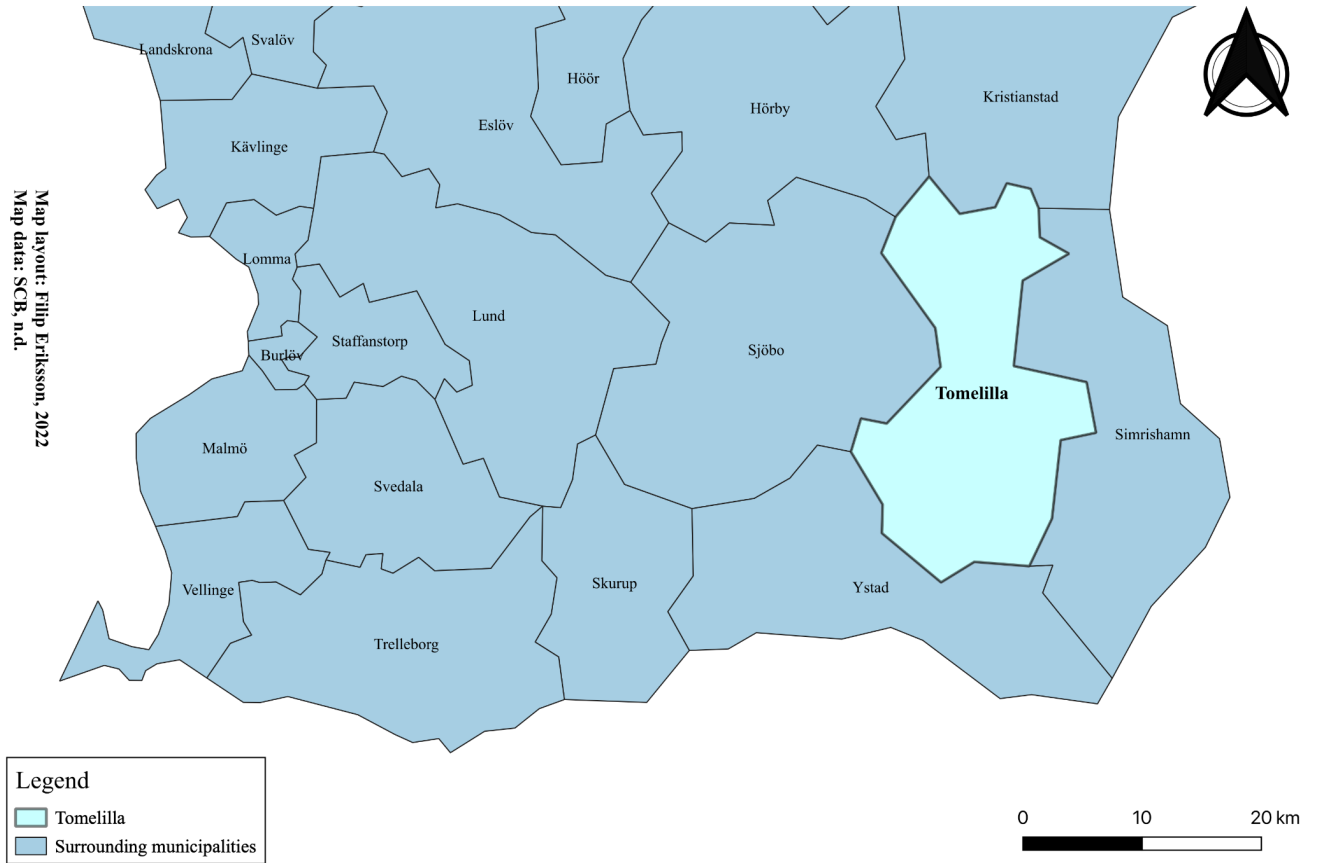


Figure 5.1 Tomellillas location in relation to surrounding areas (Eriksson, Filip. 2022).

6. Analysis and discussion

In this section, I will present the analysis that is structured based on my research questions and the four guiding themes that were derived from the theory section: growth, the doughnut model, urbanization, and housing (*see section 4.3*). The first part of the analysis will critically engage with the DE framework by giving an account of how it deals with the issues of growth, urbanization, and housing. Subsequently, I will move on to analyze how the municipality perceives doughnut economics and these urgent issues. My goal is to connect the theoretical analysis with the empirical case, where I will present the results from the interviews throughout the second part of the analysis.

6.1 Doughnut economics and growth

Ever since I started studying human geography at the university, I have experienced heated debates about economic growth. Most of the time, my classmates and professors share the same ambitions and visions but disagree regarding the paths to sustainable development and how we should tackle the issue of growth. I believe that this kind of distinction also represents the differences between the perspectives that will be presented in the analysis. However, before I dive into the theoretical analysis, I will provide an overview of the key terms within Raworth's book (*see table 6.1*).

As table 6.1 shows, the terms “growth”, “economic growth”, “GDP growth”, and “thrive” occur frequently throughout the book. Raworth (2017) is highly concerned with the issue of growth and a large part of the book revolves around our relationship to this phenomenon. The book is divided into seven chapters and two of the chapters are directly related to the issue of growth, and I would argue that even the visualization of the doughnut itself (*see figure 2.2*) is an attempt to move away from the growthism that is dominant in today's political landscape. The model provides a visual framework that has not only the potential to change the way we approach economics but could also act as a mental tool for envisioning an alternative sustainable development path. The eye-catching doughnut should help decision-makers change their thought process, however, the economic angle is completely left out of her visual framework.

Although Raworth's ideas may not be revolutionary, she provides a new set of visuals (*see figures 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4*) that could facilitate how we communicate and deal with the complexity of sustainable development. Occasionally, Raworth (*ibid*) uses the word “thrive” (*see table 6.1*) as a way to describe how an economy should develop without sacrificing any of her identified parameters, such as causing food shortages or damaging the ecosystems.

Table 6.1 Frequency of key terms in Raworth’s book² (2017) (derived from the theoretical framework). Sorted below by frequency.

Key term	Frequency in total	In-text	Reference list/index
Growth	396	308	88
Economic growth	86	48	38
GDP growth	75	71	4
Thrive	38	38	0
Thriving	28	27	1
Capitalism	22	7	15
Housing	17	13	4
Low-growth	5	3	2
No-growth	2	2	0
Population growth	2	2	0
Degrowth	2	1	1
Urbanisation	2	1	1

The author strives to change the order of priorities within contemporary economics, where the primary task is to fulfill social goals while considering the ecological limits (*see figure 2.2*). Furthermore, Raworth (2017:205-207) claims that poor countries will benefit from increasing their GDP to improve the quality of life while wealthier countries should commit to a more conservative approach. This suggests that it is necessary to consider the specific circumstances in each country or region, where the economy will sometimes grow and sometimes not. While cities and countries undertake the mission of adopting Raworth’s principles, GDP can temporarily increase during this sustainable transformation. Although we should deprioritize economic goals, the author does not give any definitive answers to the growth question since “thriving” could have different meanings in different contexts (*ibid*). Additionally, she does not completely dismiss the idea of green growth which I will return to in the next paragraph. Raworth (*ibid*:216) asserts that “we simply cannot be certain of how GDP will respond and evolve...” once we have adopted this new mindset and moved inside of her doughnut. It leaves the door open for economic growth as long as we fully commit to her principles and consider the environmental perspective. Therefore, it would not be a

² The e-book version of the book was used throughout the analysis. For full reference, see the reference list.

concern if a Western economy were to grow as long as it adopted this new way of thinking. Even if a heavy increase in GDP during a longer period might be undesirable, growth could be compatible with a doughnut economy. Her main point is that we have to stop relying on it and overcome the mental challenge of seeing it as a necessity at all costs. However, I believe that we also have to acknowledge the regional disparities within these high-income countries where some cities need to grow more than others to meet the needs of their citizens. This polarization is further exacerbated by the capitalist urbanization processes that take place across scales all over the world and often at the expense of smaller areas. The critical urban theories have much to add to this discussion, which I will return to later in this paper.

Raworth takes on the difficult task of providing a recipe for a doughnut that will work worldwide and, logically, GDP growth will differ between different parts of the world. Some may argue that her model is flexible as it allows governments to contextualize her ideas of a thriving economy locally but there might just be too much flexibility within this approach. Although Raworth is most likely referring to green growth in her discussion of potential growth, her ambiguity could lead to unnecessary misconceptions among decision-makers. It would be interesting to analyze the progression of economic growth in Amsterdam and Copenhagen but it would be too early to draw any conclusions as they are still in relatively early stages of implementation. Furthermore, Raworth (2017) recognizes the complex relationship between growth and the planetary boundaries in her discussion of decoupling and renewable energy. The author attempts to show that western countries need to achieve absolute decoupling of GDP from their use of resources to cope with the climate crisis and stay within the doughnut's threshold. In other words, she claims that we would need to dematerialize the economy where the GDP increases while the use of resources falls. Raworth (ibid:209) distinguishes between absolute and, what she refers to as, "sufficient absolute decoupling" as she claims that there is a need for an even stricter set of policies to combat climate change. She acknowledges that several high-income countries have failed to achieve the former and therefore, these countries need to pick up the pace. The author seems quite skeptical of green growth in general and it is undoubtedly a difficult task for those in power to reach this level of decoupling that she suggests (ibid). Ultimately, the DE framework strives to satisfy both sides of the growth debate by claiming that it does not matter as long as policymakers pay attention to her ecological ceiling (*see figure 2.2*). Taking this approach may increase the model's popularity within the political landscape and therefore, affect how it will be received by policymakers across the world.

6.2 Growth, thrive, or degrowth?

Turning now to critical theory in an attempt to move towards a critical understanding of the framework and analyze how the framework deals with growth. In this subsection, I will focus on engaging with the doughnut model by involving the perspectives of socialist modernism and degrowth.

Raworth is not worried about an increase in GDP as long as decision-makers do not step outside of her doughnut. As table 6.1 shows, she barely mentions “degrowth”, “low-growth”, or “no-growth” in the model’s core book, and during several of her webinars, she explicitly stated that she wants to avoid the term degrowth. However, there are many similarities between the conventional degrowth perspective and Raworth’s doughnut. I would argue that her concept of thriving in the wealthier part of the world implies either a restraint of economic growth or committing to a green growth strategy that would have to reach, in many cases, unrealistic levels of decoupling. Thus, the DE-framework is leaning more toward degrowth than green growth, which becomes evident in one of her recent speeches where she calls the belief in endless green growth for a “flight of fancy” (Raworth, 2018). If we were to follow Raworth’s arguments, there are not many alternatives other than dematerialization and reduction of GDP in these countries. Therefore, western countries, such as Sweden or Norway, would most likely have to commit to a degrowth strategy or similar to avoid environmental destruction. This approach towards growth is therefore not revolutionary by any means since the degrowth and green growth literature has been around for years. In fact, her critique of the GDP measure and her advocacy of agnosticism are reminiscent of Van den Bergh’s (2011) account for “a-growth” except that Raworth is more degrowth friendly. Although this might be the case, she highlights the issue of economic growth in a very appealing fashion that could hopefully encourage more actors to become more sustainable.

Moving on, I would like to discuss the argument for socialist modernism and I would like to return to the previously mentioned critique, Milanovic (2018) raised an interesting point regarding the global dynamics of growth. Since high-income countries have not succeeded in achieving decoupling at the scale needed, it would be logical to assume that the growth needed in the lower-income countries will be far from “green” enough (ibid). On the other hand, if richer countries such as Germany, Denmark, or the UK, would take a step back and eliminate their growth addiction, it might be enough to enable this growth globally. I would argue that it would be difficult to implement such policies and convince policymakers of this strategy, even if the doughnut’s visuals could make it somewhat more appealing. Referring back to the theoretical framework (*see section 2.4.1*), socialist modernism claims that economic growth could be a part of a post-capitalist society, where we have to address

the importance of technology at scale in this sustainable transition (Robbins, 2020). If this transformation would become reality, we could achieve Raworth's proposed decoupling that is needed even in the poorest countries. But the question remains if the socialist vision could be translated into practice and have an impact within the near future as it requires a joint commitment and reduced profits for the major players in the global capitalist market. However, I would argue that Raworth's analysis needs to consider the politics behind this sustainable transition, and my content analysis reveals that the model barely mentions "capitalism" in the core book (*see table 6.1*). On the other hand, the socialists do a great job of acknowledging these underlying issues of capitalism that unjustly prioritize people over profits, which affects how the production system is currently structured (Huber, 2020a). The doughnut may treat our growth addiction and help us overcome difficult neoliberal lock-ins but would it be enough? Radically changing the system and challenging the capitalist mode of production may also seem unrealistic but could be inevitable in the long run. As the socialists assert, the issue is not the production in itself, it is rather how it is under control by profit-driven capitalism (*ibid*). The profit-seeking investors are not putting human-well being at the heart of their investments and it could be argued that doughnut economics needs to address commodification and greediness to a larger extent. It may not be enough to only focus on our relationship to growth without engaging with the underlying capitalist structures that feed our growth obsession. Escaping growthism is a step in the right direction but there are also other capitalist structures that both degrowth and socialist modernism address, such as the issue of commodification and the need to restructure the whole capitalist industrial system. The author's core book provides the reader with interesting suggestions on how we could attract green investments, for instance, by initiating a new currency that would include a fee for holding assets, which targets capital accumulation (Raworth, 2017:220-222). However, creating the right conditions for these investments requires strong political commitments and in many cases, political changes. The doughnut model may benefit from incorporating a political analysis of the capitalist structures that inhibits the doughnut transition on a global scale. On the other hand, if the socialist vision is to become a reality, enormous technological development is required at a rapid pace, as scientists claim that the coming years will be crucial in solving the climate crisis (IPCC, 2022). Although Raworth (2017:52,183) acknowledges the importance of renewables and mentions various projects that have elements of modern technology, she does not seem to be in an equally strong belief that such a shift would be possible. It is still uncertain whether or not we could achieve these technological changes to unlock a growth agenda that could be environmentally justifiable.

Table 6.1 shows that the term "population growth" is mentioned two times throughout

the framework's core book. The DE framework claims that we need to create a fairer distribution of wealth but will this strategy be sufficient given that the world population is growing rapidly or do we need even more economic resources in the future? The socialist vision requires a radical transformation of the whole production system accompanied by technological development and therefore, it can be argued that a degrowth strategy might be the most feasible option in the short term but convincing enough leaders around the world to this commitment would not be an easy task. It may be the case that we cannot find one strategy or model that fits well on every single scale. Therefore, finding strategies that work on different scales and pursuing these simultaneously, to achieve the changes needed to save our planet from environmental disasters and social deprivation, might be the best option at the moment.

6.3 The urban scale

As my quantitative analysis shows, the term "urbanisation" is barely touched upon in the author's book (*see table 6.1*). However, she does not leave out the urban scale completely from the core book since she discusses how the city plays an important role in a sustainable future. Raworth (2017:51-55) recognizes the challenges and opportunities with increased urbanization and she argues that the massive urbanization opens up opportunities for sustainable transitions where the author underlines the importance of using eco-friendly technologies. The author (*ibid*:181-183) acknowledges how cities need to tackle this challenge by embracing her new principles and gives several examples of circular projects that also give back to the environment. She (*ibid*:183) believes there are possibilities with this regenerative design and concludes that this approach needs to be accompanied by an economy that stimulates environmentally-friendly investments in different ways. DE does not provide an extensive analysis of the urban and it might be difficult to draw any conclusions based on the core book. However, it is important to acknowledge that the urban is much more than purely the city in classic terms. Raworth's understanding of the urban could be regarded as questionable and it seems that the author treats the urban and city as interchangeable concepts in her analysis. The doughnut model's multiscale analysis of socio-ecological issues may benefit from treating the urban as a far more complex phenomenon (Lefebvre, 2003). Referring back to the theoretical framework (*see section 2.4.2*), the massive urbanization is taking place on a global scale where the urban can no longer be isolated from the city with strictly defined boundaries (Kaika & Swyngedouw, 2014). Undoubtedly, cities should lead the way in these sustainable transitions and therefore, the local scale becomes increasingly important. Raworth (*ibid*:51-52) makes several great points about how

city-living will affect our ability to cope with the current ecological crisis and claims that our consumption patterns and expectations will play a crucial role in solving the current crises. However, the burning issue of growth is also an issue of the urban because the capitalist urbanization processes have an impact on the consumption behaviors and expectations that Raworth is referring to in her discussion. I would argue that the expansion of the urban has further exacerbated our growth addiction and the expectations within these non-urban areas to a larger degree. Raworth's analysis could possibly be strengthened by acknowledging that the capitalist urban processes, including infrastructure, habits, consumption patterns, and modes of production, have tremendously expanded and forced other areas to adapt accordingly (Brenner, 2013). The concept of implosion-explosion could therefore be linked to the DE framework by addressing the issues of capitalist urbanization that pushes us out of Raworth's green space. Arguably, there are much more challenges with urbanization than lifestyles, urban drift, and technology that need to be addressed. As I was discussing in the theory section (*see section 2.4.2*), the concept of implosion could be identified as cities, companies, regimes, or even countries that have a concentration of capitalist power that then expands outwards and takes over more areas around the world. To put it more concretely, we have to analyze the expansion of the urban and interlinkages between the city and its surroundings to a much larger degree. For instance, some places are economically dependent upon urban infrastructure that pollutes the environment and sustains the capitalist processes. If not sufficiently addressed, these political structures might indirectly or directly hinder the realization of Raworth's circular cities. Although Raworth's analysis of urbanization is limited, it may benefit from adopting a broader understanding of the urban and including a geographical dimension.

On the question of housing, Raworth's core book primarily addresses the ownership of land and the construction of eco-friendly buildings. As table 6.1 shows, housing is not one of the most discussed issues in the book, but it is still important to address, especially since Raworth's doughnut has ambitions to be implemented on an urban scale. Raworth (2017:146-149,176,45) discusses how we could address inequalities by focusing on ownership. The author asserts that land as a resource could be treated in many different ways and proposes new forms of taxation and common ownership (*ibid*:146-147). However, I would argue that the fundamental issue is our perception of housing or land as a commodity. We will never be able to solve the housing crisis or create equality worldwide without radically changing our way of thinking about housing (Lefebvre, 2003; Marcuse, 2012). It is definitely encouraging that doughnut economics include housing as one of the social parameters within the framework (*see figure 2.2*) and suggest alternative approaches to

reduce inequalities. Although Raworth discusses land in more general terms, I believe that it could be linked to the housing issue. Similar to the degrowth literature, the doughnut claims that there are enormous benefits of collaborating outside of the capitalist led-market. It may well be the case that there is potential in the urban commons locally but also globally where governments need to take action, which again could be linked to the housing question. We also need to find alternative ownership structures within the housing market that could put people at the center of attention but these measures will not help us overcome the main challenge that lies in commodification (ibid). If the doughnut model is serious about solving the current housing crisis and making a difference, it cannot overlook the fact that we need to change our way of thinking and understanding of housing as an essential part of our lives (Lefebvre, 2003). Raworth's (2017:145-147) proposal of imposing a so-called land-value tax could be a part of the solution but how could this be implemented on a broad enough scale and gain the political support needed? This may be difficult without critically targeting the capitalists' drive for profits and implementing stricter regulations on both national and local levels. Affordable housing that is available for all people needs to top the agenda and getting there requires not only economic incentives but also taking an uncompromising critical stance against the commercialization of real estate. The urgent question of housing could also be connected to several other parameters within Raworth's doughnut, such as health and social equity (*see figure 2.2*). Failing to provide people with adequate housing could lead to not only mental and physical health issues but also decreased civic participation. In other words, we all need a sense of belonging that could act as a starting point for all life's activities, and taking this approach would further strengthen Raworth's framework.

6.4 Doughnut economics in Tomelilla

In this section, I will present how the city officials perceive the framework and the issue of economic growth in urban development. I will start by giving a more general description of how the municipality views the doughnut model and subsequently, I will move on to analyze how they engage with the growth issue. While coding the interviews, subthemes emerged throughout the coding process which is described in the coding handbook (*see appendix 1*).

Overall, there seems to be a positive attitude towards the model and its principles among the city officials. The city officials mainly highlighted the advantages of the model and its potential to guide the municipality's sustainability work. However, the majority of the interviewees pointed out that it was too early to discuss any disadvantages of the model as they have just started to engage with the doughnut. The municipality asserts that the DE framework takes a holistic approach toward sustainability and provides a platform for

interaction between the municipality's different departments. Raworth's new concepts and visual elements were therefore put forward as the key strengths of the model because it facilitates the municipality's interaction with sustainability issues. This was further emphasized by several of my interviewees that claimed it could reach a broader audience due to its ability to convey the complexity of sustainable development comprehensively. In the words of a planner: "...one of the main strengths for me is that it could visualize extremely complex issues in the same image, where it connects both economic, social and ecological perspectives"³. The quote illustrates how the municipality recognizes the model's visuals and another city official highlighted the doughnut's potential in having a pedagogical effect. To put it differently, the model could be used as a tool to increase awareness of important socio-ecological issues and highlight difficult tradeoffs. However, the municipality could also face several challenges with the use of Raworth's new framework. As mentioned earlier (*see section 3.1*), Amsterdam is trying to overcome the challenge of building new homes without causing environmental harm and crossing the outer circle of the doughnut. Similarly, there is a large amount of arable land in Tomelilla and the doughnut might stand in the way of further expansion that would be necessary to meet the housing needs in the area. For instance, one of the planners mentioned the lack of plots within the region and if arable land has to be used for this expansion, it could potentially cause harmful overshoots. There is a possibility that these challenges will remain with the use of the doughnut as the framework does not fully explain how we should handle such difficult socio-ecological trade-offs in a sustainable way.

Although the DE framework provides a platform for interaction, it remains a lot of work to concretize Raworth's concepts and visions to the local context of Tomelilla. As put forward by another planner: "...it is difficult to grasp what it could directly mean in an example when seeing it from a bird's eye view"⁴. Although Raworth's core book does not dive deep into the urban scale, several planners mentioned how the doughnut model has been tested in various municipal projects, including the construction of a new school within Tomelilla. It is crucial that the municipality looks beyond the visuals and into the model's principles to fully understand the economic model. Her visual framework could be used as a mental tool but it completely leaves out the economic perspective. Therefore, it becomes even more important for the municipality to pay attention to the doughnut's approach toward economic growth as will be discussed in the next subsection.

³ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "...för mig har den väldigt stor styrka i att den kan visualisera extremt komplexa frågor i en och samma bild, där man kopplar ihop liksom både ekonomiska, sociala, ekologiska perspektiv".

⁴ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "...just det här att det är svårt att få syn på vad det konkret skulle kunna innebära i ett exempel när man ser det på så pass övergripande fågelperspektiv som jag upplever att det är".

6.4.1 Growth in Tomelilla

Turning now to analyze how the municipality perceives doughnut economics and how they view the issue of growth. During the coding of the interviews, two important subcategories emerged from my analysis in particular: growth in relation to social and ecological sustainability and economic growth (*see appendix 1*).

Tomelilla is in an early phase of implementation but the city officials still seemed somewhat familiar with the doughnut's take on economic growth and its principles. The majority of my interviewees underlined the complexity of economic growth and the necessity to view it in relation to social and ecological issues. Similarly to Raworth, they argued that economic growth should support them in achieving other goals and emphasized how it needs to be linked to other sustainability parameters. In the words of a planner: "...according to me, the economy should be a means to a societal goal, not an end in itself"⁵. In the same way, another planner puts it: "...socially and ecologically first and then you incorporate the economic perspective and then it becomes a tool to achieve other goals"⁶. These quotes resemble Raworth's view on economic growth as secondary to ecological and social sustainability issues. These findings further emphasize the need for critical theory as it is important to open up for alternative discussions and critical reflections locally. Furthermore, the municipality believes that the DE framework will be able to guide them in their approach toward growth where they will strive to get into the doughnut's green zone (*see figure 2.2*). As highlighted by one of the planners: "I hope that the doughnut model could help us define what it is, in my world it is very easy to talk about sustainable growth, it is growth that gets us into the safe space"⁷. In other words, the municipality seems hopeful that the doughnut will be able to bring clarity to the growth issue by guiding them in their sustainability work.

Although the city officials agree with Raworth's agnosticism and believe that GDP growth should not be the ultimate goal, they maintain that economic growth still has a role to play in Tomelilla's development. In the words of a planner: "I think we should continue, of course, and we should have growth but it should also be something that develops over time quite evenly..."⁸. Correspondingly, another planner puts it: "It is actually the most basic

⁵ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "... ekonomin ska vara ett medel för att åstadkomma ett samhällsmål som jag ser det, inte ett självändamål i sig då".

⁶ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "...socialt och ekologiskt först och därefter lägger man det ekonomiska perspektivet på det och då blir det ett verktyg för att uppnå andra mål".

⁷ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "Jag hoppas ju att munkmodellen kan hjälpa oss och definiera där vad det är för nånting, för i min värld är det väldigt enkelt att tala om hållbar tillväxt det är tillväxt som hjälper oss in i den säkra zonen".

⁸ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "Jag tänker att vi ska fortsätta och såklart, vi ska ha en tillväxt men det ska också vara någonting som utvecklas över tid ganska jämnt...".

factor, whether you want it or not, but I do not think it should be governing...⁹. These quotes show how the municipality views economic growth as a possibility even in a future economy that undertakes Raworth's principles. It does not seem that the municipality is willing to adopt a degrowth strategy or anything similar. Instead, they seem to be choosing Raworth's second "route" which involves the difficult task of achieving large-scale green growth. Since the DE framework does not rule out the possibility of future growth, it can be argued that the municipality's approach does not stand in contrast with Raworth's doughnut. Regardless of strategy, it is important for the municipality to address and define what kind of growth they want to achieve in the future. Although I am not sure that the doughnut will bring them the clarity they were hoping for, Raworth's ideas can still guide Tomelilla in the right direction. While recognizing the extremely difficult challenge of reaching her proposed level of decoupling, Raworth still claims that growth could be a possibility in the future. She has been openly skeptical of green growth (Raworth, 2018) and points out that there are few countries that have been successful in achieving it to a sufficient extent (Raworth, 2017:209). As earlier discussed, she might be referring to green growth, but if not, what growth is she referring to? Should decision-makers assume that her new economic principles will make growth environmentally justifiable in the future? I will keep these questions open, however, if the challenge of staying within the planetary boundaries should be taken seriously, there cannot be any room for misconceptions or vagueness. Despite this, it could be easier for a smaller municipality such as Tomelilla to reach the level of decoupling needed even if it will be difficult. In larger regions and cities there might be more actors with different interests to take into account in the process of moving towards a green transition. The municipality could have a closer dialogue with the public and other private actors in the area which may facilitate the transition. In the same way, I believe that a degrowth strategy could be more feasible in a smaller region than, for instance, in a larger metropolitan region. It may be easier for a smaller municipality, such as Tomelilla, to have an impact on people's lifestyle choices or find ways to fulfill degrowth's decommodification practices locally through closer cooperation and projects. In regards to the socialist modernist perspective, Tomelilla could take this approach by focusing on different modern infrastructural projects. Moving closer to the socialist vision would most likely require local action where urban areas, arguably, should be the main drivers in achieving a more socially just society. Several planners identify the issue of transportation as one of the biggest challenges in Tomelilla where there may be room for improvements in the public transportation system. As mentioned in section 5, Tomelilla is

⁹ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "Det är den mest grundläggande faktorn egentligen oavsett man vill det eller ej så är det ju men jag tycker inte den får vara styrande...".

a large municipality within a Swedish context and would need to find sustainable and available carbon-free alternatives that cover the whole region. Based on the interviews, it seems that the municipality is already focusing on renewables, which according to modernists would be an important step towards an electrified future. On the other hand, it could be argued that Tomelilla is already participating in several modernist projects. Due to the pandemic, there has been a huge technological development in the world and the city officials claim that the increased digitization has affected the region, which I will return to later in this paper. In other words, Tomelilla is a part of these broader communication networks that have opened up new opportunities for the municipality and its citizens. In addition, Tomelilla has infrastructural links, such as railways, to other larger metropolitan areas that could be regarded as modern infrastructure.

6.4.2 Urbanization and housing

Moving on, I would like to analyze how the municipality perceives and engages with the issues of urbanization and housing. As my theoretical analysis shows, these issues could be linked to the question of growth. In terms of urbanization, three different subcategories emerged during the coding process of the interviews: *migration*, *the establishment of urban culture*, and *digitization* (see appendix 1).

The municipality identifies several opportunities with increased urbanization and claims that it is an important part of the development process. Urbanization in Tomelilla is not only a matter of more people moving to the region but also the fact that Tomelilla has become an increasingly important part of the urban. As one of the interviewees stated: “...urbanization for us is not about people moving to the Malmö-Lund and Copenhagen region, but it is more that an urban culture begins to establish itself in the countryside as well...”¹⁰. In other words, planetary urbanization has affected the development of the region and the establishment of urban culture. The interviewees mentioned new restaurants, cargo bikes, and electric scooters as examples of an emerging urban culture. Raworth’s doughnut mainly focuses on the design issues and distribution but does not account for the dynamics within planetary urbanization and how Tomelilla is a part of an explosion or expansion of the urban phenomenon (Schmid, 2013). Due to this expansion of the urban, Tomelilla positions itself differently within the capitalist urban landscape as urban elements become an integral part of the region. As pointed out by a planner, the expansion of the urban could affect the

¹⁰ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: ‘...urbaniseringen för oss handlar inte om att folk flyttar in till Malmö - Lund- och Köpenhamnsregionen utan det är mer att en urban kultur börjar etablera sig på landsbygden också, väldigt konkreta exempel som att det börjar dyka upp lunchrestauranger som inte funnits tidigare, lådcyklar börjar dyka upp i stadsbilden...’.

expectations of the citizens and the people moving to Tomelilla. It may therefore be challenging to adopt a degrowth or doughnut strategy while meeting the needs of the citizens who demand more urban-like elements.

Moreover, statistics (Region Skåne, 2022) show that there has been an increase, since the beginning of the 2000s, in the number of people commuting from Tomelilla to other larger urban areas, such as Ystad and Malmö. Using Lefebvre's metaphor could be a way of conceptualizing these relations as resources, such as labor, are drawn from Tomelilla to other nearby cities. This process could possibly support capitalist urbanization and strengthen the interlinkages between economies within and outside the Scania region (Brenner, 2013). As figure 5.1 shows, Tomelilla is located in between several larger cities such as Malmö, Kristianstad, and Ystad. For this reason, Tomelilla might play a role in supporting the process of implosion and the capitalist growth of these urban areas. One of the planners claimed that there is more focus on the western part of the Scania region: "...from the planning perspective I have, the main thing I see is that there is a focus on large cities and so on, which affects the smaller municipalities and smaller towns..."¹¹. This quote indicates how smaller areas such as Tomelilla could be disfavored in the capitalist urbanization process that manifests itself far beyond the borderline of the city. While the urban centers benefit from this process, Tomelilla might be forgotten in the broader regional policies and have to fight harder to get their voice heard. The city officials also identify the increased digitization and urban drift as important elements of urbanization. They assert that the labor market has changed dramatically due to digitization, which has created opportunities for teleworking where the importance of physical presence has decreased in favor of Tomelilla. It may facilitate networking and communication with global actors, which is important for a small municipality, such as Tomelilla. One of the planners mentioned how farmers and others have benefited from the increased digitization and, "...advanced their own positions"¹². It could also be linked to planetary urbanization as the urban digital infrastructure is expanding outwards and conquering smaller municipalities. As the quotes indicate, this urban expansion could have an impact on practices within these traditional rural areas that have become increasingly integrated into the urban landscape. The municipality is aiming for population growth and the planners claim that there is an increasing interest in moving to Tomelilla where there is a lot of new construction taking place. Raworth's doughnut claims that we need to make smart eco-friendly choices in terms of technology to overcome the challenges of urbanization.

¹¹ Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "... ur det perspektivet jag har när jag sitter och planerar så är det mest det jag ser att det är fokus på stora städer och så vidare vilket drabbar de mindre kommunerna och mindre orterna..."

¹² Quote translated by the author from Swedish. In Swedish: "...har kunnat flytta fram sina positioner rejält".

Overall, the municipality seems to follow Raworth's ideas, and the interviewees mentioned how Tomelilla participates in several circular projects and takes initiatives to become fossil-free. One of the projects involves exploring how the building sector could become more sustainable which coincides with the doughnut's ambitions.

In regards to the question of housing, the municipality aims to provide housing for all and improve the residential environment which could lead to a better quality of life. However, it will not be an easy task as the municipality does not own all the land within Tomelilla and there could be different interests fighting each other. The city officials underline the importance of having a close relationship and dialogue with private actors within the municipality to achieve these ambitions. It remains to be seen whether or not the municipality could achieve affordable housing for all people but the issue of housing is complex. Although my research draws upon interviews, it is relevant to mention how Swedish housing politics and reforms are affecting the housing market in several ways. Other scholars (Hedin et al. 2012; Baeten & Listerborn, 2015) have pointed toward the increased neo-liberalization of Swedish housing politics throughout the years. National policies affect the local context of Tomelilla and the Swedish housing sector has suffered heavily from deregulation over the past years (ibid). Although the city officials did not point to any concrete solutions or policies, there seems to be a willingness to translate the visions into action. This suggests that there may be possibilities in Tomelilla even if the power of local authorities is usually limited. One planner mentioned that there is a municipal housing company operating in the area but another thing to consider is whether this land will be kept in public ownership over time or if the land will become an object for financial speculation. On the other hand, the municipality has ambitious goals in terms of population growth, and they may become caught up in the regional game of attracting more citizens to increase their tax base. It might be the case that Tomelilla is competing with other municipalities in the Scania region to attract more taxpayers and talent, therefore, other social and ecological goals might be deprioritized in the process. Another essential aspect is the quality of housing that cannot be forgotten while fulfilling the ambitious goal of population growth. One of the planners was skeptical about this political goal while another planner saw it as important for the development and there could be challenges with balancing these goals in Tomelilla. Undoubtedly, the increase of financial actors contributes to growth-oriented goals and as long as there is a commodified housing market that operates in the general logic of Swedish housing politics, the issues of gentrification and displacement will remain (ibid; Macruse, 2012). However, it is difficult to draw any conclusions based on the interviews alone, but there seems to be a willingness to achieve the goal of decent housing for all, and it remains to

be seen if the doughnut model could provide them with enough guidance.

7. Conclusion

This section will conclude my master thesis by summarizing the main findings to answer the research questions and fulfill the aim. It will also discuss the contribution of this paper and propose avenues for further research.

By drawing upon critical theory, this master thesis aimed to scrutinize doughnut economics' (DE) engagement with growth and urbanization and to explore how the municipality of Tomelilla perceives the doughnut model and these issues. Most of the previous studies have been focusing on exploring the possibilities for implementation and apart from scholarly reviews, there is a lack of papers that critically engage with the doughnut model. Therefore, my paper made an attempt to move towards a critical understanding of this alternative economic model. To obtain my research aim, I organized the thesis by looking at the following research questions:

- RQ 1.1: What is doughnut economics, and how could it be connected to critical theory?
 - RQ 1.2: How is doughnut economics dealing with growth and urbanization and how has it been criticized?
- RQ 2: How does the municipality of Tomelilla perceive the issue of growth and doughnut economics, especially in relation to urbanization and the housing question?

The questions at issue were investigated through four qualitative interviews with city officials at the municipality and a content analysis of the model's core book. Furthermore, based on my theoretical framework, the following four elements were identified and provided guidance for both the interviews and the analysis: *urbanization, housing, growth, and the doughnut model*.

This thesis has identified Raworth's doughnut as a model that promotes ecological and social sustainability through the creation of her new visuals. The model urges decision-makers to deprioritize economic goals to ensure that they stay on track with more important social goals while not compromising the planet's well-being. Additionally, it underlines the importance of creating a circular economy that takes into account different ways of responding to rising inequalities by redistribution. This thesis has also shown that DE does not rule out the possibility of economic growth as long as policymakers embrace the doughnut's new principles, and avoid crossing the ecological limits. Similar to degrowth, the model makes a distinction between high- and low-income countries, where the former should take a more conservative approach. The DE seems to be leaning towards degrowth and pays

less attention to the issue of urbanization compared to the issue of growth. The model underlines the importance of eco-friendly technologies and circularity in tackling the challenges of increased urbanization. The doughnut suggests that focusing on the commons or introducing new forms of taxation could be ways forward.

Furthermore, this paper has illustrated how doughnut economics could be connected to several different critical theories by analyzing the issues of growth and urbanization. Reading the doughnut's engagement with economic growth through the lens of degrowth and socialist modernism, it would be hard to not conclude that there are shortcomings. My analysis showed that Raworth's framework could benefit from incorporating a more extensive political analysis of the capitalist structures under contemporary capitalism. It is difficult to arrive at any conclusion with regards to DE's engagement with urbanization solely based on Raworth's core book. However, this could be an area for further work since my paper has identified certain elements of the critical urban theory that could possibly strengthen Raworth's framework, such as adopting a broader understanding of the urban. My analysis also identifies certain ambiguities within Raworth's analysis of growth that could be investigated further, especially in relation to her discussion of future growth.

The content analysis of the semi-structured interviews showed that there seems to be a positive attitude toward the doughnut model among the city officials, who claimed that it provides a platform for communication. The municipality views economic growth as a possibility in a future economy and, similar to Raworth, does not seem to identify any contradictions between growth and respecting the doughnut's ecological ceiling. Urbanization is seen as an important part of the development process, where the municipality has ambitions to provide housing for all and establish a close dialogue with other actors in the area. The increased digitization has affected the region and opened up opportunities for teleworking in favor of Tomelilla. Overall, my case study showed that the municipality's views largely coincide with Raworth's ideas, especially in relation to the issue of growth. This case study confirms the importance of incorporating critical theories that could open up for alternative discussions and reflections. My thesis adds to a growing body of literature that engages with Raworth's model and could spark these much-needed alternative discussions.

Finally, a number of different limitations need to be addressed. First and foremost, my project was mainly based on Raworth's core book, and therefore, I did not examine her other works that might be of interest. It might be the case that Raworth expanded upon her model within her other works that were not covered by this project. For example, the previously mentioned platform called, DEAL, provides more information on how the doughnut could be applied at the local level. The scope of my research was also limited in terms of the number

of interviews that were conducted and due to the time constraints, I did not interview all of the city officials at the municipality. Apart from this, it is also worth mentioning that sustainable transformations need political support and I have not analyzed how the politicians view this alternative economic model. Regardless of strategy, I strongly believe that it requires a joint political commitment to overcome the challenges that we face today. It remains to be seen whether or not political action will follow the implementation of the doughnut and if the municipality will be able to turn Raworth's ideas into action. Future research could look into the politics in Tomelilla and how it progressed over time. Returning to the discussion of generalizability, I have already noted that the case of Tomelilla is considerably different from previous cities that have engaged with the framework, both in terms of size, location, and resources. However, the case of Tomelilla could still act as an interesting example of how a smaller Scandinavian municipality views the doughnut model and the issues of urbanization and growth. This study could be used as a complement to future research projects that analyzes the implementation of DE in smaller municipalities.

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Raworth, K. 2017. *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*. London: Random House. Credit: Raworth and Guthier. CC-BY-SA 4.0.

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Raworth, K. 2017. *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*. London: Random House. Credit: Raworth and Mihotich. CC-BY-SA 4.0.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1. Coding handbook for semi-structured interviews (translated from Swedish by author).

Filip Eriksson carried out the coding as a part of the course SGEM08 at Lunds University.

The doughnut model = Refers to the doughnut model as a whole and how the municipality views the model. For instance, the pros and cons of the doughnut model and its potential to guide Tomelilla's development.

Subcategories:

Visual/pedagogical strength
Holistic approach
Platform for communication

Growth = Refers to how the municipality views growth and the role of economic growth in the development of Tomelilla. Moreover, how the municipality perceives the doughnut's principles, such as, moving away from the goal of continued GDP growth and becoming growth-agnostic.

Subcategories:

Growth in relation to social and ecological sustainability
Economic growth

Urbanization = Refers to how the municipality views the global urbanization process and how it affects the development of Tomelilla.

Subcategories:

Migration
Establishment of urban culture
Digitization

Housing = Refers to how the municipality views housing as a part of the development process and how the city officials view the current housing shortage in the area.

Subcategories:

Housing for all
Expansion

Appendix 2. The interview guide.

Om dig

- Vad är din roll i kommunen?
- Hur länge har du haft denna rollen?
- Hur kan en vanlig dag se ut på arbetet?

Munkmodellen och den framtida utveckling

- Hur ser du på munkmodellen?
- Vilka fördelar och nackdelar ser du med modellen än så länge?
- Har ditt arbetssätt förändras efter att ni börjat utforska ramverket eller räknar du med att det kommer att ske?
- Vilken potential ser du i munkmodellen som styrningsredskap?

Tillväxt, urbanisering och bostäder

- Vad är tillväxt för dig?
- Vad är enligt dig en blomstrande ekonomi i balans?
- Hur ser du på ekonomisk tillväxt i den framtida utvecklingen?
- Munkmodellen förespråkar att BNP-tillväxt inte ska vara målet, hur ser du på detta?
- Hur ser du på ekonomisk tillväxt i relation till social och ekologisk hållbarhet?
- Vilket ansvar känner du att Tomelilla har gentemot den globala klimatkrisen?
- Allt fler mindre orter och samhällen påverkas av den globala urbaniseringsprocessen, påverkar detta Tomelillas utveckling? Och isåfall, hur?
- Hur ser du på bostädernas roll i Tomelillas utveckling?
- Vilken roll har bostädernas i Tomelillas tillväxt? Vad skulle kommunen kunna göra för att lösa denna bostadsbrist/kris som återfinns?

Avslutning:

- Vilka är de största utmaningarna med Tomelillas utveckling och planering?
- Hur hade du velat att Tomelilla såg ut om 10 år och varför just såhär?

Appendix 3. List of interviewees.

Table 9.1. List of interviewees at Tomelilla municipality.

Alias	Occupation
Informant A	Planner
Informant B	Planner
Informant C	Planner
Informant D	Planner